

in beauty the celebrated "lake of a thousand islands," near the entrance of Lake Ontario.

The coast line of British Columbia measures 450 miles, and the breadth of that colony is from 350 to 400 miles, or about the size of France. Like the sister colony, its seaboard is broken up by numerous inlets of great extent. The geology and physical geography of British Columbia derive their character primarily from the presence of the Rocky Mountains. This great chain, running from north-west to south-east, forms the axis of elevation of the Western Coast of America. It is of volcanic formation, and is subject to eruptive forces, to which the craters of three neighbouring volcanoes answer as safety-valves. Granite and trappean ridges extend in different directions, and terminate in peaks varying from 1000 to 10,000 feet high, timbered half way up to their tops. Some of the mining regions form spurs of the Rocky Mountains, and are generally so strangely contorted and erupted, as to be represented as a tumbled sea of mountains.

The insular position of Vancouver Island, and the China current (which exerts an influence corresponding to the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic), with other causes, combine to secure for it a climate singularly equable and exempt from the more rigorous extremes to which British Columbia is subject. From October to March frequent rains fall in the island, alternating with lengthened intervals of bright dry weather. Showers are rare during summer, and when they do fall are obliging enough to come at night, when no one is inconvenienced by their descent. But the limited fall of rain in this season is abundantly compensated by heavy dews, which cause the warmest days to be followed by cool nights.

The growth of vegetation is rapid, and reaches its annual maturity at the end of June. There is no naval station at which the crews of her Majesty's ships are so little liable to disease from circumstances of climate, and none where mortality is so light, as Esquimaux in Vancouver Island. British Columbia presents every shade and variety of temperature. Certain belts of country are warm and dry, while others are moist; the character of the climate, in fact, being much determined by altitude.

Previous to 1858 these colonies were held by the Hudson's Bay Company, under lease from the Crown; and the white inhabitants, a few hundred in number, were chiefly employed by the Company in fur-trapping, or stationed at the Indian trading posts. For a dozen years extensive and valuable coal beds in the island had been worked by the company; vast forests of timber had been discovered; some of the baser metals were also known to exist; and in addition to these elements of wealth the capacious harbours of Victoria and Esquimaux, in the south of the island, foreshadowed a bright commercial future for the colony. But for the discovery of gold, however, Vancouver Island might have "dragged its slow length along" at an imperceptible rate for many years. In 1857 a party of Canadians, impelled by vague rumours as to the existence of gold in British Columbia, started from Fort Colville,

near the American boundary; and, "prospecting" on the banks of the Thompson and Bonaparte rivers on their way to the Fraser, were sufficiently encouraged in this experiment to devote themselves to the occupation of "digging." Intelligence of their success soon spread through Washington territory and California; and between March and June in 1858 steamers from San Francisco, crowded with gold-seekers, arrived every two or three days at Victoria. This place, till then a quiet hamlet whose shipping had comprised only Indian canoes and the annual arrival of the Company's ship from England, was instantly converted by the golden spell into a scene of bustle and excitement. In the brief space of four months 20,000 adventurers poured into the harbour. The easy-going primitive settlers were overwhelmed by this invasion of foreigners. Individuals of every trade and profession in the neighbouring American States, under the influence of what was called "the yellow fever," threw up their employments and in many cases sold their property at an immense sacrifice, and repaired to the new Dorado. This motley throng included those scouts of civilization, gamblers, "loafers," thieves, and ruffians, with others of a more respectable stamp. The rich came to speculate, and the poor in the hope of vaulting into sudden wealth. Every sort of property in California fell to a degree that threatened the ruin of the State. The limited stock of provisions in Victoria was speedily exhausted. Twice the bakers ran short of bread. Innumerable tents covered the locality in and around the town, far as the eye could reach. The sound of hammer and axe was heard everywhere. Shops, stores, and "shanties," to the number of 225, sprang up in six weeks. Investment in town allotments attained an extravagant pitch. The land office was besieged, often before sunrise, by the multitude eager to buy building land; and the demand so increased that sales had to be suspended in order to allow the Government surveyor time to measure off new divisions of land. Allotments bought at from 10% to 15%, were re-sold within a month at sums varying from 300% to 600%; and sections twenty feet by sixty in the central thoroughfare, fetched a rental of from 50% to 100% per month. The majority, consisting of Micawbers, brokers, merchants, and French cooks, finding that they were yet some hundreds of miles from the "diggings," remained in Victoria, anxiously watching the turn of the real estate market, which was the barometer of their hopes. But several thousands, undaunted by the hardships inevitable to crossing the Gulf and ascending the river, proceeded to the source of the gold. The difficulties to be surmounted in extracting gold from the "benches" and "bars" of the river never entered into the calculations of the unheroic spirits that tarried at the scene of land speculation; and as shipments did not come down fast enough to satisfy their wishes, most of them shook the dust off their feet on the country, heaped curses on everything English, and placed the reported discovery of gold in the same category with the "South Sea bubble." A check was thus given

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