

A Visit to Anglo-Saxon Antipodes*

(Chapter XVIII of *Curiosa aus der Neuen Welt*, 1893)

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TRANSLATED BY JOHN MAASS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: I have faithfully preserved the enormously enthusiastic tone with its many exclamation points. This enthusiasm is noteworthy because the author was no innocent abroad for the first time. Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg (1854-1918), born in Vienna, was the successful writer of many travel books.

The error in the title is curious: the Antipodes of Europe are not in the northern hemisphere but near New Zealand. I think the author exaggerated when he claimed that the Chinese had "conquered" Melbourne, Auckland and San Francisco. Whenever the author wrote "Vancouver" he meant the island; the city of Vancouver is not mentioned.

When you trace on the world map the east coast of the Pacific Ocean northward from Tierra del Fuego, you will find on this 12,000-mile route no more articulated coast and no more islands and archipelagos than on the coast of British Columbia. There thousands of islands of all sizes form a kind of bulwark against the attacks of the ocean which — despite its pacific name — sometimes rages mightily.

For us the island world of British Columbia has remained a veritable milky way; a journey to this idyllic archipelago has up to now occurred to few Germans. I would not have thought of it either if I had not met some young and lively Englishmen on a splendid September day some years ago while on a trip to the mighty Columbia River; they wanted to go to Victoria the next day. Ten months before our meeting they had bought round-the-world tickets at Thos. Cook's on Ludgate Hill in London so that they could become members of the Travelers Club on Pall Mall on their return and play the dashing fellows. They came from China and had only stopped briefly on the Sandwich Islands and in San Francisco, just long enough to shake hands with Kalakaua I. Rex, and to view through their binoculars the famous "Ben Butler." (For the uninitiated reader I will mention that Kalakaua is the King of Hawaii, and Ben Butler the biggest and fattest of the seals who grace the sunny

* See *Canada und Neufundland*, Herder's Verlag, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1889, from which a large part of this chapter is taken.

rocks at the entrance of the Golden Gate; they are non-paying boarders of the City of San Francisco.)

Tomorrow, then, my Englishmen depart for Victoria in British Columbia. When these jovial globetrotters bid me "good-bye" and "good luck" in the hotel at Portland, Oregon, they did not foresee that I would be their travelling companion the next morning. Overnight I decided to return to the Atlantic by the Canadian Pacific instead of the already familiar Northern Pacific, and to visit Victoria on this occasion.

Though the million square miles of the American Northwest have barely more inhabitants than the two German principalities of Reuss-Greiz and Reuss-Schleiz, the locomotives whistle already in all directions through the forest primeval. How easy travelling is today! Comfortably resting in the soft armchairs of a Pullman car, we could view the lovely — though to a European strange — landscape along the Willamette River as we proceeded northward. At Calama a steam ferry swallowed our whole train and brought us across the clear blue rushing waters to the northern bank where this modern steam dolphin put us again on the railroad tracks. Now the thundering train sped through the densest forests, studded like a porcupine's back with the well-known Douglas firs, hundreds of feet tall. Nowhere on the six-hour trip to Seattle, the present terminal of the Northern Pacific Railroad, did we see even a woodcutter's cabin or even a clearing in the forest! Today the virgin territories of the Northwest are no longer crossed by the lonely trapper or the cautious emigrant on his slow ox wagon! American civilization gallops through the wilderness like a regiment of cavalry on the attack. We are to spend the next night in Seattle and to take the steamer to Victoria the next morning; in the complete absence of any settlement we fear that we will have to camp in our tents in Seattle. We missed our guess! Who would have expected on the wooded Puget Sound of the Indians, a thousand miles from San Francisco, such a modern, rising, vital metropolis as Seattle presented! How the devil did this telegraphing, telephoning, electric Yankee city drop into this wooded wilderness? I could hardly believe my eyes as our modern carriage drove us through brilliant, lively business streets to a large American hotel built of stone where luxurious rooms with every convenience were waiting. In the evening, a theatrical company from New York presented a sensational play by Sardou in a new opera house bursting with gilded pomp; during the intermission three different evening newspapers with cabled news from Berlin, Paris and London were on sale! In Europe we think that

the picturesque island world of the Puget Sound still lies in virginal slumber; meanwhile not only Seattle is prospering but a whole diadem of vigorous new cities with 6,000 to 15,000 inhabitants: Tacoma, Seattle, Olympia, Port Townsend, Port Moody, New Westminster — what do I know? These emporiums, barely known by name even in the American West, have overnight jumped with both feet into being almost great cities!

On the morning of the third day we finally sat comfortably on the bridge of the steamer which was to take us through the famous Puget Sound and the Straits of San Juan de Fuca to Victoria, the capital of British Columbia and the English city most distant from England. Do not be surprised by the Spanish name of San Juan de Fuca. Like almost the whole world a few hundred years ago, British Columbia was once Spanish; Vancouver Island had a Spanish governor, and a number of islands still bear Spanish names.

Now we see from the deck of our steamer how young the civilization of this wonderful land, how incomplete the settlement, how unused the great natural wealth. We had barely sailed a few minutes on the mirror surface of this sound, and we were already amidst a wilderness where not the slightest sign betrays the nearness of a great, lively and rich city. This progress by leaps and bounds is seen in the prairies, in the Rocky Mountains, and on the Pacific coast. Civilization advances with seven-league boots but the seven leagues between the paces remain untouched. Our great expectations of the beauty of Puget Sound are surpassed by reality. Puget Sound is a ten times magnified version of Lake Lucerne, transported to the Pacific coast and framed by grand mountains covered by eternal snow: In the West the 8,000-foot peaks of the Olympia Range, in the East the mighty Cascade Mountains with two glacier-bound cornerstones of 14,000 feet: the icy pyramid of Mount Tacoma in the South, and the splendidly formed Mount Baker in the North. The lower mountains and slopes between the ranges and the calm waters on which we sail are covered by the richest forests primeval; the great Douglas firs reach to the very shore so that in some places the gentle waves lap their roots. Innumerable small and large wooded islands break the monotony of the waters. Alerted by the captain we saw half-hidden among the dense trees the tents of Indian families who live mainly by fishing. A curious kind of local fishery shows how rich in fish these waters of British Columbia are. The Indians dip a long nail-studded pole into the water, shake it back and forth, and almost every minute they succeed in spearing a fish.

In the quiet dreamy bays we often encounter Indians fishing with their wives and children, frequently twenty to thirty people, in their characteristic hollow log canoes. They barely looked up when our modern steamer sailed through their old-fashioned flotilla of canoes. A wider view towards the West was unfortunately obscured by the smoke of a devastating forest fire which had been raging for a week. No one pays attention to such devastation. Where there is such abundance, a few square miles do not matter; on the contrary, the fire clears the thicket and creates arable land which is none too ample in British Columbia and Washington.

After several hours we land at the last town in the United States, Port Townsend, and then we cross the border between the star spangled banner and the royal crown, the Straits of San Juan de Fuca. Towards the evening's setting sun we enter the small port of Victoria.

What an enchanting view this city presented to our steamer! The most lavish vegetation, tall trees of strange aspect, flowers of never before seen form and splendid colour, everywhere the juiciest green lawns. The entire southern point of the island appears like an extensive and well-tended park. Half hidden, in the centre of this mountain-framed panorama, are the flat roofs of this yet unknown city; at the highest point of a gentle height is the great grey Governor's Mansion over which the British flag flies from a tall pole. Towards the West two British warships lie at anchor, like grim dogs in a porter's lodge. We stood enchanted by this magnificent view, lighted by the gold of the setting sun; quite unconsciously I pressed my back against the ship's mast, to slow its progress and to gain a longer view of this compendium of Italy, Switzerland and the Far East. Now after seeing the wonderful location of Victoria I know why this city has not vanished like most American mining towns.

For Victoria was a mining town. Gold created the city, gold made it great, rich and lively, but when the gold was exhausted the city did not burst like a soap bubble after the fashion of the California emporiums. Victoria was founded in 1842 as a trade fort by the hunters and trappers of the famous old Hudson's Bay Company. It is probable that nothing else would have become of these pallisades and blockhouses if gold had not been found on the mainland in 1856. Gold fever occurs like an epidemic of cholera or plague but even more devastating. The angel of the fever knocked on the door of lieutenant or professor; it penetrated the residences of aristocracy; it walked from table to table in the saloon; it recruited victims from every stratum of society. The news of these overnight riches in the mountains went everywhere, and tens of thousands

hurried to California. Soon the soap bubbles of Vulcan's children burst but when California was exhausted the gold of Colorado, Nevada and finally British Columbia filled the gap. From the exhausted goldfields all hurried on foot, on horseback, on wagons, on ships, like a mass migration hither and yon. The stream also reached Vancouver Island, and as Victoria was the only white settlement within hundreds of miles, it soon became the headquarters of the modern Argonauts. "Ah, gentlemen," said our captain when he told us the story of Victoria, "you should have seen that! At the time of the Fraser River excitement I ran a sailing ship between Victoria and the mainland. The gold I had then! There were no coins, and my passengers paid the fare with nuggets."

"Within two years Victoria swelled to 30,000 inhabitants. Thousands came from San Francisco, from Panama, or from the prairies. Thousands went to the mountains over there where you see the saddle north of Mount Baker. Dozens came back to Victoria heavily laden with golden nuggets and made propaganda for the gold mines. There was a fellow who gave me this nugget for the fare (and he pointed at a lump of gold as big as a nut which hung heavily from his watch chain and creased his coat). He took me to the city, and I had to drink with him. When he stepped into the first pretty full saloon he took a handful of nuggets out of his pocket and threw them at the big mirror over the bar. Then he pointed a revolver at the bartender and stammered: 'Pick up the yellow things and keep as many as the mirror costs!' He scooped the rest of the nuggets into his pocket and left."

"But, Gentlemen, this didn't last long. As I said, dozens became rich. Hundreds had washed enough gold to pay for their fare home, and thousands returned to Victoria in great misery to gradually fade away."

Nothing is left of the great mining city of Victoria with its thousands of wooden shacks, gambling halls, saloons and tents. Today this elegant, quiet, affluent capital of British Columbia no longer betrays its wild and raffish youth. When we landed in the small, charming harbour an army of insistent coachmen crowded around us, noisily shouting like the donkey drivers at the foot of Vesuvius or at Sheperd's Hotel in Cairo. A few minutes' drive through broad business streets brought us to the hotel. Our four days' stay convinced us that nowhere on the entire Pacific coasts of both Americas can one dine as excellently as at the Driard House in Victoria. Just six months earlier I had spent several weeks in the great caravanserais of San Francisco, the famous Palace Hotel and the Baldwin House, but this comfortable, Old English, quiet hotel on the

coast of Vancouver Island surpassed them all. We could not conceive it to find here, 6,000 miles from London, such a genuine piece of distinguished England as the Driard House. In the large dining room, decorated with antique oil paintings, there sat instead of the expected miners English gentlemen in white tie and tails next to English ladies in evening gowns. They drank champagne and Pontet Canet with a dinner that could have been served in Belgrave Square. In the reading room lay the *London Times* and the *Morning Post* while four quite young English Misses with light blond hair and in black silk stockings leafed through *The Graphic* and the *Illustrated News* just as in Brighton or Scarborough. How these sons and daughters of distant Albion hold on to their insular costumes, customs and habits throughout the world! They remain the same in Bombay as in Lahore, in Toronto as in Halifax.

The entire aspect of the city with its business streets and quiet residential suburbs is also English throughout. On my wanderings through the city and environs close analogies with other colonial cities kept coming to my mind. If Victoria stood on the Bermudas, it could be Port Hamilton; if it stood on one of the Bahamas it could be idyllic Nassau; only the palms and banana trees are lacking here. The houses are similar and surrounded by well-tended gardens, the business and street signs seem to be made in High Holborn, and the British Columbian militia soldiers with their swagger sticks and pillbox caps cocked over an ear strut as enterprisingly as on Trafalgar Square. But in this English-looking city pulsates the most colourful and international life I have encountered in my years of travel on all continents. I do not hesitate to characterize Victoria as the most international city on the globe. During our stay we had the opportunity to see this every moment. The waiters in the hotel were English; the owner an Austrian; the builder of the adjoining Victoria Theatre a Hungarian Count A——y, the son of a well-known diplomat; the maids in the hotel were pigtailed Chinese (of male sex as far as we could tell from their beardless young faces); in the kitchen a Frenchman rules over half a dozen Italian helpers; the beer parlours in the city are mostly in the hands of Germans; the fur dealers are Russians who immigrated from neighbouring Alaska; and in the oldest parts of the city there are still some Spanish families from earlier times. But this does not exhaust the population of the Pacific Babel, for the 12,000 inhabitants of the city include no less than 4,000 Chinese, 1,000 Indians, 500 Negroes; Europe, Asia, Africa and America here shake hands and live together in such a colourful mixture as cannot be found anywhere else.

Our first walk was to the post office where many people eager for letters awaited the distribution of the just arrived mail. Pushing to the counter we encountered a whole paintbox of colours, Redskins, Palefaces, black Africans, yellow Mongols, and between these principal colours a large number of other shades created by the mixing of the races, half-breed Indians, mixed breeds between Blacks and Chinese, Mulattoes, Quadroons.

Not only the Whites and the Blacks live peacefully in Victoria. *Les extrêmes se touchent*. The Chinese inhabit their own large part of the city, the Indians a tent camp outside the city on the way to Esquimalt, the seaport of Victoria. The white aristocracy lives in the opposite direction, near a splendid public park with green lawns and trees and the most wonderful view of the ocean's narrows looking like an alpine lake with the glacial peaks of the Cascade Range in the background. Do not wonder about the term "aristocracy." British Columbia has quite a number of names in the English court calendar, *Burke's Peerage*: the Governor, the government officials, the naval officers, the Lord Judge, and some Lords who liked Victoria so much that they built their homes here. With respect to Society, San Francisco, Portland and the Puget Sound cities therefore look up to Victoria. The soirées, races, garden parties and receptions we could attend during our stay truly transported us to the London "Season" and almost made us forget that we were lingering on the shores of the Pacific. Of the forty million Dollars washed from the rivers of British Columbia during the gold fever years, a good part remained in Victoria; there is much luxury, and life is not exactly cheap. In our hotel we paid \$4.00 a day; for a cigar we had to pay a Mark, for newspapers 20 to 30 Pfennigs. Copper coins are quite unknown in Victoria; when I gave a few coins I had brought from Manitoba to a hotel clerk for a postage stamp, he rejected them with the back of his hand, proudly as Brutus refused the crown, and said that his hotel was not a curio shop. The smallest current coin is the English sixpence or, as it is called along the Pacific Coast, the "bit"; it is worth 12½ American Cents. Canadian banknotes, except those of the Bank of British Columbia, are seldom found, and the most popular coins are the American gold Dollars.

The two most interesting sights of Victoria are the Indian quarter and the Chinese quarter. Do not imagine the Indians of British Columbia as those naked, tattooed fellows who promenade through the West with their tomahawks and use every paleface as a target for their arrows. Here in

the British Columbian archipelago they are good-natured, excellent salmon fishers, good farmers and cattle raisers, and on a much higher stage of development than the Prairie Indians; this is probably due to their strong mixing with Malays, Japanese and Chinese.

Many of the Indians you meet in Victoria and throughout British Columbia are such a pronounced Asiatic type that I was strengthened in my conviction — just as I was in Mexico and Central America — that they are not an autonomous race but immigrants from the West. Hundreds of Indians of the Comox and Cowichan tribes work on steamers, in saw mills and factories; they rarely give cause for dissatisfaction unless whiskey or brandy are within reach. The Indian women you meet in the streets of Victoria have adapted their originally very simple clothes to European fashions; they wear cotton skirts and colourful printed shawls, and I was assured also shirts underneath. Details lower down did not become known to me. Their rich, straight, black hair falls smoothly to their shoulders; in ears and nose they often wear bronze or silver rings. Their language is Chinook, originally the pure language of the Chinook Indians, today so mixed with Spanish, French and English words that Europeans can learn it easily. In British Columbia Chinook is what the *lingua franca* is in the Levant. To the traveller in regions as far north as the Aleutians, it may be more useful than all modern languages combined.

Besides the Indians, the Chinese are the most important working class element not only in Victoria but in all of British Columbia, and even down the coast as far as Mexico. Like San Francisco and Portland, Victoria has its Chinatown with heathen temples and opium dens, gambling houses and theatres, as unadulteratedly Chinese as if their pigtailed denizens were not in the New World but in their celestial homeland beyond the ocean. My travelling companions, the globetrotters, who had come from Shanghai and Hong Kong, felt quite at home in the dirty streets with their garishly painted houses, little shops with huge Chinese inscriptions, curious teahouses and restaurants where rice and mutton *à la chinois* were served with two chopsticks. At the time of our visit the Sons of Heaven were hammering and nailing to erect a new heathen temple. They let us enter without ceremony and climb the stairs to the “Holiest of Holies” where the precious gildings and wood carvings from China, images and inscriptions, were already in place, and sacrificial sticks glimmered already in bowls of sand. The never missing tea kettle stood on the coals in a corner. Only the idol itself still lay in an open box,

wrapped in bandages like a mummy, and awaited its installation on the splendidly carved altar. The building and furnishing of the temple cost the Chinese almost \$30,000, proof of their favourable circumstances earned by their proverbial thrift and moderation. In these respects we can still learn from the Mongolians. In the theatre — but what will I have left to describe for the traveller to China about the manners and customs of the Celestial Kingdom if I tell it in a chapter about Victoria? Suffice it to say they have been preserved in all details, 8,000 miles from the homeland amidst white civilization.

For the white inhabitants of Victoria the Chinese are invaluable at this time. They are good cooks, excellent chambermaids who do not bring a hussar corporal as a lover into the house, good washerwomen who do not gossip, hard-working housemen who do not get drunk. They are painters, decorators, in one word the best servants and the most frugal and economical working class. Yet, when I saw these silent, quiet, shy fellows put my bedroom in order or when I observed them busy in house or yard, I felt a curious distaste, not to say revulsion. Many inhabitants of the Pacific Coast, in Portland as in San Francisco or Los Angeles, share my feeling. Among the lower classes of the white population it is jealousy and competitive envy, among the ladies it is an instinctive disgust, but among thinking people it is fear. Today, working from the bottom upwards, China has already conquered Australia, East Asia, Polynesia. There China has undermined the social conditions, and it may in the future conquer a part of America in this quiet and peaceful way. Who has visited Batavia, Singapore, Melbourne, Auckland, San Francisco, can judge and understand why despite all philanthropy and Christian love-thy-neighbourliness they make an energetic front against this Mongolian immigration.

Vancouver, the large island of which Victoria is the chief city, will never be able to play an important role in commerce, industry or agriculture. The immediate surroundings of Victoria to a diameter of about ten miles are richly blessed and fruitful but the rest of the island is occupied by bare, grey mountain ranges of up to 8,000 feet; they are a true paradise for the tourist, sportsman and angler but plough and spade will never take hold there. The only valuable product of Vancouver Island is excellent coal which is mined at Nanaimo, a small city on the George Sound, and which provides fuel for the entire Pacific fleet of North America. Eight days before our visit a railroad line from Nanaimo to Esquimalt, the seaport of Victoria, was opened for traffic. We took

the trip of several hours to this Cardiff of the Pacific without bringing back any more travel impressions than blackened faces and the memory of the truly magnificent mountain landscapes we passed as the train sped along the coast.