

A LAND OF PLENTY

Rich Verdure and Wealth of Queen Charlotte Isles—Degenerated Habits of Natives.

A Little World which is Destined to Have a Great Future in Mineral Development.

(From the Trail Creek News.)

According to the opinion of scientists, besides the three chains of mountains forming the Cordillera system of British Columbia, there is a fourth range, partly submerged, of which Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Island group form a part.

The government of the province has spent large sums to explore the unknown parts of the continental province, but, curiously enough, the interior of Vancouver Island and of Queen Charlotte, so easy of access, has been neglected.

Everyone knows about Vancouver Island, that is, more or less, but how many in Canada know anything about the Queen Charlotte Islands? Very few indeed.

By the slow process of settlement, by timber hunters and prospectors, many portions of the interior of Vancouver Island have been reached, but in Queen Charlotte nothing of the kind happened, unless one mentions some short surveys and coal prospecting in the interior of some islands.

The group has the rough shape of a triangle, one hundred and seventy miles in length and one hundred miles in width, at its wider end, a high chain of mountains, the edge of the submerged chain of the great Cordillera system, extends from one end to the other.

Though so high in latitude, reaching the 54 degree of parallel, the climate is exceedingly mild. The position of the group, far out in the Pacific, where the Japanese current sweeps the shores, renders the climate even milder than it is in any other part of British Columbia.

The snow very seldom stays any length of time, except on the mountains, the grass is always green, and the moisture in the air causes the vegetation to be more vigorous than anywhere else on the coast.

The islands were discovered very early by old navigators, and there seems to be some doubt about who first visited the group. At an early date the trade in sea otter skins rendered the place very attractive to the shrewd traders and hundreds of thousands of skins were exchanged for European commodities.

The natives soon learned what advantages they could reap by trading with the whites, and they soon learned to cultivate the potatoes and were able to supply traders and whalers with the tubers. Tobacco was also cultivated shortly after the first white traders appeared.

Tradition says that a certain Yankee trader once sold them seed of gun powder. Finding out later that the seed would not sprout, and that they had been swindled, their indignation made them eager for revenge when one of their sages told them it was all wrong; instead of putting the Yankee trader to death, the best way would be to learn how to cheat him and get the best of the lesson.

The natives are known as Hydahs, but they were divided into four or five tribes. They are, as a rule, much taller looking than the other Indians, of rather short stature, but strongly built, and almost white. Their women, especially, are very attractive. It is a common thing to see grey-blue eyes among them, and that peculiar reddish color of the hair, often seen with South Sea Islanders.

Their complete lack of morals, added to the physical beauty of their women, has been the cause of the trouble. If one looks at the large number of abandoned villages, and their houses are built in such a substantial way that they should live centuries. The population must have been at one time very numerous, and to-day they are barely one thousand, the remainder of the broken tribes have joined together in two villages and with the help and advice of devoted missionaries, and Mother and Father, they are making a hard fight against complete destruction.

Formerly the whole population would move down to the Sound cities and Victoria living in perpetual debauchery, smallpox, measles and many other diseases would often carry away one-half of the large expeditions, and the larger portion of the other half would reach the islands with the arms and disease and broken down in health.

Now they live at home, but in spite of the new moral brought to them their days are counted. Few children are to be seen, and it is only a question of short years when the last Hydah will disappear. Earning a living with them is an easy question, as they can make money by fishing for the dog fish, oil works or go across to the canneries. They have gardens, and they can get all they fish they want, and know how to preserve it. They are clever mechanics; their canoes are the best on the coast and find ready market from the Sound to Behring Sea, selling from \$100 to \$300. They carve their totem poles in stone, tobacco boxes and a hundred different curios, for which they get ready cash, in abundance. They also make a special kind of ornaments in gold and silver, rings, bracelets, necklace, etc., for which there is a great demand.

Their houses are good and substantial, their standards of living much higher than the average white man can pretend to. Flour, sugar, tea, coffee, canned meats, fruit, jams, preserves, and all of the best quality and most costly brands, are bought for one and sometimes two years ahead, and their clothing are also of the best and most costly kind.

The wealth of fish around the islands could hardly be exaggerated. Cod of the true species can be caught on banks near the group, herring and Spanish mackerel are in abundance, halibut is teeming by millions. Skiff, or black cod, a delicious fish of the Pollack species, I believe, can be had in abundance, salmon and a multitude of other fish are to be found. A great source of wealth is in the oil. Dog fish alone are now used, but porpoise,

sea lions and seals could furnish an unlimited supply. Halibut is the favorite food of the native and they prepare it in a very attractive manner.

The timber will be another great source of riches in the future. Nowhere in Canada can such forests be seen. The Manzanillo fir, the Engelmann spruce, the Western hemlock, grow to a height and size almost incredible. Cedar and Virginia cypress, or yellow cedar, and yew are found in large forests. The mild, damp climate also prevents forest fires to destroy the timber, as it often happens elsewhere.

The first gold discovery in British Columbia occurred on one of the Queen Charlotte Islands in the early sixties. It is a thin vein of quartz, shining with free gold. The Hudson Bay Company brought miners from California and in a short time the vein was mined and abandoned, where it struck seaward. A great portion of the gold was lost by shipwreck, and no one knows how much gold there was, but it certainly was in the hundreds of thousands.

The Hydahs were fierce and wild then, and they would not allow white men to prospect. Since a few old placer miners have done a little desultory prospecting, but only around Skidegate and the eastern shore, no one has yet penetrated the interior.

Dr. Dawson put in a summer in the group, but the larger part of his time was devoted to geographical work. Still, his geological report gives an idea of the minerals of the group. Iron of good quality, copper ore, galena rich in silver, copper and iron pyrites bearing gold have been found in many locations.

Immense coal fields are known, both on Graham and Moreby, the two principal islands of the group. The fuel is of all known qualities, from the richest anthracite to soft bituminous. Large deposits of asphaltum are known and indications of petroleum have been found.

The black sands all around the group are rich in gold, and it is only fair to believe that the first gold vein discovered will not be the last.

The railway on the shores make it hard work to prospect, but this is not the case in the interior. The natives have a superstition which prevents them to go into the mountains and thence on to the interior, where the gold is.

To my mind no part of Canada offers better chances to the prospector. A small party could go there, either with a good sloop or whaler, and go from harbor to harbor, and from that base reach the mountains.

There are two principal villages, Masset has a Hudson Bay Company's post, a mission, and three or four settlers, who do a little farming. There is a large, and a mission, and a post where steamers go most often.

I have seen a garden covered with violets, pansies and other flowers in midwinter, and fruit trees do very well. Frost is an exception, and it does not reach the islands more than a day or two. There are no deer on the islands, unless there are a few lately imported; small black bears are numerous, and these, with martens, are a source of income to the natives.

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Any time is good to go to the islands, but of course the fall is the best, say from October to January.

The most western islands of Canada, basking in the warm sun of the Pacific Ocean, the home of an interesting race, going down to the sea, and the wood carvings to speak for them, the Queen Charlotte Islands will yet see a large population of wealthy inhabitants and become in time one of the fairest provinces of the Dominion. The south of its fishing fleet will cover the sea, the hammer of the miner will be heard from one end to the other, and the chimneys of the saw mills, smelters and concentrators will be seen between the pine forests of the interior plateau and of the islands of the coast.

A. L. POUDRIER.

(From the B. C. Review, London.)

Since British Columbia first began to attract attention in England on account of its immense mineral deposits, many interviews have appeared in the London press with visitors or residents of the province; but mine owners and politicians are not the best guides for the investing public to follow, and many of the so-called experts have shown little experience that their opinion cannot be reasonably considered to deserve much attention. Hearing some weeks ago that Mr. Edgar P. Rathbone, a mining engineer, was in the city, I called on him. A.M. inst. C.E., etc., and a late inspector of mines to the Transvaal government, had returned from a six months' tour of inspection of nearly all the principal mining districts in Canada, we endeavored to obtain an expression of opinion from one who has had so long and varied an experience in practical mining affairs, and who, from the position he has held, must be regarded as an expert whose opinion is of the highest value.

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CANADA AS A GOLD PRODUCER

Impressions of a Well Known Mining Engineer After a Six Months' Tour.

B. O. A Great Field for the Work of Well Organized Exploration Companies.

(From the B. C. Review, London.)

Since British Columbia first began to attract attention in England on account of its immense mineral deposits, many interviews have appeared in the London press with visitors or residents of the province; but mine owners and politicians are not the best guides for the investing public to follow, and many of the so-called experts have shown little experience that their opinion cannot be reasonably considered to deserve much attention. Hearing some weeks ago that Mr. Edgar P. Rathbone, a mining engineer, was in the city, I called on him. A.M. inst. C.E., etc., and a late inspector of mines to the Transvaal government, had returned from a six months' tour of inspection of nearly all the principal mining districts in Canada, we endeavored to obtain an expression of opinion from one who has had so long and varied an experience in practical mining affairs, and who, from the position he has held, must be regarded as an expert whose opinion is of the highest value.

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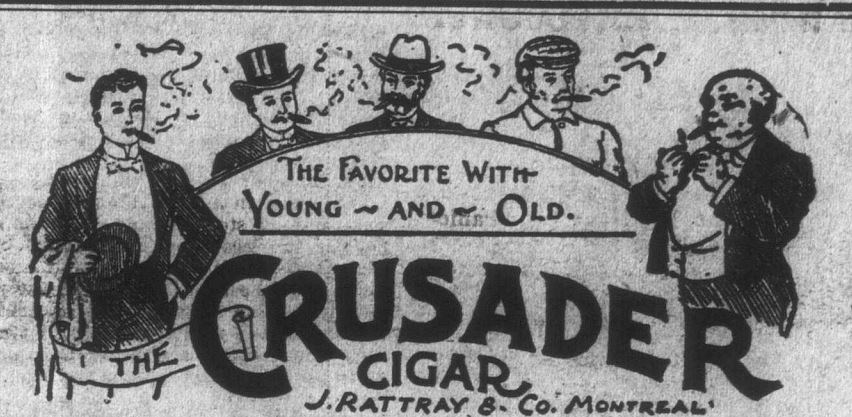
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NOTICE

Is hereby given that application will be made to the Parliament of Canada at its next session for an act to incorporate, a company with power