

AN EXPEDITION ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

THE rapidly-increasing importance of British Columbia, dependent upon the discovery of gold, has drawn attention to our means of communication with that colony. The only direct road at present existing between the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific, passes through the territory of the United States; and it has often been thought desirable to open a route through our own dominions. In the spring of 1862 I resolved to investigate for myself the nature of the country between the Red River Settlement and the Rocky Mountains; and to penetrate, if possible, by the shortest route to the gold regions of Cariboo—an enterprise hitherto unattempted. Dr. Hector, indeed, first endeavoured to reach the head-waters of the Thompson River, but was unsuccessful. To quote his own words in a letter addressed to Sir Roderick Murchison:—"I failed to get through—not owing to any insuperable rocky barriers, but merely to my having encountered a forest growth so dense, and so encumbered with fallen timber, that I had neither time, men, nor provisions to cope with it. As it was, the escape from this region of the mountains was so tedious that we were nearly caught in the snows of the early mountain winter, and at one time I thought we should have to abandon most, if not all, our horses."

The Leather Pass, which lies in the same latitude as Cariboo, had, in former years, been used by the *voyageurs* of the Hudson's Bay Company, but merely as a portage from the Athabasca River to the Fraser; and the route was abandoned on account of the dangerous character of the latter river, and the many casualties which resulted from its navigation. As this pass offered the most direct road, and as the region with