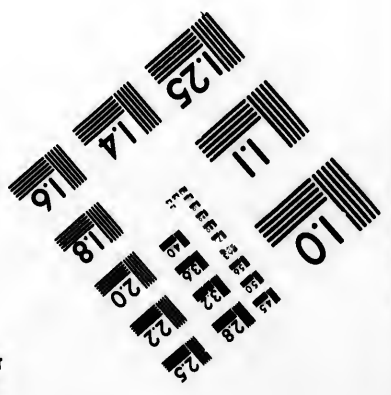
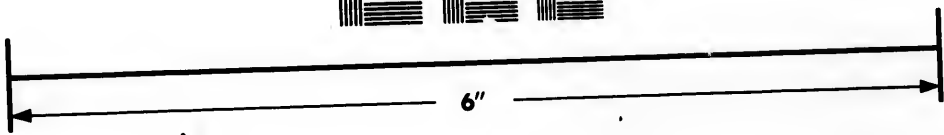
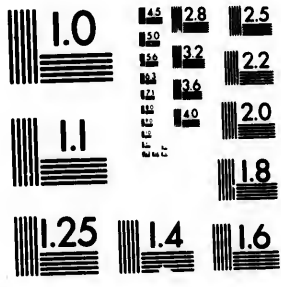


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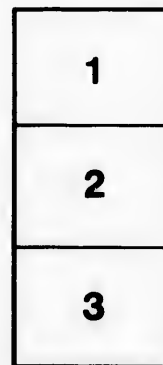
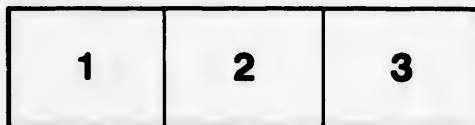
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THE ISLANDS OF THE GULF.

1. *Description of Vancouver Island.* By Lt.-Col. W. C. GRANT, F.R.G.S.

The position of Vancouver Island is between $48^{\circ} 20'$ and 51° N. lat., and between 123° and $128^{\circ} 20'$ W. long. It is situated on the western coast of North America, within a short distance of the mainland, the Straits of Fuca, which separate the island from the mainland on the south, forming the boundary in those parts between the British territories and those of the United States. The extreme length of Vancouver Island from north to south is 270 miles, with a general breadth of from 40 to 50 miles. The general aspect of the island is that of a broken rocky country densely covered with timber. The proportion which the available land bears to that which is totally incapable of cultivation is extremely small. The whole centre of the island as far as it has yet been explored consists of a barren rocky waste, the timber with which it is covered being, as well from its nature as from its position, unavailable for any useful purpose. Along the sea-coast a few patches of level land are to be met with, where the timber is extremely fine, and suitable either for masts and spars or for being sawn into planks. Small spots of open land, clear of trees, occasionally intervene, but seldom of more than a few hundred acres in extent; on these spots the soil is almost invariably extremely rich, and will produce abundantly every description of crop grown in Great Britain. The climate is agreeable and healthy, the summer is warm and dry; no rain falls from March till November; the remainder of the year is rather a rainy season than a severe winter; some snow falls, but does not generally lie long on the ground; and the frosts are neither hard nor of long duration.

The deposits of coal on the island are extremely rich, and are in many places favourably situated for export. The seas by which the island is surrounded teem with fish of almost every description. The salmon and herring are particularly numerous, cod and sturgeon also abound, and several whales are annually caught by the natives at a short distance from the coast. The prevailing geological structures in the higher parts of the island are the gneiss and mica schist systems; in the lower, greywacke and clay-slate prevail. These are intersected by several dykes of igneous rock; and on the sea-coast basins of sandstone and of limestone occasionally occur. The native population of the island is calculated at from 15,000 to 20,000 souls; who are divided into numerous tribes, many of whom speak languages entirely different from each other. They are in general a harmless race, they live almost entirely by fishing, they are willing to work for the white man, but their labour cannot be depended on continuously. The island is still in its infancy as a colony; it possesses numerous safe and commodious harbours, is favourably situated for export to Oregon, California, the Sandwich Islands, Central and South America, Australia and China; and though now but little known, Vancouver Island cannot fail eventually to be of very considerable importance. The object of this paper is to make its position, its products, its natural resources, and its history, better known to the British public.

In answer to questions as to the climate, the adaptability of the island for colonisation, its mineral productions, &c., COLONEL GRANT said the climate was delicious for travellers, as from April to September there was no wet. This absence of humidity, however, was somewhat unfavourable for agriculture. With respect to colonisation, he thought Vancouver Island fitted for it, to a certain extent. The available arable land was small in proportion to that which was useless, so that it could never support a large population. The wheat and vegetables grown were very fine indeed. The island had not been surveyed, except a small portion by the Hudson Bay Company, and of that part about two-thirds were fit for agricultural purposes; the remaining third was useless rock. The quantity of coal discovered at present was small, but it was fitted for steam purposes.

SIR HARRY VERNEY, F.R.G.S., asked Colonel Grant whether the natives in the different parts of the island could communicate with each other, whether their languages were similar; and also whether there was any trace of any patriarchal government that had at any former period ruled over the whole of the island; also whether there was any trace of religion among the natives, whether it was a common religion, and whether there were any missionaries there?

COLONEL GRANT said that he had never been able to trace any real religion among them. They had some traditions excessively childish in their nature, and which did not point to one common object. They were scarcely aware of the existence of a supreme Being, though some had a glimmering notion of such a Being. One missionary informed him that they worshipped the sun, but he thought this too noble a superstition to exist in the breast of such a

grovelling race of Indians as they were. They had a few superstitious among them. There were among them several most zealous Roman Catholic missionaries, who were incessant in their endeavours to implant Christianity. The savage was very ready to take any impression, but his mind was incapable of retaining any fixed idea, and the missionaries had consequently been unable to make any permanent progress. There were three languages in the island; the prevailing one was the Cowitchen. The languages again were subdivided into various dialects, so that the different tribes speaking them could, with some difficulty, understand each other. There was not the slightest trace of a common patriarchal government. Each tribe had a patriarchal government, because each tribe formed a family something like our clans in Scotland.

MR. KENNETH SUTHERLAND, F.R.G.S., remarked that our Government had sent an expedition to Nootka Sound towards the end of the last century.

COLONEL GRANT said the object of Vancouver's expedition was to discover the North-West Passage, and in trying to discover it he saw a large inlet, which he immediately proceeded into, thinking it would conduct him to the opposite coast of America, and that he had found the long sought North-West Passage. He followed the channel and learned that he was sailing round an island, and he was much disappointed in finding himself in the Pacific again. In going round the island he met two Spanish vessels coming from Nootka, and they first told him that he was sailing round an island. He then went round to Nootka and gave the Spaniards notice to quit.

MR. MONCKTON MILNES, F.R.G.S., asked whether Colonel Grant had ever turned his attention to the practicability of rendering the island a convict settlement?

COLONEL GRANT was afraid that it would not make a good convict settlement, on account of its contiguity to America. Access to the continent across the channel was easy, and to prevent the convicts escaping, a large military guard would be required.

The REV. BRYMER BELCHER, F.R.G.S., believed what had been said about the missionaries in Vancouver Island was quite correct. At present there were no missionaries in the island, except some Roman Catholics, who had been engaged there several years. The Hudson Bay Company had a chapel at Victoria, and about a year ago an unordained labourer, a catechist, was sent out by one of the great missionary societies of this country to the southern part of the island. The gentlemen who brought their geographical knowledge to bear upon the missionary work of the Church, had looked on Vancouver Island as an unoccupied field, and had directed the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to it. A grant of 250*l.* had been expended in sending out two missionaries. The population amounted to between 20,000 and 30,000 of native inhabitants, according to the last census given by the Hudson Bay Company. With respect to the climate and nature of the country, all the information that the Society had been able to obtain, went to show that there was nothing in either respect which the Anglo-Saxon race might not most easily overcome. The coal, to which allusion has been made, he had reason to believe, was spread over a large field, and was of very excellent quality, well suited for furnaces and for steam purposes. With coal and wood, and with what, there was every reason to believe, would be found in mineral products as well, Vancouver Island appeared to him to be one of the most promising fields open to the English settler.

MR. R. BLANCHARD, F.R.G.S., late Governor of Vancouver Island, begged leave to offer an observation with regard to the population. Colonel Grant estimated it at 17,000, and Mr. Belcher at between 20,000 and 30,000. When he was there he took great pains to make inquiries of the people who, he considered, were best qualified to judge, and they stated the numbers to be, at the outside, 10,000, and that the population was decreasing.

The PRESIDENT, in closing the discussion, said it was evident that the island was destined to become a valuable possession of the British crown. The position it occupied, and the mineral riches it contained, with the probability of finding more, all tended to indicate its future value to our country.

