

find the same elements as in the south, only some are developed into larger proportions—others are contracted, while the passage from a rainless into a humid climate is indicated by great rivers, whose restless flow has worn deep passes and precipitous cañons through the mountain ranges, and into the floor of the plateau.

Instead of the arid plains of Nebraska, rolling up to an elevation of 6,000 feet at Cheyenne, we have the fertile prairies of the Saskatchewan, which meet the mountains at an elevation of only 2,600 feet. Then, though here the Rocky Mountain Range attains, in its highest summits—Mounts Brown and Hooker—proportions even grander than it does in the Colorado Peaks, it is cleft so deeply by ravines—the beds in more than one instance of mighty rivers that rise within the range to the west—that the passage through the mountains may be made in several places without the traveller being aware by any steep alternation in level that he has even left the plains. One or other of these gaps will, of course, be chosen to give passage to the Railway. Within the Rocky Mountain Range is an elevated plateau such as we have described as inclosed between the same range and the Sierra Nevada in the south. This plateau has in British Columbia, however, an average elevation of only about 2,000 feet instead of 5,500 feet; its surface is likewise corrugated by secondary mountain ranges, such as the Selkirk and Gold, but it is much more deeply furrowed by water-courses than in its southern extension. In the latitude we are describing the Columbia and Fraser Rivers traverse the plateau diagonally from north-east to south-west, and with their tributaries, which generally join the main stream at right angles, cut it up in all directions with deep trenches, of which steep sides form precipitous escarpments, and whose bottoms are so narrow that the water often fills completely the gorge, not allowing, on either side, room to build a road. These river

valleys, with their regular descent to the sea, would form admirable railway routes were it not for their impassable character even on the plateau, and which becomes still more marked when the rivers cut their way through the Cascade or Coast Range, rushing impetuously through gloomy defiles in which to build a railroad would involve carving a shelf for miles out of a wall of rock.

The Cascade Range is the continuation northward of the Sierra Nevada, and forms like it the western rim of the basin. In California, as we have seen, the Sierra Nevada slopes rapidly into the San Jacinto Valley. In this part of British Columbia the Cascade Range drops, by precipices thousands of feet high, into the Straits of Georgia. With the Valley of San Jacinto depressed a few hundred feet, it would form an arm of the sea corresponding to the Straits of San Juan de Fuca and Georgia, and the high land which occupies the coast of California would be an island, the representative in the south of the highest zone of the submerged mountain chain whose extension northward is indicated by Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Group.

It will be understood, therefore, that while the deep indentations in the Rocky Mountains, which have been cut in one instance at least beneath the level of the enclosed plateau, afford easy highways through them from the east; the deep furrows which the rivers have grooved into the surface of the table land, added to the undulations, rising sometimes into mountain chains, into which it is broken, present a labyrinth of obstacles through which it is not easy to thread a way; and the difficulties become more insuperable when the Cascade Range is reached, for its western slope is a precipice whose base is lashed by the sea—except where rapid rivers have cleft through its narrow gorges—terminating in long sinuous arms of the sea, so narrow as to be unnavigable generally by sailing ships and is enclosed by cliffs that tower almost

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