

bounding the distant horizon to the westward, forming a coast-line to the land-sea beneath it; and this feature, which becomes less and less defined as one approaches it, is the Great Coteau of the Missouri, and is one of the most important features of the western plains. It is the second prairie steppe of the North-American Continent, and crosses the country from north-west to south-east. This coteau or prairie steppe leads to a very remarkable plateau, of an average elevation of 2250 feet above the sea, which is broken up in a succession of ridges, valleys, and basins, presenting in section a very broken and irregular profile. The boundary-line for 50 miles crosses the Great Coteau district, and over the whole of this distance there is no well-defined ridge or water-course, but the same confused monotony of ridges and hollows. Those are succeeded, as one travels westerly, by a more undulating country, in which large alkaline lakes occur; and as the waters evaporate during the summer, a white saline deposit remains on the shore-line, which contrasts strikingly with the *Salicornia*, a crimson plant which fringes the salt lakes, and at once marks their brackish character. The chain of salt-lakes extends in almost an east and west direction for 15 miles, and over the whole of this district, including the Great Coteau, the waters have no outlet to the ocean. We are thus in the central water-parting of the continent; for the waters we have left behind us find their way by the Red River into the Hudson's Bay, while the ravines that are now opening out to view towards the west drain southwards to the Missouri, and find their way to the Gulf of Mexico. A great change is now observable in the topographical features; owing to the nature of the soil, which is of clay and very friable, denudation proceeds very rapidly during the short period that the soil is saturated with the snow-water, and the valleys are often scarped by deep and almost vertical sides, which in many places become baked by the heat of the sun and resemble retaining walls. The peaks and ridges of the clay-hills are weathered into most varied forms, some turret-shaped, others conical, and in many instances the peaks and ridges are capped by a natural brick material, burnt to a red colour by the combustion of the beds of lignite or tertiary coal which are scattered through this clay formation. The soil is unable to support vegetation, and this rugged and desolate country, which somewhat resembles the wilderness of Judæa, is called by the half-breed hunters "*Les mauvaises Terres*." Though the principal portion of this semi-desert occurs on the United States side of the boundary, a wedged-shaped area protrudes into British territory, measuring at its base on the boundary 7° of longitude, or about 320 miles, and tapering off north-