

Victoria City and the Island of Vancouver

Miss Agnes Deans Cameron Writes on the Romance and Beauty of British Columbia—"The Beginning of Things"

"And she is no common Earth,
Water or wood or air,
But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye
Where you and I will fare."
—Rudyard Kipling



MOST Canadian kiddies can inform you that the sailors of Agricola discovered Britain to be an island. Can they tell who performed a like service for their own island of Vancouver? Teachers religiously begin each term with vivid descriptions of how the eagle-bearer of Caesar's Tenth Legion fought blue-skinned Britons in England's off-shore waters fifty-five years before the Christian era. What do we give them of all the glamor of our own Northwest Coast? And yet surely no part of the Empire has a history of more compelling interest than is written on the western harbors of British Columbia.

While France and England fought for possession in the east of America, it was the galleons of Spain that denied British supremacy on the western shore. In 1592, just one hundred years after the voyage of Columbus, Juan de Fuca, or Fiery John, discovered the strait that separates Vancouver Island from the mainland, and gave it his name.

After de Fuca with argosies of ghostly sails came Quadra, Behring, and another adventurous Jack, the dashing Juan Perez, and these were followed in 1778 by Captain James Cook. What were they all seeking on this uncharted coast which had to offer as glittering bait neither commerce nor conquest? At this time neither Sacramento nor Fraser had divulged its sands shining like those of Pactolus, the wondrous whale-wealth of cachelot and sulphur-bottom was unknown, unvisited were the seal herds on the Pribyloffs, and all-unguessed those inland towering conifers and channels choked with fish.

The wealth of an empire waited just beyond the shore-line, and across the mountains the unborn fields of yellow wheat. But unwitting and uncaring the lone questing vessels passed on through mid-day glare, sunset splendor, and when the lemon moon made witch-light of all that unbordered sea. It was not material gain they sought. Ever since Magellan rounded the southern continent keel-cutting the Pacific, "the first that ever burst into that silent sea," word had spread among those who go down to the sea in ships of a mystical passage at the top of the map corresponding to Magellan's Straits at the south. To establish the existence of this waterway was the object of the early navigators, Spaniard and Briton alike.

Each master-mariner cherished in his chart-room a secret map of this fairy channel, this canal of dreams, which was to cut the continent and give a land-locked way from west to east. The Anian Strait they called it, and from Panama to circumpolar ice at every river-estuary they sought a hidden entrance. Most persistent among those who followed the gleam was Captain Cook. Sailing from the south he cast anchor in Nootka Sound on the sea-ward coast of what we now call Vancouver Island, and from here he pushed on coast-wise up to the very Arctic-edge, traversing sound after sound, and penetrating each successive inlet if perchance to his eager eye might open up that will-o'-the-wisp, that fairy fire he followed.

Cook failed to find a northeast passage. But his eyes were not open only to the kudos of discovery. It was not for naught that he held charter from the mistress of all oceans, the "Grey Old Mother" overseas. Penetrating farther north than those who went before and those who followed, Captain Cook got from the natives a glimpse of the fur-wealth of the great white north, and with quick, prophetic vision saw the potential value to Britain of the rich trade in peltries; but it was not to be his to carry home the news of the commercial gold mine he had stumbled upon. From the Arctic, the ships of this virile and intrepid navigator sailed to the Sandwich Group; where James Cook, one of England's bravest sailors and truest sons, lost his life at the hands of a native.

But Cook's vessels, the "Discovery" and the "Resolution," safely reached England with the dead captain's carefully written report regarding the possibilities of the fur trade. The immediate result of the publication of Cook's journal was an eagerly awakened interest in the Ultima Thule whose fringe touched the water-way was the object of the early navigations were fitted out in England, in China, and in India, all bound for that mystical north which with the advent of this twentieth century has not yet lost its lodestone power.

For ten years, merchant adventurers, British, Spanish, and Dutch, with belling sail crossed one ocean and beat their way up the whole length of another, coast-clinging to two continents, in a fierce contest for the mastery of the fur trade. But it remained for the Englishman, Meares, ten years after the voyage of Cook, to make the first attempt at a permanent settlement. The others had slipped in on a favoring tide, seductively secured with the lures that would best turn the trick all the peltries in sight, and then sailed on to the next lucrative haven. Meares cherished an ambition to establish a local trading-base from which he might send out short expeditions to the near-by tribes, relieving them of their beaver skins, bear and marten as soon as each

season's catch accumulated. To this end he founded a post where Cook had touched at Nootka Sound, and here he accomplished a feat notable in the annals of ship-construction; this was no less than the building of the first vessel whose keel was laid on the Pacific, the "Northwest America."

Next year the spoiler came in the person of Don Estevan Martinez, who seized the settlement in the name of his sovereign, confiscated the shipping in the harbor, and imprisoned the crews. The high-handed act of this fire-eater nearly precipitated war far off on the western edge of another map where Kentish chalk-

Indians of that day. It is interesting to note one passage in the commentaries of England's voyager-historian, the bloodless Caesar of the Northwest coast. Vancouver sailed up the Straits so long ago named by Fiery Jack (who had merely glimpsed them from his ship that passed in the night) and proceeded to enter and explore each inner bay and waterway between island and mainland. Here he came in contact with the Salish tribe, a people distinct from the Nootkas on the seaward coast of the island. The Indians set out from their mainland homes on Burrard Inlet to meet the incoming ships, filled with awed surprise at the

terly hands to the cousins of India, Australia, and the isles of the sea.

The air was surely surcharged with destiny that day. If Vancouver was susceptible to psychic influence, a strange thrill moved him as he looked landward across that unbroken forest of Douglas firs and giant cedars to where another pathfinder of the silence was cutting a new trail for the uncounted myriads who follow. Let us turn back the pages and get the genesis of this voyage of Vancouver, learn if we may how he happened to be here.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century two voices spoke to two men; one was of

second man listens. That man is a young Highlander, the servant of the Company, Alexander Mackenzie, a self-made Scot, a Canadian bourgeois, if you will. In the noisy mid-day clatter of the Fort he hears that voice, in the waking hours of dawn, and "when evening shuts the deed off, calls the glory from the gray." He cannot get away from that haunting echo, he would not if he could. There are interminable changes rung on the everlasting whisper, but its burden is ever the same,

"Something lost behind the Ranges,
Lost and waiting for you: Go!"

To turn Kipling's phrase, "when one hears the North a-calling, he won't ever fear aught else," from this out the desire to penetrate the unknown filled the very soul of Mackenzie. No more might it satisfy him to outdo his competitors and carry back to Grand Portage canoes overflowing with furs. Samuel Hearne twenty years before had discovered the Coppermine river; might it not be given to him to reach Arctic ice down the bosom of some other northward-trending stream?

With this determined Scot, to resolve was to do; so in June, 1789, we see Mackenzie launch his birchbark from the shores of Lake Athabasca and make his way north and ever north. Skirting portage, rushing rapid, threading intricate waterway, the little band of empire builders at last shot out on the breast of the mighty river which Mackenzie himself was too modest to name, but which perpetuates on the map of all time the faith made visible of this doughty and determined Scot. This achievement but whetted the ambition of Mackenzie, it was of a Western sea that he had greatly dreamed among the bear-skins and beavers of Montreal, and to that ocean which split its waves "somewhere" far beyond the snow-crests of the Rockies he would go.

It gives us the measure of the man to know that the thought uppermost in the mind of Mackenzie returning from the Arctic was not pride in the deed accomplished, but a realization of his limitations in astronomical knowledge. He would go back to Britain and study stars for a time instead of skins, planets for peltries. And back he went in 1791. Next year we see him back in the great white north land, leaving Fort Chippewyan, pressing up the lone Peace to winter at the farthest settlement; and the breaking of the ice in the spring sends him forth on the quest of that Northwest Passage by land which in singleness of purpose ever since the voices came to him he had sought with such passionate desire.

We have not time to count the chapters of the story, to name the streams ascended, the boiling gorges passed, the discontent allayed, the encouragement given, the lonely night-watches when the leader himself looked for comfort in his new-found stars,

Stars that blaze in the velvet blue,
God's own guides on the Long Trail,
The trail that is always new.

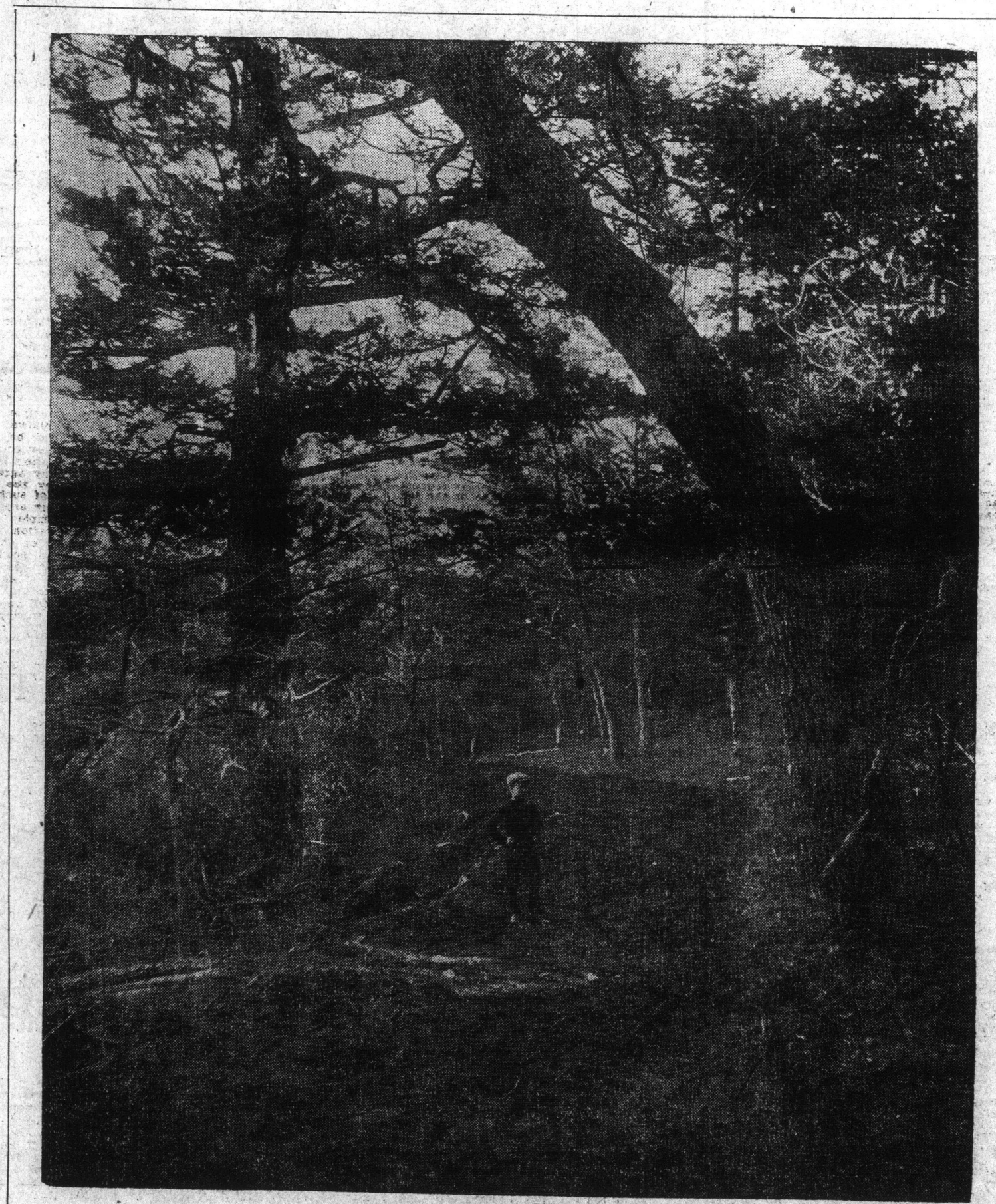
The Fraser was discovered, traced for a while, and then striking westward Mackenzie heard the beat of the surf upon the rocks, and came out from among the pines to the silver Pacific sparkling in the sun. It was a sweet day in summer's prime, and as the gulls cried overhead and the sun mixed scent of seaweed with balsam breath from in-shore, we can imagine but not divine the feelings of that brave man who has thrown himself face-downward on the sand, and from whose presence the awed companions steal silently away. From the parted lips we seem to catch the words of another builder of empire,

Anybody might have found it,
But God's Whisper came to me.

And not twenty miles away, each unwitting of the other, lay the other man who had heard the Voice; off the mouth of the Bella Coola river the ships of Vancouver rode at anchor.

Nanaimo is so situated that she is the central distributing point of the Island. All roads of travel on Vancouver Island meet there. Trade to Cumberland and Alberni Valleys and to the southern point of the Island, in the centre of which Nanaimo is the pivot, passes through Nanaimo. With all of the Island awakening and renewed activity general it is natural that it should have a corresponding effect on Nanaimo. An announcement recently made by the C. P. R., however, has encouraged to a wonderful degree the business activities of the city. Nanaimo is connected with Victoria by the E. & N. This railway is now to be extended to Alberni and also to Comox. Surveyors are in the field running the lines, and the C. P. R. is making arrangements to commence work at once clearing the right-of-way. In addition to this the C. P. R. has announced that it will clear large tracts of land all through the district to be thrown open at moderate prices for settlement. This, coupled with the fact that Nanaimo will be the feeder for all this enterprise, has made even the outsider realize the strategic position held by the city, and it is not surprising that within the past year there has been considerable realty business transacted and several important improvements planned for Nanaimo properties. Bank clearings have more than doubled in the past two years and bank deposits have increased 28 per cent.

One has not to remain long in Nanaimo to realize that while her present largely depends on coal, her future will have many more substantial assets. Take the fisheries, for instance. Nanaimo, as every one knows, is the centre of the greatest herring fisheries on the continent.



Beneath the Gnarled Oak at Gonzales—A Pretty Residential Suburb of Victoria

cliffs look across channel to the lordly keeps of Spain. But in these maligned dark ages arbitration was a power in the land, and Hispania paid Albion two hundred and ten thousand dollars for damaged ships and ruffled dignity, and with cleaned slate the story of the sea-board duel slipped into another chapter.

Then in 1792, just two hundred years after the voyage of De Fuca, Captain George Vancouver made a survey of the coast and discovered Vancouver to be an island, a point which had been in dispute for two hundred years. The value of Vancouver's survey work appears in the fact that his charts of 1792 are in use still in this year of grace 1908. All this while the continental fringe of "New Caledonia" was a No Man's Land.

But Vancouver did more than leave us invaluable sea-charts. It is from his carefully compiled notes that we get most of what is authentic of the recorded history of the Coast

size of the "winged canoes" the strange sails, the cordage and the rigging.

Vancouver writes: "Here we were met by about fifty Indians in their canoes who conducted themselves with the greatest decorum and civility, presenting us with several fish, cooked and undressed, of a sort resembling smelts. These good people finding we were inclined to make them some return for their hospitality showed much understanding in selecting iron and copper." As Vancouver bartered with his Indians, one wonders if across his mind flashed any glimpse of that vision splendid of a Greater Britain that should extend from ocean to ocean, girded by bands of steel, and opening its fruitful bosom to the Old World's hungry ones. On the very spot where Vancouver stood that summer day of the long ago now throbs and pulsates the strong sane city that bears his name, Vancouver, the ocean terminal of the Canadian Pacific, close guarded by her crouching lions, and reaching out sis-

the land and one of the sea, each a mighty voice. Among English hedge-rows George Vancouver "heard the North a-calling" and began to see visions and dream dreams. It was the lure of the Anian Strait, that magnetic power out of the mists, which when it gripped a man would have no compromise, and strongly claimed him body, soul, and spirit. Crisp across the ice-ocean, smiling down summer sea came the voice:

O, young Mariner, down to the haven call your companions,
Launch your vessel and crowd your canvas,
And ere it vanishes over the margin
After it, follow it, follow the gleam.

And Vancouver heard the call and followed. While Vancouver, debonair and buoyant, is spreading eager sail across the Atlantic on the first tack of his questing journey, off in unknown Montreal amid the bales of peltries and trading trinkets of the Northwest Fur Company a second voice is speaking, and a

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