

was then at its height, and the legend of the river of the West, brooding like a mist on the ocean and beckoning spectrally from many a wave-lashed headland, excited to intense rivalry, the greatest maritime nations of the globe in the race of discovery and empire. Therefore, in addition to the diplomatic business with which he was charged, Vancouver was instructed to examine the coast from the 35th to the 60th parallel, with reference to the existence of a maritime passage between the Pacific and Atlantic. Finding when he reached Nootka that the Spanish commission had not arrived, he resolved to make a survey of the Strait of Fuca and Admiralty Inlet. After an easy passage through Fuca and over the blue unchartered bosom of the Gulf of Georgia, he entered upon the tedious and difficult navigation of Johnstone Strait and at length came out again into the Pacific, 100 miles above Nootka. Although nothing came of all the sailing to and fro and swaggering sea talk that characterized the search for the western river and the Straits of Anian, yet, none will grudge the gallant captain the honor which so righteously attaches to his name, as a most intrepid seaman and eminent explorer. From this time till 1843, when the Hudson's Bay Company established an Indian trading post on the shores of Victoria harbor, the island remained untraversed by white men, and the Mainland was regarded as a vast and unexplored wilderness. During the succeeding 14 years but little progress was made; Victoria, then as now, the chief business centre, having only attained the humble position of a straggling hamlet of two or three hundred souls. Thus the winter of '57 wore away; but as the memorable spring of '58 opened, the returning birds sang the resurrection of the year with charming *esprit*. They were right. It was, indeed, eminently fitting that "the days of gold" should be thus signally announced. The yellow glitter of the precious grains picked up by a small body of prospectors on the banks of the Thompson and Bonaparte rivers, on their way to the far famed Fraser, had grown into a consuming flame that was sweeping over the world. Gold! There was music in the word and elysium in its import. The bosoms of the sturdy pioneers of the west, lightly bared to every danger, were not proof against the subtle enemy within the walls--the *suavi fames auri* deprecated and denounced by Roman philosophers. Hither they came in swarms. The plow was left in the furrow, and the woodman's axe ceased to ring in the dim corridors of the forest. The bronzed and grizzled frontiersman and the gay young Corydon went out together, for one dream inspired all--riches swift, sure and countless! In the brief space of four months 20,000 souls poured into the harbor. This motley throng included gamblers, thieves and ruffians with not a few of a higher moral grade. Innumerable tents covered the ground in and around Victoria, far as the eye could reach, and speculation in town lots attained a pitch of unparalleled extravagance.

But a change soon came over the fair dream of these wooers of the fickle Goddess. Sombre and portentous clouds began to raise and darken the erstwhile golden horizon. Unlike the rivers with which these adventurers were acquainted, the Fraser and its tributaries begin to swell in June and do not reach their lowest ebb till winter. The few, therefore, who happened to enter the mining region in March or April succeeded in extracting large quantities of gold from the bars or benches not yet covered with water. Ignorant of this periodic raise and

fall of the streams, the mass of immigrants who arrived later, found the auriferous parts under water. Their patience becoming exhausted waiting for the uncovering of the banks, many of them, crestfallen and disappointed, returned to Victoria. An absurd impression that the river never did fall began to prevail and thousands of them losing heart went back to San Francisco heaping execrations on the country and everything that was English. The press of California took up the refrain and effectually put an end to further immigration. In consequence of these disparaging accounts of British Columbia, published far and wide, large sums of money sent up from San Francisco for investment were shipped back again; and whole cargoes of goods, ordered during the heat of the excitement were thrown upon the hands of merchants, and croaking was the order of the day.

At length, however, the river did fall; and the return of successful miners to Victoria with bags of dust and nuggets rallied the fainting hopes of the community, and they were regarded as walking advertisements that the country was safe. A healthy relation between supply and demand in every department was gradually effected. During the first six months of mining operations over \$700,000 were taken out. For a few intelligent and persevering men, these facts and figures had weight. But amateur miners, romantic speculators, and whiskey bummers, could not, by the most attractive representations, be detained in the country, and it was wisely ordered that it should be so. Out of the tens of thousands who arrived in '58 not more than 1500 remained till the following year. Nor were those who came in '61 and '62, as a rule, adapted to the pursuit of mining in a wilderness. The chief misfortune connected with the influx of population at this period was that it comprised an excessive proportion of clerks, retired army officers, prodigal sons, and a host of other romantic nondescripts, who indulged visions of sudden wealth obtainable with scarcely more exertion than is usually put forth in a pleasure excursion. The vague imaginations with which they left home were soon dissipated, when, on the termination of the voyage, they discovered that 500 miles lay between them and Cariboo--a distance which must be passed over muddy roads and frowning precipices, with whatever necessaries might be required for the trip strapped to their shoulders. Hundreds went half way to the mines and returned in despondency; hundreds more remained in Victoria, and were only saved from starvation by the liberality of more prosperous citizens. Of those who went to the mines, one-third made independent fortunes, one-third netted several thousand dollars, and one-third from a variety of causes, were unsuccessful.

Of course, placer mining or "poor man's diggings" was all that was then attempted. When the auriferous benches had been worked over, few cared to prospect further, and consequently the great mass returned, declaring in the simple and sententious language of the miner, that the placers were "played out." Of those who remained in the country and continued to mine, or engaged in other pursuits and industries, there are but few who have not an ample competence while many are possessed of affluence.

In 1866, the Mainland and Vancouver Island, formerly separate colonies, were politically united, and in 1871 were admitted into the confederation as one of the seven Provinces of the Dominion of Canada.

Notwithstanding the many grave hindrances to her advancement, such as the distance from the Euro-