

In a Mission Launch on the Pacific Coast

LETTER FROM THE REV. G. E. DARBY, B.A., M.B., BELLA BELLA, B.C.

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BELLA BELLA, B.C., Jan. 29, 1920.

DEAR FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS:

If you have read your copies of the Missionary Report for last year you will have noticed that a change in policy has occurred in connection with our "Waterways Mission" on the Pacific Coast. Instead of one large mission boat such as we have had in the *Thomas Crosby*, it is the intention to supply missionaries at suitable points with launches, so that they can have circuits to cover. There are many logging camps and canneries, as well as settlers, that can be visited from the larger settlements. As the Society bought a launch at Bella Bella for Mr. Colwell to use at Alert Bay, Captain Oliver was asked to take it down to him and teach him the way around to the different places in his district. As Captain Oliver has been so long in the mission service on the coast, there is no one more competent to instruct our men in this work.

From Bella Bella to Alert Bay, 150 miles; Rough Weather Compels us to Shelter.

Although it is at least one hundred and fifty miles from Bella Bella to Alert Bay, it is not a hard trip even at this time of the year for a small launch if the weather is at all favorable; as, except for the fifty miles or so across Queen Charlotte Sound, which is off the open Pacific, the course is fairly well protected by smaller islands above and big Vancouver Island below. As it was fine weather when the Captain arrived I volunteered to go with him, expecting that I would be able to catch a steamer and go back in three days. The former owner of the boat came along as engineer and we made good progress for a few hours. As we approached the Sound, though, the wind gradually changed around until by the time we were well out toward Cape Caution the sea was too big for us and we had to seek shelter. We had already called at two lighthouses and delivered the mail to the keepers, who were very glad to see both us and the mail, and at the Nairn saw mill. We intended to call at the first lighthouse out in the Sound, but the sea was so big we could not land. Captain Oliver soon took us into a fine little bay where we could anchor in safety and wait for the wind to go down. That was Tuesday and this is Thursday night and we are still waiting, with not much to encourage us in regard to the weather, so I am taking this unexpected opportunity to write to you. Yesterday we ran around into one of the canneries in Smith's Inlet to get some more food and coal as well as to pass the time away. Although Captain Oliver has had many such experiences, it is the first time I have waited like this. As a rule I cannot leave the hospital for a very long time and so do not make many long trips.

Visiting other Missions on the Coast.

Last September, though, I made a three-hundred-mile trip in our hospital launch, visiting our missions at China Hat, Hartley Bay and Kitamaat. As I was able to take my family, one of the nurses and a male friend to help in handling the launch, we had a very nice time and the opportunity of getting acquainted with the workers at the other missions. The first night out we anchored behind Ivory Island, which protected us from the open waters of Millbank Sound, and in the morning walked across the island to visit the lighthouse keeper and to take him his mail, which we had brought along. As his light is in quite an isolated place he is always glad to see visitors, for sometimes he has no one to talk to for two or three months. It was so foggy that he had his machinery running with the big fog horn blowing at regular intervals, but while we were there the sun came out. As the fog dispersed we had a glorious view out over the ocean and enjoyed seeing the big breakers try to rush up the rocks at the foot of the light and then slide back, the white foam contrasting with the deep green of the water in a beautiful way. By the time we had finished our mid-day meal the fog had cleared up, and we had a nice run to China Hat, arriving about five in the afternoon.

A Splendid Work at China Hat and Hartley Bay.

We enjoyed meeting Mr. and Mrs. Edgar, our missionaries there, who are natives and have done a splendid work there as well as at other places where they have been stationed. I saw a few sick people in the evening but as the weather was so good for travelling we pushed on the next day, telling the people that we would be sure to give them all the treatment they needed on our way back. We called at Swanson Bay and met the Company doctor and his wife there for the first time. When I came up here first there wasn't a doctor within eighty miles of Bella Bella, but they are getting thick now, with one at Ocean Falls, twenty-five miles away, and this one seventy miles away. After looking through the pulp mills and saw mills there we next went on, making a short stop at a cannery about six o'clock. We should have anchored there, but fearing it would be foggy in the morning and so delay us unduly, we thought it better to hurry on and try to make Hartley Bay, even if we did have to run in the dark. We got along all right but lost about two hours by taking the wrong channel in one place, and it was with a great deal of relief that we heaved the anchor over board when we finally arrived about two a.m. In the morning we had the pleasure of meeting our new missionaries there, Mr. and Mrs. Couldrey. Many of the Indians were away from home, smoking and drying salmon for their winter food, but I examined and prescribed for the sick who were at home. One boy was quite ill with pneumonia and it was fortunate for him that I arrived when I did.

Having enjoyed our visit there and, I trust, having done some good, the following day we started for Kitamaat, about fifty miles up a long inlet. It was a lovely trip. Both shores were formed by high, snow-topped mountains, yet it was warm enough that we could sit outside without extra wraps. We passed quite close to two deer which were swimming in the water and occasionally we could see seals and black fish.

At the Elizabeth Long Memorial Home at Kitamaat, then a Service at China Hat.

We received a cordial welcome at Kitamaat and enjoyed the opportunity of visiting the Elizabeth Long Memorial Home, which is situated there. We also enjoyed our visits with the Allans and Miss Alton. I examined all the Home children and a good many of the village people, but on the whole there was not as much sickness as I expected after the time the Indians had with the influenza epidemic. As at the other places, we hadn't the time to stay as long as we should have liked, and as soon as I had finished my work we bade farewell and started on our return trip. After spending one night anchored in a little bay, we arrived again at China Hat and found Mr. Edgar laid up with two black eyes that would have been a source of pride to his antagonist had he been boxing. He had had a bad fall on his face that morning and was feeling not at all well, so we carried our portable organ up to the church and had a very pleasant service with his people. I was glad to hear from him recently that the ladies made baskets and sold them and with the proceeds they are to buy an organ for their church. The next day I spent in examining and treating the Indians, some of whom needed attention very badly, and late in the afternoon we left for home. We anchored in a narrow little channel for the night and arrived safely at Bella Bella the next day, glad to find that what patients we had left in the hospital were all right and that there had been no accidents or severe illnesses in the twelve days we had been away.

I hope that I will be able to make a trip of inspection similar to this oftener in the future. But I can not always leave the hospital, in fact, it is not very good policy to leave it at all, as one can never tell what emergency may arise. When there is such need for medical men here so near home, what must it be like in China and Japan! Let us all pray, and work that so many doctors will give themselves that there will be plenty for every branch of our Mission at home and abroad.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE DARBY.

P.S. We were able to get through on Friday, arriving at Alert Bay at 8.30 a.m., after a ten-hour run.—G. E. D.