

Nanaimo (a copy of which is annexed to this) as the greatest, or, in fact, the only obstacle to the road between Albernie and Nanaimo. In that letter I stated that I thought it possible a more careful examination might enable an engineer to carry the road over these without blasting; a second visit, however, has led me to alter this opinion, and I now feel sure some blasting, though I could not say how much, would be required if a road (waggon) were being constructed; but a trail might be made to pass over them. I now think that the engineer constructing the road might prefer the north side of the lake to the south; as, though generally the mountain comes steeper down to the edge on that side, and there did not appear to be so much of a beach as there is on the south side all along, except at these bluffs, I did not see any such positive impediment as the bluffs present, and there may be level enough to carry the trail along.

At the head of the lake, which we found did not extend farther than we had seen, there is a small hill, which I at first took for "Solitary Hill," over the top of which we crossed, and then ascended the higher ridge behind it, as shown by the red line on the accompanying tracing. My object in keeping up was to get sight of Texhada Peak, or some other point to fix my position; but the road would be brought into the lake through the wide gorge in the north-east corner, through which a large river, 40 or 50 yards wide, runs from the lake to the northward. I was disappointed in the hope of obtaining any bearings, as between the incessant, or almost incessant, rain, and the mists over the gulf, we could see nothing, (though several trees were ascended for the purpose.) Descending on the north side of the ridge, we shaped an easterly course along the level land at its foot. It was 1 P.M. on the 1st of May when we reached the bottom of this ridge; and from that time till we made the sea at the head of North-west Bay the same hour on the 3rd, the country over which we travelled was perfectly level, in most places thinly timbered, and with a few patches of swamp. The nature of the soil varied considerably. In some places we passed over many acres of a black vegetable mould, free from stones; while others, though certainly the smaller proportion, were hard and sandy, and covered with stones. There was much less undergrowth than I have been accustomed to meet with, which was a considerable relief, though probably owing more to the earliness of the season than to anything else; a month later would make a considerable difference in this respect. The generality of this country, however, appeared as if it was never very thickly covered, and was well adapted for settlement. In speaking of all this as level, I must except a couple of gorges mentioned in my former letter, about 100 feet deep, through which run two rivers, 50 or 60 yards wide.