

*"I will make you fishers of men."*

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE NAAS MISSION.

THE mouth of the Naas River is in latitude 55° north; the course of the river is south, south-west, passing through the Coast Range Mountains, which in many parts rise directly from the edge of the water. Here and there are low flats suitable for the growth of roots and hardier vegetables. As one enters the mouth of the river the mind is struck with wonder and admiration by the sublimity of the scenery. It appears as if one were in a land-locked sea, surrounded by high mountains, the peaks of which are in some cases thickly mantled with snow. It is a scene in which one can always delight.

My first visit to the Naas was made over the ice in the spring of 1875. We found the people at a great heathen dance in old Chief Claycut's house. Most of them were covered with paint and feathers and wished to know what I had come for. They didn't want any Missionary troubling them. An old Chief said, "God gave you the Bible, but He gave us the dance and the potlatch, and we don't want you here." This was near the place where shortly before that time a Chief had ordered some men shot because they and their Chief put up a taller crest pole than he had.

As we stood there by the fire, with the heathen dancers rushing past us and brushing off their feathers and paint on our clothes as much as they could, I said to them, my Bible in my hand, "I came to tell you what is in this Good Book, to tell you of God's love and His law, of heaven

## UP AND DOWN THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

and hell." I talked on in this way, partly through an interpreter and partly in Chinook, for some time. Finally the old Chief called to some of his men and told them to bring his bed alongside the fire. It was a box-like thing, standing about eighteen inches from the floor and containing a feather bed. Then one of his wives brought half a box of fish grease, containing perhaps four or five gallons, and threw it all on the fire. This blazed up at such a rate that it set the roof on fire. I said to my men, "What is the matter? Are they going to burn the house down?"

They said, "Oh, no, this is done in honor of your coming. They always did this in olden times when they were pleased at the arrival of a Chief; this is to show that they now welcome you."

We had a good service that night, as we were privileged to speak to a goodly number in that large heathen house.

My next visit was in the autumn. With a large canoe and party we had visited all the villages on the river. When we returned to the lowest village, Kiteeks, which is about twelve miles from the mouth of the river, it was a very cold night. I said to my man before I went ashore, "We must get out of the river to-night or we will be caught in the ice, as it is going to freeze. I'll just go ashore and preach to this people, and we will go right on."

I went in to the large heathen house. Men were dancing all over the floor, the old conjurer's drum was going, and hundreds more were beating sticks on boards to keep time. They were covered with paint and feathers, a grotesque sight. They never danced promiscuously. When the men would sit or fall down exhausted, the women would sally forth and dance, they in turn falling near the fire or even on it. The people would throw water on them to bring them to.

I said, "Stop!" in a very decided voice. "I want to

## THE NAAS MISSION

preach to you." I walked up and down in the house, giving them the Law as well as the Gospel.

Then I went out and, stepping into the canoe, we started to paddle down the river as hard as we could. We camped for the night on the beach by salt water.

About six weeks from that time a party of thirteen men, including the two Chiefs, came down from the Naas to ask for a Missionary. They said the people were all sorry for the unkind way the Chief had treated me on my former visit, and, from the way I left so suddenly the last time, they felt afraid that the Great One Above might be angry with them. The Chiefs had sent them down to ask for a Missionary. A thousand people up the river were wanting a Missionary. I promised to visit them soon.

As it was getting near the Christmas holidays, I couldn't leave at that time and during January the weather was too severe. With a party of ten I started away in February, 1876. As the weather seemed mild and favorable, we expected to reach Naas the same night or next day, but that night the weather cleared up and became frosty, with a very strong north wind. Next day we struggled against the storm up Portland Channel until it got so bad we had to camp. In the night it was very cold in our camp on the beach. Next day the wind blew terribly and the cold increased so that we had to move camp up into the woods and cut down trees to make a booth or brush-house to shelter us from the wintry blast. Here we remained for several days until our food was all gone; and so, in the midst of the gale, the wind making water-spouts of the waves on the Inlet, we started back home, assured that we couldn't get up the Naas, as the river would be freezing over. On our return trip near a headland known as Ten Mile Point, in a most miraculous way we were saved when our mast broke away at the foot and came near cap-

sizing the canoe. Had we been upset here we must all have been lost, for the rocks rose perpendicularly from the water's edge and there was no way to get ashore. We recovered the sail, got it fixed, and on we went, the waves dashing over us and the spray every time forming ice on our covering and clothes.

Within ten miles of home we met Chief Sick-sake from Simpson with twenty-one young men in a large canoe, plunging away bravely through the waves in the face of that terrible gale to take food to the Missionary and his party. They had become convinced at home, the night before, that it was impossible for us to reach Naas, so they had gone through the village collecting food. They had got a hundred dried salmon, fish grease and other things, and were bent on pressing their way even to Naas through such a gale. We have been sometimes asked, "Have the Indians any gratitude?" Here we saw it in its purity. Where in any other part of the world would twenty-two men be found to go against such a storm, so bitterly cold and so dangerous, to look after a poor Missionary, without anything of reward in view? Needless to say, as soon as they met us, they whipped their fine large craft around, holding up their paddles, with the flat sides to the wind, to act as sails. We swept along until we got shelter at the next island, where we soon had a fire. With thanksgiving and prayer, we ate a good meal in old-fashioned Indian style.

In the early part of March we tried the trip again. We found the people all at home, and many of the Chiefs spoke, urging that a Missionary be sent at once. One said, "There are fifteen hundred people reaching away up the Naas and on to the headwaters of the Skeena, and this is the door to them all." They urged that we should not

fail to send a white Missionary that summer. I left a native with them.

Later on I made my way south to attend the Annual District Meeting with a view to getting a Missionary for the Naas people. The meeting was held in Victoria. Business went on until Saturday afternoon, when the Chairman suggested that there was now a chance to hear from Brother Crosby about the work in the North. The Naas people and their "Macedonian cry" were first on my mind and heart. I told them the story of the open door to that people. As I pleaded the Chairman said, "Brother, you will pardon me, but I must say here that word has come from the East that the Society is in debt and not one dollar more can be spent this year for the opening up of new work." A minister from a sister church was in the meeting and sat with tears rolling down his cheeks. Said he, "Mr. Crosby, I wish you were in Bristol, England, to-night; you would get both the money and the man if you would tell them that story." I said, "I can't go to Bristol, brother, but I must have a Missionary." After what the Chairman had said I felt almost broken-hearted; I sat down in one of the big seats in the church and had a good cry. Then I left the room, went to the parsonage near by, where I was billeted, and there, on my knees, I told the Lord all about it.

I could not take any supper that night, but went out and took a walk up one of the back streets, feeling oh, so lonely. I felt as if every friend in the world had forsaken me and, crying, I kept telling the Lord I must have a Missionary. After I had walked some distance, I thought of a cottage prayer meeting that used to be held in Father McKay's house on Saturday nights. I went around to that place and there I found a number engaged in prayer—Presbyterians and Methodists, Episcopalians and Baptists,

## UP AND DOWN THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

white and colored. They were having a glorious time. After a while the leader said, "We will change the exercises; some would like to speak." One or two spoke and then I got a chance. I didn't go back over years of experience but told them of the cry from the Naas for a Missionary, of the experience I had that afternoon and how my heart was nearly broken by what the Chairman had said. By this time nearly everybody was in tears. An old colored man jumped up and said, "Brother Crosby shan't go back widout a Missionary. I'se give two dollars and a half." Another brother said, "We must get it higher than that, brother; I will give fifty dollars." Another gave fifty dollars, another twenty-five dollars, and on the list went until it ran up to over three hundred dollars. All at once a young man, who had been teaching our School at Nanaimo, said, "I'll go, I'll go." The late Sheriff McMillan, a lay representative to the District Meeting, took charge of the subscription list and presented the man and the money to the District Meeting on Monday morning. I need not say there was not a happier man in the world than I was that day; I was praising the Lord wherever I went, shouting and happy for what He had done. I met a young Yorkshire man whose father had died and left some money in Nanaimo. I knew the dear old man some years before. His son had just come out to see about the estate. I said, "Young fellow, you missed it you were not with us last night; we had a glorious time." When I told him what had been done, he said, "I'll help; I will give fifty dollars for that."

Mr. A. E. Green, the young teacher at the meeting, was forthwith sent, and the people of Victoria sustained him that year and part of the year following, as well as giving largely to the General Fund. After the Missionary reached Port Simpson we made a trip together to the

## THE NAAS MISSION

Upper Naas, visiting and preaching in all the villages. A site was chosen and presented to us by the Chiefs for a Mission at Lack-al-zap (Greenville).

In December, 1877, the Naas Missionary writes: "A blessed revival has been going on at Port Simpson; the Missionary from there, with fifty people, visited the Naas. It was a time long to be remembered."

Again in February, 1878, he writes: "We were encouraged and blessed in November by a visit from Brother Crosby and fifty of his people, many of whom gave clear testimony. . . . When we came here the young people thought the Gospel could help them, but that there was no hope for the old; they said they had been too long in darkness. They brought a young man who was sick twenty-six miles to the Mission. He wept when he saw us and said he wanted to hear about Jesus before he died. We told him to pray. He said, 'I can't; I don't know how.' We pointed him to the Lamb of God. A few days ago an old Chief came to ask a question. He said, 'The white people are very wise; they know a great deal; the Indians are very foolish. Why did not God make us all white, so we could all be wise?' The old man seemed amazed when we pointed him back to our common parentage, to the origin of sin, and pointed him to Christ." Afterwards the Rev. Mr. Green reported that this old man had become a convert to Christianity and had begged for a copy of the Word of God, which was given him. He drove a stake into the ground to which he fastened it. In answer to the question why he did this, he said he could not read, but he knew the book was God's Word and he wanted to have it near him, so he fastened it this way as a source of comfort.

Later, we made a trip up the river, spending six days at the upper village. Heathenism in its worst forms had

## UP AND DOWN THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

been carried on by the doctors and conjurers. We preached to large congregations and pointed them to Jesus.

In April, 1881, Mr. Green reported thirty-nine taken into the Church during the year. He said, "On the 6th of last month twenty adults were baptized. On the same day a love-feast was held, and the Spirit of God came down upon the people. An invitation was given for all who would consecrate themselves to the Lord to come forward. The whole congregation pressed forward. The house was full of cries and prayers. Several families, leaving heathenism, have united with us during the winter.

"No sooner is an Indian converted than he becomes anxious for the conversion of his heathen friends. A young man from the interior, who last spring joined our Mission, came one morning, with his Testament, saying, 'Please find me that text where it says, "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin." When I heard you preach from it, it warmed my heart. Now I have heard that my mother is sick and I want to carry that word to her.' He went one hundred and twenty miles to tell his heathen friends about Jesus.

"Twenty of our people started up the river on snowshoes, visiting all the villages for forty miles, praying in every house and declaring to old and young what God had done for them. Even those who before had persecuted the Christians opened their doors and invited them to eat with them. One old man said, 'My friends, you know this river; it flows to the sea; it lifts and carries away the old logs, taking all it reaches into the sea. Sometimes the river is low; winter comes; the river is dry; the snow is deep. Then spring comes, the sun shines; the rain falls; the snow melts and the mountain streams rush down into the river. It fills; it overflows its banks and carries away old, dry logs that for years have been lying on the banks.

## THE NAAS MISSION

So it was with God's work. It flowed on, but not very wide; it did not reach us all. It was winter. Then summer came, the sun shone and the good rain fell; the river of God overflowed its banks and reached me. I was a log, but the Good Word lifted me. I am saved. I am on my way to heaven. Blessed be Jesus!

"The children formed themselves into a praying band. It was a lovely sight to see them going from house to house, singing the songs of Zion and speaking of the wonderful works of God. The oldest of the band was not over nine years of age.

"A great heathen Chief died in the Mission village," continues Mr. Green, "and the heathen people rushed here with their songs, dances and eagle feathers to carry on their superstitious practices. This sorely tried our Christians. It is strange to see how determined these heathen are to get the Christians back to heathenism. If they cannot get them by persecution they will try them by force, or by kindness work on their feelings.

"A man and his wife came to stay at the Christian village. They hadn't been there a week before the woman's friends came in the night and carried her off, back to heathenism. She, however, managed to escape and returned to the Mission, but in a day or so a strong party came and took her away again.

"A young man who had lived in a Christian village was converted and had commenced to preach when his old uncle, a Chief in a heathen village, sent for the young local preacher. He showed him boxes filled with blankets, furs and other property. Then, sitting down by the fire, he said, 'My nephew, you are my heir, you see my property; I have been saving it up all my life for you, so that when you take my name you will be rich and a big Chief. But you are going a different road; you are poor;

you have no good clothes; you have no boxes filled; you won't dance, so the people don't give you presents. It is true you have a little house at the Mission; but I can't see your property. Come to me and I will give you all. I have no child; you are my son; come and take all I have.'

"The young man said, 'Yes, uncle, your words are true. I am not rich; I do not have fine clothes or boxes filled with blankets. The people don't give me presents since I went to follow Jesus. I know you cannot see my property; but I have a treasure. Yours is in these boxes; mine is in Heaven. You see yours now, but soon, you say, you will leave it; and you won't see it again. I don't see my treasure now, but it is yonder, and I shall soon have it forever. I love you, my uncle; but you must do what you like with your property. I can't leave the treasure I have in Jesus.'

"The old man went away seemingly angry. These two became reconciled on the following Christmas Day, 'the day of peace,' and at the nephew's urgent invitation the old Chief took dinner with him. He afterwards became an earnest Christian and died happy in the Lord."

Still another instance is given by Mr. Green of the effort of heathenism on the Naas to recover its lost ground: "A Christian was called by his heathen relations to their house, and he went; the heathen Chiefs came and were given seats according to their rank; spoons were given them, food placed before them and blankets put down at their feet. They wanted the Christian to eat with them and take the presents. This would be the formal way of taking him back again into heathenism. He understood them and spoke, asking, 'If you were to bring a dead body into this house and put food before it and put a spoon in its hand, would it eat? If you put blankets at its feet would it take them? No, no, it would not, because

it was dead. Friends, you bring me into this house, you put food before me and a spoon into my hand, you put blankets at my feet; but I cannot eat, I cannot take these blankets because I am dead—dead to your old way. I used to live in it, just as you do, but now I am dead to it all.' He then preached Jesus to them.

"Another time a Christian young man's friends wished to take him back into heathenism. He said, 'You see this stone that rolled down this mountain side from the top of the mountains. It was up there a long time and was very strong—a part of the great mountain; but a great power reached it, moved it, and it rolled down and came into the river. Will it go back again? Will it roll up there again? Will it go back to the old place? No, it won't. So it was with me. I was with you a long time, a part of your great, bad mountain; but God's great power came; His Word loosened me, moved me out of the mountain of sin and rolled me down to God's new river. I cannot go back up the mountain to my old place. It is cold there; the snow is there; but here down by the river it is warm. Now God comes to shake you and to move you to come to Him.'

"A young man from a heathen village thus expressed himself in a Class Meeting: 'Friends, I am nearly dead; it almost takes my breath away to see how you people live. Oh, it is so different from the lives we live! I am going to ask my mother if she won't come with me to live here in this new way.'

"The Indians have much improved their village, having put down a plank sidewalk at a cost of ninety-nine dollars and built a Band house at a cost of one hundred and thirty-five dollars."

In January, 1886, the Missionary in a letter to the *Missionary Outlook* tells this story of the Mission: "A

## UP AND DOWN THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

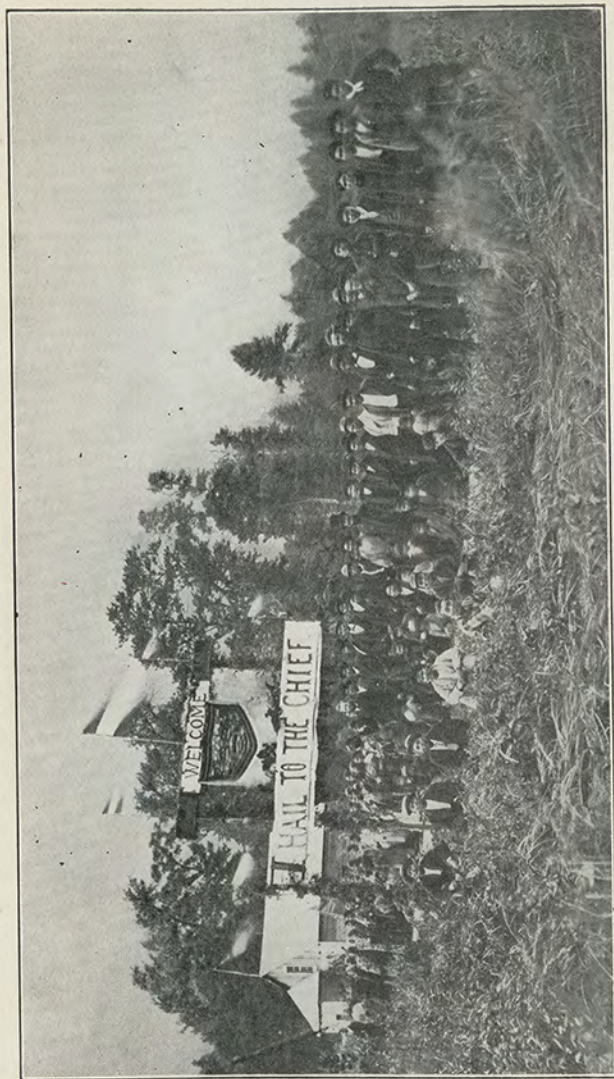
young white man who had come to spend a few days was converted and made to rejoice in the Saviour's love, and oh, how happy he was! The people also got very happy. A man who had recently given his heart to God said, 'My wife often wakes me up and tells me, "George, we sleep too much; let us get up and pray," and, as we do so, our hearts get warm and we feel as if we should like to go away straight home to Heaven.'

In January, 1887, the Missionary, Mr. Green, says: "It gave great joy to the Indians to hear that they were to have a new Church. They had already got out the foundation timber.

"We have had plenty of Band music during the past six weeks. A teacher came from the Coast to teach them to play their new band instruments, presented by friends in England on my visit. They are proving to be good ones. One of our men soon thought he could teach as well as the teacher. We were all astonished at the progress they made. For thirty-three days they had three sessions every day. The Indians can now play, 'The German Hymn,' 'The Fisherman's Prayer,' 'Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow,' 'God save the Queen,' 'The Dead March in Saul,' 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' and 'Around the Throne of God in Heaven.'

"On Christmas eve we had a tree with presents for the children. The Chieftainess, 'Long Arm,' had a beautiful shawl and other things sent by a friend in London. She spoke very nicely, saying God had answered her prayers and had sent her a sign that the white Christians remembered her and her people, and that morning and evening, every day, she would pray God's blessing upon them.

"During the Christmas time, and indeed any other time, there is danger of the Indians going into debt for food for the feasts. This is one of their great weaknesses.



HOW THE INDIANS ON THE NAAS WELCOMED THE MISSIONARY.

## THE NAAS MISSION

"News was brought to our village that a white man and three halfbreed children were without food and blankets at the upper village, Kit-lach-tamux. We made the journey on snowshoes through a storm, reached the village and preached the Gospel. We found the old man, a daughter and two little boys in a corner of their little log cabin with a bearskin over them and but fragments of clothing. The old man died. Before dying, he begged the Missionary to take the children. He took them, baptized the boys, calling them John and George, and kept them both for some time. John was soon able to care for himself. The youngest, George, stayed on at the Mission. We also took another boy and baptized him Fred. Boys such as these were transferred to the Crosby Boys' Home at Port Simpson or went to work for themselves.

"In the spring, when the small fish come into the river, the gulls are so numerous as to resemble a heavy fall of snow. The eagles soar high above the myriads of gulls, seeking their chance. In the water are seals and larger fish after the small fish, all under intense excitement. We have Indians from the interior, from Skeena River, Alaska, Port Simpson, Metlakatlah, and other places, making in all about five thousand people, some Christians and many not. Those who are heathen are known by their faces—some red, some black. They are dressed in all kinds of strange, fantastic costumes and present a wonderful sight as they move about on the ice. We have man life, fish life and bird life, all seeking to destroy the delicious fish. In former years the people used to offer sacrifice to the Great Spirit for giving them the fish, and the one who caught the first fish would put it in his bosom and run about, crying, 'Oh, you salvation fish, you salvation fish.' When asked why they called them salvation fish, they said, 'Oh, years ago, many Indians were here on this river,



starving to death before the fish came, hence as soon as they did come we called them the salvation fish, for they saved the people from death.' These oolachan fish are called also 'small fish,' 'candle fish,' or, as above, 'salvation fish.' They are most delicious, and the grease obtained from them is a wonderful help to health in that climate."

In 1888, Mr. Green, writing of the trials and triumphs of his work on the Naas, says: "When Brother Crosby was up here, I wrote about the death of our little boy. Our loss is his gain. Indians from every village on the river brought their sick to us when the fever was very bad. Among them were the Chiefs from Kit-heeks. One family brought five children very sick with the fever. They stayed at the house of a local preacher who was married to their eldest daughter. The daughter said, 'Father, you don't believe the Gospel; but, when you all get sick and think you are going to die and don't know what to do, then you come to the Christians and ask them to help you. God's servants give you medicine, God shows His mercy and spares all your children, when so many around you die. Then you all go back to the devil's work again. I am a Christian, and I thought now you would give me one of my sisters to serve God. She would live with me and would become a Christian. Yes, I thought you would give me Hath-kun to be a Christian.' 'Yes,' her father replied, 'but Hath-kun is not willing to stay here.' 'Hear what he says,' cried Hath-kun, 'I have wanted to be a Christian for a long time but father would not let me.' The father consented to let her join the Mission; she became a Christian and was baptized.

"One of our local preachers said in Class Meeting, 'I am so glad I am a Methodist. I was never so pleased with this before. There is good in the other Churches, I have no doubt, but they do not have Class Meeting. If ever so

happy, they cannot tell it in the meeting. God has helped me very much while my child was sick. He has blessed me much; my heart is full; and I thank God I am a Methodist, for I can open my mouth with joy and tell of His love.'"

Rev. D. Jennings, writing from Naas Mission in 1889, says: "I have seen many weep on account of sin, but I never saw one weep as bitterly as a strong, intelligent man at our principal Mission station wept on account of his sin. He said he wanted to be a genuine Christian, not a half-hearted one.

"The Lord was present with us at the opening of the new Church at Lach-al-zap."

Our work on the Naas is described by another missionary as follows: "About sixteen miles from the mouth of the river is Fishery Bay, where we have a neat little Church. Four miles above Fishery Bay, on the same side of the river, is Lach-al-zap (Greenville), our headquarters on the Naas. Taking this village as a centre, there are several others at which Missions are established, extending as far as Kit-wan-silk and Kit-lach-tamux, some forty miles above Greenville.

"We have preached the joyful tidings of salvation in all these villages. At one of the camps we found a medicine man practising over a sick old man. The old medicine man was physically and spiritually blind. He had a box containing shot or small stones which he rattled over the sick man, while he uttered his wild incantations. When the sick man saw me he gave a piteous look as much as to say, 'Help me.' As the doctor rattled, I gave the sick man some medicine; this made him better by next day. It was laughable to see the doctor finish up his practice. He rattled near the sick man's mouth with great force; put down his rattle; put his two hands on the sick man's

## UP AND DOWN THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

head and, with too much friction to be comfortable, drew them down over his face, grasping the mouth, and pretending to take something away. Then placing his closed hands together, as people do when looking at a distant object, he blew into them with great force; and thus took the disease away from the sick man. The doctor said to the sick man, 'Has he given you medicine?' When he was told I had, he said, 'Good! good!' The doctor then asked me to give him some medicine. I replied, 'You are a doctor, take your own medicine'; but doctors do not often do that."

The Naas was for many years a most successful Methodist Mission. The Rev. A. E. Green, our first Missionary, was followed by the Rev. D. Jennings, the Rev. R. B. Beavis, the Rev. S. S. Osterhout and Dr. Wm. Rush, each of whom did faithful and successful work. Dr. Rush failed in health and it was found impossible to supply his place. The Church Missionary Society has since taken over the work and the Methodist Church has withdrawn from this field.

## OUR WORK ON THE SKEENA.

Blind Jack—Our First Trip to the Forks of the Skeena—A  
Unique Fishery—Native Bridges—Entertained by a  
Conjurer—The Gospel in a Heathen Salmon  
Camp—The Forks—Mr. Mathieson's  
Work—The C. M. S. in the  
Field—Later Visits.