

Medical Work at Bella Bella, B.C.

Dr. George E. Darby, Superintendent of the Indian Medical Work at Bella Bella, has written a very descriptive letter of his work at that point, which we are sure will be of interest to our readers:

"Bella Bella is an Indian village of about 300 inhabitants situated on the eastern shore of Campbell, is about two-thirds of the way north from Vancouver to Prince Rupert. If you have a large map or can get a G.T.P. folder, you can see just where we are. We are separated from the mainland by several small islands and the channel separating us from them is the one all the boats going to Prince Rupert and Alaska use. Hence we see several large steamers as well as many small boats nearly every day, although only one or two will condescend to stop each week. We have a lovely view from the village and across the channel about a mile away is a salmon cannery. About two miles south of our island is our Post-Office and general store. As we have a new wharf at the village now, we do not need to go there for our freight like we used to, but still have to go for our mail which comes once a week. I usually go by water, as the trail is over mountains and so poor that though I have been over it several times, I nearly always lose my way.

"At Bella Bella our plant consists of a church, hospital, mission house and Government school. We have a fine church and mission house, but the hospital is very small and becoming very dilapidated and we are planning for a new one as soon as the war is over, which I hope will be very soon. A graduate nurse is in charge, with two nurses in training. The school teacher, of whom you may have heard, as she has been in the Indian work for many years, is Miss K. Tranter. She lives with us. I have charge of the church services, preach morning and evening on Sundays and take charge of the Sunday School. We had a Wednesday night prayer meeting and a song service on Friday night last winter, so you see that after taking an evening to lecture to the nurses, I do not have much time to myself. If I do plan for a quiet evening I am sure to have several office calls.

"In June the village is practically deserted, for all the people scatter to the various canneries along the coast where they earn most of the money which keeps them during the winter. Hence, as there is almost nothing for us at the village, we move too. That is why we are at Rivers Inlet during June, July and August. This Inlet is about seventy miles south of Bella Bella and scattered along its shores are seven canneries. The hospital is about half way up the Inlet, so that we are about twelve miles from the cannery the greatest distance from us. As there are an average of 200 employees at each cannery and the Indians all have their families with them, I have a good many people to look after. At present there is no doctor within 150 miles from the Inlet. As there had not been many patients in the hospital for the last three or four years, I was looking forward to more or less of a rest but was disappointed, agreeably however. Before we had been here a week, we had six or seven patients and averaged nine or ten all summer. That is not so very many, but looking after them properly made our small staff hustle. Besides these I have a lot of office work, as the fishermen are all assessed so much a boat for hospital support and the Indians were all anxious to get their money's worth, even if there was nothing the matter with them. Many of them live in out of the way places and as they do not see a doctor all winter, they come to the office each summer for their annual patching up. We see Indians from all parts of the Coast here, and it is

very hard to tell the ones who come from Christian villages. There are several small villages along here where we should have missionaries, as the natives need a strong Christian influence very badly, not only to save their souls but their bodies as well. For instance, the tribe that lives at the head of this Inlet have had a missionary from time to time, but because of the lack of men and funds, there has been no one here for some years. Meanwhile, the influence of non-Christian white men has been present and the condition of the people morally and physically is frightful.

"Besides the white employees, there are always three communities at every cannery. The Chinese, of whom there are quite a number, live in one large building, the 'China House.' The Japanese usually live in one long house, but as a rule several of them are married and their homes are more respectable. The Indians crowd into little shacks, most of which are a disgrace to such large and profitable establishments as these canneries, and are not improved much



INDIAN MISSION HOUSE, CAPE CROKER, ONT.

by their summer outing, either morally or physically. The Indian men, Japanese and white (all nationalities) catch the fish; the Indian women, old men and girls and boys clean them and fill the cans, and the Chinamen handle the cans after that.

"As a rule a couple of theological students are sent to the Inlet, but for some reason they did not appear this year, and the evangelistic part of our work suffered as a consequence. Especially as our mission boat, the *Thomas Crosby* was not running, I was confined too closely to the hospital with the medical work to have many services except the regular Sunday evening one in the hospital, to which the people from the nearest cannery come. Fortunately, just before too many of the people had left the Inlet, Rev. Colwell, our home missionary at Bella Coola (150 miles north) was able to spend a few days here, and as I happened to have the leisure just then I was able to take him around in the launch. As his time was limited we had to double up, but we had six services at different canneries and covered about one hundred miles in the four evenings. Some of the services were very interesting, but it would take a separate letter to describe that week in detail."