

Victoria City and the Island of Vancouver

Third of the Series of Articles on "The Romance and Beauty of British Columbia," From the Pen of Miss Agnes Deans Cameron



In the April number of the Westminster magazine there appears the third of a series of bright and interesting articles from the pen of Miss Agnes Deans Cameron, formerly of Victoria, on "The Romance and Beauty of British Columbia." The last chapter deals with historical episodes

surrounding the discovery of gold, which first brought the province into world-wide notice; and the illustrations are most appropriate and exceptionally interesting. These pictures are: "Lady Douglas and her descendants, to the third generation" (taken in front of the old Douglas residence), views of Lillooet, Quesselle and Harrison Lake, and "A Parade of Volunteers at Beacon Hill." The article follows:

"What is here? Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?"

—Timon of Athens.

The first period of British Columbia's history is the sea-story of her early navigators. The second chapter is written within fort-walls and out in the free open by the sturdy factors of the Fur company. Overlapping and intruding into the period of peltries comes the third age, the Age of Gold.

Recently, the government at Ottawa, anxious to preserve the old records, sent to Victoria one of Canada's brightest women and set her delving among the dry bones of the valley in the Provincial library. She doubtless will unearth there much that is of moment, for she herself, like Mulvaney, "has bowels," and is full of the mellow juice of life. Had I been sent on a mission to gather data of the gold days of British Columbia, there are two places that would strongly draw me, both of them lush with interest, the Old Men's Home and the Quadra Street cemetery—the quick and the dead.

Morbid to haunt a graveyard? Then morbid be it; here is crystallized history, if it is history you speak; and history is but looking backward that one may intelligently look forward.

"Far and far our graves are set round the Seven Seas; Woe for us if we forget, we that hold by these!"

sings Kipling.

"Unto each his mother-branch, bloom and bird and land, Masters of the Seven Seas, oh, love and understand."

In nothing is the cosmopolitan nature of early British Columbia more strikingly shown than in her graveyards, and in the old cemetery at the corner of Quadra and Meares streets in Victoria, the pioneers of the gold rush, the forefathers of the hamlet, many of them, sleep. For twenty-five years, from 1848 to 1873, this was the burial place for the young colony. Sixty years from the time the first little mound was made in the rude clearing!

In the outside world, the busiest, noisiest, most eventful half-century of man's history; in this little colonial God's-acre half a hundred years of slow forgetting—sorrow and keenest grief giving place to resignation, resignation falling into forgetfulness, and forgetfulness into oblivion.

Moss and ivy, trailing brambles and fallen branches make it difficult for us to decipher the names and inscriptions on the crumbling stones. Age and youth meet. Here we read:

"David Cameron
First Chief Justice of the Colony of
Vancouver Island.
Born 1804; died 1872."

The words of Job come to us: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season."

But woman had her part in the brave work of pioneering. Wandering on, we come to an almost obliterated inscription,

"A beloved wife, Aged 18 years."

A heart-history told in a scant six words. Mother Nature has thickly carpeted this resting place with softest grass, through which wild violets peep; as we rise from slowly feeling out the words with our fingers, we think of Ophelia:

"Lay her in the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!"

And all around us are the graves of men who sought wealth in the Fraser placers and the mines of Cariboo. The fathers of these men, and their fathers' fathers, rest in Scottish graves and English churchyards. They themselves left home and kindred with high hopes. Were they not young and brave and vigorous?

"Ah Western pine, and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell!"

Truly, here the warlike and the peaceful, the miserable and the fortunate, the beloved and the despised, mingle their dust and pay down their symbol of mortality.

As we turn back for one comprehensive look over the old graveyard, we see the buried history of decades. In this little plot mingles the dust of men and women of many nations, servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, the fathers and mothers of colonial times, seekers after wealth in Cariboo, sail-

ors, sappers, miners, soldiers of the Queen—those who, for us, bore the heat and burden of the day. There all are equal, the poor man and the son of pride lie calm and still. Could they speak, what account would they give us? How tell the story of the home-leaving? We sit down on a queer-shaped tomb, one that always fascinated us when we were school children, and to which we used to steal away in lunch hours from the "Central" there to read surreptitiously Longfellow and Mark Twain and Bret Harte when the time-table prescribed Euclid's lines and angles and the seductive Gallic wars of Caesar.

Keeping very quiet, and shutting out all thoughts of wrangling politicians, clashing mayors and aldermen and the clamor of the

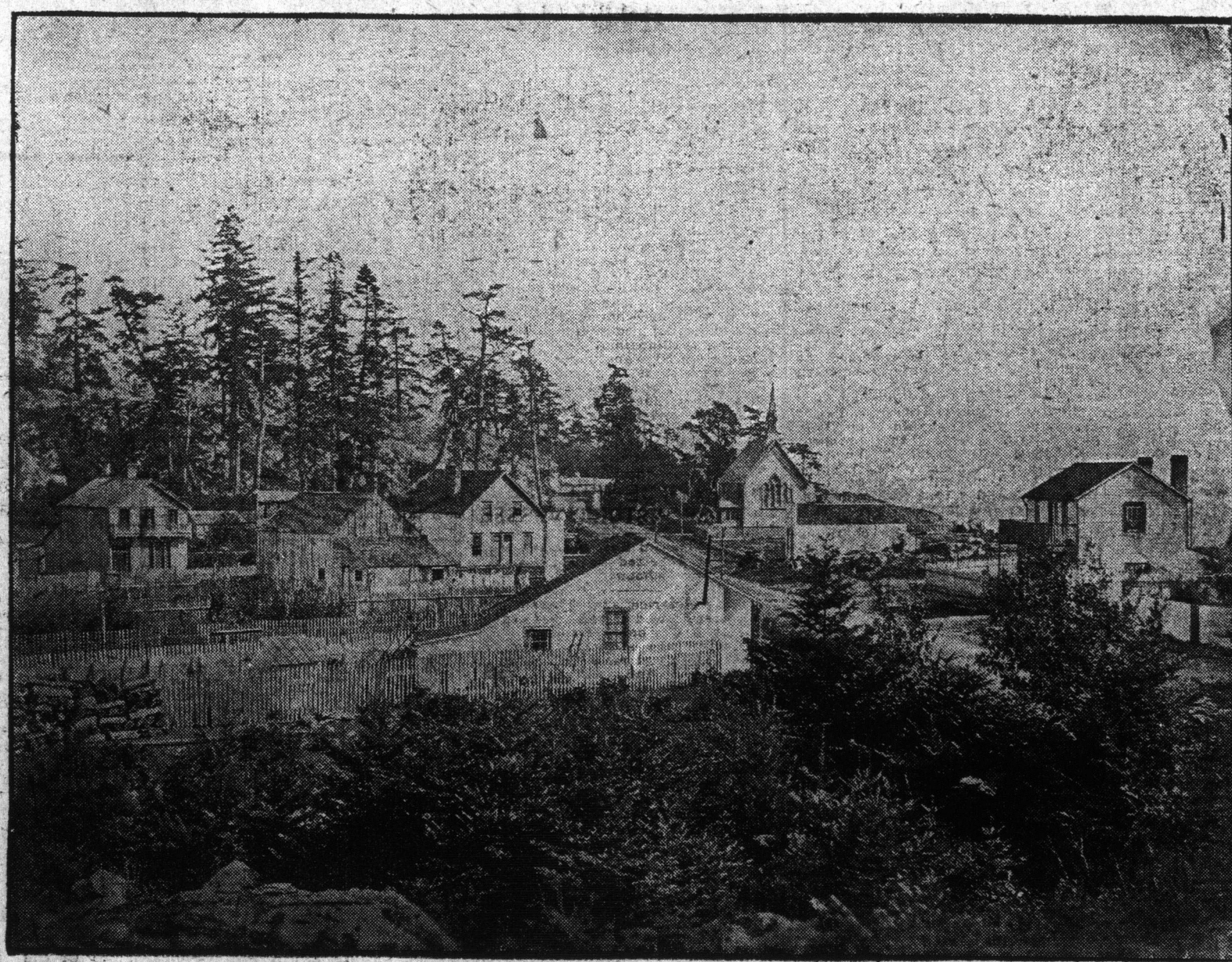
three successive years, no conservative position in the outside world with a certain salary fixed and limited can ever after have power to hold him.

In British Columbia, as elsewhere, the early activities were all in the placers. Placer mining is poor man's mining and has a charm, a glamor of expectancy which yields to no elaborately planned-out campaign of the capitalist with his imported machinery, pre-emption of shares and consolidation of companies. The free prospector works off his own bat, makes his own discoveries and locations and hugs to his soul each night the delicious hope of millions on the morrow.

In the gold rush of 1858, it was the diggings at Fort Hope on the Fraser that first attracted the get-rich-quick. The Yale dig-

out, a more practical and less hazardous route to the front became imperative. The Indians knew of a way from Lillooet, through Harrison Lake and River and over the Douglas portages. In Victoria five hundred miners had their faces turned toward the new diggings. Douglas would try the virtues of co-operation.

His proposal to the miners was this: Each man as an evidence of good faith would deposit \$25 in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, and sign an agreement to work upon the trail until it was completed. The Hudson's Bay Company in return agreed to carry the miners to the point of commencement on the Harrison River, feed them all the time they worked, and give each back his \$25 at the expiry of the contract.



Esquimalt as it Appeared During the Days of the "Gold Rush," When All Passengers Were Landed at the Naval Port

market-place, a whisper wafts to us from the dandelions and daisies.

"We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled town;

We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.

Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need, Till the soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.

As the deer breaks—as the steer breaks—from the herd where they graze, In the faith of little children we went on our ways.

On the sand-drift—on the veldt-side, in the fern-scrub we lay, That our sons might follow after by the bones on the way.

Follow after—we are waiting, by the trails that we lost, For the sound of many footsteps, for the tread of a host."

There are many graves here, and many dates, but the majority of both names and dates identify themselves with the gold rush, the mad stampede which, coming just ten years after the California gold excitement, in intensity, impetuosity and abandon was to eclipse both that madness and the more recent and infinitely tamer fever of the Klondike.

Where in the long scale of the passions which influence men must we place the lust for gold? Is there anything in this life for which men will risk more, endure more, suffer more? As a factor in our destiny it stands high above religious fanaticism or love of empire. In the early history of this Pacific colony not once but many times has it overshadowed, nay, overthrown, family affection, woman's virtue, and man's honor.

Gold fever is a disease that the doctors cannot cure, and if its fiery strain courses through a man's blood for two or

gings came next, these embraced the river banks between Hope and Yale and for some distance beyond Yale again, Hill's, Emery's and Boston Bars being the most historic. The enormous rush of miners, although by no means exhausting these grounds, did take the cream of the big gettings from the deposits, and now the cry for richer and more removed benches goes up.

Was not California gold more plentiful near the source of the streams, and are not the rivers of British Columbia greater than those of California? Farther back towards the frozen ocean the fortune-hunters will go.

And so the peaceful settlers on Vancouver island, on the Cowichan, and from the valley of the Columbia, leave ox and plough and steading; the bound servants of the big company break their contracts and throw off their allegiance; the sawmills of the sound are silent, and the northern trek begins again.

By sea and by land the Argonauts pour in, from Oregon they come and from California, from Canada the crowded centres of the Old World, from Australia and the ocean's last, least lump of coral. It is the story of Sacramento and of Ballarat told over again; the world sees enacted the third great devil-dance of the nations.

How did Governor Douglas adapt himself to the new conditions? Here are thousands of adventurers pouring in to the erstwhile peaceful fur-preserves, the most desperate, debonair and lawless of the Legion of the Lost Ones. How shall a semblance of British law and order be maintained among these away off in the silence of earth's immensities where according to the traditions of all gold-camps "there ain't no ten commandments and a man may raise a thirst?"

James Douglas was a diplomat, he looked ahead and he knew how to manage men. When the first Fraser placers were worked

The length of the proposed trail, including water-way, was seventy miles. The scheme worked well; it was an object lesson in economics, the miners were well pleased with their bargain and the Ancient and Honorable Company found itself in possession of a money-making toll road. Miles were money in these days. Beans that could be bought in Victoria for a cent and a half a pound were worth five cents at Port Douglas where the trail began, and at the end of the communistic highway had increased to the Delmonico value of a dollar and a half a pound. When modern historians extol to high heaven the glories of the ocean-to-ocean road-beds of steel with their short ribs and long ribs reaching out to the fields of 40-bushel wheat, let us not forget the pioneer empire-builder of them all, the man who, attended by no visions splendid, with indomitable pluck wrought steadfastly his day's work, leaving to others to tell the story. In all truth has Sir James Douglas earned the honorable title, "King of Roads."

In 1860, the Cariboo rush began. The Cariboo country may be roughly described as lying between the headwaters of the Fraser and the Thompson in latitude 52 degrees to 54 degrees north. The chief river of the region is the Quesnel, and old Fort Alexandria lay but forty miles distant. Placers and pokes of dust overshadowed peltries, skins gave way to sluice boxes. Cariboo was rich; the authenticated reports read like fairy stories; Aladdin's lamp and Fortunatus' purse that held the treasures of the universe.

The 1,500 miners of Cariboo shipped to Victoria before the end of the next year (1861) two millions of dollars in coarse nuggets, and the name Cariboo figured in the newspapers of every civilized country in the world. Manchester merchants made "Cariboo shirts," enterprising Yankees advertised "Cariboo coffee," "Cariboo braces," and "Cariboo gum-

boots," and it was only last year that I came across in a Toronto junk-shop a china sugar-bowl ornamented with a sylph-like figure emerging Hagarlike from an Oriental tabernacle ornamented with the legend "A Camp on the Cariboo." It bore about as much resemblance to a Cariboo camp as a Yarmouth bloater does to a Sockeye salmon, but it satisfied the artistic unities of Stoke-on-Trent and lone and distant colonials must not ask too much.

Each creek had a history of its own, Quesnel Forks being the first to develop into a permanent camp and early assuming the dignity of a small town. In Cedar Creek exceptionally rich diggings opened out. Here the Aurora claim with sluices, flumes and working plant yielded in the year 1866 \$20,000, and in August of the next year it was paying one hundred ounces a week, and an ounce of Cariboo gold ran all the way from sixteen to twenty dollars.

On the right branch of the Quesnel was the famed Keithly Creek, at whose mouth in 1861 grew up the town of Keithly. On the creek in this year five men in a single day laid bare \$1,200 in good sized nuggets, and their daily output for a time was sixteen ounces of gold per man. In the autumn, several companies turned out a hundred dollars a day to the man. The diggings continued on Keithly until 1875, the conservative Chinese hanging on for a decade afterwards scraping these auriferous sands on his own account, flashing back a non-committal "no sabe" to the inquisitive stranger, smiling his old-ivory smile and obeying the scriptural injunction "keep all these things in thy heart."

In 1864, Cunningham Creek made good, here a party of four white men unearthed an old river-channel and in one day took out \$460 apiece. Then Antler Creek aroused the interest of two continents. The London Times declared the bed of Antler to be, like the heavenly streets, paved with gold, rockers yielded easily fifty ounces in an hour or two, a shovelful sometimes realized \$50, and good-sized nuggets could be picked out by hand. The inevitable stampede followed, a tented city arose in a night, saloons and sawmills followed. Individuals at Antler made as high as \$1,000 a day, much of the ground yielded \$1,000 to the square foot, the creek as a whole easily produced \$10,000 a day for the entire summer.

Then came Grouse Creek with its record of eighty ounces a week for the whole season, and Williams Creek looms large on the horizon. In 1865, Barkerville, on Williams Creek, became the distributing point for the whole Cariboo country, the aggregate output of which in seven years was to total no less than twenty-five millions of dollars. The Steele party picked out of the blue clay 796 ounces in two days, and prospects of \$600 to the pan are vouched for.

And so the story goes on. The year 1862 eclipsed the year 1861, and 1863 was better than 1862. Cariboo is a sea of mountains and pine-covered hills rising to the height of 8,000 feet above sea-level. Everywhere are evidences of volcanic eruption, strata are uplifted, and the beds of old streams are heaved to the hill tops. Round this centre of old wealth the Fraser wraps its semi-circular course and to the main stream the gold-bearing branches poured their tribute. The extraordinary yield of the Cariboo mines appears in the fact that in 1861 the whole of British Columbia and Vancouver island were supported by the gold gotten from Antler Creek alone, and in the further fact that for four years Williams Creek supported a population of 16,000 people, many of whom left for the world outside with independent fortunes. And yet Williams Creek was only a narrow gully worked for less than two miles of its length in the roughest and most primitive manner.

Fortunes were made in Cariboo, colossal fortunes. And much was lost, much sacrificed. There was a reverse to the shield; there always is. Alongside the pictures of glittering nuggets and fat sluice boxes there creeps on the canvas, intrusive, the shadow of poor and meagre homes in Victoria, the tired faces of patient mothers, and hungry babies pulling at the skirts. These are the hostages given to Fortune by the miner who did not make his pile; and his name is legion because he was many.

You may read the aftermath of Cariboo in the Old Men's Homes and in the kindly Rest-Refuges accorded to old and friendless women throughout the Province today. Here as everywhere you find the happy and the miserable, the philosophical and the fretful; it is the world in small.

The concluding portion of an interesting article on "Trout Fishing Through British Columbia," in Rod and Gun in Canada, from the pen of G. C. Hacking, reads as follows:

There is still the beauty spot of America to be visited. I speak of Vancouver island, to which my poor words of praise can do but scant justice. It is simply an Island of Enchantment. The Island is reached from Vancouver by either of the two Canadian Pacific steamers which provide a double daily service to Victoria. The magnificent new hotel erected by the company will be open for the reception of guests this season, and will be made the headquarters for many fishing trips.

The Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway runs from Victoria to Nanaimo, along which line fishing can be enjoyed at Shawnigan lake, Cowichan lake and up to Nanaimo.

ays Acceptable
ays Delicious
DA

EL 50c. AT ALL GROCERS

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N'S CHOW... 20c
N'S MIXED... 35c
N'S RELISH... 25c
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t into trouble. God Jacob
tened him with revenge for
e church.

Witnesses gave evidence of a
ture. The trial will be con-
know," said little May,
by they call them "boys,"
in just as plain as day,
se that rhymes with "noise."
—Philadelphia Press.

TIDE TABLE

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