

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE PACIFIC PROVINCE.

NOTES FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA—VICTORIA, B. C.

MR. EDITOR. - Letters descriptive of travel and scenery are so common nowadays, that one almost shrinks from attempting to describe what they have seen, for no matter how interesting it may seem at the time, it is hard to convey an adequate impression to the reader. As there is so little known in Ontario of the Pacific Province I am emboldened to give my observations of that interesting part of our Dominion, made by a recent visit.

About the year 1858 the colony began to be settled. Immigration was very much stimulated by the gold discoveries, and settlers began to pour in from California, the Western States and Canada, and other parts of the British Empire. In 1861 the portion of the Province known as the Mainland was formed into a separate colony, then known only as Vancouver Island, but which, by royal consent, was known afterwards as British Columbia. The area of the Province is about 350,000 square miles. For a quarter of a century British Columbia has attracted travellers and explorers from all parts of the world, many of whom have returned to their homes laden with the precious metals dug from the bowels of the earth. This fair Province is distant from Toronto about 3,500 miles, and can be reached *via* San Francisco in a little over nine days, three of which are occupied by steamer, between San Francisco and Victoria.

Leaving Toronto by the G. T. R. and Chicago line, we started for the latter city, staying there over Sunday.

CHICAGO

is the city of the west, whose ambition is to rival New York, and judging from the appearance of the place, one would say that if life, bustle, and business enterprise will accomplish it, the denizens of the Empire City should succeed. To an easy going person from a country town like Toronto, Chicago on a Sunday presents a wonderful appearance, in fact more like a holiday in Toronto than anything else. Within a short distance of the city a man was ploughing, and on one of the streets were about 1,000 men digging a drain. The saloons and theatres were all open. Of the former there are about 400, and of the latter from fifteen to twenty.

THE CHURCHES.

There are about 130 churches of the various denominations that are to be found in such cities. The number is proportionately small when compared with Toronto. Among the prominent preachers there is the Rev. Dr. Barrows, of the First Presbyterian Church, who on this occasion preached in the Central Music Hall, and was at this time giving a course of sermons on "The Family," the subject on this occasion being "The Duties of the Wife," which, as might be expected, drew a large audience, good looking and well-dressed ladies being largely in the majority. Long before the doors were opened a large number had gathered, anxious to obtain admittance, and when the minister appeared on the platform, I would say that there were at least 2,500 people present, who seemed deeply interested in the discourse. Dr. Barrows is about forty-five years of age, with a rather youthful appearance, is an effective, pleasing speaker, and who in a city like Chicago is "likely to draw." After leaving Chicago we passed Omaha, where a son of the Rev. Dr. Hall, of New York, is among the prominent clergymen, and after a long monotonous ride we reach the Rockies. The highest elevation is at Sherman, over 8,000 feet above the level of the sea, and with a train of nine cars we were going at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

SALT LAKE CITY

was the next place visited, and is the capital of Utah Territory, which, owing to its being the headquarters of Mormonism, has never yet been recognized as a State. The city lies snugly at the base of the mountains, and is properly termed the "Valley City." Although there may be snow on the mountains, flowers and vegetables are in bloom below. There is a population of about 30,000 in the city, of whom a large proportion profess the Mormon faith, but throughout the Territory of Utah the number of Mormons is estimated at 120,000. They own a large part of the wealth of the city, and are exclusive in

their dealings, having co-operative stores, where they can purchase every article they require. The Tabernacle where they worship holds an audience of 10,000, and so good are the acoustic properties that at the extreme end of the building I heard my escort drop a pin into his hat, when standing in the pulpit.

Mormonism was first established in New York, whence it extended to Ohio, and further west to Nebraska, until now its influence is felt throughout the entire Territory of Utah. They have only a few educated ministers, but their missionaries are to be found in every country. These are making converts to the system, and bringing them over to Salt Lake City.

SAN FRANCISCO,

reached on Saturday morning, is a city of about 200,000 inhabitants, where are to be found a large number of Canadians, who have been successful in business. I met here the Rev. Mr. Whittier, formerly of Halifax, N. S., who had just been called to a congregation in the city of Oakland, where there is a population of 40,000. San Francisco boasts of having the largest hotel in the world, the "Palace Hotel," which has 1,500 bedrooms. Carriages even can pass into the interior of the building.

Presbyterianism is prosperous here, although the congregations are not large. In the morning I heard the Rev. Mr. Smith, of the Tabernacle, a young preacher of much promise, and in the evening the Rev. Dr. Gibson, of the U. P. Church. His theme was "The greatest of these is charity." Dr. Gibson is a man of commanding appearance, and his discourse was fresh and forcible.

Three days by steamer brings us to Victoria, B. C., situated on a peninsula on Vancouver Island. The island derives its name from Captain Vancouver, by whom it was discovered in 1790. It is about 300 miles long, and sixty broad, and contains about 20,000 square miles. British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, and although the Canadian sentiment is not very strong, still they continue to grow in numbers and wealth, and are warmly attached to English institutions. The principal industries of the colony are mining, fishing and stock-raising; the beef and mutton are said to be unexcelled. The fisheries are among the richest in the world, the nearest approach being those on the Atlantic coast, in the Maritime Provinces.

The salmon make their way as far as 1,000 miles up the river. They weigh from five to twenty-five pounds, although I saw one caught in the Columbia river which weighed seventy-four pounds. The fishing season extends from April to October, and the price runs from five and a half to six and a half cents per pound.

A new industry has been started this year by a New York capitalist, who has inaugurated a "refrigerator car company" for conveying fresh salmon from the coast to New York, where it can be sold at twenty cents per pound, and where a car load can be disposed of in one day. The salmon will be packed in boxes; each car containing a certain number of boxes, will be attached to the express train on the Northern Pacific Railway, and will reach New York in six or seven days.

Coal is abundant, and of excellent quality, and is shipped in large quantities to San Francisco, where it is in great demand.

Cattle grazing is very profitable; the celebrated "bunch grass," to be found on the mainland south of fifty-five degrees, has wonderful beef-producing properties. A butcher told me that some of the cattle in the fall of the year are too fat to kill, and have to be held over till spring, that they may be reduced by the winter.

VICTORIA

is the capital of the Province, and has a population of about 8,000, including Chinese and Indians. The climate is the most delightful that can be imagined, the temperature rising above eighty, and seldom falling under fourteen degrees above zero, with cool, refreshing nights. There is very little winter, and if frost or snow make their appearance, it will be only for a day or two, probably only a few hours. Victoria is entirely free from the extremes of the eastern provinces. Gardening commences in March, and whole hedges of roses are to be found in the woods, filling the air with their fragrance. A gentleman who has been a resident for five years, told me that since he settled there he never heard a peal of thunder nor saw a flash of lightning.

THE SCENERY

around Victoria is splendid, particularly the carriage drives. The roads are all macadamized, and in first-class order. Sometimes the eye will catch the sea, then again a snow-clad mountain will rise into view, whilst all around you nature is dressed in her loveliest attire, and so much are the Victorians attached to their charming little city, that they wonder very much why Canadians, as they call them, do not flock thither in larger numbers from their ice-bound regions. There is a large mercantile business carried on in Victoria, and a number of wealthy, reliable wholesale houses, doing a large business on the mainland; large quantities of canned salmon are shipped to England. Among the prominent firms may be mentioned Messrs. Robert Ward & Co., who are also provincial agents for the Standard Life Assurance Company, of Edinburgh. The salmon from the cannery of Messrs. Ewan & Co. are particularly fine, and bring high prices in the London markets. Victoria is also the head office for the Province of the Bank of British Columbia, and of which Mr. Wm. C. Ward is the efficient manager. The *Colonist* is the leading newspaper, owned and edited by Mr. Higgins. The *Capitalist Block* is one of the finest buildings in the city.

CHINESE LABOUR.

This question is forcing itself on the attention of politicians, and must be faced squarely, as the Orientals are pouring in both from China and the United States. In the present state of matters it would be difficult to get along without Chinamen. Female help is very scarce, and commands very high wages, and Chinamen act as cooks and house servants, for which they get from \$10 to \$22 per month, and give good satisfaction. They are also largely employed on the railway, public works, and shoe factories, and for some time the extensive salmon canneries on the Fraser river were largely run by them. No doubt they live cheaply, but we often blame white people for being extravagant, and it is hard to draw the line. At present the employers of labour could ill afford to do without them.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

There are two good congregations here. The congregation of St. Andrew's is wealthy and prosperous, and still retains its connection with the Church of Scotland, from which it continues to receive substantial support. Mr. Stevens, the pastor, is a native of Scotland, and was educated there. He came to Victoria about three years ago. He is a man of pleasing manners and good address. His sermons are concise and thoughtful, giving evidence of careful preparation. The church edifice is neat and comfortable. The singing is excellent, being improved by the pleasing tones of an organ. The First Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. D. Gamble was pastor, is at present vacant, the minister having resigned while I was in Victoria. Mr. Gamble is a native of Ireland. His father was a respected elder in Donegal County. Mr. Gamble is an eloquent speaker, and much esteemed by his people. He intends returning to San Francisco. On a recent Sabbath the Rev. Mr. Meldrum, of San Francisco, occupied the pulpit. A graduate of Knox College, Toronto, he is an eloquent preacher, and reflects credit on the institution where he received his theological education.

The congregation at New Westminster has great expectations of Mr. McKay, who has been lately designated to that field, and judging from the manner in which some of the members speak of him, I must say that "his lines have fallen in pleasant places."

My return trip was made by the Northern Pacific Road, from Portland, Oregon, which is reached by boat from Victoria, the time occupied in going across Puget Sound being a day and a night. The train leaves Portland at twelve o'clock, noon, and reaches St. Paul, Minn., in about ninety hours, the distance being nearly 2,000 miles. To give an idea of the scenery on this line would require powers of description which I do not possess. Suffice it to say that it will take the finest scenery in Ireland, Scotland or Switzerland to surpass it. The building equipment of a line of railway through such territory to an unskilled observer would seem among the impossibilities, but after many delays, and after overcoming many difficulties, the Northern Pacific Railroad is now a fact. The line has splendid coaches, with Pullman and dining cars attached. Having been built on the most improved plans, they give to passengers every possible comfort. Should this line keep free from "wash-