



PORT ESSINGTON. B.C.
A centre of the salmon canning industry.

Marks of Progress Among the Indians of the Naas

LETTER FROM THE REV. W. H. PIERCE, PORT ESSINGTON, B.C.

Supported by British Columbia Conference Epworth Leagues.

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MY DEAR FELLOW-LEAGUERS:

I am just back from a trip up the Naas River, and before starting off again I must write you a letter or I shall be too late for the January BULLETIN.

One week from now I expect to leave for Bella Bella, China Hat and Hartley Bay. By the time I return from these points we shall be thinking of Christmas preparations. And thus the days roll by. Time seems all too short to accomplish all that we would like.

A Trip up the Naas.

My stay up the Naas was very pleasant and I received a warm welcome from everyone. My visit among the people there was the first in many years past. I spent one Sunday there and took the morning service at our former mission, Greenville, which is now usually known by the Indian name,



THE OPENING OF THE NAAS MISSION.
Thomas Crosby's first visit to the Naas.

Lakalzap. In the afternoon I was taken down to Kincolith mission by gasoline boat. Archdeacon Collison, having to be away from home, requested me to be there to preach for the evening service. On the afternoon of the following day, the whole population formed a procession and marched through the village, headed by the brass band. This was done as a reception for the returned soldiers, two of whom were Archdeacon Collison's sons. All went into the Church Army Hall and addresses were given. Your missionary was chosen to be one of the speakers.

The Indians Enjoy my Lantern Slides.

The next evening I gave a magic lantern entertainment in the village hall, when everybody was present. The first part of the programme was the great war, now past. All declared that those were the best war pictures they had seen. Next they were shown temperance pictures, and lastly, the life of Christ. All thanked me very much. One chief in his address said that they had often seen moving pictures and that nearly all of them were funny and foolish, which could never do them any good, but that what they had seen and heard on this occasion would not soon be forgotten.

The Whole Village Busy with the New Lighting System instead of the Potlatch.

The whole village was all astir, pulling down posts and making preparations for a new lighting system which is to be installed as soon as possible.



IN A BRITISH COLUMBIA CANNERY.

The Native Fishermen's Association has brought the Indian's work into great demand.

The women did the cooking and served meals to the men in the hall, in order to save time. The entire cost of the plant will be \$5,000.00. This outlay of money seems great, but in my opinion it is a good investment. It is a step in the right direction and will help to kill the Potlatch. How much better to subscribe for and spend on something that will benefit everybody than to spend a similar amount on feasting and potlatching, which destroys every vestige of good and ruins Christianity! Two other villages above them are following their example, which means there will be no feasting on the Naas this winter. And it also means that coal oil lamps up there will soon be a thing of the past. On my journey home I met a man from Port Simpson who told me that they had already sent an order for the same lighting.

The Native Fishermen's Association.

At each of the three villages mentioned was held a meeting of the Native Fishermen's Association, of which there are 140 members on the Naas River, 60 more joining during my stay there. Perhaps it would interest you to know something about that Association. It was organized in 1914, with the idea of uniting all the native fishermen of the different tribes into one body, in order that they might be able to protect themselves from being crowded out by foreigners. Your missionary was chosen to act as President, while William Starr, one of our Port Essington young men, was appointed Secretary. In 1917 the Association was incorporated according to British Columbia law.

A charter was given by the Government and by-laws were formed to benefit each member. No whites are included—Indians only. So far this unity among these fishermen—women included—has proved itself to be a success.

The Association Stands for a Professional Standard and Improved Conduct.

For some time previous there had been a spirit of carelessness among most of the fishermen, which, of course, caused the cannerymen to dislike them; and naturally they preferred to employ Japanese, who would persevere in all kinds of weather, whether salmon were plentiful or scarce. As soon as the natives saw that they were gradually being left out, they began to think, and wondered how they could make good again. It was just at that point the Association was formed. Port Essington, being the central place, was chosen headquarters, and it is here the Annual Meeting is held. At the present time there are 1,800 members and 23 branches among the different tribes, from Rivers Inlet to Skeena, Naas and Queen Charlotte Islands.

The Cannery men are now loud in their praises of the work done by the Indians, also of their improved conduct during the fishing time. Both on the Skeena and the Naas the natives were high boat this summer, and at some of the canneries they were high boat last year. All the managers at the different canneries have already engaged them for next year's fishing. This has never been done before. All this means much thought and planning, and I can assure you that your missionary has very little chance to be idle.

A Hard Winter but no Sickness.

Our people are just home from their salmon camps, where most of them have been spending a few weeks, preparing food for the winter months. The Indians feel the high prices of white men's food these days, and they are anxious to provide as much of their own food as possible. The old Indians, who profess to study the weather by signs in the woods, declare that we have a long, cold, hard winter ahead. Be that as it may, the cold weather has certainly made a very early start. The cost of fuel, both wood and coal, is increasing.

So far we have no sickness in our village, and we trust that we may be as free during the rest of the winter as we were last year.

Wishing you all much success in your winter's work for the Master, and asking an interest in your prayers, I remain,

Yours in His service,

W. H. PIERCE.