

Eastern limit of the Colony, and runs from its SE corner at the Boundary line, in a NNW direction, to beyond the Northern limit of the Colony, in Lat. 60°. I say the main crest, because what generally bears the name of the Rocky Mountains, is composed in British Columbia of three distinct ranges, divided from each other by rivers and deep depressions, and having each its own crest or ridge. Of these, the two western ones, though less elevated, are chiefly composed of metamorphic rocks, and, therefore, generally speaking, more distorted and abrupt than the rounded granitic peaks and domes of the main crest. The whole forms a triple fence as it were to the Colony, or one vast sea of mountains, averaging from 150 to 160 miles wide.

The Middle range, which as before said, is somewhat lower than the main one, and which takes the names of the Purcell, Selkirk and Malton ranges successively, is separated from the main ridge by the Kootanie River, the Upper Columbia, the Canoe River and the Upper Fraser; and presents one uninterrupted line of mountains, some of them 12,000 feet high, parallel to the main range, for 240 miles from the Boundary line to the Great Bend of the Columbia, in 52° N Lat. The Columbia River here runs toward the North, and after separating the above Middle or Selkirk range from the Rocky Mountains, cuts through it at the Big Bend, and turning South, again separates it in its downward course from the third or more Westerly range. But the travellers who have discovered the different passes [such as they are in this latitude] through the Rocky Mountains were unable to push their explorations further than this Eastern or upper portion of the Columbia, excepting near the Boundary line; so that neither the Middle range nor the Western one, which were, perhaps, supposed, as being less elevated, to present less difficulties, had been hitherto examined. In consequence, however, of the gold discoveries at Kootanie and the Big Bend, or in connexion with them, they were carefully explored last year; but no practicable pass could be discovered through the Selkirk range, which thus presents an impenetrable barrier for a railroad in that direction.

A scheme, it is true, has been broached and even patronized in the interest of New Westminster, for overcoming this difficulty, by making use of the Columbia for 100 miles north, from the Eagle Pass in the next Range and in Lat. 50°:56, to the Boat Encampment and the Big Bend of the Columbia, in Lat. 52°, and then 60 miles south to Blaeberry River; from which point the road would follow Howse Pass, 6347 feet high, over the main crest of the Rocky Mountains. But forty miles above Eagle Pass the navigation of the Columbia is interrupted by the Dalles de Mort or Death Rapids, and the formidable bluffs on either side of the river would hinder the construction of a wagon or railroad, supposing there were no greater difficulties beyond. Such a road may do very well on paper or to show in England, but practically speaking, could never be carried out.