



IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.
CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE, VANCOUVER.

British Columbia.

British Columbia, Canada's Maritime Province on the Pacific Ocean, is the largest in the Dominion. It is a great irregular quadrangle, about 700 miles from north to south, with an average width of about 400 miles.

The province is traversed from south to north by four principal ranges of mountains—the Rocky and Selkirk ranges on the east, and the Coast and Island Ranges on the west. The Rocky Mountain Range preserves its continuity, but the Selkirks are broken up into the Purcell, the Selkirk, the Gold and the Cariboo Mountains. Between these ranges and the Rockies lies a valley of remarkable length and regularity, extending from the International Boundary Line along the western base of the Rockies, northerly, 700 miles. West of these ranges extends a vast plateau or table land with an average elevation of 3,500 feet above sea level, but so worn away and eroded by water courses that in many parts it presents the appearance of a succession of mountains. In others it spreads out into wide plains and rolling ground, dotted with low hills, which constitute fine areas of farming and pasture lands.

In 1537 Cortez discovered California and for nearly half a century the Spaniards were the only navigators of the North Pacific. Sir Francis Drake was the first of the British to visit the Pacific Coast in 1578, when he raided the

Spanish settlements and set up the British flag at Drake's Bay, near San Francisco, and took possession of the country in the name of Queen Elizabeth, calling it New Albion. In 1592 Juan de Fuca discovered the strait which bears his name, and Juan Perez, Quadra, Behring and others, visited the coast at intervals until 1778, when Captain James Cook cast anchor in Nootka Sound, while on a mission to discover a north-east passage to the Atlantic. After sailing north to the Arctic Ocean and naming many sounds, inlets and islands, Cook's ships sailed to the Sandwich islands, where he was killed in a fight with natives. His vessels, the *Resolution* and the *Discovery*, returned to England, however, and the reports of their crews respecting the great opportunities for fur trading aroused so much attention that several expeditions were outfitted in England and in China and India for the North Pacific trade.

Alexander Mackenzie, who was the first man to cross the continent north of the Mississippi, reached the shore of the Pacific at the mouth of the Bella Coola River in July, 1793.

In 1800 David Thompson travelling overland from Red River, near the present site of Winnipeg, reached the Bow River, near the present site of Calgary, and subsequently crossed the mountains and discovered the river which bears his name.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Simon Fraser and David Hearne also made extensive explorations and added materially to the knowledge of the great North-West and the Pacific Coast.

In 1849 the Island of Vancouver was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company for a period of ten years. A Government was established and Richard Blanchard was sent from England as Governor. He resigned in 1850 and was succeeded by James (afterwards Sir James) Douglas. An Assembly was called and held its first meeting in Victoria in August, 1856. While Vancouver Island was thus constituted a Crown Colony, the Mainland, known as New Caledonia, remained practically unknown, and inhabited only by Indians and a few fur traders. Gold was discovered on the Fraser River in 1857, and miners began to crowd into the country, making the establishment of some form of government a necessity. Therefore the whole of the Mainland, west of the Rocky Mountains, was created a Crown Colony under the name of British Columbia.

In 1866 the two colonies were united by Act of the Imperial Parliament, and on July 20th, 1871, British Columbia became a province of