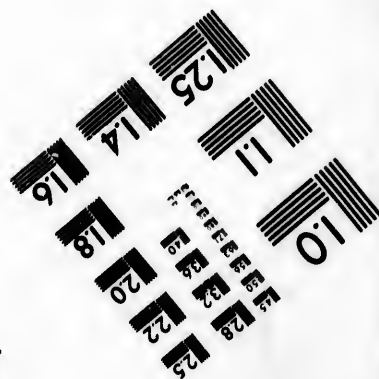
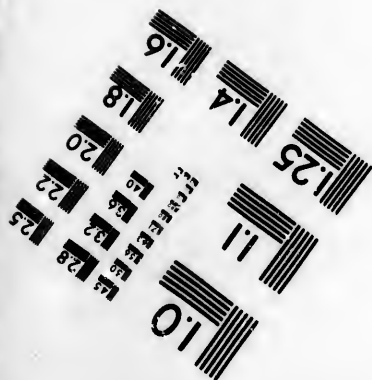
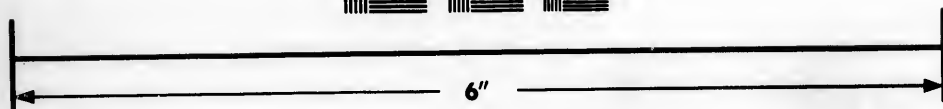
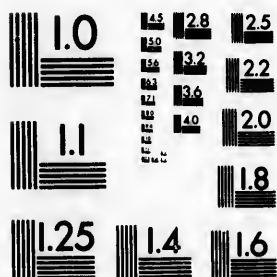


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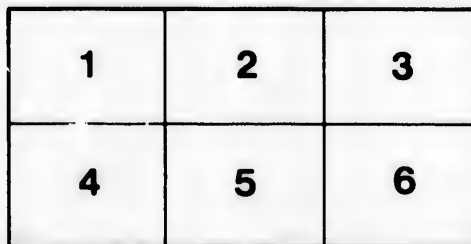
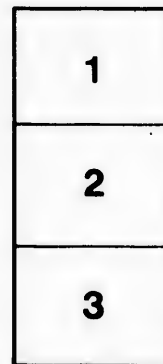
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BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BY WILLIAM J. STEWART.

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So much has been said and written, recently, descriptive of British Columbia, that, beyond doubt, a large number of our surplus population will be attracted to this great gold-field of the Pacific. This is as it should be; and no one who knows anything of the depressing poverty which prevails at all times in the agricultural counties of England, or of the uncertainties of artisan life in our manufacturing districts and great cities, will say one careless word which should deter our suffering poor from migrating to a land where, at least, the day's bread is ensured to every pair of strong hands that choose to work for it. But it has occurred to several who have spent some years in British Columbia, that a perusal of the newspaper articles and letters, which have been written recently about the country, is but too likely to fire the imagination of the inexperienced reader, and is calculated to convey a false impression of the place to the more wary inquirer. It was not as if the advice to emigrate thither had been addressed to the stout heart and

ready hand, that can make their way wherever a tree has to be felled, a road made, a spadeful of earth to be turned. Not one word of remonstrance or warning would have been heard in that case. But, when the inducements of certain occupation, and a hearty welcome, are held out to such men as the tide-waiter, pestering the representative of his native borough for promotion, the banker's clerk, toiling on with the hope of adding another ten pounds to his scanty salary; the University-man with the world before him, an oyster he knows not how to open; when even married men with families are encouraged to start for the shores of the Pacific, it is right that what they may expect to find there should be simply set before them.

They will find there, in the first place, the promise of one of the richest and most flourishing countries the world has ever seen. There is no exaggeration in this statement. We all know by this time the geographical position of British Columbia. To say nothing of the adjacent island of Vancouver, which

shelters its coast from the drift of the Pacific, and renders its inlets and rivers safe and easy of navigation, it possesses within itself the elements of a complete and powerful empire. Harbours, the most commodious; rivers, even where they are unnavigable, adapted admirably to water and fertilize the soil through which they run; large valleys of rich fertile land stretching from the base of the Rocky mountains that form the back-bone of the great American continent to the sea; timber enough to stock the navy-yards of Europe for ages to come; coal in sufficient abundance, and easily worked; with other mineral wealth almost beyond the power of the imagination to conceive:—this may seem an extravagantly coloured picture, but it is, in reality, the simple truth couched in the simplest fitting words. A glance at the geographical and geological charts of British Columbia will satisfy the least experienced inquirer, that here nature has provided elements out of which the Anglo-Saxon race can scarcely fail to build a great and powerful nation. But the work of making its foundation is of the hardest, and the hands that are put to the plough have need of more than ordinary pith and muscle.

As yet the chief rendezvous for settlers is Victoria, in Vancouver Island, a few years back one of the out-of-the-way stations of the Hudson's Bay Company. Hither, when the Americans laid strong hands on the Oregon territory, the headquarters of the Great Fur Company were removed from Vancouver's Fort on the banks of the Columbia. Here, as there, Mr. Douglas continued to trade with the Indians, winning their confidence by his fairness and justice, and commanding their respect by his firmness and decision. The life of these agents—factors as they are called—of the Great Fur Company, in their detached stations along the shores, and far up in the mainland of British North America, where they possess a power which they seem rarely to have abused, is full of interest and romance. Recruited at intervals from the home country, which they leave at an early age, they marry,

frequently half-breeds, and rear families, striking their roots so deep into the soil that they rarely care to quit it. Once a year a great Fur Brigade winds its way from fort to fort, gathering the collections of the year from each as it rolls on, by dizzy mountain passes, across swollen rivers, through dense forests, to the coast. Whither once a year also comes, from the Company at home, the same familiar brig, with its supply of fresh young English life, its news of home, and cargo of muskets, blankets, beads and toys, for which the Indian hunters barter furs and skins.

It was from such a life as this that Mr. Douglas, in 1858, was called upon to act as Governor of one of the richest gold-producing countries the world has ever known; from such a trading station, with its rough stockade and wooden bastion, that Victoria has grown into a city. Mr. Douglas has proved himself well equal to the work he was called upon to undertake; and the shrewd head and firm hand that ruled the Indian tribes were found as equal to the management of the most heterogeneous population imaginable—among whom many of the scamps of San Francisco, whom the Vigilance Committee of that city, from no unwillingness on their part, had left unhung, figured conspicuously.

But we have to do with Victoria now mainly in relation to the attractions which it offers to the settler. Here, of course, as in all places where the process of transforming a town from canvass to wood, from wood to stone, is being carried on, artisans of all kinds will not fail to find remunerative employment, and capital will not be long in discovering fit channels to flow in. But the undergraduate, the tide-waiter, clerk, and shopman, even if they have strong arms which they are not ashamed to turn to any honest work, will of a certainty prefer pushing onward to the mines. Even the agriculturist will find little inducement to settle upon a coast so densely wooded as this is. From this cause it is that the population of Victoria is decidedly migratory, flowing and ebbing with the rush of the miners to and from the dig-

gings. Last winter it was comparatively depopulated, while this spring they are expecting no less than 50,000 miners on their way through to the Fraser.

The way to the mines lies up the River Fraser. To reach its mouth the Gulf of Georgia must be crossed. No ocean ship or steamer can pass its bar, so that the passage has to be made in smaller vessels that ply at regular intervals from Victoria. The way is pleasant, by and through an archipelago of islands; of which San Juan, now a bone of contention between our government and that of the United States, is one of the most important—the smaller ones being mere rocky islets, covered with pines to the water's edge.

The entrance to the Fraser is, as I have said, impassable to ships of considerable freight, and to all uncertain. But for the friendly shelter of Vancouver Island, its bar of uncertain shifting sands would be as perilous as that of the Columbia River; as it is, if a vessel grounds, as often happens, she has only to wait until the rising tide shall set her free. The Fraser is the high, and, indeed, at present, the only road to the gold-fields. Hopes are entertained that some day a way may be found at the head of one of the numerous inlets that indent the shore north of its mouth, by which the upper country may be reached; and several explorations have been made by officers of the navy, and enterprising settlers, to discover such a route, but hitherto without any practical result. A way was forced inland, from Burrard's Inlet, by Lieutenant Mayne, of H.M.S. *Plumper*, in 1859; and, many years ago, Sir Alexander M'Kenzie reached the sea from Fort George, one of the northernmost stations of the Hudson's Bay Company. But their way lay over high mountains, and across swift streams, in winter covered with snow, in summer dangerously swollen by freshets from the hills.

The banks of the Fraser, for some miles from its mouth, are low, and liable in summer to be flooded. There is no rising ground until Ne Westminster, the capital of British Columbia, is reached.

In writing of new countries, there is no choice but to use the phraseology of old, however much it may mislead the reader. An American backwood's-man would be at no loss to form an accurate conception of the city of New Westminster, while nothing that I can say will help an English reader to imagine it. Half-a-dozen wooden huts, a whiskey shop, and a post-office, constitute a "city" anywhere in America; and New Westminster, in addition to these, possesses a church, a court-house, treasury, and camp. That is to say, with extraordinary efforts, some square yards have been cleared of the vast over and under growth of timber and roots, that line the banks of the Fraser, and a few wooden huts run up, to which these pretentious names have been attached. Nothing short of a photograph could give a proper idea of the position of these little boxes of houses, set in the midst of the fallen timber, with a dense background of impenetrable forest in their rear. It is this vast growth of timber, on the shores of Vancouver Island, and upon the coast of the mainland, that must for a time retard colonization. There are rare stretches of good land among the inland valleys—the Semilkameen country, for instance, east of Fort Hope, is one of the richest in the world—and the day will no doubt come when pleasant English farm-houses will rise among them, and the plains, clothed now with long sweet grass, and the numberless wild flowers, which in British Columbia grow so luxuriantly, be white with bleating flocks. But, until roads are made to them from the towns, the agriculturist who may be induced to settle there will find his crops useless and embarrassing, for want of a market at which he can sell them.

Some twenty-five miles from the Fraser's mouth, Langley, another town of wooden huts, is reached; and here the river becomes so swift and shallow, that the steamers which have crossed the gulf can go no further, and have to transfer their cargoes to shallow, flat-bottomed boats, drawing a few inches only of water, and propelled by huge wheels, projecting

from behind the stern. These stern-wheel steamers struggle up against the stream with a great effort to Fort Hope. But at this point the mountains so close in upon the river that it becomes un-navigable, at some seasons of the year even for canoes, and the first settlers had to land from them at Yale, some fifteen miles higher up, and follow a trail which ran, now by the water's edge, now high by a dizzy path round the face of steep precipitous rocks, many hundred, even thousand feet above the swift and turbid stream. All this portion of the river's banks is highly auriferous; and the traveller following this trail might see below him the figures of the miners washing the gold "dirt," and hear the ceaseless clatter of their rockers. Upon the Fraser generally, before more secure trails were made, and this route in particular, many miners in 1858 and 1859 lost their lives.

But the richer gold-fields of British Columbia lie many miles above this rocky barrier, through which the Fraser, reduced to a comparative thread of water, works its tortuous way. And for those bound to them, a route, not perhaps the most direct, has been formed, by which the necessity of ascending that part of the Fraser I have just described may be avoided. This is known as the Harrison Lilloett trail. A few miles above Langley, a smaller river meets the Fraser; following which the first of a chain of lakes is reached, which extend, with occasional intervals of forests and mountains, in a northerly direction, until the Fraser is struck again some 140 miles from where it had been parted with. This route was well known to the Indians, and, less familiarly, to the factors of the Hudson's Bay Company; and, when the rush to the diggings commenced, it was at once determined by the Governor to open it. The task looks easy enough on paper. It consisted simply in opening communications from the head of one lake to the nearest port upon the succeeding one. But, to do this, roads had to be carried over steep mountain passes, across rivers—as many as sixty bridges were built—and through "bush," in some places so dense that

the hardest pedestrian, walking ten hours a day, might think himself lucky if he made as many miles. The following table of distances will show the nature of this route:—

From.	To.	Distance by Land trail.	Distance by water.
Fort Langley	Port Douglas	—	75
Douglas	Port Lilloett	33½	—
Lilloett	Port Pemberton	—	18
Pemberton	Port Anderson	24½	—
Anderson	East Port	—	15
East Port	West Port	1½	—
West Port	Port Seton	—	10
Port Seton	Fraser River	4	—

Total from Langley to the Fraser—
 By land (trail) 64 miles.
 By water 119 "
 Entire distance 183 "

From this point of the Fraser River roads are planned, but not made, and the miner must be prepared to tramp it to that part of the Quesnelle or Cariboo gold-fields to which he may be bound. A miner, having only himself to look to, and carrying his baggage on his back, may make his way from Victoria to Cariboo in ten days, and at a cost of from 7*l.* to 10*l.* Of course, if he tramps it from lake to lake, on the Harrison Lilloett route, he will do with less. But, live hardly as he may, he can scarcely spend less than two dollars (8*s.* 4*d.*) a day, on his journey up. All the way he will now find, at intervals, huts—restaurants is the name there given to them—open for his accommodation, where a meal of bread, beans, and bacon, may be had, and a soft plank secured for the night. It is impossible to say at what price provisions may be now, varying as they do with the supply and the state of the weather; but they have been at times very high, and, until the country is in more certain communication with the sea, will necessarily be so again. Last year, it is said, the miner might live for four or five shillings a day, and the restaurants offered board and lodging at the rate of 2*l.* a week; but letters lately received from British Columbia tell a somewhat different tale.

The following facts relative to the country may be interesting. It is peo-

pled pretty thickly with Indians. No apprehension need be entertained of them, if treated justly and fairly. They hate the Americans cordially, and not, it is believed, without good reason; but King George's men, as the British are everywhere called by them, are secure against all but petty depredations. The fish-eating tribes by the sea-coast are morally and intellectually much inferior to the Indian of the interior, who approaches closely to the red man whose noble qualities won Penn's respect and regard. The country is not rich in animal life, and,

mosquitoes excepted, is singularly free from insects and reptiles. The climate resembles that of England closely. As with us, the winters are uncertain. For years together little snow will fall, or frost be felt; and then as was the case there last year, a season of more than ordinary severity will set in, blocking up the trails, and even closing the Fraser against the entry of ships or steamers. The land, where clear, is rich and fertile, and will produce abundantly the roots and cereals familiar to the English farmer.

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