

(named from one of Vancouver's officers), skirting Valdes and Thurlow Islands, and threading Johnstone Straits, where a spur of the mainland thrusts itself out amidst the other islands, and comes into close proximity to Vancouver Island. Entering Queen Charlotte Sound, and passing close to an Indian village and a cannery, we strike away from Vancouver Island, along the northern shore of which we have been coasting for about two hundred and fifty miles. Between the mainland and the open sea in Queen Charlotte Sound there is nothing but the Sea Otter Islands, but the steamer soon enters more intricate and winding channels. At one point we turn off through the narrow Gunboat Passage—for the broad inviting channel ahead only leads inland—and follow an exceedingly long and narrow fiord between Princess Royal Island and the mainland, more like a river than an arm of the sea, scooped out no doubt partly by the action of glaciers, where is found some of the grandest scenery to be seen on this particular route—composed chiefly of waterfalls, cliffs, trees, and high mountains on the right hand and on the left. On emerging we immediately enter Grenville Channel, remarkable as being nearly forty nautical miles in length, in some places not more than a mile wide, yet almost perfectly straight, and shut in by high mountains like walls on either side.

We emerge through Arthur Pass and catch sight of the first sign of human life seen for many leagues (unless it has been some Indian canoe), in the shape of a salmon-cannery built on piles above low-water mark, this being the vicinity of the Skeena river. Twenty miles farther, in Chatham Sound, the old Duncan Mission of Metlakatla is seen, with a row of substantial houses, and fifteen miles farther the Hudson Bay Company's Fort Simpson. We soon cross the mouth of Portland Inlet, which leads to Naas river and the International boundary (which reaches the sea at the head of Portland Canal—a fiord penetrating the mainland for a distance of about 100 miles); this is the commencement of Alaska, here a mere narrow strip that shuts off the whole of North British Columbia from the sea.

If cousin Jonathan would make this narrow strip over to British Columbia, I think we might reasonably allow him in exchange the privilege of the exclusive rights of the seal-fisheries in Behring Sea. This would also save the expense of marking the frontier, which is not yet delimited. We might even throw in Mount Saint Elias, about which there was so much uncertainty as to its exact position, and whether it lay in American territory or no, that an expedition of United States Government Surveyors, Messrs. Kerr and Russell (whom I had the pleasure of meeting on my return at Sitka) was this summer sent to locate it precisely, being conveyed to Behring Bay, or Disenchantment Bay, in a man-of-war. They are of opinion that St. Elias is in the Union, but, as though to console us for the loss, it is found not to be so high as the United States Coast Survey made it out to be. I