

have eaten several gaps into the line of sea-cliffs of which we have already made mention. Indeed, there can scarcely be a doubt but that Vancouver Island itself is a huge fragment detached from the mainland. In numerous instances, these inlets—or ‘canals,’ as they have come to be called—penetrate almost to the centre of the island, and many of them, from opposite sides of the coast, approach to within a few miles of each other. Thus, Esquimalt Harbour itself is but seven miles distant from the Canal de Haro; and many similar instances occur. They are all deep and free from obstruction, and, in a more extended state of agriculture and commerce, their natural facilities would be highly important. These harbours and inlets—in common with the neighbouring seas and gulfs—absolutely swarm with herrings, salmon, mackerel, and cod. A fine description of sturgeon also is found. But the fish of these coasts are an element of so much importance that we must again recur to the subject when we reach the mainland.

The most important production, however, of Vancouver Island at the present time is coal. A fair average coal has been discovered at Nanaimo Harbour, opposite to the mainland, and on two adjacent small islets, known as Newcastle Island and Douglas Island. Here two seams, of from six to eight feet in thickness, have been worked at an average depth of fifty feet from the surface. Vessels drawing sixteen feet of water can approach within a few yards of the pit's mouth; while the harbour itself is excellently sheltered, and can safely be entered by ships of considerable burden. The coal is little if at all inferior to the coarser descriptions of North of England coal, and has already entered into extensive use by the river and coasting steamers of the mainland, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the British and United States men-of-war from time to time visiting the coast. The want of a suitable coaling station on the northern portion of the Pacific has for some time been severely felt. Indeed, throughout the whole of that vast ocean—both on its waters and along its new and rapidly increasing settlements—a great and still growing demand for coal has arisen. River steamers now ply on all the great streams from the Colorado to the Fraser; while the various cities and towns springing into existence along their banks are becoming large consumers. The recent introduction, too, of steam-machinery into gold-mining has much increased the demand. The single port of San Francisco alone receives as much as 14,000 tons per month, and British Columbia gives promise of becoming an equally large consumer. Nor has the demand on the high seas received a less proportionate increase. It is but a very few years since an ocean-