

HOMES OF THE ENGLISH OVER THE SEA.

No. 1.—BRITISH COLUMBIA AND VANCOUVER ISLAND.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION.

As it would be needless to dilate at any length upon the vast public benefits likely to accrue from the discovery of this new El Dorado, it is our intention to abstain from the discussion of any abstract questions relating to it, in order that the following pages may be found to partake of an eminently practical character. We shall endeavour to furnish our readers with a comprehensive and minute description of the natural aspects and physical peculiarities of the country, collated from the most reliable authorities, and preceded by a brief historical sketch of the circumstances attending its early discovery; and, finally, to indicate the readiest and cheapest method of reaching it.

British Columbia is situated on the north-west coast of North America, and is defined, in the bill introduced into the House of Commons for its future government by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, as comprising "all such territories within the dominion of Her Majesty as are bounded to the south by the frontier of the United States of America, to the east by the Watershed between the streams which flow into the Pacific Ocean and those which flow into the Atlantic and Icy Oceans, to the north by the fifty-fifth parallel of north latitude; and to the west by the Pacific Ocean; and shall include Queen Charlotte's Island and all other islands adjacent, excepting Vancouver Island," which has a special constitution of its own.

Vancouver Island lies off the mainland at a distance of about forty or fifty miles, extending from north latitude $48^{\circ} 17'$ to $50^{\circ} 55'$, and from west longitude $123^{\circ} 10'$ to $128^{\circ} 30'$. Its extreme length from north-west to south-east is 276 miles; its breadth varies from 50 miles to 65 miles. On the east and north-east it is separated from the coast of British America by the Gulf of Georgia and Queen Charlotte's Sound, and on the south the Strait of San Juan de Fuca

separates it from the Oregon territory of the United States. North of Queen Charlotte's Sound will be found Queen Charlotte's Islands, between 52° and 54° north latitude. The group consists of three islands, about 150 miles in length, by about 60 miles in breadth.

The claim of the Spaniards to having made the first successful explorations on the western coast of North America in the sixteenth century is very generally admitted. In consequence of a bull issued in 1494 by Pope Alexander VI, the celebrated Treaty of Partition was concluded between the united Spanish sovereigns and the King of Portugal. In accordance with this treaty the Spaniards were to make no attempts to communicate with India by sea through eastern routes, which became, in a manner, the property of Portugal; while, on the other hand, they were to possess exclusive control and use of every western channel of intercourse with those countries which might be discovered.

In 1613 Vasco Nunez de Balboa, the governor of the colony of Darien, on the Atlantic, after a short march across the mountains overlooking that place, arrived on the shore of a sea. The Spaniards, in consequence, directed their researches particularly towards this isthmus until the complete separation of the oceans in that quarter was satisfactorily established. In the meanwhile, a Portuguese in the same service, one Fernando Magalhaens or Magellan, discovered the strait which has hitherto borne his name, and thereby solved the difficult geographical problem as to the possibility of circumnavigating the globe. While Magellan was prosecuting his labours in this direction, Hernan Cortes conquered the rich and populous empire of Mexico, and in the course of a few years Peru and Chili likewise passed into the possession of the Spanish monarch. The most northern settlement on the Pacific side of the American continent

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