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THE CITY OF THE BLACK DIAMOND—NANAIMO

By Rev. J. R. Robertson, M.A., B.D.

Long, long ago, or as the Indian chief would say, "many thousands of years ago," numerous bands of Indians harbored in the beautiful harbor shores of the most beautiful island on the Pacific Coast. In one of these harbors there lived some five bands that in course of time became welded into a kind of loose confederacy, named "Sne-ny-mo." The word means "the whole" or "a big, strong tribe." With the lapse of time and the laws of euphony "Sne-ny-mo" came to stand for the locality of this "big, strong tribe" and to change its form first to "Ne-ny-mo," then to "Na-ny-mo," and then to the modern Englishized form, Nanaimo.

In the year 1853 officers of the Hudson's Bay Company surveyed the harbor of Nanaimo and Departure Bay. The old block bastion, still standing, was built in that year. Also in May of the same year H. M. S. Virago obtained many more soundings, which were added to the chart. On the War Office map of 1859 the settlement in the harbor is marked "Colvilletown," and up to that year letters to this settlement were usually addressed "Colville Town, Nanaimo, V. I." This super-imposed name was, however, gradually dropped and has not been used since 1860.

The "big, strong tribe" of ancient days has largely passed away and only a remnant remains. About 170 at most are found today of the same people and place connecting the historic present with the romantic past. Their reserve at the south of the city is not only a choice site in the harbor but one of the most magnificent sites to be seen anywhere. Those that remain are no longer pagans, they are largely civilized, and many of them are professing Christians. Their religious life has been under the care of the Methodist Church for some fifty years.

The "big, strong tribe" of the present day on the shores of the same "Sne-ny-mo" harbor—some of the old-time Indians still hold to the old-time pronunciation—is a city of 10,000 people, the fourth city in the province, "the Hub of Vancouver Island," "the City of the Black Diamond," etc., etc.

The interest of the tourist is first caught by the sight of the old Bastion. It can be seen from the deck of the steamer coming into the harbor, it can be seen from the business centre of the city, it can be seen from Hospital Hill.