

INTRODUCTION

VANCOUVER ISLAND has an estimated area of 15,000 square miles, which includes numerous small islands lying near its shores, to all intents and purposes part of the main island. At its widest point it is eighty-six statute miles; at its narrowest point not quite nine miles, and its length from north to south approximates 285 statute miles. Its position off the western coast of British Columbia is a very strong one strategically, and gives it a foremost rank among the frontiers of Great Britain, whether from the standpoint of war or commerce.

It is the richest portion of the North American Continent in the variety and extent of its natural resources combined. Its timber and coal are practically inexhaustible. Iron deposits, running as high as 64 to 69 per cent. in magnetite, are found, and, as yet, have been comparatively undeveloped. It has produced, during the past five years, above half the copper that has come from the entire Pacific Coast District. Vancouver Island produces marble of splendid quality and in immense quantities—blue, grey, red, and variegated, as well as a superior grade of pure white marble. Granite, limestone, and building stone of various grades are all abundant, as well as brick, fireclay, cement, and slate.

Gold and silver have been found in paying quantities on the Island; the former in the river sands and on the sea-beaches principally, and the silver in the copper ores for the main part. Quicksilver and other minerals have also been discovered, but, excepting for coal and copper, mining is still in its infancy on the Island.

Agriculturally, the Island has vast possibilities. It is not, and never will be, a grain-growing country of wide areas like the middle Canadian Provinces, although the cereals all grow well on Vancouver Island. But for mixed farming, fruit-growing, poultry-raising, berry and vegetable raising, the raising of sheep, cattle, and hogs, and for dairy-farming, it is not to be excelled, and scarcely equalled, in fact, in any country. The climate is particularly equable, without any extremes of hot or cold weather. In the southern half the rainfall is moderate, and there are seldom any thunderstorms. In the districts farther north the rainfall is heavier, but there are no severities of climate in the winter season.

Excepting peaches and grapes, which grow in some localities, the entire Island is particularly adaptable to the raising of fruit. Apples, pears, plums, cherries, prunes, quinces, and other fruit flourish splendidly, the flavour and colouring of the different varieties being especially noticeable. Vancouver Island fruit has taken first prizes in national and international exhibitions, and experts declare that for apples, pears, cherries, and plums the Island cannot be excelled as a natural fruit-growing country.

For berries and vegetables the land is admirably suited, Vancouver Island strawberries and loganberries being famous. Vegetables grow to enormous size, and still do not get watery or hollow. All kinds of garden vegetables and field vegetables grow astonishingly, and irrigation is almost a thing unknown.

All grasses grow luxuriantly, and dairy-farming is a profitable occupation. Vancouver Island dairy stock runs almost exclusively to the highest grade, and high prices for butter from the principal Island creameries are maintained the year round.