

easy and safe. As to the extent and richness of the mines of Fraser River, abundant evidence is on every side here to prove the truth of the extravagant stories before related. I have talked freely with a number of my friends who have worked on the river-banks, and have exhibited to me hundreds of ounces of the dust collected there before the waters commenced to rise.

Another writer in the same paper says of Victoria: 'This place improves on me on acquaintance. There is plenty of fish in the bay; both large and small are caught from the bridge. There is a great variety of pleasant walks in the neighbourhood. We went about six miles to the sound shore. It is a curious beach, and consists of millions of tons of pebbles, from the size of an egg down to pens and beans. They are used a great deal in town for the streets, and in gardens for walks, and wherever there is much travel. 'In two minutes' walk from the fort, you are in the fields, and the grounds are covered with ripe strawberries and blackberries. The wild rose-bushes are in full bloom. There is an abundance of young oaks, aspen, and other shrubs, on up to the big old oak and lofty pine. The ground is not a dead-level, but just even enough to make it pretty, and the brush and trees are so thick that it is pleasant walking among them. The temperature is just right for walking; and the prevailing wind from Mount Olympus and the Coast Range makes the otherwise too great warmth delightfully bracing.'

A third correspondent describes the place as 'growing like wild-fire;' and in the account given by a fourth, we have a graphic detail of the process of buying town-lots. 'The great event since I wrote you last, in this place, was the sale of town-lots, under the direction of the Hudson's Bay Company, on the 21st. The sale created a great deal of interest, and, long before the hour of opening the Land-office, its doors were besieged by an anxious crowd of people, eager to invest their money in lots they knew not where situated, or when they would receive deeds to them. The Company owned some 6400 acres of land, upon which the town of Victoria is located, and had sold, from time to time, the most eligibly located lots, of 60 feet front by 120 deep, at first for 25 dollars, then 50 dollars, then 75 dollars each, until all the land lying within seven or eight blocks of the water had been disposed of. The rapid and wonderful rise in the value of this property was so great, and the demand such, that the Company determined to throw some 1200 additional lots in the market, and raise the price to 100 dollars per lot. The land was hurriedly surveyed, and written notices posted on the door of the office, stating that the lots would be sold at the above rates, the purchaser to receive a receipt for the amount of money paid, and when the map should be completed, to be entitled to a choice of the same according to the number of his receipt—the receipts to be numbered as issued. This receipt is very brief, and merely expresses that a certain sum has been received on account of town-lots. It will be some ten days before purchasers get their title-deeds, which are very brief and simple in form, discarding *in toto* all the usual local phrases and terms. It is estimated that about 25,000 dollars were paid into the Land-office during the day. No person was allowed to purchase exceeding six lots. Notwithstanding this large amount of real estate thus suddenly flung upon the market, prices remain firm, with a strong upward tendency. Building-lots five and six blocks back from the water-front are selling at from 1000 to 2000 dollars each, according to location.'

A demand for land, not very dissimilar, prevailed in connection with some other places in Vancouver's Island; the universal expectation, of course, being that much of the gold to be discovered would find

its way thither, and not a little of it be spent with a recklessness according to the ordinary improvident habits of gold-diggers.

WHEN I WAS A SCHOOL-BOY.

WELL do I remember those delicious half-holidays at school, when we started off in groups to spend the afternoon among the hills, or by the river-side. With arms twined round one another's necks, in school-boy fashion—my group consisting of three sworn chums besides myself, and our exact destination kept as an important secret from the other groups—would we start off, and plod onwards towards a certain moor-burn far up among the green hills. On our way thither, if a small bird chanced to be *churling* its happy song in the hedgerows, how instantly were our deliberations stopped, and our curiosity raised to discover the nest: the nest found, how eager to hear the report—eggs or young. We were all naturalists in our own special ways: one had a *penchant* for beetles; another for moths; a third was ever on the *qui vive* for birds' eggs; while a fourth, perhaps, kept a heterogeneous collection of caterpillars, to see what they would turn to. Caterpillar-collecting, I may as well observe, was considered capital fun; so was pupa or chrysalis hunting; and I remember, when one of the latter was found, it used to be conveyed to a certain defined portion of ground, the property of its captor, and there buried, and zealously guarded till the time came for its wondrous transformation into the perfect insect. The boy whose chrysalises changed into the greatest variety of insects, was considered exceedingly fortunate, and held a greater rank in our estimation than before.

As 'we four' wandered along towards our destination—the hill-burn—the objects that crossed our path were always carefully noted and commented upon. Birds were the chief objects of our solicitude, and many a weary search we made for their nests. Sometimes the skylark would rise mounting before us, with her glorious flood of song; but she, and her song too, passed comparatively unheeded by us, being of secondary importance to the tuft of grass from whence the bird rose, with the possibility of a nest therein. Poor larks! many an egg was stolen from them to grace our collections, and yet the skyward messengers seemed to be as plentiful as ever in the following spring.

At the foot of the hills was a small sheet of water termed the Pot Loch, the margin and depths of which supplied us with many interesting subjects for our collections. We always visited it on our way to the moor-burn, to set lines for pike again: our return and to institute a diligent search amongst the adjacent weeds and grass for anything we could find. During those investigations, we always separated, each having his own bent. An exclamation of mingled delight and surprise would cause us to rush to the spot, to be rewarded perhaps with nothing more than a quantity of frog-spawn, or a colony of tadpoles, or, as we called them, *padde lades*. Then an eager cry from the foot of the loch, with shouts of 'Quick! quick!' would bring us panting to the side of the discoverer, our steps thither accelerated from the fear of being too late, and our fears too often realised; for just as the spot was gained, we would receive the annoying assurance that if we had arrived a moment sooner, we would have seen *such* a monster of an eel—said monster having just wriggled out of sight into the water-weeds. These little accidents only increased our zeal, and were more than made up for by the many curiosities discovered and appropriated. Water-lilies were severed from their sub-aquatic stems; their broad leaves supplied with masts of reeds, and with paper attached, set adrift on the loch.