

VANCOUVER ISLAND

By A COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVE.

Vancouver Island is separated from the mainland of British Columbia and the state of Washington by Queen Charlotte Sound and the Straits of Georgia and San Juan de Fuca. The Victoria Colonist has the following to say about its early history.

In 1592 Juan de Fuca sailed into the straits which bear his name and he was probably the first white man who set foot on Vancouver Island. Juan Perez anchored in Nootka Sound in 1774, Captain James Cook followed him in 1778, and in 1788 Capt. Meares established a trading post there which was afterwards seized by Don Estevan Martinez, in the name of the King of Spain, but restored to Great Britain in 1795. Captain George Vancouver, to whom was entrusted the arranging of details of the Spanish evacuation of Nootka, made a complete survey of the straits in 1792-3 and established the existence of Vancouver Island—previously it had been accepted as a portion of the mainland. Although visited by many adventurers in search of furs in the intervening years it was not till 1842 that a permanent settlement was made at Comox, of Fort Rupert, (now Victoria) by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1849 the Island was created a crown colony, which was granted representative government in 1856. Two years later Vancouver Island joined with New Caledonia (the present British Columbia mainland) and the two were welded by royal proclamation into the crown colony of British Columbia which became a province of the Dominion of Canada in 1871.

The coast line is indented with deep bays and long arms of the sea running miles inland, many of them affording safe anchorage for the largest ocean vessels. The island is 255 miles in length and 80 miles at its greatest breadth, containing an area of 16,400 square miles. This is covered for the most part with magnificent forests of fir, and it is not uncommon to see logs some of these trees grow to enormous size, especially the cedar and Douglas fir, and it is not uncommon to see logs 200 to 300 feet long, ranging from 6 feet to 50 feet in circumference at the base. There are saw mills at several points throughout the island, but with one or two exceptions these cut only enough lumber to supply the local trade. In addition to the timber limits held by these mills and by speculators there are large extents of fine timber still to be had and the facilities for manufacturing lumber are so very favorable that it is surprising there are not more mills being operated. The largest mill on the island, and in fact one of the largest on the Pacific coast, is situated at Chemainus, a town on the line of the railway, 52 miles from Victoria, where there is a very fine harbor. The mill has a capacity of about 350,000 feet per day, giving employment to about 200 hands. The lumber is practically all shipped to foreign parts, as the double handling, rendered necessary on account of the lack of direct railway accommodation, prevents shipping to western or eastern Canadian points. It would be expected that land which can produce such enormous trees as are found here would be very rich and where clearings have been made and crops sown this has been found to be the case as large yields have resulted. Farming operations, however, are still conducted on a very small scale, due largely to the labor and expense necessary to clear the land of the heavy growth of timber. Many farms, or ranches, have been taken up and parts of them are being cultivated with very satisfactory results. Grains and vegetables of almost all kinds do well and such fruits as plums, cherries, apples, pears and the smaller varieties grow to good size and mature well, while many other varieties are grown with varying success. A ready market at good prices is at all times found close at hand and as the lumber and mining resources are further developed a much larger market will, of course, be created. R. E. Gosnell, writing in his Year Book of British Columbia, has the following to say regarding the agricultural conditions on the British Columbia lower mainland, applying also to Vancouver Island:

A decidedly humid atmosphere, a good deal of rain during the winter months, no extremes of heat or cold, a long growing season, cool nights and profuse vegetation. It is scarcely necessary to explain the

effects of such conditions—tree growth is generally greatly stimulated; roots and vegetables flourish; the softer grains, such as oats and barley, yield largely and grow to great perfection; grasses are abundant; fruits, such as pears, cherries and plums and all small fruits are practically indigenous to the soil and yield enormously; flowers, especially roses, and all the good old-fashioned varieties, are profuse bloomers, and shrubbery is dense. It is a country of great growth, and where fertile soil deposits exist no better results can be had anywhere. Unfortunately, the beneficial effect of the climate in contributing such favorable conditions is accompanied by corresponding disadvantages in the creation of dense forests and thick and heavy undergrowth, in encouraging the growth of weeds and in the propagation of insect pests and plant diseases once they have found a foothold. Under average conditions, to clear a farm for cultivation requires much more labor than it does to keep it in a clean, healthy condition. Eternal vigilance is the price of immunity from weeds second growth and insect pests. On the other hand extensive farming gives wonderful results.

The government has been taking steps of late with a view to the extermination of these insect pests and has been able to do considerable good in this regard.

In the mining world Vancouver Island has long been known for its coal deposits and during the last few years its metalliferous ores have been attracting attention. The first recorded discovery of coal was made in 1835 on the east coast near the north end of the island. About 1850 another deposit was found at Nanaimo and after a few years the Vancouver Coal company was formed to operate it and it is still being worked by the New Vancouver Coal, Mining and Land company, on an extensive scale. In 1869 the Wellington mine, near this point, was discovered by the late Hon. Robt. Dunsmuir, and has been steadily worked until last year, when it was closed down on account of the exhaustion of the seam. The Union Colliery company's mine, near Comox, was discovered in 1870. This covers 300 square miles and is one of the best steam coals in the world, and is also a good coking coal. It has been worked since 1887 and is said to be practically inexhaustible. The Extension mine, near Nanaimo, though only started in 1898, is one of the largest producers on the island, some 500 hands being employed. Estimates made of the amount of coal in this deposit show that there is sufficient known of now to last for 35 years, shipping at the rate of 2,000 tons a day, and it is confidently expected that other bodies of coal will be discovered as work proceeds.

It has been proven beyond a doubt that there are extensive deposits of gold, silver, copper and iron throughout this island, but until the last two or three years little or nothing has been done to prove the value of these. In the locality tributary to the San Juan River, in the Alberni district, along the Bear and Elk rivers and in many other localities gold quartz has been discovered in paying quantities. Placer gold has also been found in most of the streams and considerable sums of money have been recovered in the past and even yet Chinese are making fair wages in some localities. Copper leads carrying gold and silver in paying quantities have been found in several localities and large deposits of iron have also been located, but while many of these are doubtless rich properties it seems to be a difficult matter to get the capital necessary to open them up. Some progress is being made toward this end, however, and after two or three mines have reached the dividend paying stage it will have the effect of bringing in the capital necessary to work other claims. The Lenora mine, on Mount Sicker, has been shipping ore for a year or more and over 7,000 tons have been sent to the smelter. The main ore body is well defined for at least 700 feet, ranging in width from five to thirty-five feet. A large amount of development work has been done in the way of tunnels, cross cuts,

etc., exposing an immense quantity of ore. Assays are said to have shown as high as \$130 in gold, or \$225 in all, to the ton, taking the gold, silver and copper. Near this are the Tynee and the Key City claims on which considerable work has been done, more in the way of development.

The Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway runs from Victoria to Wellington, a distance of seventy-eight miles, touching at several towns and cities.

The first and most important of these is Victoria. The foundation of this city may be said to have been laid in 1843 when the Hudson's Bay Co. established a fort on the present site. For a number of years no further progress was made towards building up a town, but in 1862 some streets were surveyed and by 1864 the population had gradually increased to 3,000. At times the population was greatly in excess of this figure, as the excitement caused by the discovery of gold in the Cariboo country and on some of the creeks on Vancouver Island and the mainland attracted large numbers of adventurers who came to Victoria to outfit so that on these occasions particularly, this was a very busy place. At the present time Victoria is one of the most important cities on the Pacific slope of North America. It has a goodly number of wholesale establishments which are on undisputedly a financial footing and which transact a large business all over British Columbia. There are a number of important manufacturing interests also, such as soap works, paint works, biscuit and confectionery factories, sawmills, foundries, oatmeal mill, etc. The returns for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1900, show that the total value of goods entered at this port was \$3,389,811 and the exports amounted to \$2,051,954. The transactions of the Victoria clearing house for 1900 amounted to \$32,295,000. The business men here are badly handicapped by lack of railway connection with the mainland, but once this is established goods can be shipped at much less expense and with greater dispatch. Good reason has been given for entertaining the hope that this railway accommodation will be provided in the near future.

It would be hard, if not impossible, to find a more desirable place of residence than at Victoria, and the person who could find fault with the climate and situation here need hardly expect to be satisfied in this world. It is a beautiful spot at almost all times of the year, but particularly so during the spring and summer months, when the wealth of flowers, trees and shrubbery is such that the air is almost too heavy with their odor. Nearly every dwelling in the city is surrounded by a garden, and, whether large or small, the best use is made of the space, many of the places being exceedingly beautiful. There are many lovely recreation haunts in the near vicinity, principal among which are Beacon Hill park, The Gorge, Oak Bay, Esquimalt harbor, which is the headquarters for the Pacific squadron; Mount Tolmie and many other places which can be easily reached by carriage, bicycle, in boats or on foot. Although Beacon Hill park may not contain as many acres as some other places can claim, still it makes up for any lack there may be in this respect by its own beauty, as well as by the magnificent view of ocean, mountain and valley which it commands and by the invigorating freshness of the ocean breezes. Victoria has many fine buildings, chief among which are the provincial government buildings. There is a total disregard here for the rules usually governing the building up of a modern city, the largest and finest buildings being in some cases surrounded by old, tumble-down shacks which have a tendency to give visitors a wrong impression of Victoria.

Leaving Victoria the first town reached is Duncan, 40 miles distant. It is the centre for a large agricultural district, where farming operations are very successfully carried on, vegetables, fruits and grains all producing large yields. Dairying has for years received a large proportion of the farmer's attention, and as a result a large creamery was erected at Duncan some four years ago, the output of which has been steadily increasing and last year over 71,000 lbs. of butter were made. This locality has such a pleasing appearance and gives to the visitor such a sense of quiet and comfort that he is loath to leave. The district is well laid out with good roads and many pleasant drives are to be had. Then too, this is a famed resort for fishermen and

hunters. There are two or three lakes and several streams in the vicinity of Duncan which furnish good trout fishing and in the woods and hills there is both large and small game. Near this place there are some of the best timber limits on the island and a saw mill is being operated about three miles from the town. Another source of revenue is the Mount Sicker mines, from which a considerable amount of business is already received and this is certain to increase in volume as the mining operations are extended.

Chemainus is 12 miles further on the line, having been started only about a year ago. This town is located on Oyster Harbor, and is the shipping point of the coal from the Extension mines. A large proportion of the men working in these mines live in Ladysmith and the coal company run special trains to and from the mines for their accommodation. Magnificent wharves and bunkers have been built and while a large shipping trade is already done, it is expected that this will be greatly increased before long. The business men have hopes of securing other enterprises which will bring trade to this place, but even though these should not materialize they have a sure source of revenue from the business resulting from the operations of the coal company.

Nanaimo is the last point of importance on this line, and is well to the top among the cities of British Columbia as regards size and volume of business transacted. It has a population of about 5,000, and is particularly well favored in regard to its retail stores, which are large and are stocked with goods of the best variety. It has a charming location, being built on rising ground overlooking a very beautiful harbor, which affords safe anchorage for all classes of vessels. The town itself contains many pretty houses and gardens, although there does not appear to have been a great deal of attention given to this, many of the residents, no doubt, being well satisfied with the natural beauties of the place. Some of the buildings are large and substantial, particularly among the business houses, and the post office and court house would be a credit to any place. The coal mining industry forms almost the entire support of Nanaimo. This industry has assumed enormous proportions and vessels may be seen almost any day loading with coal for foreign shipment. This is the coaling station for the Pacific squadron. A good agricultural district surrounds Nanaimo, but it would seem that this is not made use of to the extent that the conditions would warrant and large supplies of farm produce have to be imported which might easily be supplied from the adjoining district.

There are several manufacturing industries at this place, including a foundry, saw mill, shoe factory, three breweries, an aerated water factory, etc. There are electric light, gas, telephone and water works systems, the latter having been recently acquired by the city. A board of trade which was formed last year has been doing good work.

Progress in the development of the resources of Vancouver island has been very slow, but during the last year or two a step in the right direction has been taken and it would seem as if the residents have at last awakened to a realization of the vast wealth of mine and forest by which they are surrounded.

A drunken man was once lodged in the cell of a Scotch country police station, when he made a tremendous noise by kicking the cell door with his heavy, hob-nailed boots. The constable who had charge of the police station, going to the cell door, opened it a little and said, "Man, ye micht pit aff yer buits, and I'll gie them a hick rub, so that ye'll be respectable-like when ye come up afore the bailie the morn." The prisoner, flattered at the request, at once complied, and only saw his mistake when the constable shut the door upon him, saying coolly: "Ye can kick awa' noo, my man, as long as ye like."