

is deep enough, but very narrow, and jagged rocks project into it on both sides. Like several other straits and narrows along the route, this one can only be passed safely at slack-water, as the opposing currents cause whirlpools so strong that a steamer cannot be controlled with certainty. A very slight deviation from the course carries a boat on to the rocks, as happened to the U.S. steamer *Saranac*, which was wrecked in these narrows a score of years ago. The narrowness of the strait has suggested the construction of a railway-crossing here, as there are similar narrow straits to the east which can be bridged. The engineering difficulties are not great; the question of profit is more material.

Thence to Queen Charlotte Sound the steamer-route is through narrow channels. On the eastern side great fiords reach inland, exposing rugged mountains to view as far as the eye can see; the Cascade range is broader than in California and Oregon, and no plain intervenes between it and the ocean. The Vancouver coast is almost equally inhospitable, the mountains rising sharply, and in many places almost precipitously, to a height of more than a thousand feet. Further north, snow becomes more abundant, and waterfalls, rivalling in height those of the Yosemite, are of frequent occurrence. The type of scenery is practically the same throughout the voyage, so that, in spite of its grandeur, it becomes occasionally a little monotonous; there is an unbroken succession of mountains rising abruptly four or five thousand feet from the water's edge; of precipitous, or even overhanging cliffs, two thousand or more feet in height; of magnificent amphitheatres in which glaciers had their origin aforetime; and of long fiords where neither glaciers nor icebergs are any longer to be found. The mountains have a dense covering of cedars, firs, and spruces, among which one sees great numbers of dead trees. The destruction is said to be due, not to forest fires, but to lack of nourishment. The struggle for existence on the scanty soil is so severe that the older trees cannot maintain themselves against the younger, which form the dense undergrowth. Whether this explanation be consistent or not, must be left for others to decide.

The excursion steamer stops first at Wrangel, about one hundred and fifty miles north of Portland Channel, the boundary between British Columbia and Alaska, and not far short of six hundred miles north-westward from Victoria. There, in N. lat. $56^{\circ} 30'$, is a straggling settlement, which was of some importance during the Russian occupation, but has since declined. It is situated on the island of the same name, almost opposite the mouth of the Stickeen river, and is the source of supply for stations along that river; for there is still some trade with the region lying behind the Cascade range. For the present, however, little is doing, and the commercial prosperity of the place depends chiefly on the new industry of victimising tourists, which has grown up within the last half-dozen years; it has been very successful, as the steamers are crowded with passengers, who, for the most part, goodnaturedly agree with the Indians that they are legitimate game.

The Stickeen glacier is the first, or most southerly, of Alaska's great ice-streams; but as it fails to reach the mouth of its inlet, it lies beyond the range of the tourist. Ice is seen only after the narrow and treacherous

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