

VANCOUVER
ISLAND.
No. 2.

The quantity of arable land, or land that can be made arable is, so far as I can ascertain, exceedingly limited throughout the Island, which consists almost entirely of broken ranges of rocky hills, intersected by ravines and valleys so narrow as to render them useless for cultivation.

A Mr. McNeil, Agent for the Hudson's Bay Company at Beaver Harbour, who is considered to be better acquainted with the Indian population than any other person, estimates their number at the very largest at ten thousand, and these he considers to be steadily decreasing, although the sale of spirituous liquors has been for a considerable time prohibited, and the prohibition appears to be strictly enforced.

As no settlers have at present arrived, I have considered that it is unnecessary as yet to nominate a Council, as my instructions direct; for a Council chosen at present must be composed entirely of the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, few if any of whom possess the qualification of landed property which is required to vote for Members of Assembly, and they would moreover be completely under the control of their superior officers; but as no immediate arrival of settlers is likely to take place, and my instructions direct me to form a Council on my arrival, I should wish for a further direction on this point before I proceed to its formation.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) RICHARD BLANSHARD.

No. 3.

(Copy.)

Vancouver Island,
June 15th, 1850.

My Lord,

No. 3.

I beg to enclose you a copy of my last letter, April 8th, 1850, since which time no opportunity has occurred of dispatching letters with any degree of certainty.

Nothing of importance has since occurred in the Colony; no settlers or immigrants have arrived, nor have any land sales been effected. Coal has not yet been discovered, though the miners have not yet, I am happy to say, abandoned all hope.

An American Company have commenced running a line of Mail steam packets between San Francisco and Oregon. They have not yet decided what port in Oregon will be their terminus; could coal have been supplied from Vancouver Island they would have chosen Nisqually, in Puget Sound, which would have greatly facilitated the communication between Vancouver Island and England, but as it cannot be obtained they will probably select Portland, on the Columbia River.

The Hudson's Bay Company have commenced a survey of the land reserved to themselves, which is bounded by a line, drawn nearly due north, from the head of Victoria Harbour to a hill marked on the chart as Cedar Hill or Mount Douglas, and thence running due east to the Canal de Arro. The extent is estimated at about ten miles (square). A tract adjoining, of similar extent, is reserved for the Puget Sound Agricultural Association, the Hudson's Bay Company under another name, for the association has no real existence. This last contains the Harbour of Esquimalt, the only harbour in the southern part of the Island worthy of notice, as it is of large extent, has good anchorage, is easy of access at all times and in all weather, is well watered, and in many places the water is of sufficient depth to allow ships anchoring along the shore. Victoria Harbour, where the Hudson's Bay Company's settlement is established, is very small, the entrance is narrow, tortuous, and shallow; no vessels can enter except at high tide with favourable wind and weather; and there is no water near, the water required for the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company is brought from a distance of two miles, and during summer and autumn they are kept on allowance as at sea.

I have received news from Oregon of the discovery of very rich gold mines on the Spoken River. The whole population of that territory are flocking to the spot. Should the favourable accounts of these mines prove correct, I fear that it will draw away all the Hudson's Bay Company's servants from Vancouver Island, and at present they form the entire population.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) RICHARD BLANSHARD,
Governor of Vancouver Island.