

Nanaimo—Bunkers and Sacked Coal.



Nanaimo—A General View.

A Coal and Herring Town

Something About Nanaimo, or the Sunset Island of the Pacific

By BONNYCASTLE DALE

THIRTY-FIVE miles across the usually calm Gulf of Georgia from Vancouver, or seventy-three miles north of Victoria on Vancouver Island, lies the rich brown humus loam valleys, the lighter sandy soils on the higher benches, the great deep-lying seams of valuable coal, the mountain-climbing fir woods, the safe harbour with its wonderful marine life that surround and build and invigorate the thriving city of Nanaimo. Here the Dominion Government, under the supervision of the energetic inspector, Mr. E. G. Taylor, is establishing a biological station.

I never entered a city that owes its supremacy to the rich veins of coal that underlie it, which showed so little of that industry in its streets, buildings and inhabitants. There is little sign of the mining town here. This is a clean, bright business town surrounded with rich ranches, and well-laden small orchards. A really excellent series of five-acre lots lie close to the town. Trim homes line the streets. The stores are most modern. The post-office and court-house models of western architecture. Far off on either side of Nanaimo are the bunkers of the coal mines, where the black diamonds pour into the holds of steamers from all the civilised ports of the world, and the sawmill where the huge red and white fir is rapidly turned into commercial form. If near road, railroad or water, it must pay to clean off your farm, when lumber is selling at seventeen dollars in the rough. Note in the picture of the harbour the mighty pile of sacked coal to be shipped to the far northern port of Nome.

This is one of the oldest cities on the Island of Vancouver. These coal mines have been worked since 1850. The population is now between seven and eight thousand and the yearly payroll from the mines alone is over a million and a quarter dollars.

Many more farmers are needed to supply the active demand for milk, butter, eggs, vegetables and fruit. These all command a high price, for remember living is not as cheap as in the more settled

places in the centre of Canada, and if you are coming here to work in the mines, the sawmills, the lumber camps, you can be assured of a good fair rate of wages. If you are going on to the land you can take up uncleared portions within a few miles of many of the towns along the line of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway at as low a price as five dollars per acre, up to say fifteen. These timbered lands are hard to clear, but if you choose the right soil the land is wonderfully productive. The days are warm—not too hot—and the nights are cool. If you buy cleared land you will pay from one hundred and fifty dollars per acre upward, and the investment is safe since the tide of men with money is turning this way. These are the men that are wanted.

Across the island the surveyors are now prospecting a continuation of the E. & N.—now a part of the Canadian Pacific Railway system. This is not yet the place for assisted emigration. It needs men with a little capital and plenty of energy, but the man who takes and clears up land that costs him only a few dollars per acre now will assuredly have a very valuable farm in a few years, even if the work of clearing is hard and expensive. The C.P.R. have a plan now to clear up a great amount of their immense belt of railroad lands, using heavy machinery and reducing the cost of clearing to a third of the usual price.

Of the herring fishery right in the harbour of Nanaimo I hesitate to use the figures. From all I can read and gather the results are unique. Right in the harbour, above where the miners are busily picking out the coal in the seam that underlies the water, runs every winter a closely packed mass of herring, so close that the waters are agitated and the silvery fish leap and sparkle in the sunlight, or strand and perish on the beach in thousands. Only three years have elapsed since the industry was started and yet last year eighteen millions of pounds of these excellent fish were captured. There is also

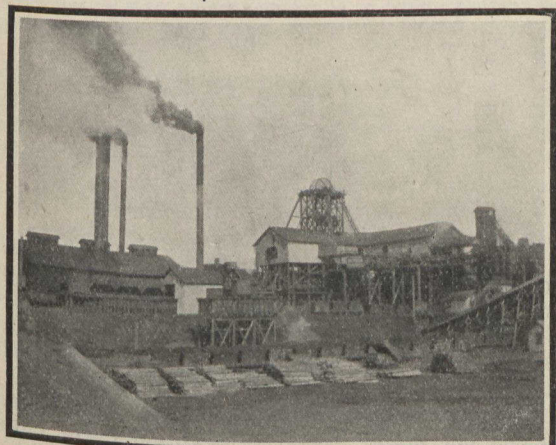
the salmon fishing, the cod fishing, and many a lake and river where the nimble speckled trout lie. Three miles from Nanaimo a branch of the whaling station is now being built, for they have great fishes in these waters, halibut, sturgeon, as well as these oil-giving sea animals, the black-fish, the sulphur-bottom whale and quantities of hair seals.

Seldom have we seen better dairy stock than feed in the meadows and on the ranches of this great valley. The creamery in the town is a fruitful source of revenue to the happy farmers and ranchers that have their land cleared up. Amid the luxuriant ferns, that grew to a man's height on the upper benches, we saw many fat pigs. Ranchers tell me that this ever-present vascular cryptogamous plant, the fern, is not a despised weed. True, the horse will not eat it unless driven by need or when he snatches a plant to moisten his mouth while in harness; but it gives shade for the smaller parching plants and its roots are greedily rooted up by the pigs.

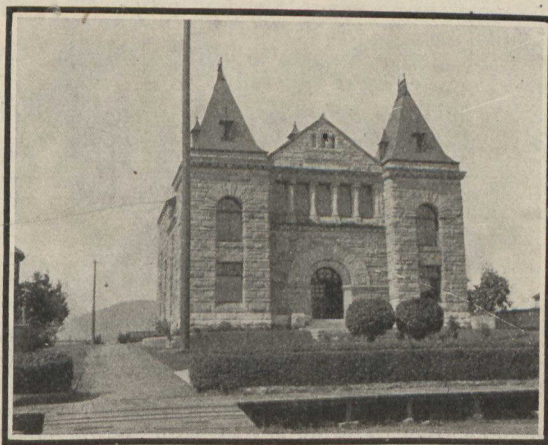
The roads are excellent. In many places they are not wider than a trail, but they run amid the tall firs, skirting the mighty boulders placed here by old-time glacial or volcanic force, interspersing patches of clear sunshine or cool shadow. There is never a poisonous reptile nor weed, nor an animal which will injure that most belligerent of all animals, man, unless man is the aggressor. This sunset island of the Pacific is a happy home for the race.

A Perfect Understanding

He hovered around her and watched her eyes,
And hung on each musical word—
And she was aware of his stifled sighs
And the throbs of his heart she heard;
And though nothing was said between these two,
He knew she knew that he knew she knew.
—Puck.



Nanaimo—The Colliery.



Nanaimo—The Court House.



Nanaimo—The Post-office.