



The Royal Engineers

— IN —

British Columbia.

THE ROYAL ENGINEERS.

IN the formation of the Colony of British Columbia, the doctrine of evolution had neither place nor part. In the spring of the year 1858 the magnetic lure of the gold drew into the amorphous territory called New Caledonia a horde of reckless fortune-hunters, "from the world's four corners blown."

The first contingent of 450 miners arrived in Victoria on the 25th April, 1858. Reporting this event, Governor Douglas said: "They are represented as being with some exceptions a specimen of the worst of the population of San Francisco—the very dregs, in fact, of society." Yet he admits that they were quiet and orderly during their stay there; and we know that some of our best respected and most esteemed citizens came in that early rush.

In the fortnight between the 15th and the 20th of June there arrived in Victoria from San Francisco the steamers *Republic*, *Constitution*, *Panama*, *Cortez*, and *Santa Cruz*; the ships *Georgina* and *William Berry*; the barques *Gold Hunter*, *Adelaide*, *Live Yankee*, and *Madonna*; the schooners *Guilietta*, *Kosuth*, and *Osprey*; and the sloop *Curlew*. And all of them loaded to the gunwales with eager adventurers. On the 27th June the *Republic* returned with 800; on the 1st July the *Sierra Nevada* landed 1,900; and on the 8th July the *Orizaba* and *Cortez* landed 2,800 more.

By every then known mode of conveyance, on land and water, "this motley inundation of immigrant diggers," as Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton (afterwards Lord Lytton) described it, poured into the unorganised territory, startling with a rude awaken-

ing the slumberous forts of the Hudson's Bay Company, until by the middle of July the number exceeded 30,000. As the Rev. R. C. Lundin Brown says: "Never in the migrations of men had there been seen such a rush, so sudden and so vast."

The mainland of British Columbia, comprising the territory referred to as New Caledonia, then held by the Hudson's Bay Company under its exclusive licence of trade, still lay wrapped in the mantle of original silence. About a score of forts, or trading posts, of the Company, separated in most instances by hundreds of miles, were the only evidences of civilisation; hunting, trapping, and trading, the only occupations; beaver-skins, the only money; the natural waterways, the Indian, and brigade trails, the only means of communication; semblance of government there was none; and the law of the club and the fang was the arbiter in all disputes.

In a moment all this was completely changed. The gathering cry had been cried; the bounden were obeying and responding in thousands to the call of the "yellow root of evil."

Instantly an enormous burden was thrown upon the "mother of nations." This great inrush called for the formation of civil government; the enforcement of law and order; the raising and collection of revenue; the examination, exploration, and development of the country; the construction of roads, trails, and bridges; and all the thousand-and-one things which are necessary to change a wilderness into the abode of civilised and law-abiding people. And all of these things to be done, not leisurely, but immediately; not separately, but jointly; not consecutively, but concurrently.