

## THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORY.

No. 9.—BRITISH COLUMBIA.—THE MAINLAND.

By the Rev. Fr. McD. Dawson, Ottawa.

Much interest attaches and will long attach to BRITISH COLUMBIA. It is, without exception, the richest British possession on the Continent of America. It would not be too much even to say that there is no colony of the British Empire which abounds so much in all the elements of national wealth. Neither Australia nor California surpass, or even equal it in the production of gold. Its unrivalled timber, its safe harbours and inexhaustible fisheries give it an additional claim to our attention. The desire of the inhabitants of this great Pacific colony to be united with the Dominion of Canada, their admirable fitness for such union, and the prospect that it will be speedily effected, must also tend to awaken the most lively interest in the minds of all patriotic Canadians. A member of the British Columbian Legislative Council, the Hon. Mr. Holbrook, shortly before the recent prorogation of Parliament, communicated very valuable information concerning the resources and present state of the colony, in a lecture which he delivered before the House of Commons and the Senate at Ottawa. Since the close of the session, commissioners from British Columbia have arrived at the Canadian Capital, charged with negotiating a political union of their country with the Dominion. In this they will probably succeed, and without much loss of time. We may, therefore, find, and sooner than many suppose, that the rich Pacific colony has become a limb of the Confederated Provinces. This desirable consummation, indeed, may even come to pass before such important portions of the North-West Territory, as the Saskatchewan and McKenzie River countries have come practically, within the British North American Confederation.

In a former paper (No. 8) the insular portion of the colony was more particularly treated of. A few words will now be devoted to the mainland of British Columbia. This, it is admitted on all hands, is a mountainous and rugged region. But it is not without its fairer aspects. The western slope of the Rocky Mountains is more precipitous than their eastern declivity. The descent, consequently, to the shores of the Pacific ocean is more steep and rapid than the approaches from the great mountain chain to the alluvial valleys of the Saskatchewan. It is not difficult, therefore, to suppose, and, indeed, all travellers bear witness to the fact, that the rivers rush, with all the fury of mountain torrents, from their Alpine glacier sources, to the sea, leaving but little room along their rocky beds, or within the deep ravines which they have excavated, for such rich alluvial deposits as distinguish the plains which extend eastward from the Rocky Mountain range. There are, however, many favoured localities—fertile spots where the industrious husbandman could very profitably divide his time between the labours of the plough and the care of his flocks. There must, indeed, be every advantage of soil and climate generally throughout the colony, since it produces, in the utmost profusion, and without any appliance from the hand of man, all conceivable varieties of trees, shrubs, wild plants, and flowers of every description. When Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle were on their pilgrimage through the Rocky Mountains and had reached Jasper House, within a short distance of the highest land in the Arthabaska or Leather Head Pass, they speak of themselves as "standing in a perfect garden of wild flowers, which form a rich sheet of varied and brilliant colours, backed by dark green pines which clustered thickly round the bases of the hills. Above a zone of light green shrubs and herbage still retained their vernal freshness, and contrasted with the more sombre trees below, and the terraced rocks above, with their snow-clad summits. In the neighbourhood of Jasper House the flowers were very beautiful and various. Here grew cinerarias, in the greatest profusion, of every shade of blue, an immense variety of composites, and a flower like the *Lychnis*, with sepals of brilliant scarlet, roses, tiger lilies, orchids and vetches." (*The N. W. passage, &c., Viscount Milton and Dr. Cheadle, 7th edition, London, Page 223.*) Still nearer the height of land, and nearly on the same level, these gentlemen, following the Arthabaska, reached a beautiful little prairie, surrounded by fine hills, green almost to their summits, and over-topped by lofty snow-clad peaks. One of these, which has received the name of the Priest's Rock, was of curious shape, its apex resembling the top of a pyramid, and covered with snow. The prairie was richly carpeted with flowers, and a rugged excrescence upon it marked the site of the old Rocky Mountain Fort, Henry's House." (*id: ib: p. 241.*) Having passed the Myette, "we pursued our way," say Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle, "along the base of the pine-clad hills, now beginning to diverge more widely, and through scenery which bore a strong likeness to the beautiful vale of Todmorden, in Yorkshire. One of the snowy peaks closely resembled the pyramidal Priest's Rock, and white topped mountains rose up more thickly around us." (*p. 244.*) At one of the sources of the Myette, a small stream called Pipe-stone River, "the place for camping was very pretty, a tiny plain, covered with flowers and surrounded by the Rocky Mountains in all their grandeur." (*p. 245.*) They may not yet have been, strictly speaking, in British Columbia. But it cannot be affirmed that they were not; for after a few hours' travel at anything but railway speed, My Lord and the Doctor "had unconsciously passed the height of land and gained the water-shed of the

Pacific. "The ascent had been so gradual and imperceptible, that, until we had the evidence of the water-flood, we had no suspicion that we were even near the dividing ridge." Proceeding downwards towards the Pacific Ocean, they came upon a Lake well stocked with trout," where some Indians of the Shuswap tribe subsist chiefly by fishing. The learned travellers proceed to say that on the northern side of this lake "commenced verdant and swelling hills, the bases of loftier heights, which rose up further back in many a naked, ragged rock or ice-crowned peak." Notwithstanding all these fine descriptions, the same travellers express the opinion that British Columbia is not adapted for being an agricultural country. Making due allowance for the circumstance that Milton and Cheadle traversed the colony from the beautiful, verdant, fertile and flowery places just alluded to, near and around the place,—the highest spot in the mountain pass, where they first noticed the flowing of the waters westwards,—by the rocky and rugged and comparatively barren valley of the Fraser, it may be admitted that they speak truly, when they say that, generally, the country is not suited for agricultural purposes. All that can be said is that there are many favoured and exceptional spots, which if contiguous would form an immense tract of fertile, cultivable land, rejoicing in a genial climate. Three great mountain ranges fill the land,—the Rocky Mountains, the Cascade and the Blue Mountains. Of these ranges some raise their icy peaks to the height of sixteen thousand feet, and are the abode of perpetual winter, whilst to use the language of Moore,

"Summer, in a vale of flowers,  
Is sleeping rosy at their feet."

This great vale or plain, which might be cultivated throughout, extends no less than 1,300 miles from the ocean to the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, and varies from 250 to 400 miles in breadth. The Fraser itself is not all rock and barrenness. Whilst from Yale, where it becomes navigable to the ocean, it presents a very fertile valley some fifty miles in length; its upper regions produce grain crops yielding 26 to 36 bushels per acre. If the noble traveller and his learned companion had seen more of the Thompson, they would have been inclined to give a more favourable opinion of the agricultural capabilities of British Columbia; for it was given in evidence before the House of Commons (1857), that that fine river "flows through one of the most beautiful countries in the world." Further North, the undulating plateau which is situated between the Rocky and the Cascade Mountains descending to a much lower level than at its southern extremity, the climate is milder, less variable and more favourable to the raising of root and grain crops. If our travellers had made their way into Columbia by the northerly pass, so highly recommended as the best and safest and most practicable at all times, by Mr. Alfred Waddington, ascending the Peace River, &c., they would not have failed to express a more favourable view as the result of their observations. They appear also to consider those parts of the country which are covered with dense forests, as being irreclaimably wild. The presence of those fine forests, where all kinds of wood are to be found, and the best pine in the world, proves the opposite position. In Canada, where every kind of wood grows in its wildest luxuriance, are found the best and most productive farms as soon as the serious operation of hewing down the forest has been accomplished. Let us examine competent witnesses, and so learn whether the like results may not be looked for in the valleys and mountain slopes, undulating plains and more or less elevated plateau-lands of British Columbia. A careful examination of the evidence which was given before a select committee of the House of Commons in 1857, must satisfy every attentive reader that fertile and cultivable land abounds in the mainland portion of the colony, and not in detached patches here and there among the mountains, and by the banks of rivers, but in far extending tracts, which temptingly invite the art and labour of the husbandman. The more level country, which stretches no less than 13,000 miles in length, and from 250 to 400 in breadth, from the base of the Rocky Mountains to the ocean, might all be cultivated. This very fertile region enjoys an excellent climate, and according to the Hon. Mr. Holbrooke, potatoes of great size and excellent quality are easily raised.

Mr. Alfred Waddington gives a very favourable view of the great plain which lies between the Rocky Mountain and Cascade ranges. It is easy to conceive that the climate of this extensive region must be much milder and more promotive of vegetation towards its northern extremity, where the level is lower by several thousand feet, than that further south at the boundary of the United States. Millions of cattle could be reared and fattened in this region, where grazing is so good that the Americans even admit that they have no grounds for live stock that can compare with it. It is no uncommon thing to find a two-year old ox weighing 500 lbs. The settlers are only beginning to avail themselves of the facilities offered by these prairie lands. As yet they feed only some twenty thousand horned cattle, and about the same number of sheep. The only thing now wanting, insists the Hon. Mr. Holbrooke, to develop the great agricultural resources of British Columbia, is the presence of the iron-horse. And why should not that colony have railways even now? Why should it be required to wait until a great railway system extend over the British American continent, until men of science have determined whether the lines are to be laid along the Nipigon

valley or the shores of Hudson's Bay, or until experienced engineers have decided by which of the famous passes the formidable barrier of the Rocky Mountains must be finally surmounted?

The important subject of Agriculture has left no room to point out other great resources of the colony.

## THE LATE CHARLES DICKENS.

The loss sustained by the British nation in the death of so brilliant an author as Mr. Dickens can be looked upon as little less than a national calamity, and will be felt as keenly on this side the Atlantic as at home. In Canada and in the United States, as well as in England, Mr. Dickens had many personal friends and admirers, who will mourn the death of an open-hearted, kindly gentleman. But his loss will be equally deplored by thousands in every quarter of the world who have known and loved him for his writings only. He possessed the wonderful power of embodying himself in his writings, of making himself as it were personally known to his readers. To all of us who are acquainted with his works he appears in the light of a kindly generous friend—one who, like his own David Copperfield, strove and struggled against the difficulties of life, until by his own exertions he won for himself a reputation and a name; who ever bore up manfully in the midst of trouble, with the even-tempered fortitude of Mark Tapley; and when the reward of his patient labour came, when he was courted and feted, when his honours fell thick upon him, he conducted himself with that modesty and quiet humility which became him so well, and which have won for him the respect even of his detractors. Mr. Dickens' death took place on Friday evening of last week at his residence at Gadshill, near Rochester, in Kent. The account given by cable says that Mr. Dickens was entertaining a dinner party at his house at Gadshill. Miss Hogarth, who was seated near him, observed the evident signs of distress on his countenance. She then made the remark to him that he must be ill; to this Mr. Dickens replied:—"Oh, no; I have only got a headache; I shall be better presently." He then asked that an open window be shut. Almost immediately he became unconscious and fell back in his chair. He was conveyed to his room and medical aid summoned. Mr. Dickens still remained unconscious and never recovered animation. His son and daughters remained steadfastly at his bedside until his decease. It is stated that Mr. Dickens had several times of late complained that he experienced considerable difficulty in working, because his powers of application were becoming impaired. He also said that his thoughts no longer came to him spontaneously, as in former times. While at Preston he had need of medical aid and called upon a physician, who warned him not to continue reading, because he was doing so at the peril of his life. He neglected, however, his physician's warning. His last novel, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," and his duties as editor of *All the Year Round*, required his constant and close attention, and the result proved fatal to his already over-taxed energies. Paralysis supervened, and a few hours after the commencement of the attack Mr. Dickens breathed his last. He literally died in harness, and the unfinished novel will have additional interest as marking the exact spot where the brilliant intellect of its author ceased to work.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812, at Landport, near Portsmouth, in the county of Hampshire. His father, Mr. John Dickens, held a position in the Navy Pay Department, which he resigned at the close of the war with the United States, and came to London as a parliamentary reporter for one of the daily papers. Charles was placed in an attorney's office, but distaste for legal studies and a natural inclination to literature induced him to relinquish this position, and to attach himself to the *Morning Chronicle*, then at the height of its fame under the editorial management of Mr. John Black. While engaged in his ordinary reporter's work, young Dickens devoted himself to the study of shorthand writing, in order to qualify himself for parliamentary reporting. In "David Copperfield" he has left us an able and graphic description of the difficulties and trials that beset the path of the student of shorthand, an acquirement obtained only after the closest application and the most untiring patience. Mr. Black, observing the readiness and versatility of his *protégé*, gave him an opportunity of displaying his abilities by inserting in the *Chronicle* his "Sketches of English Life and Character," a series of racy articles on men, women, and things in general. These sketches were, in 1837, reprinted and published in a collected form, under the title of "Sketches by Boz." In these sketches Dickens gave the first evidence of the humour and graphic power, especially of delineating the ludicrous, which have since made his name so well-known. The freshness and originality of these sketches, as well as a certain dramatic power exhibited in "The Village Coquettes"—a comedy the young reporter produced about this time—attracted the attention of the eminent publishers, Messrs. Chapman and Hall, who requested "Boz" to furnish them with a story to appear in serial form. The result of this application was the publication of the "Posthumous Memoirs of the Pickwick Club." Never did any work of fiction have such a complete success. The easy, natural way in which the incidents were related, and the flow of humour throughout the whole story, took so thoroughly the fancy of the public that Dickens found himself suddenly raised to the highest pinnacle of fame. Pickwick became all the rage, and the "Papers," illustrated first by Seymour and afterwards by "Phiz," had an enormous sale. "In less than six months from the appearance of the first number of the 'Pickwick Papers,'" says the *Quarterly Review* of October, 1837, "the whole reading public were talking about them,—the names of Winkle, Wardle, Weller, Snodgrass, Dodson and Fogg, had become familiar to our mouths as household terms; and Mr. Dickens was the grand object of interest to the whole tribe of 'Leo-hunters,' male and female, of the metropolis. Nay, Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-draper's windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers' advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the streets, and the portrait of the author of 'Pelham' or 'Crichton' was scraped down or pasted over, to make room for that of the new popular favourite, in the omnibuses. This is only to be accounted for on the supposition that a fresh vein of humour had been opened; that a new and decidedly original genius had sprung up; and the comic curiosity reference to preceding English writers of the same order will show that, in his own peculiar walk, Mr. Dickens is not simply the most distinguished, but the first." And the writer upon whom the heaviest of heavy Reviews