

Victoria City and the Island of Vancouver

Some Reasons Why It May Be Anticipated That the Magnificent Harbor of Esquimalt Will Shortly Be the Scene of Commercial Activity

N any attempt to forecast the future of Victoria and Vancouver Island it is impossible to leave out of the calculation the likelihood of the harbor of Esquimalt—one of the finest on the Pacific coast of America—assuming the proud position of a great commercial depot, for which it is so eminently fitted because of its commodiousness and accessibility to the ocean. To the close observer of the trend of events bearing on the transportation problems pressing for a solution in this quarter of the globe, there would seem to be legitimate grounds for anticipating that some recent announcements are calculated to force a reconsideration of the position of Esquimalt as a point which must, out of sheer necessity, be called into utilization at a very early date in order to provide needed facilities to meet new commercial demands.

Before proceeding with some speculation as to what one may reasonably anticipate in this direction at no remote date, it will perhaps prove of interest to recall some early opinions of Esquimalt harbor and what was anticipated would be its ultimate position amongst the chief ports on the Pacific seaboard.

Bancroft, in his history, referring to conditions on Vancouver Island in 1842, says:

At the extreme south-eastern end of Vancouver Island is a large open bay called Royal Bay, directly back of which is Esquimalt harbor, some three miles east of which is Victoria harbor. That part of Royal Bay leading more directly into Esquimalt harbor, and beginning at Albert Head, is called Royal Roads. Vessels may there anchor in ten or twelve fathoms, safe from all winds save those from the east or south-east. Esquimalt harbor may be entered at all times, and there vessels of any size may find safe anchorage. "It appears not a little remarkable," says Murray, West Coast of North America, 233, "that with the excellent harbor of Esquimalt within two miles, Victoria should have been continued as the commercial port of a rising colony." About a league west of Camosun was a spot known to the natives as Esquimalt; that is to say, "a place for gathering canoes." Great quantities of which vegetable were found there, where it was now well known was a better harbor; indeed, Camosun could scarcely be regarded as a suitable rendezvous for whalers; but that did not prevent it being a better place for a fort. When once the shoals and covered rocks were known, the channel would be found sufficient for the small vessels of the company; and as for whalers, the other harbor was quite near enough for their not always too pleasing presence. Little thought was then taken as to which should be the great commercial city. Even should the station ever assume such pretensions, Esquimalt would assuredly still be the proper place, and Camosun would still be near enough to it. For the present, favorable surroundings, good open lands, clear fresh water, and a beautiful periscope were far weightier considerations than the accessibility to shipping, which they did not care to have too near them.

In reference to Esquimalt, Sir James Douglas says:

Esquimalt is one of the best harbors on the coast, being perfectly safe and easy of access, but in other respects it possesses no attractions. Its appearance is strikingly unprepossessing, the outline of the country exhibiting a confused assemblage of rock and wood.

In the report on "Surveys and Preliminary Operations on the Canadian Pacific Railway up to January, 1877," by Sandford Fleming, engineer-in-chief, we find the following under the sub-head "Deductions from Naval Testimony":

That the approach (to Burrard Inlet) by the south of Vancouver Island is through passages more or less intricate, between, or at no great distances from, islands known as the San Juan group. That the most important islands of the San Juan group are in the territory of a foreign power, and that from their position they hold the power of assuming a threatening attitude towards passing commerce. Accordingly, it is held important, if practicable, that the railway should terminate at a harbor at which these islands need, in no way, be approached. . . . An unbroken line of railway from the railways of the eastern provinces of the Dominion to one of these harbors on the outer coast of Vancouver Island would be exceedingly desirable. All the difficulties of navigation in reaching the mainland from the ocean would then be avoided. . . . If it be considered of paramount importance to carry an unbroken line of railway to one or more of the harbors on the coast of Vancouver Island, and there is a likelihood that this project will, regardless of cost, hereafter be seriously entertained, then route No. 6 (via Burrard Inlet) becomes of the first importance.

Extract from the statement of the late Capt. John Devereux, respecting the accessibility of Burrard Inlet:

There are three months in the year, viz., from part of August to the same time in November, when this coast is subject to dense fogs, rendering it unsafe, if not utterly impossible, to navigate Haro Strait and the Gulf of Georgia with large steamers, such as the Royal Mail, Cunard, and Pacific Mail Co.'s ships. In my opinion Esquimalt must be made the terminus of the ocean steamers, or else a harbor must be sought north of Vancouver Island altogether.

It would appear to have been made abundantly clear that the harbor of Esquimalt is immeasurably more advantageously situated in respect to its strategic position on the seaboard than any port on the lower mainland of British Columbia; and we may now attempt a general survey of the present situation in the hope of discovering reasons which appear to justify the belief that at a very early date it will be the scene of considerable activity resultant upon the inauguration of new enterprises.

Of supreme interest to all who are at all watchful of the trend of events bearing upon the future of this city and Vancouver Island is the recent action of the board of directors of the C. P. R. in determining to transfer to these waters at an early date the vessels of the Atlantic Empress line of steamships—Empress of Britain and Empress of Ireland. There is complete unanimity of opinion amongst those best in a position to speak with knowledge of the subject, that it is extremely unlikely that vessels of such mammoth proportions will proceed to a port on the mainland which would necessitate the navigation of intricate passages notorious for the existence of dangers which have in the past resulted in the occasional loss

of and not infrequent serious damage to ships of much smaller dimensions.

For our present purposes, let us assume, then, that there are some grounds for the belief that the Atlantic Empresses will choose some port on Vancouver Island for a terminal point on this side of the ocean when operated (as has been stated by the C. P. R. they will be) on the route to the Orient. In previous articles some argument was attempted to show that Victoria would be, or ought to be, the point chosen for such terminal port, rather than a harbor on the west coast of Vancouver Island, but we may dismiss this point from immediate consideration, as not material to the question of the future of the harbor of Esquimalt.

Whatever point may be chosen by the Empress of Britain and the Empress of Ireland as a terminal port on this coast, the task of coaling them will constitute a problem which will necessitate a departure from existing arrangements for the placing on board of the necessary amount of fuel to complete the long

fancy they detect preparations to haul large quantities of coal to bunkers to be erected at Esquimalt.

It is within the prerogative of people not so fortunate as to enjoy the confidence of the greatest transportation company in the world to occasionally recognize commercial opportunities which must apparently be embraced at a very early date by the C. P. R. To many it must be obvious that there is no enterprise connected with the development of Vancouver Island which offers better inducements to the C. P. R. than the establishment of large coal bunkers at Esquimalt.

In three particulars there are conspicuous advantages attendant upon the erection and equipment of such facilities.

1. The problem of how to quickly coal the Atlantic Empresses when they take up their new run on the Oriental route would be solved.

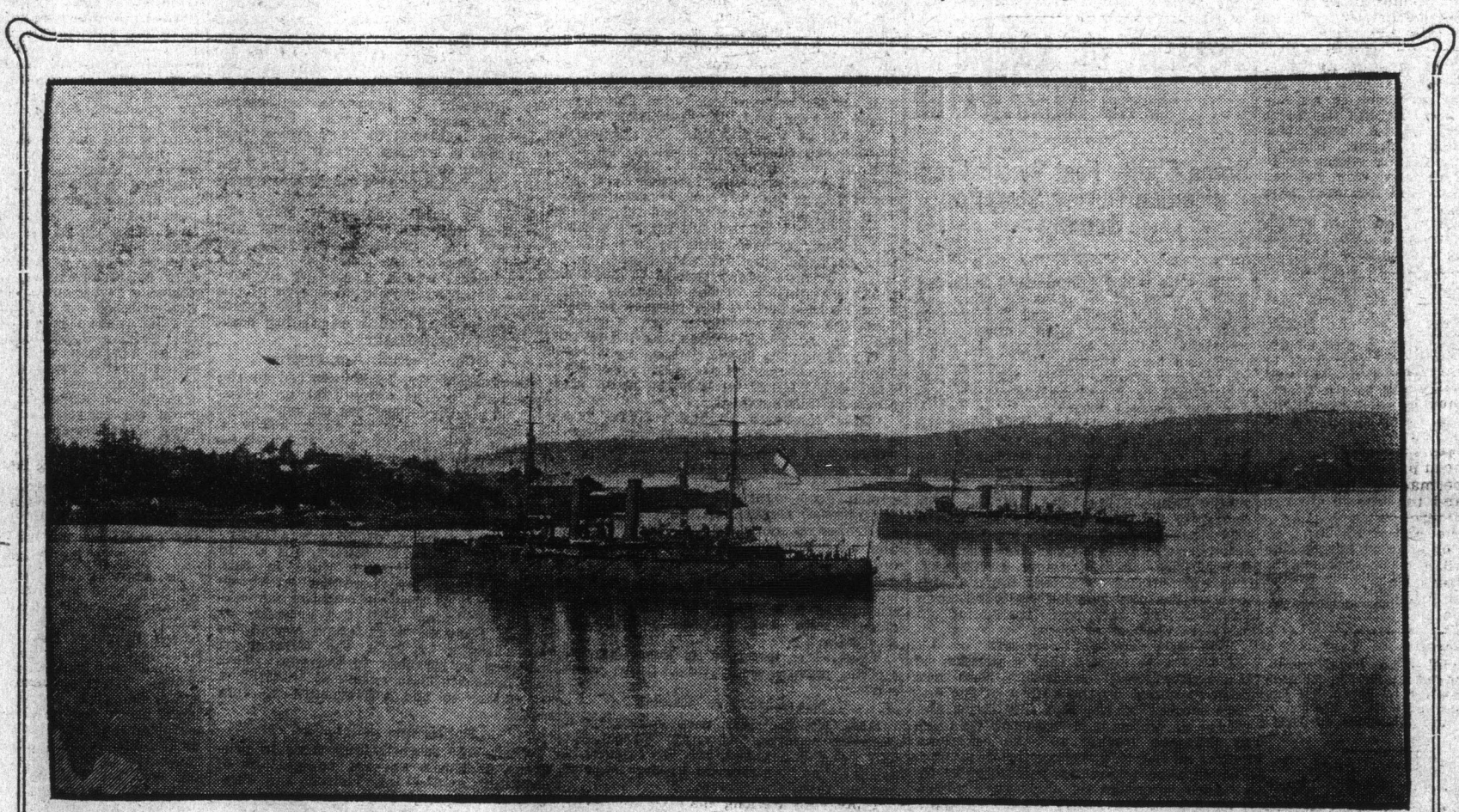
2. To many vessels seeking cargoes of coal, and others requiring but to fill their bunkers, the navigation of intricate waterways

piloteage dues, and avoid all the dangers attendant upon the navigation of intricate passages on the East coast of the Island, does it not appear that the slightly increased cost would be more than off-set by the gains mentioned?

Of Esquimalt's future in other respects than as a possible great coal depot—why, "that is another story."

—C. A. GREGG.

I do not know how many Americans have stood on the great stone causeway leading over to the noble parliament buildings, wondering how it came about that in their own city or state, after most reckless spending of money, they had not managed to erect something equally splendid, writes W. S. Hardwood in "The World of Today." I doubt not, though, there has been ample cause for such wonderment. This building stands as one of the finest, though not one of the costliest, public buildings on the continent. It is the pride of



View Showing Entrance to the Magnificent Harbor of Esquimalt—One of the Finest on the Pacific Coast.

Photo by Fleming Bros.

voyage across the Pacific; and it is because of this circumstance that I am seized with the conviction that the harbor of Esquimalt may be called upon to play a new role—and this is as the site for great coal bunkers capable of accommodating a large proportion of the shipping of this coast.

The steamers which the C. P. R. is at present operating to the Orient—the Empresses of India, China and Japan, are coaled at the dock at Vancouver. The fuel is towed over from Ladysmith in a hulk, from which it is taken in barges alongside the vessel to be supplied, into which it is hoisted by means of a steam winch and buckets—the operation being at once crude and tedious. Now, assuming that the Atlantic Empresses, when they are brought to these waters, will not go to Vancouver, but make their headquarters at some port on this Island, does it not appear that the most favorable point that could be chosen at which to coal them would be Esquimalt? The idea that they would proceed to the bunkers at the mines may be dismissed at once, as the course to be followed in reaching those points is quite as intricate as that to Vancouver. Esquimalt, then, seems to be the one point likely to be used by these ships as a coaling port. But there are additional reasons, as we shall presently see, why we may anticipate the early erection of bunkers of large capacity at that point.

At a very considerable outlay, the road-bed of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo railway (C. P. R.), has recently been greatly improved—stone and steel structures replacing the wooden bridges and culverts, and the whole line made capable of handling heavy traffic. We are only permitted to guess at the reasons which actuated the company in embarking upon this policy. On the surface, it would appear that they were moved to do so because of the fact that such improvements were desirable, in any event, and demanded in view of the increased traffic promised on the completion of the extension to Alberni. But the circumstance that this work has been done with some evidence of an apparent desire to be ready for business which will be offering before the Alberni branch shall have been completed fits in very conveniently with the deductions of those who

on the east coast of the island would be avoided time and piloteage dues saved.

3. The E. & N. railway would earn a large revenue by transporting coal to Esquimalt, where now it does not earn a single cent from such traffic.

In regard to the first point, the coaling of the Empresses of Britain and Ireland, it has probably been sufficiently dwelt upon to indicate its bearing on the question in hand; but in respect to the others something further may be said. Local shipping men who were asked for an opinion on the matter of the feasibility of establishing bunkers at Esquimalt said that beyond all question such an enterprise would not only appear, from all standpoints, to be a good business proposition, but would undoubtedly prove a boon to the shipping interests in these waters. The saving in time and piloteage dues, not to mention the lessening of the risks of navigation, would no doubt induce many vessels to forego the trip to the mines on the east coast of the Island, and induce them, instead, to take their cargoes, or fill their bunkers as the case might be, at Esquimalt. Then, again, it was pointed out, the fact that the coal obtainable at Esquimalt was of a superior quality to that available at the Sound ports would induce many vessels plying to the American ports to call at the former harbor for their fuel. At present many ships which would otherwise give a preference to our coal do not do so, because the bunkers at the mines are so much out of their way.

In respect to the question of increased revenue which would flow to the C. P. R. as a result of the establishment of bunkers at Esquimalt, it may be said that this one consideration alone ought to be sufficient to ensure the success of the undertaking. At the present time the E. & N. is handing but the most infinitesimal portion of the output of the Island collieries, whereas, if the foregoing deductions are warranted it is clear that the line might handle, via Esquimalt, a very considerable proportion of it. It may be said that ships could obtain coal cheaper at the mines than at the bunkers at Esquimalt. This would seem a reasonable contention; but inasmuch as they would save time, a considerable sum in

Victoria indeed, I fancy it is the pride of all Canada.

Lying down in one far corner of the great island of Vancouver, Victoria is alone, set apart from her neighbors, Seattle and Vancouver, and wholly unlike either of them in municipal type. She loses much in a commercial and a business way by not being on the mainland, by not feeling the touch and impact of the things of today. And yet she has not the railroads to blacken her blue sky and make bedlam of her streets; only the white steamships from her sister cities and those that reach out to the war-stirred lands across the sea to make bridges for her to other civilizations.

Without any huge manufacturing enterprises or any vast industrial establishments it is a charming life these Victorians lead, full of delightful, even if caste-marked, society, as many a garrison town is marked, rich in real culture, soberly aggressive in material development, willing to let the other fellow make part of the money, passionately devoted to uplifting sports, intensely British but unconsciously American after all. I wonder sometimes if these loyal Canada folk realize how much they are being influenced by the great neighbor to the south. I said to a ruddy-cheeked Victorian with the very dawn of an English morning upon his brown head and the blue of a Canadian sky above him:

"I hear that the Canadians of the great middle West beyond the Selkirk and the Rockies and this side of Winnipeg are being much influenced by the so-called American invasion of Canada. Do you think these American farmers are going to make these people over so that they will want to come into the United States one of these days?"

He looked at me in indignant silence for a moment. Then with his British choler rising he burst forth:

"Let them go, if they want to, let 'em go to —" mentioning a place I have not been able to locate on the map. "British Columbia stands by the Union Jack to the death!"

It is a motley crowd, as the afternoon sun is striking the distant snowclad peaks of the Olympians, that gently ebbs and flows through the streets of this old city: now and again a

bronze-faced Indian; frontiersmen come in from the forests; jaunty city chaps in haste to a tennis tea; men in green with white belts and dark blue caps, men in scarlet coats with natty red caps tipped over their ears, men in handsome dark blue with brilliant red stripes or even more conspicuous white ones running down the trousers, men in white, men in yellow, men in khaki—so many of them you wonder where the rest of the garrison may be; while around the corner swarthy fishermen are chatting; sealers for the Arctic are swapping lies; a pair of wondering-eyed Chinamen stand watching a pudgy black bear, who is alternately running up a telegraph pole as far as he can for the tethering chain and again dashing down and along his few feet of leeway at the street gamin who is making his life a burden with a sharp stick, all in a vain attempt to cuff the lad with his powerful flat paw.

Round about Victoria are delightful places to visit, while inland upon the great island are opportunities for the royal sport of gun and rod. Of course the people of Victoria do not brag about their climate; nobody on the Pacific coast from Mexico to Alaska ever does that! But they are willing you should draw your own inferences from their cleverly prepared tables and their ingeniously worded comparisons; and, before you are aware of it, especially if it be such charming weather as that which greeted the writer, you are seeing the year through an aureole of climatic glory.

Historically there is much of interest in Victoria from the early days when it was a fort of the Hudson's Bay company. I can never forgive somebody, I am sure I do not know who it was, who let the good ship Beaver go out upon a voyage that wrecked her, the most interesting craft upon any sea. It was this little ship, long stationed at Victoria, which a number of years ago went to pieces on the rocks of Brockton when she ought to have been preserved for all time as a precious relic, the first steamer to cross the Atlantic ocean, the first to round Cape Horn, the first to ride the Pacific.

The farmers of Vancouver Island are very proud of their herds of cattle. The Jersey is the favorite, and cattle from the Island farms can always meet those from other parts of the west and win out, or at any rate take their share of the prizes awarded. There are many of these dairies where the herds would even compare favorably with those of the Old Country. There is no longer any need for British Columbia to send east for its pure bred stock, unless it be for the purpose of introducing new blood now and then for the purpose of preventing too much inbreeding. The opposite is becoming the case. Dairymen on the Island are commencing to export their thoroughbred stock, and they are being recognized as the best in all the west.

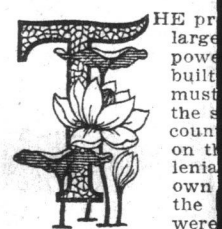
The quality of the butter made in the Island creameries is the best made anywhere. This is evidenced by the fact that in the Victoria market the Island butter realizes from five to ten cents a pound more than any other brands, and even in Vancouver many expert buyers call for Island butter in preference to any other on the market. It is not a question of winning a prize with a specially prepared pound or two, but it is winning the market with the daily output at every season of the year.

Vancouver Island has within itself the source of immense wealth if that is only developed. A commencement has been made sufficient to prove the value of the part yet undeveloped. It has been shown that the best possible butter can be made, and that in paying quantities. Those who have large dairies are among the most wealthy and influential members of the Island communities, and the influence of such people is bound to increase as the years roll by.

Between Nanaimo and Comox, on the E. & N. railway belt, there are thousands of acres of the best land in the world, which needs only the stumps and timber cleared away to make it a country of exceeding richness, where farmers and fruit growers will go in and make sufficient wealth to keep up another large city. North of Comox there is even more, and the wealth of the Island in those places in cultivatable land is untold. But that is nothing like all. Across at the west coast, at Alberni and numerous other points there are large agricultural areas which have only just been touched, and where very little of the land is cleared. At the north end of the Island, too, the land is almost all level and fit for agriculture. The attention of the world is being drawn to these lands, and the timber is already in the hands of capitalists who intend to develop it. Following the logging off will come the clearing of the land, and these large areas will be more or less contingent to the city of Victoria, with which they will be connected by rail and steamboat.

Cultivate all the lands above mentioned, and there will be enough produced to feed all the people in British Columbia and fruit to supply a considerable part of the population of the prairies. With this agricultural development will come, however, the development of the mining areas of the Island, and these will take the produce of the farmer, thus ensuring for the farmers for ever a ready market right at their doors.

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By G. G. White, B.Sc.
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