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GENERAL REPORT ON THE COWICHAN VALLEY.

COL. SEC. OFFICE,
Victoria, 22nd March 1860.

The following Report upon the Country of the Cowichan Valley containing matter of interest to the Public, is herewith published for general information.

By Command of His Excellency,
WILLIAM A. G. YOUNG,
Acting Colonial Secretary.

GENERAL REPORT ON THE COWICHAN VALLEY.

To Joseph Despard Pemberton Esq., Colonial Surveyor, &c.

SIR.—I beg leave to submit for your information the following remarks on the capabilities of the Cowichan Valley.

The Valley may be fairly considered as about 15 miles wide upon the sea coast, but narrows rapidly as we ascend the river, inasmuch, that upon the Westerly limit of the survey (11 miles from the Coast) it has a width of only 6 miles. The surface throughout is either uniformly level, or lies in gentle swells, and until the Mountain sides are attained, scarcely any rocks or boulders are found, the rocky knolls and ledges so frequently found occurring in the southerly parts of the Island almost entirely disappear. It is well watered by the Cowichan river and its numerous tributaries. High ranges of mountains believed to be of secondary formation, with Calcareous Freestone, or Carbonate of Lime, form almost impassable barriers towards the North and South, and the whole subsidence of land between these mountains is evidently a deposit brought down by the waters. The distinctive nature of the soils throughout the Cowichan Valley is Calcareous, seemingly formed by the decomposition of Limestone rock, for while the other principles occur in different degrees, the properties of Carbonate of Lime almost invariably predominate. There is usually a depth of two or three feet, resting upon a sufficiently retentive sub-soil of blue clay or gravel. The Earths, chiefly light, very porous, and composed of due proportions of clay, sand, carbonate of lime, and vegetable remains, are well constituted for absorbing and retaining moisture, and the gen-

eral color from brown to black, with the entire absence of chalky or white earths, would likewise indicate a favorable soil for receiving and retaining heat. Samples taken from the Soменов Plains were found by experiment to absorb water sufficient to increase the volume of soil from one-eighth to one-fifth of its whole bulk. The low grounds are good, and would easily be brought into a state fit for cultivation. The only exceptions are those lying immediately at the foot of Mount Prevost and the Quamachan mountains, where the soil resting upon massive rock, has been converted into a spongy web Pabulum, and good for nothing. Much of the river bottom is a clay loam of a brown color, and an excellent soil for wheat, beans, turnips and red clover. The alluvial deposit of the Valley is, however, far from being all of a clayey nature, in many parts, chiefly on the southerly side, the mould rests upon a gravelly, and even a sandy deposit. This is likewise a rich soil as may be seen from the abundant crops of potatoes (among the most exhausting plants) raised by the Indians upon the same patches of land for a series of years. The Plain lands have soils either gravelly, or sandy and gravelly loams, eligible for barley, oats, rye, buckwheat, beans, peas, and the root and leaf crops, potatoes, turnips, and carrots, with the other usual garden vegetables. The humidity of the atmosphere may prove a barrier to the culture of Indian corn, I am unable to say, but I believe that this grain will one day form a staple, as it will assuredly form a profitable commodity, both of consumption and export. Wheat may likewise be successfully raised upon most of the soils in their natural state, and by proper tillage, upon all. And I am firmly persuaded that under a common, judicious system of farming, as good returns can be obtained from these lands as in any part of the Continent of America. The climate, it may be noted, is one especially adapted to the pursuits of agriculture, not being subject to the heats and droughts of California, or to the colds of the other British American Provinces, and the Eastern United States. The loamy soils everywhere possessing a depth of two or three feet, and containing a large proportion of the calcareous principle are especially eligible for fruit culture, and the oak