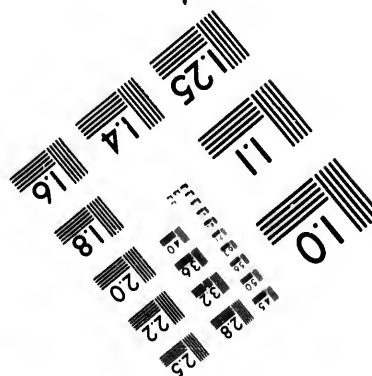
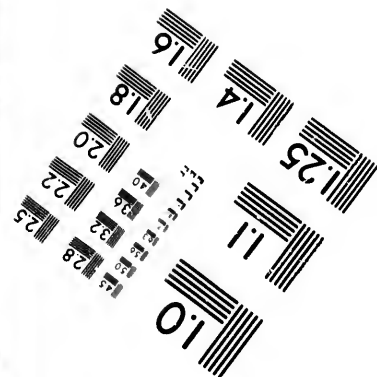
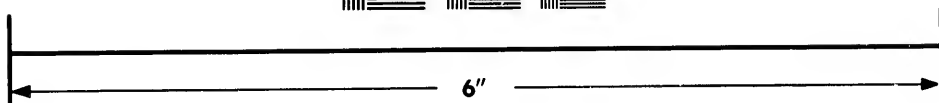
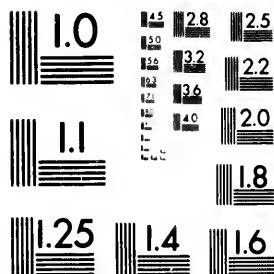


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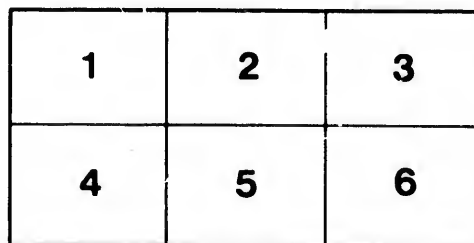
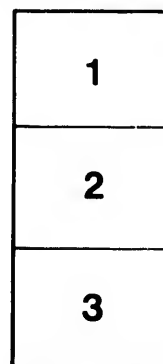
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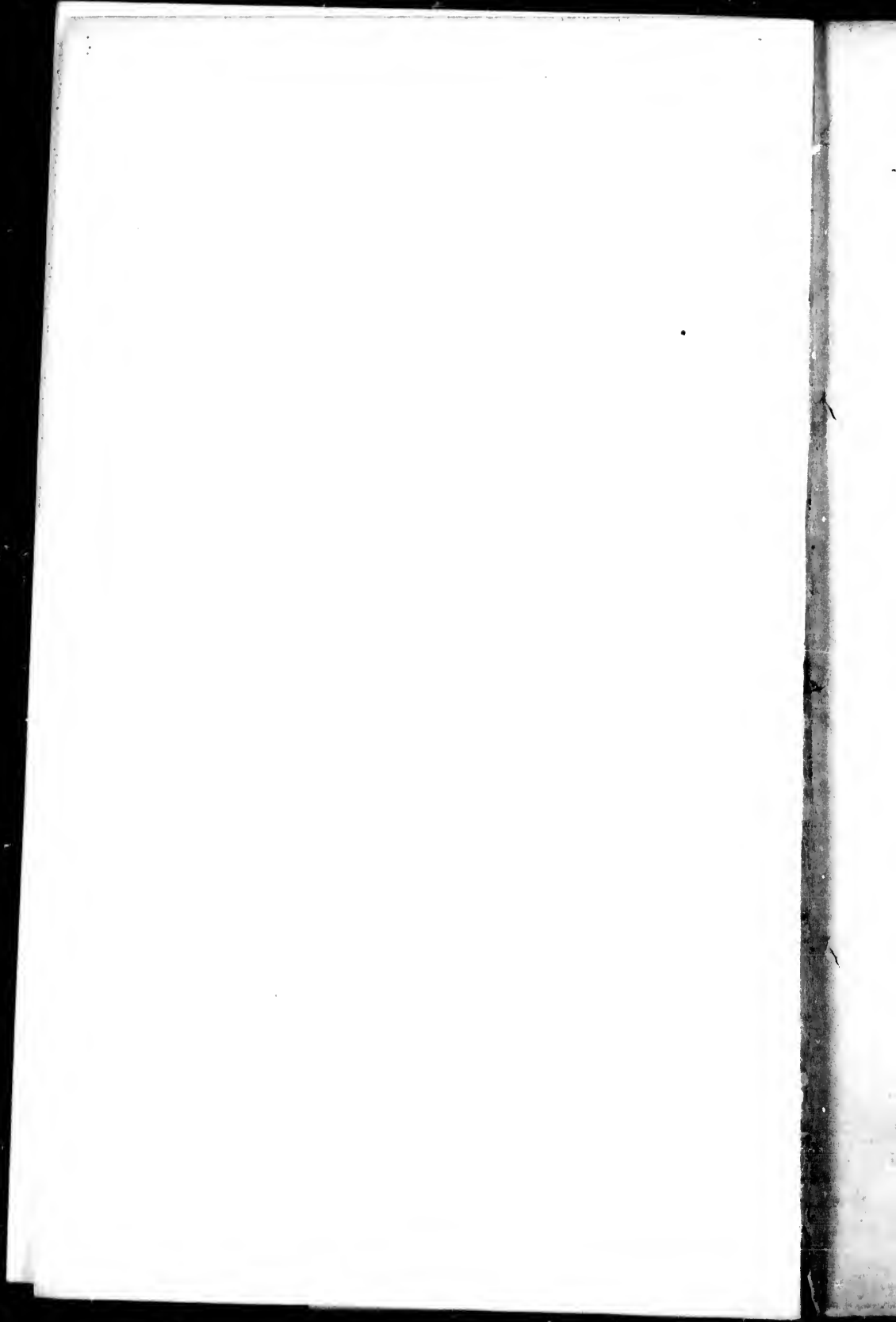
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VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

THE N.W. COLONY.

BY JAMES EDWARD FITZ GERALD, ESQ.

[Reprinted from the "Colonial Magazine" for August, 1848.]

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VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

THE NEW COLONY.

ENGLAND ought to know something about Colonisation. She has made greater Colonies and spoilt greater Colonies, kept greater Colonies and lost greater Colonies, than any other nation in the world. And yet passing strange it is, that our whole system, up to the present moment, has been little better than a succession of experiments; as yet neither theory nor principle has been deduced.

But a change is approaching; on all sides a muttering of many voices is heard: the mass is thinking and speaking everywhere of *Colonisation* and the *Colonial Office*—that is, of making Colonies, and of governing them when made. There is a deep and active conviction awake, that the great task of this generation allotted to the English race is *Colonisation*.

The same stern necessity which drove men forth in the first ages of the world to inherit the earth, is pressing upon us, and will till the end of time influence the destinies of mankind. Our task now is, to fit and adjust the civilisation of the age to the task of Emigration—to make such use of the materials we possess, and especially of the experience we have, or ought to have, gained, as to ensure at once success to those who leave, and benefit to those who cling to, the old country.

Now, it is admitted by all that there have been great faults committed in all our present Colonies; and it is fancied that, had we to begin over again, we should manage matters in a very different way. Every successive Colonial Secretary defends himself by throwing the blame on his predecessors, and showing how much better matters are managed in the present day. "If we had had the affair in our hands from the first all would have been right!" It is with some curiosity, then, and with not a little anxiety, that we hear *a new Colony is about to be founded*. This is an event of the deepest importance in such a moment as the present. It is the evidence of our advance or retrogression in the science of Colonisation; we therefore earnestly beg the attention of our readers to the present narrative.

The public have been informed by the Prime Minister, that it is in the contemplation of the Government to give Vancouver's Island to the Hudson's Bay Company. It is most likely that many who read this in

the newspaper reports of the parliamentary proceedings a few days ago, did not even know where Vancouver's Island was situated.

Take a map of the world and spread it before you. Now, cast your eye on the North American shore of the Pacific Ocean. In north latitude, 49° - 50° , you will see, embedded in the coast, a long narrow island. In shape and in magnitude it is much like the part of England lying south of the Thames and the Severn, and the line joining them; except that its length is placed from N. W. to S. E. That is Vancouver's Island. Now, before you shut the map, remark the geographical position of this island. First, it occupies very much the same position with respect to the Pacific which Great Britain does with respect to the Atlantic Ocean. Next, we observe that the whole of the Pacific Ocean is studded all over with islands, abounding in every species of tropical production, whose riches are at present unknown and unsought. The internal traffic of the Pacific has not as yet commenced: that traffic depends on a simple natural law—the beneficial exchange of the productions of one climate for those of another. Now the north-western shores of the Pacific are occupied by races who are not likely, by any rapid advance of civilisation, to effect the development of this traffic. The north-eastern shores are still wilds and forests, occupied only by a few tribes of savages.

When the time shall come, in the history of mankind, that the American coast west of the Rocky Mountains shall be peopled by a hardy, enterprising, persevering race of men, then will the waters between Asia and America become, what the waters of the Western Hemisphere have long been, the high road of commerce. It is a hard task to keep the imagination in check when we endeavour to penetrate the future history of the Pacific Ocean.

Taking into account the coincidence of climate and geographical position, it is not a wild or unseasonable speculation to assert that the race who make their home on the north-west shores of the American continent, will—if at least they be equal to the great task before them—become the lords of the Pacific Ocean.

Now turn from the map of the world to a good map of the north-west coast of America, especially to Vancouver's charts, if you can borrow them—you are not likely to possess them, as they are very rare—you will then get a more detailed view of the island itself; you will then see that it lies embedded in the coast, that it approaches close to the continent at its northern end, the channel between them being, in some parts, little more than a mile in width, whilst on the south side it may be twenty miles across, and more. You will also perceive that its sides are indented with a multitude of harbours, there being scarcely any part of the island which does not afford good shelter for shipping; that the whole eastern shore is, in fact, washed by an inland sea, surrounded by excellent harbours in all directions. Taking a more extended view of the coast of the continent, you will learn that there are no harbours at all, from California northwards, until you come to the Straits of San Juan de Fuca, which separates Vancouver's Island from the main land; so that the whole of that country, however well adapted it may be for agricultural purposes, is absolutely precluded from the benefits of direct commerce. When you arrive at the Straits of San Juan de Fuca, and sail up

them eastward, you come to two branches of water, one to the southward, forming all those splendid harbours which Puget's Sound, &c., present, and which are now in the United States territory; the other to the northward, forming the continuation of the channel between the island and the mainland.

Before we leave the subject of geography, we may as well notice the character of the coast further north than Vancouver's Island, considered as eligible for habitation. It presents some of the most singular features in the world, but is probably more like the coast of Norway than anything else European. Long narrow *fjords* run up long distances into the land, often so deep, that, when your vessel is lashed to the trees on shore, the deep sea-line will find no bottom; sometimes so overshadowed by mountains, that a plumb-line of perhaps three or four thousand feet, suspended from the summit of a cliff, would just touch the surface. For several hundred miles along the coast there are long narrow islands, situated close to the shore, forming there with channels such as those we have described running up into the land, so that you may pursue your course in a boat for hundreds of miles along the coast, in deep and smooth water, without ever meeting the sea from the ocean. In the vista of futurity we can see these wonderful canals ploughed up as incessantly as the Thames or the Hudson, by the paddles or the screws of the steamers, which will one day convey the produce and the passengers between the settlements along their shores.

Returning, however, to the geographical situation of Vancouver's Island, we see that it not only possesses the most important harbours on the north-west coast of the American continent, but that it commands, for eighty miles, the Straits which lead to those in the territory of the United States. It follows, then, of necessity, that this island must become the focus of all the trade which shall, at any future period, flow in the north of Western America.

Men will not always circumnavigate the globe to convey merchandise from one point to another. They will not take goods round Cape Horn, or the Cape of Good Hope, on the way from Canton to New York. The oriental trade to America will, *infallibly*, some day, find its way across the American continent. The time may be nearer than we like to predict, who shrink from the charge of extravagant enthusiasm; but whenever it does arrive, the Straits of Juan de Fuca will become the funnel through which it will be poured into the New World. For the same reason that Tyre or Venice rose to be great on the earth, will the people who dwell around those straits become mighty in their generation.

Vancouver's Island, then, is a station of unspeakable importance, because it has the reasonable prospect of a great future. We proceed, however, to give some information respecting the island itself, as regards its capabilities for affording support and prosperity to the first Colonists. There is not much to be found about it in books. Nootka Sound, a splendid harbour on the western side, was visited by Captain Cook. He has left some description of it, as well as drawings of the country in the vicinity of the harbour. Mears has, likewise, left a description of this spot, and Vancouver spent a considerable time there. In later times, many parts of the coast have been visited by the servants of the Hudson Bay Company, and by officers of the navy. The writer of this paper

has conversed with many persons who have been in Vancouver's Island; some who have spent many years in the vicinity of its shores. In their reports there is no difference of opinion whatsoever respecting its great natural capabilities; and several of those who have been there, some who have been servants of the Hudson Bay Company, some who are officers in Her Majesty's navy, express their anxiety to join a Colony, were it possible to establish one in the island. The character of the climate is similar to that of England; but it is unquestionably milder in the winter. Snow is said rarely to lie on the lowlands, and for no great length of time even on the hills, with the exception of some mountains in the north. The expression of a gentleman of unquestionable veracity to the author was, "It was never so cold in the winter but that we took off our coats to play quoits." There is a good deal of misapprehension respecting the climate of this coast. Persons generally suppose that the climate is similar to that of Canada, and that consequently at so high a latitude as 50° it must be intensely cold; but even in Canada it is a common remark that a degree *west* is as good as a degree *south* in moderating the climate. As soon, however, as you pass the Rocky Mountains, you get into a different atmosphere altogether, and one differing little from that of the west of Europe in corresponding latitudes; and this even now, when the country is for the most part covered with vast and impenetrable forests, which have the effect of lowering the temperature.

The general character of Vancouver's Island is mountainous, but it is extremely varied. In parts towards the north of the island there are high mountains; in the south there are extensive plains of rich alluvial soil. A gentleman who had been in the Hudson's Bay Company's service, once informed the author that he had walked over a plain of some miles in extent, on the south side of the island, which had not a blade of grass growing, owing to its having lately been burnt by the Indians, and that a few months afterwards, on going over the same spot, he found the grass up to his middle in height. Another gentleman informed me that in the north-east of the island, after penetrating through an almost impassable forest, he arrived at a beautiful plain, of several miles in extent, covered with high grass, and interspersed with oaks and other trees, having much the appearance of a nobleman's park in this country, and traversed by three streams of good water. A very small part of this island has yet been investigated; but when such tracts as those mentioned have been alighted on at the very outset, as it were, of discovery, there is every reason to believe that the country presents every conceivable advantage for agricultural settlement. A few years ago the Hudson's Bay Company made a small establishment on the south-east corner of the island, and brought some land into cultivation, and they found that all English agricultural produce is readily obtained from the soil. Corn of various kinds, fruit, vegetables, and cattle, all succeed equally well. There is no reason to apprehend any obstacle in the way of a settlement arising from the savages; those who have lived amongst them say they are very easily managed. When Her Majesty's frigate "America" was lying in Port Discovery, the Governor of Port Victoria, in Vancouver's Island, was asked to come over, and they sent a boat for him, but he preferred coming in a canoe, rowed by a number of Indians,

and he returned with them alone in the night. The Indians are few in number, and migratory in their habits. They live chiefly by fishing and hunting, and rarely cultivate the soil. Their great propensity is thieving, at which they are singularly expert. When one of Her Majesty's vessels was lying in the Straits, some of the Indians actually began to strip the copper off the bottom of the ship, whilst others were exchanging articles with the crew. They are treacherous, as all savages are, but seem to be readily propitiated. In Vancouver's time they were living on terms of great friendship with the Spaniards, and hailed the prospect of a permanent settlement of the white men with pleasure.

To complete the list of advantages which Vancouver's Island would offer to a Colony, we should mention that the woods abound with deer and other game; and the water is teeming with salmon, which is described as being in greater abundance here than in almost any other part of the world. It might be made an article of considerable export to the Sandwich Islands and to China. Exports would also be found at once, in timber and spars, which are here the largest and finest in the world.

But whatever interest may have attached to Vancouver's Island, formerly, as a site for a Colony, events of late occurrence have made the question one of the greatest importance. These events are as follows:—Last year the Government of the United States, with that active intelligence which distinguishes their policy in these matters, determined to adopt some expeditious mode of keeping up communications with their rapidly-increasing settlements in the Oregon Territory. A contract was therefore entered into with Messrs. Aspinwall, of New York, to undertake the conveyance of a mail in steam-vessels, between Panama and the Columbia River. This contract is to last for ten years. With the same object arrangements have been made for securing a transit across the Isthmus of Panama; and another line of steamers will complete the communication from Chagres to New York. Messrs. Aspinwall immediately commenced building three steam-vessels, of a thousand tons each, one of which is already, we believe, launched, and the whole are to be finished before the end of the year.

It was at the commencement of the present year that intelligence was received in England that a supply of coal, amounting, probably, to nearly, or quite, ten thousand tons per annum, would be required at the Columbia river, at Panama, and at some intermediate ports, for the purpose of supplying these steamers. The question was then asked, "why not take an advantage of the opportunity of supplying this demand from Vancouver's Island?" The distance of the coal in this island from the Columbia river is not very much greater than from our own coal mines in the North to the ports in the English Channel. The distance from England involves a voyage of five months and a half, at least: it is manifest, then, that, supposing there to be any ordinary facility of procuring this coal in the island, it can be supplied far more readily thence than from England. Whether it can be so supplied at Panama, a distance of more than three thousand miles from Vancouver's Island, is another question. Still we maintain it can. It is quite true that English coals are as cheap at Valparaiso as in parts of England. It is also true that in India English coals may be procured for 33s. a ton. But the circumstances are totally

different. In Valparaiso, for example, all the English coal that is used, or wanted, may be taken out in ballast by vessels which go for a home freight. Their expenses are nearly, sometimes quite, paid by the home freight, so that it possibly may be worth while to carry out coal, paying no freight at all, and to sell it at a trifling advance on the cost price: this would be the extreme case; but, in fact, the price of coals at Valparaiso is from 25s. to 35s. per ton. Now all this depends on a valuable home freight being obtainable. But there is nothing of the kind to be obtained from Panama, still less from the Columbia river; so that coal sent thither must pay freight for at least a considerable part of the way out and back; that is, at least from some port on the Pacific whence a cargo can be procured for England. And it must not be forgotten that a considerable addition to the number of outward vessels, coal laden, would increase the difficulty of procuring a home cargo for all, and would lower the home freights. Hence it is more than probable that coal could be supplied from Vancouver's Island to all the coast of North America at a lower rate than it could be obtained from England.

The promoters of this scheme, however, were not obliged to depend on a hypothetical calculation. They had reason to believe, from positive negotiations, that terms might be agreed upon equally advantageous to all parties by which the coal might be supplied to the steamers of Panama. The whole question rested upon the probable cost of procuring the coal in the Island. Now, the accounts on this head are to be thoroughly relied on, and they are as follow:—M'Neil's harbour lie on the north-east side of Vancouver's island. The access to it from the northward, round Cape Scott, is extremely easy. There are no dangers in rounding the headland, and there is a deep channel of from two to three miles wide, between the island and the mainland, through which a fleet of ships may beat in any weather, for the water is always smooth, and the shore is steep too, on both sides. The harbour affords excellent anchoring ground in 12 or 15 fathoms close to the shore.

Now, round this harbour, and in many places below high-water mark, the coal appears on the surface in great abundance. The natives, with their rude tools, wooden spades, &c., have been able to supply 40 or 50 tons in a few hours; and the coal thus obtained, although it has been exposed to the action of the air and of the salt water, has been found to be of a fine quality; so much so that there is no room to doubt, that if the surface were cleared away, and the coal procured from a certain depth, it would be found fully as good as the best English and Scotch coals. On one side of this harbour a hill rises, and it has been found that strata of coal are found lying one under the other at the top of the hill. And along the flat at another part of the harbour a stream of water has been discovered, which, running along the surface, lays bare the stratum of coal for three-quarters of a mile.

From M'Neil's harbour towards the north-west, coal has been found cropping out for eight miles; but it is supposed not to exist farther south. It would seem then, from these accounts, that there is an enormous supply of coal to be obtained in this locality. Its qualities have not been ascertained by the analysis of specimens only, but it has been burnt in considerable quantities in a steam-vessel, on a trial with the best Welsh and Scotch coal; and, although the coal from Vancouver's

island was that procured by the natives from the surface of the ground, the difference in the result was comparatively slight. In the furnace it produced an excessive heat with very little smoke, and at the same time it was not found that any injury was done to the fire bars, as is frequently the case in coals of an apparently similar character.

We have said enough to show that this coal is not only worth obtaining, and is well fitted for the purpose proposed, but also that it may be obtained at a very small cost. The water is so deep close to the shore, and is so completely sheltered from all violence of wind and storm, that it will be possible to erect, at a small cost, a wooden pier, from which the coals may be discharged at once into the bottom of the vessels. The character of the country in the neighbourhood of the mines is a dense, and sometimes impenetrable forest; but within a very short distance was discovered one of those rich and beautiful plains which have been mentioned before: so there is every possible facility for forming in the immediate neighbourhood an agricultural settlement capable of furnishing the supplies which the miners would require. Now, when these things came to be known and considered, it was manifest that in order to carry out successfully the proposal for founding a Colony in Vancouver's island, the great advantage of an export trade in coal ought to be secured, in the first instance, to the Colony itself; that the proceeds of this trade should not go to enrich any individual speculators, but should be made available for prosecuting the more important design of founding a successful and vigorous settlement in so important a situation.

It was thought that, in these days, it would not be difficult to bring together a number of persons, who would be glad to undertake the enterprising task of forming the first settlement, if a sufficient prospect were held out to them, that they would not be subject to that disgraceful mismanagement, against the ruinous effects of which, early settlers in some of our Colonies have had to contend.

It was proposed to form a company similar to the first New Zealand Association, of those gentlemen to whom the public are accustomed to look up as a sufficient guarantee for the good faith of an enterprise; and it was thought that if brought before the public in such a manner, and by such persons, so that it once obtained a certain amount of public support, its future success would depend only upon the exertions of those who engaged in its management. It is much to be regretted that all this occurred at a period above all others unpropitious to the promotion of such a scheme.

The state of the money-market, and the general feeling of commercial men, were strongly opposed to the commencement of any undertaking, however promising. It would have been extremely difficult to form a Company for any purpose whatsoever. But there was another difficulty to be overcome, greater even than this. Before bringing this scheme publicly before the world, it was necessary to ascertain how it would be regarded by the Colonial Office.

The melancholy farce of the New Zealand Company was fresh in the memory of all; and it was not to be supposed that men of sense would again be found to sacrifice time, trouble, fortune, and hopes to work out an enterprise, when all their efforts might be thwarted by the caprice or

incapacity of a Minister, or his subordinates in an irresponsible office. Beyond all question there is a mystery about this office. Situated in the deepest shades of official repose, there is something oppressive in the very approach to its portals. In a country where responsibility and publicity are the appointed safeguards against oppression and corruption, it is a natural rather than a surprising coincidence that the Colonial Office should shrink to the remotest corner of Downing-street—this office, which exercises the largest powers of all the departments of Government; which is utterly irresponsible to those over whom its sway is exercised, and only partially so even to the British public; that is to say, which can act first, and ask the public how they like it afterwards; this Office wisely enough shrinks from public gaze.

Now in framing any new scheme for Colonial enterprise, there is this disadvantage, viz., no one knows what to expect from the Colonial Office. There is no commanding law—there is no guiding principle.

The waste lands of the Colonies are the property of the nation; they have been acquired by the power and character of the British race: for them they are, or ought to be, held in trust. When they are conveyed away from being the property of the nation to become the property of the individual, they should be so conveyed upon some general principles. When bold, enterprising men forsake home and kindred to settle in new lands, they ought not to be left either to the ignorance or despotism of any man whatsoever; yet that is now practically the case.

Let there be a proposal to start a new Colony to-morrow, and no man in the empire can predict, from any previous knowledge of colonial policy, what system of government the colonists are likely to find themselves under, or upon what terms they may be able to obtain the land. A man may buy land in Australia, and if he find coal or minerals, he may work and export them to his heart's and his pocket's content. A Company want to raise coal in Labuan, and they are not allowed to do so without paying 2s. 6d. per ton to the Crown for all the coal raised, and being bound under a penalty of £500 to raise 2,000 tons in the first year. The Hudson's Bay Company ask for an island, where there is also coal, and the same government are about, at this moment, to grant it to them without any rent or royalty whatsoever. And so it is with our Colonies all over the world; there is no system or design—all is caprice and fancy. These facts were well known to those who wished to bring the scheme of the Vancouver's Island Colony before the public. They therefore applied to the Colonial Office to know which course it would adopt in the event of a Company being formed for colonising and working the coal in Vancouver's Island. They could not bring their scheme before the public without this knowledge; they could not even complete their calculations, properly, without it. Obviously, they could not say at what price the coal could be supplied, unless they knew what royalty the Government were about to demand; and they could not ask persons to invest money in a commercial transaction, without showing them distinctly a fair profit in striking a balance between expenditure and income. They laid all these circumstances before the Colonial Government, and said, "all we want to know is upon what principle will you act towards us?"

It is sufficient to say, that nothing could exceed the civility of the

gentlemen of the Colonial Office, except their impenetrability. No definite answer could be obtained. Men might have said, as we do now say, "there ought to be no necessity to ask the question at all, for your principles of government ought to be known;" but they are not only not known, but cannot be discovered. The only answer received was, in effect, "tell us who you are? Show us you are able to effect your object, and we will *consider* your project."

Now, considering that it was necessary to know what the Colonial Office would do, as a preliminary step to bringing the project before the public at all, this answer was truly at once sensible and satisfactory. It was equivalent to this—and the reply had better have been straightforward at once—"It is no business of yours what we think; and we don't care whether there is a Colony in Vancouver's Island or not." But there was another representation lying on the minister's table when he gave this reply. The Hudson's Bay Company had asked for the Island.

We intend to say a few words about the Hudson's Bay Company. Perhaps it is difficult to speak of such a body without some respect. It is as if we were looking at some gigantic building: we are oppressed by the grandeur of the dimensions before we are capable of criticising the details. These rich and powerful associations are peculiar to the English system, and probably to the English race; and, after the East India Company, perhaps the Hudson's Bay Company ranks highest, in the extent of its operations and the greatness of its power—not, however, in the importance of its results. The Hudson's Bay Company was incorporated by royal charter, in 1670, for the purpose of prosecuting discovery in the countries within Hudson's Straits, especially of discovering a north-west passage to the Southern Ocean; for the purpose of making settlements in the country, of trading with the Indians, thereby spreading civilisation and Christianity among them, and extending the commerce of England. At the same time that the Charter proclaimed these to be the high and noble tasks allotted to the Company, it invested them with powers proportionate to the magnitude of the duties imposed. They were to have the exclusive lordship of the soil of all the country adjacent to all the rivers and streams which run into Hudson's Bay; that is to say, nearly to the Rocky Mountains. They had, besides, the sole privilege of trading with the Indians, to the exclusion of all others, not only over this inner tract of country, but also over all countries into which they might "find access, by *land* or *water*." The full extent of these powers have neither been appreciated nor acted on; but there can be no manner of question, that, if the Charter be good for anything at all, it gives the Company the right of exclusive trade over the whole of British North America, not at that time actually a province, as far as the shores of the Pacific Ocean. They were given besides the power of making laws and inflicting punishments, and of seizing the persons and property of all those whom they found interfering with these privileges, and of confiscating the property so seized, half to themselves and half to the Crown. Such were the powers with which they were invested; such were the objects for which such powers were granted. The powers they have exceeded; the duties they have neglected. The Hudson's Bay Company have no history but that

which is written in day-books and ledgers. All their functions they have forgotten, except that of trading; all their powers have been exerted for the sole purpose of making money. The result was that, from the first, they have been regarded with odium. In 1690, we find them presenting a petition to the House of Commons, complaining that their privileges were interfered with, by "interloping traffickers," and praying the House for a *confirmation of their Charter*. Hence it seems their Charter had already become a dead letter; and it required an Act of Parliament to vivify it. They got their act; but a disagreeable rider was added, limiting the duration of the confirmation to *fourteen* years. The Act was returned from the Lords with this *fourteen* changed into *seven*; and with this amendment the Act was passed. In 1697, the Company prayed the House for a renewal of the Act of confirmation; so that at that time, at any rate, they seemed to view it as necessary to ensure the validity of the Charter. The Act was brought in and read a second time, but dropped in Committee: it has not since been renewed.

In 1748 the Company seem to have excited so much odium by their grasping policy, that a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the expediency of continuing their privileges, and into the validity of their charter. To this Committee were referred petitions, which poured in from every town of any manufacturing and commercial consequence in the country, complaining of the ruinous policy pursued by the Hudson's Bay Company. The Select Committee having reported, the question was referred to a Committee of the whole House, which, having reported progress twice, dropped the subject altogether. There is no mention of it subsequently.

Since then the Company have continued the same policy without alteration. As fur traders it is impossible not to admire their perseverance and determination in prosecuting a difficult and arduous traffic amidst savage tribes and through an almost impassable country; but when we ask what they have done *more than this*, the answer is a melancholy one indeed—nothing: so that were they to be driven out of the country to-morrow, they would leave behind them—it was the powerful language of Edmund Burke, when speaking of the still greater Company in the eastern hemisphere—nothing to bear witness that the country had been possessed by other than the ourang-outang or the tiger.

Sir J. H. Pelly admits, in his letter of 7th Feb., 1838, to the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade, that for one hundred and ten years, in spite of enormous losses from the destruction of their stations and property by the French, the Company realised annual profits of 60 or 70 per cent. per annum. Perhaps there is no instance on record of any corporation becoming masters of such wealth and bestowing so few benefits on those from whose labour it was extorted.

The territory of the Hudson's Bay Company comprises a vast tract of country quite as favourable for settlement and cultivation, if not considerably more so, than Canada. All our North American colonies were founded by Companies with charters somewhat similar to that of the Hudson's Bay Company. They grew into powerful states, and are now a mighty nation, whilst the country under the blight of this Company remains a desert.

It was not to be wondered at that the Montreal merchants should be

extremely jealous of so extravagantly profitable a trade, carried on under their very eyes, over countries to which they had a natural claim, apparently prior to that of any body of merchants in London. The grasping policy of the Hudson's Bay Company proved, for a time, its ruin. Tempted by great gains, the North-west Company was formed, and a scene of fierce contention for the mastery in the trade followed; until the Indian must have smiled to hear the white man call him Savage. For twenty years this was carried on, till the dividends of the Company decreased from 70 per cent. to nothing. Then Parliament interfered—the rival Companies united. An Act was passed empowering the Crown to grant a licence of exclusive trade to *any Company or Corporation*; empowering the Crown, in short, to do that which the Crown had already done in 1670; for by the original charter, as we have seen, the grant of exclusive trade extended to the Pacific Ocean. So far, then, this Act, 1 and 2 Geo. IV., c. 66, sets aside or disallows the charter; because it empowers the Crown to grant to *any Company*, what had been already granted *exclusively* to the Hudson's Bay Company. The licence was then granted to the combined Company, which has carried on the trade ever since under the old title of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company have one settlement, for it would be untrue to call any one of their forts or trading-houses settlements; they are nothing more than factories, where the furs are collected, and the articles of trade with which they are bought preserved. Red River, however, is a Colony, the population of which amounts to, alone, 5,000 souls. It consists for the most part of retired servants of the Company, of half-breeds, and some few Indians.

This one settlement is the result of 180 years of despotic power over the country; and this settlement is governed, whether in respect of law, of taxation, or of commercial restriction, by a despotism more uncontrolled than any in the entire world. It is sufficient to mention, that no man can hold land in the Colony without signing a deed, by which he binds himself to obedience to the Company, and resigns the right of selling or underletting the land without especial permission. No man can *trade* at all with England, or America, or any one else, except he be given a licence from the Company to do so. No man can export or import goods except in the Company's vessels, as none others are allowed to trade to the country; and when any individual is so unlucky as to offend the Company, he is punished by a refusal to admit his goods on board the vessels.

The taxes are imposed at the sole caprice of the Governor of the Colony, and are never accounted for, in any way, to the public or taxpayers. It is sufficient to mention these facts, in order to show what the character of the Hudson's Bay Company is, and always has been. And having mentioned so much, we return to the point from which we diverged, viz., that when negotiations were going on with the Colonial Office, with a view of ascertaining, if possible, what course they would take, supposing a Company were formed for the purpose of colonising Vancouver's Island, there was a proposal lying on the table of the Minister, on the part of this Company, to undertake the Colonisation and proprietorship of the island; and a Whig Minister has determined that their application shall be successful.

Despite of the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company is the closest

monopoly in the world—that they have already enormous possessions, which they have never dreamed of colonising—that it is their especial interest, in the present instance, to prevent the foundation of a Colony, because it would interfere with their monopoly of the fur trade, and of the export trade in manufactured articles—despite of the vast importance of a Colony being established in the Pacific without delay, and of the singularly favourable coincidence of events which would facilitate the foundation of a settlement there at the present time, arising from the demand for coal—despite of all this, the Hudson's Bay Company are to have the island, and to do what they please with it.

Whig Colonial Ministers were not always of the same opinion. When Lord Glenelg was in office, in the year 1838, the Hudson's Bay Company applied for a renewal of the license of trade, which had been granted to them in 1821, under the Act 1 and 2 Geo. IV., c. 66. Lord Glenelg determined on recommending the Crown to renew that licence without requiring any rent, but insisted on the insertion in the charter of a clause reserving to the Crown the right of revoking the privileges granted, over any part of the country in which a Colony should be founded. Lord Glenelg expressly states his opinion to the Committee of Trade of the Privy Council, that should such a Colony ever be founded, the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company ought to cease, as far as the country occupied by the Colony was concerned. But not only does there seem to be no inclination on the part of the Government to put an end to the privileges of the Company in Vancouver's Island, but, as we are credibly informed, these powers are to be increased in a most unusual manner. The land, mines, &c., are to be given to them, and they are to be permitted to appoint their own Governor for the Colony which they promise to form in the island.

We can understand the Crown resigning its right of appointing its own representative, when there is some definite and specific advantage to be gained by so doing. We can understand the appointment being given to the Colonists themselves, from the idea that they will select one of themselves—a man who has their interests at heart, and who understands their wants. But why this right, of which the Crown is so peculiarly tenacious, should be resigned to a Company, who have just as little interest as the Colonial Office itself in sending a proper man to the Colony—why this novel mode of election should be adopted, containing all the evils of the present system, and none of its advantages—all this is beyond our comprehension.

And what are the Company to do for all this? What is its peculiar function, standing, as it will, in an intermediate position between the Colony and the Mother-country? The Colonial Office will reply, "They are to colonise the island; and a Colony is what is wanted!"

Let us inquire whether they will colonise the island, and how they will do it? It is necessary to relate some facts. A company was formed some few years ago, called "The Puget's Sound Agricultural Association." It seems to be one form or phase of the Hudson's Bay Company. It is a kind of co-ordinate or supplementary company to the other. And as all or most of the members of the one are members of the other, and the governors of the one are governors of the other, we may fairly assume that there will be a corresponding identity in their

actions and policy. Now, the object of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Association was to colonise the country lying adjacent to Puget's Sound. Their mode of Colonisation is simple enough. They lend money to a settler to enable him to procure stock for a farm, They supply him with all the requisite *materiel*. The settler pays them so much per cent. for the money lent him, and, besides that, the Company share the profits of the farm with him. But as the Company is not only *landlord*, but has at the same time the exclusive privilege of importing all manufactured produce—in fine, all the necessaries of life—into the country, so that it can charge its tenant its *own prices* for everything; and as he is compelled to purchase at these prices, it is manifest that it is entirely at the option of the Company what amount of the produce of the farm shall find its way into the pockets of the settler, or whether he shall, as is, in fact, frequently the case, be kept continually in debt to the Company.

Now, it is not likely that any persons of independent capital would place themselves under such a system, or subject themselves to such a Government.

If this Company colonise at all they will make a settlement of their own servants, of men completely in their own power, who will be unable to move hand or foot but at their bidding, who will labour for the wealth which will flow into the pockets of the shareholders in London, and who will be content to live under a Government the most despotic and tyrannical in the world—and this is to be the result of all our Colonial experience. This is to be our new Colony!

The fact is, the whole idea of founding a free Colony, through the agency of a Commercial Company, whose interests are necessarily hostile to those of the Colonists, is an absurd one. If such a Company expend capital on the Colony, they will expect the payment of interest on the capital; as high interest, at least, as would have been paid in their own trade. They will colonise as a speculation; and money must thus go into their exchequer, which would otherwise have fallen into the hands of the Colonists themselves. The Company will become, in fact, absentee proprietors of the soil. The infant Colony will commence its existence with the burden of a national debt.

But after all, if the Colonial Office were to come forward with a distinct declaration, "Such and such shall be the constitution; such and such the tenure of the land in case a body of Colonists will go out to the island;" we want to know what could the Hudson's Bay Company, or any Company, do for the prosperity of such a society of Colonists, which they could not do better for themselves. If they wanted to borrow money, they could do so on the security of their island and their Charter; if they could be governed better than by the Colonial Office, let them govern themselves; if some link were necessary to secure their dependence on the Mother-country, such as the appointment of a Governor, let the link be at once with her Majesty's Government, not with a private and irresponsible corporation in the City. The Colonial Office is irresponsible enough; but if there is to be a doubly refracted responsibility, through the Hudson's Bay Company to the Colonial Office, and through the Colonial Office to Parliament, then we say, Heaven help the Colonists. But after all, the Governors of the Hudson's Bay Company are

sensible enough. They know all this. The real question is, when they ask for Vancouver's Island, do they really and honestly intend to make a Colony there? We express our sincere conviction, they want to *prevent a Colony being formed there*. Did they even ask for this island, or propose to form a Colony there, until after the value of the situation had been urged on the Colonial Office by other parties, and the proposal to found a free Colony submitted? We believe they did not; and then it was only when they found that the coast would fall into other hands that they urged their claim on the attention of the Government.

The question, however, will now come before the House of Commons, who will have to decide whether the enormous powers and privileges which the Hudson's Bay Company already possess, and of which they have made so little use, shall be increased or not. If the House of Commons would prevent that interesting and important coast remaining a desert, or becoming a farm for a City corporation—if they would not retrograde in the art of Colonisation, and throw to the winds all the knowledge and experience which recent experiments ought to have taught them—they will insist on the Ministry pausing before they make this grant to the Hudson's Bay Company.

It is easy for the Minister to say, "we will exercise the prerogative of the Crown, and it is not for Parliament to interfere; as soon as the Charter is made it shall be laid on the table." But the Parliament will not forget that they have imperial functions and powers, involving grave responsibility, which it becomes them to exercise. The settlement of the North American coast will determine the future empire of Great Britain in the Pacific Ocean. And so it becomes the duty of Parliament to exercise a vigilant watchfulness over the arrangements that are made, and to guard against an unwise or ignorant step in the formation of a Colony, resulting in the sacrifice of the future interests of their country.

We *must* and *will* have such a Colony there as that men of birth, intelligence, education, and enterprise shall be willing and glad to join it; not a settlement for the convenience of a corporation of pedlars, but a Colony which shall be a worthy representative of the interests, character, and dignity of this mighty empire. Oh, that such had ever been our policy with our Colonies! We should have then been spared the reproach of seeing gallant and noble men arraigned in arms against their country, or the deeper shame and sorrow of seeing them sink in hopeless and helpless destitution upon its breast—~~e~~rgies and courage that might have founded an empire squandered in impotent rebellion—industry and endurance that might have conjured food out of the desert, paralyzed into listless sloth by starvation and suffering.

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