

THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORY.

No. 8.—BRITISH COLUMBIA—VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

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The desire so frequently expressed of late, by the inhabitants of British Columbia, to be incorporated with the Dominion of Canada, renders more than ordinarily interesting to Canadians this rich and flourishing colony. Independently of the mineral wealth of British Columbia, its fertile valleys, stately forests, safe natural harbours, and inexhaustible fisheries, it would be an invaluable, nay, an essential addition to the Dominion, if there ever were to be a British or Canadian Pacific Railway, or indeed ordinary communication between Canada and the great South Sea by means of waggon-roads, canals, lakes, and rivers. If Canadians would not have the approaches to the Pacific barred against them, they will do everything in their power to encourage the Union with their newly constituted State, of the friendly Colony of British Columbia. No murderous ruffians have attempted to establish there a reign of terror. On the contrary, all is order, peace, and harmony. The only thing which appears to disquiet the minds of the inhabitants is the dread lest they should not be received into close alliance—political union—with the New Dominion. No doubt they set a high value on the possession of free communications with the Atlantic Sea-board, through Canadian and British Territory. And they must understand how greatly it will add to their importance, and even to the wealth of a land which already teems with every earthly treasure, that their harbours should become the emporium of the trade of the Canadian Provinces, of Great Britain, of all Europe, perhaps, with China and Japan, Australia, New Zealand, India, even. This is manifestly the destiny of British Columbia if united with the growing Dominion of Canada. Let it remain isolated, or let it be annexed to the neighbouring republic—the bright prospect vanishes, and it will be an appendage, merely, of frozen Alaska, or a back settlement of the American Union. This is no exaggeration; for does not the great Union already possess Pacific harbours, and Pacific railways, gold fields, and coal fields, fertile plains and rich forests along the Pacific coast, as well as in its more inland settlements? It would have no interest, therefore, in improving British Columbia, at least to any great extent. Canada, on the other hand, would necessarily labour to develop the great resources of the colony. She would be dependent on it for many things—for safe harbours on the Pacific, for coal, for gold, and above all, for the command which it would give to her of the trade of the vast eastern world—her own trade with England's trade, and that, no doubt, also of other European nations, which must, ere long, take its course through Canadian soil and over the Pacific Ocean.

If British Columbia were to remain as an isolated state or colony, it would still, nevertheless, be one of the most important portions of the habitable world. When viewed in relation to the Dominion of Canada and the extensive regions of North Western America, which are now united with this Dominion, it possesses a degree of importance which it is impossible to over-estimate.

This two-fold colony, as it may not inaptly be termed, consists of Vancouver's Island, which was formerly a separate colony, and that portion of the neighbouring mainland, anciently known as New Caledonia, which also had its own colonial Government. The colony thus constituted, extends along the whole portion of the Pacific coast which belongs to Great Britain, about 450 miles, from the frontier line of the United States on the south, to Alaska (formerly Russian America) on the north. It is bounded on the east by the summits of the Rocky Mountains, or rather, by a line drawn from south to north, through the centre of these mountains. The coast-line does not indicate the length of the territory from south to north, the boundary of Alaska, a little island, being much farther north than on the coast.

Vancouver's Island, which may be considered in the first place, occupies a position of great importance on the Pacific coast. Nearly as extensive as England proper, it almost touches, at one end, the colder regions of the North Pacific ocean, whilst at the other, it basks in the sunshine and warmth of the South. But, whilst at its southern extremity the climate is not unpleasantly warm, at the North it is not disagreeably cold. Generally, the Island enjoys the moderate temperature of the south of England. It is not subjected at any time to the trying heat of the Canadian summer, nor does its winter, if winter can be said to exist where frost and snow are almost unknown, render necessary, as in Canada, the use of costly furs.

Mr. Blanshard (evidence before the House of Commons) says that some snow, which he beheld there in mid-winter, lasted only a few days. On being asked more particularly what sort of weather there was there during the winter, he replied that "the winters are comparatively mild, that there are, occasionally, heavy falls of snow, but that it seldom lies for any length of time." He adds that, "on the whole, the climate is milder than that of England." Mr. J. Miles, the Hon. C. W. W. Fitzwilliam, and Mr. J. Cooper bear witness to the same effect. The last named gentleman, who resided six years in the Island, as an agriculturist, says decidedly, that, "in every sense of the word, the climate is superior to that of Great Britain, and that its agricultural capabilities are of considerable extent." All who have any knowledge of Vancouver's Island, appear to

agree in stating that the winter there is milder than in England, and that the summer is considerably warmer.

There is no difference of opinion as to the excellence and fertility of the soil. It produces all kinds of vegetables and cereal crops, whilst both soil and climate are highly favourable to the growth of fruit trees. The interior of the Island has not been much explored as yet, and the extent of cultivable land which it contains, is not, consequently, ascertained. But it is well known that the valleys are exceedingly fertile, as are also the lands along the eastern coast. One of these valleys, the Cowichan, which extends along the bay of the same name, is one of the richest and most beautiful in the world. The mild and humid climate gives to the Island, even in its wild state, a very pleasing appearance. It enjoys the advantage of perpetual verdure; and the rich meadows, stretching in park-like form far into the luxuriant forests, convey the idea of a well populated and highly cultivated country. Both soil and climate must be good, when the most valuable kind of grain—wheat—is easily raised in the proportion of 25 to 40 bushels per acre.

There is wonderful concurrence of testimony as regards the fertility of the soil. "The Island is the most valuable British possession in the Pacific," says the Hon. C. W. W. Fitzwilliam. "The soil is, in general, productive, although in some places, rocky." "Wheat, oats, barley and potatoes are easily raised." "The soil of the country," says Mr. J. Cooper, (evidence before the House of Commons) "is peculiarly well adapted to the production of corn and vegetables." "The valleys are very fertile." Mr. J. Miles, also, (in evidence before the House of Commons,) considers that "in soil, climate, minerals, &c., the island possesses everything essential for the formation of a great colony." "The soil is very good and rich." Mr. Blanshard and the Right Hon. Edward Ellice concur in bearing the like testimony, the latter adding that Vancouver's Island "is a most interesting position and possession;" that there is every kind of timber fit for naval purposes. "It is the only good harbour (and it is an excellent harbour) to the northward of San Francisco, as far north as Sitka, (formerly) the Russian settlement." "There is coal enough," continues the right hon. gentleman, "for the whole British navy; the climate is wholesome, very like that of England; the coasts abound with fish of every description; in short, there is every advantage on the Island of Vancouver to make it one of the first colonies and best settlements of England."

There is equally concurrent testimony as to the very great abundance of coal in the island. The Hon. C. W. W. Fitzwilliam says that, at the time of his visit, (1852-53) "they were working a six feet seam of coal at a depth of about forty feet. It was close on the shore—within twenty yards of it (the Eastern shore)." This was the now celebrated Nanimo coal mine, situated about eighty miles to the north of Victoria, the chief town of the island. The coal is of "very fine quality," "suitable for all purposes, generating steam, &c." The absence of an available market for this valuable commodity has prevented hitherto any extensive working of the mines, any remunerative trade in coal. The rich coal seams of the island can never be a source of wealth until the North-West Territory is fairly settled, or at least until the gold mines of British Columbia are more completely developed. Coal is wanted at San Francisco, no doubt, and California has gold enough to pay for it. But the United States' Government impose prohibitory duties, and the trade in this kind of export is consequently unprofitable. It may not always be so. Who knows what a resource the coal of Vancouver's Island may be at some future, and may it be hoped, distant day, when the coal fields of England proper shall have been exhausted. Already have political economists of foreign and somewhat jealous lands speculated on this possible and not improbable contingency. They have even rejoiced in the idea of our decline as a maritime and naval power, not reflecting that the British Colonial Empire possesses inexhaustible supplies of excellent coal.

Iron, also, all travellers are agreed, forms another source of the mineral wealth of Vancouver's Island.

This island possesses the richest fisheries in the world. Its waters literally swarm with all these varieties of fish that are most useful. The finest kinds of salmon are particularly abundant, the fine rivers of British Columbia affording to this fish the facility of disporting itself in fresh waters at stated seasons, whilst it enjoys safe and undisturbed sea-quarters in the straits, sounds, bays, and inlets around the island. The only trade in fish hitherto, and not a very extensive one, has been with the Sandwich Islands, and between the Aborigines, who mostly subsist by fishing, and the European settlers of the Hudson's Bay Company and others.

So far back as 1843, the work of colonization may be said to have fairly commenced in Vancouver's Island. In 1858 the Settlement looked so promising that it was constituted a British colony, with Fort Victoria for its capital. Incorporated with the Settlement on the neighbouring mainland, formerly known as New Caledonia, it now forms together with this territory the important colony of British Columbia, with the seat of Government at New Westminster. Victoria is still the chief town, or more truly, the only town in the island. Its population is supposed to be about 10,000, whilst the Aborigines on the island number 17,000 souls.

Vancouver's Island occupies the most commanding position on the whole Pacific Coast. Whoever holds it may be said to hold also British Columbia—the whole North-West. The key

to this position is a small island which geographers do not think it worth their while to describe on their maps. Two great powers are at present contending, and on one side, at least, employing with matchless skill the weapons of diplomacy, for the possession of this island of SAN JUAN,—for the command of BRITISH COLUMBIA, for the EMPIRE OF NORTH-WESTERN AMERICA. To whom will it fall? To whom will be awarded the magnificent prize? All depends on the doubtful chances of a pending arbitration.

CANADIAN PARLIAMENT.

THE SENATE.

Tuesday, April 12.—Hon. Mr. McCULLY moved for the appointment of a committee to collect information respecting the climate and resources of Red River. Hon. Mr. DICKEY enquired whether Bishop Taché had been accredited by the Dominion Government to the authorities at Red River, and whether Government had received intelligence that the Bishop had recommended the people to submit to Riel's government. Hon. Mr. CAMPBELL replied that the Bishop had not been accredited to any authorities, nor had the Government received any intimation of his having recommended the people to submit to Riel. The following bills were then read a third time and passed:—Dominion Notes Issue Regulation Bill; Peace in the vicinity of Public Works Preservation Bill; Public Officers in Canada Security Bill; Perjury Act Amendment Bill; and Banks and Banking Bill. Some conversation followed on a notice of motion by Hon. Mr. BAZON for an address respecting the murder of Scott at Fort Garry, and subsequently the notice was withdrawn. The House then adjourned.

Wednesday, April 13.—Hon. Mr. DICKEY enquired whether the Imperial authorities were likely to bear part of the expense to which the country would be put on account of the Fenian raid. Hon. Mr. CAMPBELL replied that the expense in the first instance would be borne by the Dominion, but as to any ultimate division of the expense, it would have to be subject to arrangement; correspondence on the matter had taken place between the two governments. On motion of Hon. Mr. CAMPBELL the Bill to amend the Act respecting Penitentiaries was read a third time and passed. After some conversation respecting the report of the Committee on Printing the House adjourned.

Tuesday, April 13.—The Speaker took the chair at a quarter of one o'clock, and after some routine business the House adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Tuesday, April 12.—Sir FRANCIS HUSKINS introduced a bill respecting the Department of Finance—the object of the bill being to do away with one of the deputy-treasurers. The bill was read a first time. On motion to go into committee on the Intercolonial Railway, Sir A. T. GALT moved in amendment that the Speaker do not leave the chair, and also moved a resolution to take the management of the Intercolonial Railway out of the hands of the Government and entrust it to a Company. He said that his motion was not to be considered as a motion of want of confidence, and referred to the English practice with reference to motions of this kind. He contended that an important saving would be made if the change which he proposed were effected. The hon. gentleman spoke at great length in support of his scheme, and was followed by Mr. SHANLY, who repeated the arguments made use of by the mover. Hon. JOHN HULLYARD CAMERON contended that the change could not be made without the consent of the Imperial Parliament. He did not believe that private capitalists would spend their money on the undertaking. Sir GEORGE E. CAMPBELL replied to the arguments used by the mover and second of the motion against the policy of the Government. He went over the facts connected with the work on the Intercolonial Railway for the last two years, and contrasted their progress with those on the Grand Trunk, adducing proofs to show that the Intercolonial Railway is being built faster than was the Grand Trunk. Mr. CAMPBELL sustained Sir A. T. GALT's motion, and Col. GALT opposed it. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD showed that the Union Act obliged the Government to build the road, to commence it within six months, and to go on with it continuously. Sir A. T. GALT replied generally. The House then divided on the motion, which was lost—Yeas, 49; Nays, 97. The House then went into Committee of Supply, and passed the item for contingent printing and advertising, and adjourned at one o'clock.

Wednesday, April 13.—After preliminary business Dr. GRAY moved for the reports on the examination of Mr. Dawson's proposed line of water communication with the North-West Territory. Hon. Mr. LANGRISSE replied that since Mr. Dawson had been sent out a year and a half ago, Mr. Blair had been sent to make further examinations as to the feasibility of the route. The latter gentleman's report had only been in for a few days. New surveys were to be made of the region between Lake Neepigon and Fort Garry, and by next session Government would be able to tell whether or not a better road cannot be had to Fort Garry. Mr. MACKENZIE and Hon. Mr. HOWE spoke against the Neepigon route. The motion was carried. Some debate took place on a motion of Hon. Mr. WOOD for the appointment of a select committee on the land improving fund of Upper Canada, after which the House went into committee on the bill respecting the Canada Central Railway. The time for private bills having expired, committee rose. Several bills from the Senate were read a first time, and the bill respecting Masters' and Mates' Certificates was read a third time and passed. The House then went into Committee of Supply and passed the following items: \$25,000 for Dominion Police; \$3,030 for Water Police at Montreal; \$9,456,000 for River Police at Quebec; \$45,270 salaries and contingent expenses of the Senate; \$89,065 do., House of Commons; \$40,408 do. for Sergeant-at-Arms estimate; and \$5,000 possible amount required for the purpose of making a more just equalization of salaries, subject to the approval of commissioners, under the internal economy. On the item of \$1,000 to pay the Chairman of the Commissioners under the House of Commons Internal Economy Act, Mr. MACKENZIE moved in amendment that the item be struck out. Carried—Yeas, 32; Nays, 25.

The items of \$6,000 grant to the Parliamentary Library; \$10,000 for printing, binding and distributing the laws; \$4,400 to the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway for two specials daily during the session of Parliament; \$35,000 for printing, printing paper and book-binding; \$7,000 for commission for making provision for the conformity of the laws of the Provinces; \$1,000 for contingencies of the Clerk of the Crown in Chan-