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MAKING A START IN CANADA

LETTERS FROM TWO YOUNG EMIGRANTS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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CHAPTER I.

Our New Home.—The First Week's Work.—A few
Birds.

June, 1886.—On Saturday we left Toronto by the mid-day train, arriving here a few minutes before six. The country through which we passed was quite different to that between Montreal and Quebec. There were still large forests, but the fields looked more cultivated, and we saw lots of large orchards. We saw Lake Simcoe, and in the distance Barrie. This is a splendid place, with a sort of rambling old farmhouse, a large garden and orchard, and lots of vines. The fruit has all done blossoming and is forming fast. The farm is chiefly arable ; there are only about fifty head

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A Rough Voyage.

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on our way a bit, then it stopped, and we had to tow into Nanaimo, where we had tea, beds, and breakfast. All this time we have been going north, along the east coast of Vancouver Island, in among all the little islands.

We started from Nanaimo in the morning, with a good wind, and crossed to the mainland (ten miles) and coasted up to Normanby Island, where we camped, sleeping on the boat for fear of wolves. Next morning we started again up the channel between Texada Island and the mainland, but, having no wind, only did ten miles, and then towed into an inlet on the mainland, where we camped. The same thing happened next day, and, after making ten miles, we towed into a bay at the north-east part of Texada Island. Starting again next morning, the wind failed us, and we towed into this harbour, our destination.

W—— and K—— sleep in a tent, and Dick and I in an old log-hut with no doors

or windows, and only one-third of the floor down. Here the cooking is done with a stove ; and it serves as general living-room. W—— and K—— have been making gigantic efforts to bake bread, and till the last time made it rather like lead. The cooking is a terrible job to them every meal, and it sounds very amusing to hear them blame everything but the cook—the wood, the stove, those who cut the wood, those who light the fire, all get a share of the credit for heavy bread, etc.

We have not done much exploring yet, but at present the island seems to me all rocks and stones, and one or two swamp meadows. W——, however, seems much taken with it. I went over to Comox (Vancouver Island) two days ago ; the land there is first-rate, but most of it is taken up. Harwood Island, too, as far as we could see, would be a very nice place. We may find good land on this island, when we have explored it a bit more. Last

came across one or two deserted logging-camps, and shot a brace of grouse. On Thursday we rowed to a Siwash village, where there is a Roman Catholic mission. Most of the inhabitants were out fishing or shooting. The Padre was also away, so we started home again. We rowed considerably over twenty miles that day, and the sun was awfully hot. In first crossing the channel we sighted a huge whale. It gradually got nearer and nearer to us, and then disappeared. After a bit it suddenly came up about thirty yards to one side of us, making straight in our direction. W—— and I were rowing, and you bet we didn't stop to watch. We made the boat go pretty quick, and the whale passed just by our stern. Coming home we saw no less than seven whales in different parts of the channel—now while I am writing I can hear them blowing. On Saturday we went to camp by the river which we found on Thursday. We rigged up a tarpaulin for

More Exploring.

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K—— and W——, and Dick and I found a nice little hollow behind a tree under some bushes. First we spread a waterproof sheet : then folded our coats into pillows, and, with our guns and knives handy, lay down and pulled the blankets and another waterproof sheet over us. We were very comfortable indeed, as the sal-lal bushes on the top of which we were made a sort of spring-mattress. It was necessary to have our arms ready, as we were some five-and-twenty yards from the camp-fire, and the whole place was swarming with gray wolves. On Sunday we took a walk up the river. After going some way we came to a splendid fall. The river ran through a narrow gorge about thirty feet broad. The whole gorge was on a tremendous incline, and it was headed by the fall where the water came sheer down some twenty feet. We could feel the ground shake quite a quarter of a mile away, and a large cloud of mist and spray hung over the falls. We then

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climbed on to a hill which was near, and from there saw the grandest piece of scenery I have come upon since we passed the Selkirks. The river came from a large lake several miles long and one or two broad. All round it were steep hills covered with timber; and in the background rose the Cascade Mountains, capped with snow. In the evening there was the most magnificent sunset that I have ever seen. It was really beyond description. I was looking over the smooth sea dotted all round with little islands, and lit up with a bright red light. Behind the sea rose up the mountain-range along the coast of Vancouver Island, while behind them again were the snow mountains, their white peaks shining with a brilliant flame-colour: the clouds just above the mountains were edged with the same hue, and the whole sky was reddened with the light. This lasted about half an hour, and then the whole sky changed to a wonderful steel gray, which was almost as beautiful, though quite

A Fine View.

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different. You could not realize a quarter of its beauty from the best description. I only hope you will be able to see something similar soon, when you come out here. There is lots of fun in camping out here, and the scenery is very grand indeed—almost too grand and rugged, I think. For my part, I should like to see a little bit of the scenery you get—green fields and farmhouses—better than all the mountains in British Columbia. Before long, however, I hope we shall be doing something towards making part of the scenery a little less wild. Perhaps then the rest will become pleasanter by contrast.

July.—The day we posted our last letters to you we went to Comox in the sloop. The wind fell almost directly after we had started, so we had to pull the sloop by means of the two sweeps, a man at each. We pulled here twenty-two miles, and can feel it now in our left hands, which got rather cramped. Coming

CHAPTER VII.

A Change of Plans.—Our Journey to Victoria.—A
Rough Voyage.—Our Destination at Last.

IN their last letters the lads proposed the plan of going North-West, and gave some idea of the way in which they intended to work. A few days after this an offer was made to them by an uncle in British Columbia. Mr. Z—— and his wife, who had gone there with a view to settling, were at that time engaged in looking out for a suitable locality. His proposal was to this effect: that the lads should come and join him in exploring the island of Texada. If, as he was inclined to think, this island should prove a desirable place, he further proposed that they should join him in running a farm of the same description as the