

other bright-coloured birds, the inhabitants of a southern clime. The practicability of the pass can scarcely, perhaps, be placed in a stronger light than by the fact that it was discovered and crossed by the energy of one man, leading a small band of alarmed and discontented followers through an unknown country, beset with hostile Indians; the whole party being ignorant not only of the paths they were travelling, but of their distance from the Pacific, or of the fate that might there await them. Under such circumstances Mackenzie performed the passage now traced, with a canoe which, from successive repairs, had become so heavy that two men could not carry her more than a hundred yards, and so crazy that it became absolutely necessary to construct another. The table-land of the summit-level is flanked by mountains on either side, about a quarter of a mile apart. Two streams fall from the rocks into the one first approached; two others, descending from the opposite heights, glide into the second lake. The scenery of the ascent reveals a succession of picturesque beauty, and the forests, islands, meadows, and table-lands show a continuation of the same general characteristics of the country of the Saskatchewan and Peace rivers. The timber is specified as of large dimensions, the poplars as the largest Mackenzie had ever beheld; he names the spruce, red pine, cypress, white birch, poplar, willow, alder, arrow-wood, redwood, liard, service-tree, bois piquant, &c., and, among shrubs, the gooseberry, currant, and various kinds of briars.

The characteristics of the southern passes are similar; that between latitude 53° and 54° is more gradually approached, the valleys are wider, and the character of the scenery less precipitous.

During the freshets in the spring, on the sudden melting of the snow and breaking up of the ice, the narrow valleys of the northern and southern passes are sometimes completely choked by natural dams, formed by timber and fragments of rock carried down by the impetuous torrent. When the accumulated waters have acquired sufficient weight or force, these temporary obstacles are borne away before them, and the rivers and streams gradually retire within their ordinary channels. This operation of nature is indicative of a mode by which a great transit of traffic may be effected across the mountains; the narrow valleys are the river-beds, the rocky banks and bottoms the abutments and chambers of the masonry, the temporary dams only require to be made permanent, and navigable rivers—steps of still water—replace the furious and impracticable mountain torrent. The largest bodies of water admit of being regulated without danger, by providing outlets increasing in size in full proportion to the accumulated quantities of successive descents.