

voyages, says of them: "The French* never saw them either armed or distrustful; they followed them into their family circles, and found them good husbands and good fathers; they lived several days as it were in intimacy with them; they studied them as much as it is possible to do when people can explain themselves only by signs; and everything that they relate of their manners, their customs and their character, announces a hospitable, mild, intelligent, laborious and industrious people, endowed with great good sense, to whom the useful arts are not unknown, who join to these even the agreeable ones, and who may be said to have already made considerable advances towards civilization."

This is what Marchand thought of the Haidas in 1791. Dixon, who traded with them a few years before, from his vessel's deck, and did not set foot on shore, considered them, without any proof, as cannibals. I can safely assert that there is no evidence, nor is there a scintilla of reliable evidence, that the natives of the Northwest coast ever were cannibals, or ever feasted on human flesh like the natives of the Fiji and other South Sea Islands have done. I can truly say in the language of Flenrien: "I am not an apologist for savage people; never have I fallen into ecstasies before the man of nature; never have I participated in the opinion of certain philosophers who have racked their imaginations and put in play the illusion of eloquence, for the purpose of showing him to us as the most excellent of men. I am not here examining whether man be good, or whether he be wicked through his nature, nor what he might have lost or gained in the state of great societies." But let us not judge too precipitately of the character or real worth of the natives of Queen Charlotte Islands, or what they are capable of doing, by the representatives of that tribe to be met with on Victoria streets.

The limits of an evening's reading will not afford me time to say more upon this subject at present, but in my official report of my visit and observations made last summer on Queen Charlotte Islands, I intend to discuss this question at length, and endeavour to show that, with the aid and the fostering care of the Government, the Haidas of Queen Charlotte Islands, and perhaps other tribes on the main land, are capable of making a great stride towards civilization.

Fruits.

While at Laskeek, I noticed the salal (*Gaultheria*, *Shallow*), which grows there in rich profusion, and yields the largest and finest of these wholesome berries I have seen. The salal seems to be but little appreciated by whites, but is in reality one of the most delicious of berries for cooking purposes, either in the fresh state or dried for winter use, like currants. Strawberries also abound on Queen Charlotte Islands and at Massett, and along the northern shore of Graham Island they are in greater abundance than in any place I have seen, and from the size of the berries and their abundance, they seemed quite equal to some of the cultivated varieties. The plants, as is usual with the strawberry, are low, and the berries often found quite hidden in the mossy covering of the ground, but where the soil is rich, particularly in those places

where the sod has been removed and piled around a cultivated patch, as is usual with the Indians, I notice the strawberry plants attain great size. I gathered one specimen at Yakh village, Parry Passage, which, when dried, measured more than seventeen inches from root to flower, and the plants look healthy and vigorous. Other small fruits, such as are common on the main land are found on Queen Charlotte Islands, such as the salmonberry (*Rubus Spectabilis*), thimbleberry (*R. odoratus*), Raspberry (*R. Uruinus*), crab apple (*Rynus rivularis*), and a coarse species of black currant, which is of disagreeable taste and odor. Red and black huckleberries also abound, but of all the fruits, I think the wild strawberry in the early summer, and the salalberry in the fall, are the finest and most plentiful. I was told that cranberries are found in some of the islands, but I did not see any. I believe they can be profitably cultivated in many places on the islands, particularly Massett Inlet.

Potatoes and root vegetables of all kinds thrive well, but the climate is too humid for cereals to ripen well. Grass, both native and cultivated, yields good crops, and Mr. McKenzie, at Massett, finds no difficulty in curing all the hay he requires, but no systematic agriculture has been attempted, and until it shall have been tried, no one can say with certainty what those islands are capable of producing. Queen Charlotte Islands are well adapted for a home for the fishing population, either of Scotland, Ireland or Scandinavia, but before any emigrants are invited there, the island should be thoroughly surveyed, and the interior fully explored; all the information now known is of a very narrow belt of land on the immediate coast, but there is much of value yet to be developed in the interior, of mineral wealth in coal and precious metals, and magnificent forests of timber. The great drawback to the growth of these islands in commerce and agricultural importance at present, is the uncertain and difficult means of communication; when that can be remedied, and monthly transportation of passengers, mails and freight, be assured, there is no reason to doubt that the islands will soon be visited by persons who will make permanent settlement there, and develop the fisheries, the lumbering, and the agricultural interest, and build up thriving communities to add to the wealth and importance of the Province.

I take this occasion to tender my thanks to the officers of the Hudson Bay Company in Victoria, and their agents at Port Simpson and Massett, and to the officers of the Oil Company at Skidegate, for their courtesies and assistance in enabling me to make my explorations of Queen Charlotte Islands; to the Indian Commission, and the Inspector of Fisheries, for valuable information; to the Collector of Customs for courtesies rendered me at the Custom House; to the Provincial Government for doing me the honor of inviting me to read this essay before them this evening; and to the members of the Legislature, and the audience, for their kind attention.

I shall feel that I have effected some good, if what I have said to-night may be the means of awakening an interest in those beautiful islands in this Province, so that they may become tenanted with a prosperous community, or communities, of settlers.

*Marchand's Voyages, vol. 1, p. 24.