

## VICTORIA, B. C.

**T**O its own natural advantages, apparent to intelligent observers even before the axe had been laid to the first tree on its site, Victoria owes, not only its birth, but its growth in population, wealth and commercial importance. It has had no artificial advantages. No railway crossing a continent to give it life and commerce; no brilliant picturing of the beauty of its location, or the salubrity of its climate; no world-wide advertising of the untold values of the virgin mines and forests in the tributary country, or the wealth of its adjacent waters, are to be thanked by Victorians for the importance that their city has now attained in commerce, or the attractions it offers to people of wealth and refinement, in search of a delightful place of residence.

Fifty years ago, before immigration to the shores of the Pacific was attracted by the discovery of gold in California, Fort Victoria had an existence. The gold seekers were preceded by the fur dealers, and the first house in what is now the Queenly Capital of British Columbia, was that of one of the adventurous traders of the Hudson's Bay Company. As years rolled on, the importance of the post on the southern extremity of Vancouver Island became more and more recognized. Population increased; the Hudson's Bay Company, with its store-keepers, trappers and traders, forming one important class; while another, drawn from the ships of the Royal Navy, which paid frequent visits to the shores of Vancouver Island, more gradually became a noticeable feature of its society.

Then came news of gold discoveries in various parts of the country tributary to the struggling settlement, and then the influx of the army of the Argonauts. From California, where they tasted the sweet and the bitter of the gold fever, the treasure-seekers, with pick and shovel, poured into Victoria, equipped themselves, and passed on in hundreds and thousands to the Fraser, or to Cariboo. The history of Victoria's life during the "sixties," is the history of many places in the West, which gold finds have made famous in a day.

The mad search for riches made the village a city—and one, while the excitement was at its height, of considerable population and constantly changing character. After the fever came the reaction, which even more tried the young and struggling city. Many of its citizens, however, knew its worth, and Victoria passed the crisis safely, and commenced the steady, substantial growth, which has led to its recognition to-day as the wealthiest city for its size upon the continent.

### SITUATION.

Located at the southern extremity of Vancouver Island, the situation of Victoria is remarkable for its beauty,

and its adaptability to the purposes of commerce. The city rises gradually from the Straits of San Juan de Fuca, and from the land-locked harbor in which its extensive shipping lies in safety. The grades from the water-side, through the business section, to the suburbs are all gentle, and no high bluffs, alike dangerous and inconvenient, mar any of the wide and well kept streets. The harbor and shipping facilities cannot be surpassed. By the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars, private enterprise has constructed at the entrance to the harbor proper, docks capable of accommodating and sheltering in the roughest gale that blows, the largest steamships and sailing vessels to be found upon the waters of the Pacific. Their course from the ocean is a clear one, there being no dangerous and tortuous channels, and no shoals or rocks. At this outer dock, for which Mr. R. P. Rithet deserves the gratitude of Victorians, abundant water and excellent wharfage is afforded for shipping of any draught. The shore line of Victoria harbor, which is entirely protected by the natural conformation of the land, is about seven miles in length, good anchorage being found in many places, while well appointed wharves extend for a mile or more in almost unbroken succession. Here it is that dozens of steamers and sailing craft of all sizes are to be found at all seasons of the year, receiving or discharging freight. The great majority of the wharves are lighted by electricity, and all are provided with the most approved appliances for the quick despatch of business.

### BUSINESS PORTION.

Victoria's business streets are wide and handsome. The policy of the people has been not to concentrate the business life of the city upon any one street. Hence, Government, Fort, Yates, Douglas and Johnson streets are all bustling commercial thoroughfares, while a vast amount of substantial business is transacted daily with very little show on Wharf street, the mart of the wholesalers. Government street being the first business avenue, still retains first importance, while for massive structures of brick, stone and plate glass, Douglas street is rapidly attaining prominence. All of the business streets boast buildings of imposing design and the most modern arrangement, but the city differs materially from many others in the neighboring States, in that it is far from being built to meet a non-existent demand. Four and five story blocks are uncommon, but every foot of accommodation provided is utilized. In this particular point will be seen the conservative policy which has made the city what it is; the boom policy, so common to the cities of Puget Sound, is thoroughly lacking here; the business atmosphere is different; credits are maintained, and Eastern merchants