THE PENSIONER’S PROBLEM—THE ATTRACTIONS OF VANCOUVER ISLAND.¹

By Major Percy Hope Falkner.

Royal Army Medical Corps.

To the British officer the question of employment after retiring from the active list is often an important and anxious one. The prospect of eternal club life is not attractive to a man in the prime of his days; in fact, to many such an existence would be an undesirable prospect. There are frequently a wife and family to be thought of, and generally a small income which even with care will not do more than supply bare necessities at home. Now these people are not, for many reasons, always fitted for the discomforts, &c., which are involved in the farmer’s life. Their training and surroundings during their service do not often fit them for such work, however much it may appeal to them; yet, I am afraid the emigration “plunge” is not infrequently taken without due consideration of these things.

The selection of a climate is an important matter, and it is not advisable for every one who has had prolonged service in India, &c., to suddenly change to conditions such as we have them in Eastern Canada. Further, the scenic surroundings do weigh with us in selecting a future home. The prospect must also hold out some likelihood that the small income referred to can be supplemented, and that the young family can have a chance of “making good” in due course. Last, but not least, there is the social element, and this frequently, to my certain knowledge, decides the whole question. The lady must have society and its attractions, as on no account could she suddenly drop what she has been accustomed to for many years in this respect. That such is the case can hardly be wondered at.

To recapitulate we must have:—

(1) A good climate, with pleasant surroundings, including sport.

(2) We must be able to supplement our small incomes in an industry of which as yet we know practically nothing.

¹ Reprinted from Canada by permission of the Editor.
Pensioner’s Problem—Attractions of Vancouver Island

(3) There must be good openings for our sons, not to mention the girls when they reach the marriageable age.

(4) The social conditions must be correct for Madam.

Now many of these requirements may appear frivolous to the civilian, but he would quickly alter his opinion if he had experienced a world-wide military service extending over twenty or thirty years. Further, they are well understood by the promoters of various propositions both in British Columbia and out of it, as can easily be seen by reading their literature. I believe I have now solved this question of retirement, although two years ago I had hardly given the matter much thought. At that time I had the good fortune to be serving in Bermuda, and decided that I would go to Canada and see for myself. I at once obtained piles of books, pamphlets, and what not, from all directions. These had special reference to various properties for sale, all “eminently suitable,” many of them recommended by men who, almost to a certainty, had never been to Canada at all. Many of these properties were sound, and others certainly the reverse.

I obtained leave of absence, and crossed Canada with another officer. We visited many and various places in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia. We took advice from everyone, and at the finish were more confused than when we started. No place visited came within the scope of my four points. Almost in despair, we decided on an extension of our tour to Vancouver Island. This we carried out, and finally arrived at Duncan, in the Cowichan District. This small city is situated some forty miles north of Victoria, on the
E. and N. Railway, while close by are the Lakes of Quamichan, Somenos, and Cowichan. Within some three miles the seaside resort of Maple Bay adds to the many attractions of the place.

It is difficult to speak in moderation of the beauties of this delightful country. Many naval officers have told me that Vancouver Island is "God's country," and Duncan will certainly need a lot of beating in this respect. The country rises and falls sufficiently to make the scenery perfect. Lakes, rivers, moors, and magnificent pine woods made the experience worth having as we sped along the perfect roads in our motor. Delightful houses of the bungalow type were visible on all sides, each surrounded by cleared farm ground, upon which the owners engaged in their own special line of industry. Many of those I met were ex-Service men, and one and all stated that they had never regretted their choice of this locality.

As regards industry, there is a wide choice. The district is famous for its butter and cream, but poultry is rapidly overtaking this, and will, I believe, be the leading industry in time to come. The returns from either are excellent to those who understand the work, and for others who do not Government advice can be had from the experimental station in Vancouver free of cost. The poultry and fruit industries can be combined to their mutual advantage, whilst, of course, general farming is lucrative, if handled in an efficient manner. A Co-operative Creamery is run by, and for, the benefit of the actual producers themselves. Not only does one obtain the very best market prices right at one's door, but a second profit is returned to the owners, after working expenses have been deducted. The various feeding stuffs are stocked and
handed to the members at wholesale prices. Incubators, poultry appliances, &c., are also held, whilst those needing advice can obtain this on request. This institution has certainly added much to the successes of the district, and it is wise to locate one's property as conveniently as may be to it, for the reasons given.

The soil is chiefly a red loam, running to a considerable depth, with a gravel subsoil. The bottom lands are deep black loam, which will produce enormous crops. Nowhere can this black soil be beaten, either from analysis or from a practical point of view. The land chosen for poultry or fruit culture will obviously not be always the kind required for dairy work, but this matter is a simple one for those who adopt the wise precaution of selecting the property personally. Irrigation is not required.

The climate is somewhat like that of the South or West of England, but much more agreeable. The rains are heavy, but fall mostly in winter, so that as an all-round climate it is one of the most perfect in the world. Snow and frost cause no trouble, neither do the biting east winds such as we experience in many places in Great Britain. Without a good rainfall we must expect a barren and desolate looking country, however good it may be made for fruit culture, &c., by expensive systems of irrigation. This has been my experience not only in Canada but elsewhere. From about March or April to November the climate is delightful, bright sunshine being the rule and not the exception; and one does not suffer from the extremes of heat or cold, as neither are in excess of one's requirements.

A few details regarding the poultry industry will not be amiss. There are large areas of land suitable for the industry which can be had for £20 ($100) per acre, more or less. This when simply
slashed and seeded to clover will yield as large returns with poultry as more expensive land. It is certainly advisable to get well-drained soil, sufficiently good to produce grain, fruit, or vegetables, because if poultry constantly occupy the same ground it becomes contaminated, but if the rich soil is alternated between poultry and crops of any kind many marked advantages are secured by each department. The yield from average good stock works out at from $2 (8s. 4d.) to $3.20 (12s. 10d.) per head, average profit. The man is fortunate who can secure an average of 5s. per head in Britain. The higher figures would represent sales of hatching eggs, stock, &c., in addition to the main output, which is marketed in the usual way through the Creamery. The climate cannot be beaten for the poultry industry in its many departments.

Clover yields large crops practically all the year round, and this is of vital importance, as it is a foodstuff of great value, besides purifying the ground at the same time. Fruit will yield good returns in conjunction with poultry culture upon the same ground. The trees, whilst supplying an absolute necessity in the form of shade in summer, will be greatly benefited by the poultry manure. Not only this, but many insects, &c., injurious to the trees, will be removed by the ever-watchful flock.

Markets are ever increasing in both number and size. A large proportion of the people in this Province are not producers of farm produce, as, for example, the mining communities. The two cities of Victoria and Vancouver are practically at our door, whilst increasing demands upon the output are being secured from Alaska and Yukon. The Prairie Provinces, though becoming rich at a phenomenal rate, are practically dependent upon outside supplies of eggs, fruit, vegetables, &c. The result of this is that
we can secure for butter 45 cents to 50 cents per lb. in the winter, and an average of from 38 cents to 40 cents in the summer, for all that can be produced and more. The returns of the Cowichan Creamery in 1907 were $57,139, and in 1908 $61,167, and these results have largely increased year by year up to the present time. A large amount of money is leaving the Province of British Columbia annually for poultry products.

Sufficient has been said to verify the statement that the present and future prospects of the various Duncan industries could not be more promising, and it will be many years, if ever, before the demands upon her produce will fully satisfy market requirements.

Sport, &c., is practically unlimited, and of the most attractive kind conceivable. The district has two tennis clubs and a first-class golf links, while polo, cricket, &c., &c., are all provided for in this way. A Yacht Club was lately in the process of formation, but this has been temporarily delayed. The fisherman has at his door probably one of the best regions for sport that Nature can supply. Lakes, rivers, and open sea provide unlimited numbers of salmon, grilse, trout, &c. The English pheasant is very numerous, as are quail, snipe, duck, geese, and so on, ad infinitum. The district is provided with an efficient telephone service, and before the present year is out a scheme of electric power will be arranged for the young city sufficient for all future developments, including, of course, electric light. The power is available at the Cowichan River Falls, about eleven miles from the city, and the cost of transfer will not be a large one.

Many men of mature years are taking up land for residential sites, pure and simple. The prices of land are increasing in the
district. Fair agricultural land can be had from $150 to $250, whilst bottom land runs higher. Residential sites are changing hands at as much as $3,000 per acre, for exceptional lots in the best localities. Not the least important point about the city is its proximity to Victoria. What could be more enjoyable than a run of forty miles in a good train, through magnificent scenery, with the prospect of a day in one of the most attractive cities in Canada?

In concluding, I must state that I am not financially interested in the country described in any way, with the exception of the property I own there, and this is not for sale. Should any officer require further information, I shall be only too pleased to give him such, to the best of my ability, if he will communicate with me through the Editor of Canada.

Echoes from the Past.

CONCERNING THE ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

BY SURGEON G. J. H. EVATT, M.D.

Attached to 25th (King's Own Borderers) Regiment, Jubbulpore, India, February, 1875.

(Continued from p. 640.)

SECTION IV.—THE UNIFICATION SYSTEM

(40) We now turn to discuss the unification system, or the principle of handing over to the Army Medical Department the fullest control over the Medical service of the forces, subject at all times and in all places to the command of the chief Military authority present either in garrison or in the field.

It would be absurd to ignore, in discussing this question, the causes that are at work in the medical department promoting the desire for unification. No profession has during the past fifty years made anything like the social progress ours has done. Better men, with better education, and wider views join it every day. When one remembers the position it occupied in not very distant times by comparison with the sword, the Church, or law, no one can deny that it has risen amazingly, while its position is every day more liable to assault. Large armies and volunteer military systems have made military rank common, the odium theologicum has died out