

lying below the level of the summer inundation, which are entirely covered with snow-water from June to August. Here embanking is of no avail, but so fertile is the ground that crops put in after the subsidence of the floods are found to flourish quite as well as if tilled earlier. I rowed over the Sumass prairies in a whale-boat in June, when, with the exception of a high ridge peeping up here and there, and the cotton-wood trees, flooded to their branches, appearing as though they grew from out of the water, not a sign of land or vegetation was visible. In August following I measured the stalks of some grass, picked on the prairie after the water had gone, and found the grass had grown to a length of six feet three inches; in seven weeks all the *Cyperaceæ* grow with the same wild profusion, after the summer inundation. I placed a very lean ox on this prairie (belonging her Majesty's commission) after the waters subsided, and had it killed at Christmas, when it weighed eleven hundred pounds, and was so fat that the men grumbled to eat it. I merely mention this in proof of the nutritious qualities of the herbage. Still higher up the rivers, frequently occurring among the craggy summits of the Cascades and Rocky Mountains, one constantly comes upon small openings, misnamed "wet prairies," clad thickly with *Gramineæ*, *Cyperaceæ*, and *Equisetaceæ*, all of the most luxuriant growth. By far the most interesting kind of prairies are those which are designated "dry prairies," which are clearly alluvial river deposits, although most of them are raised over one hundred feet above the present water-level, and are covered in many cases with a rich black loam, three feet and over in depth, the result of vegetable decomposition. These fertile patches of land produce all the plants adapted to the climate in startling profusion. The Nisqually plains, over a portion of which we are jogging along, in extent measure thirty square miles. The Nisqually river—we shall cross it soon—may be considered in some degree the southern boundary, whilst the Puyallup river washes the northern border. Conspicuous from their extreme singularity are the "shingle terraces," rising successively from fifteen to fifty feet high, and taking a course, as a rule, parallel to that of the mountain ranges. This terrace formation is common both on the east and west sides of the Rocky Mountains. Near the Rocky Mountain House, Dr. Hector speaks of a valley excavated in the cretaceous strata by the eroding influence of the North Saskatchewan river. "In this valley there are three 'terraces,' extensively developed at twenty, sixty, and one hundred and ten feet above water-level."\* The terraces appear to be confined to valleys, through which flow large streams, until arriving near the mountains. "Then they gradually spread out, and at last cover the whole country along the base of the mountains, filling up the hollows and valleys of the outer ranges to the depth of several

\* Palliser's Expl.

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