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BRITISH COLUMBIA AND VANCOUVER ISLAND.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

British Columbia, with which is now incorporated Vancouver Island, is situated on the north-west coast of America, and extends from 49° to 57° north latitude. It comprises the territory lying between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, and extends from the frontier line of the United States on the south, to the Simpson and Findlay Rivers which form its northern boundary. The average breadth of the territory is about 250 miles; the length of its coast line about 450 miles; and its area (including Queen Charlotte's Islands) is roughly estimated at 220,000 square miles. The north-west, and interior portions of Vancouver Island are mountainous—there are no very extensive plains—but a number of small valleys, and through the whole of the south-eastern portion the land is excellent and very fertile. The middle portion of the Island is a sea of mountains.

The author crossed over in 1838 from Nootka Sound, on the west coast, to Johnstone's Strait, on the east coast, and found the dividing ridge over 6,000 feet above the level of the sea. On the mainland of British Columbia, and between the Cascade Range and the coast, the only available land is to be found on the delta of the Fraser River; but between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains there are extensive prairies and level tracts, and the whole country between the Thompson River and Nicolas Lake, and stretching away to the great Okauagan Lake, affords splendid pasturage for innumerable herds of cattle.

HISTORY.

As is well known, Vancouver Island was discovered by Juan de Fuca, a Greek, in 1592. Captain Cook coasted along the western shore in 1778, and supposed it to form part of the mainland. The first British settlement was made at Nootka Sound in the year 1778, by some London merchants. Spain, however, laid claim to the west coast of America, south of 60°, and her cruizers seized the British trading vessels. To resent this, a large fleet was assembled at Spithead, but war was avoided by the concession of Spain. In 1792 the Island was visited by Vancouver, a Lieutenant in the British navy, who minutely surveyed the whole coast line, and so accurately, that his charts are in use to the present day. Up to the discussion of the Oregon boundary question it attracted little attention, when by the treaty of 1846, it was vested in Great Britain. In 1849 it was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company for the purposes of colonisation, but their control ceased in 1859, when the Island became again a British Colony, under a complete form of government.

The mainland of British Columbia, formerly called New Caledonia, had been, up to 1859, also under the control of the Hudson's Bay Com-