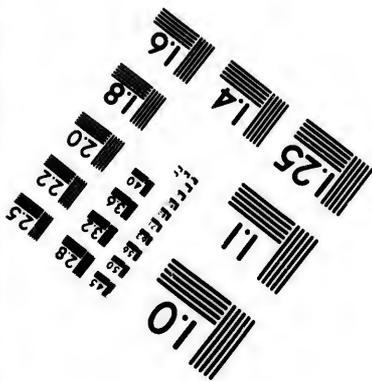
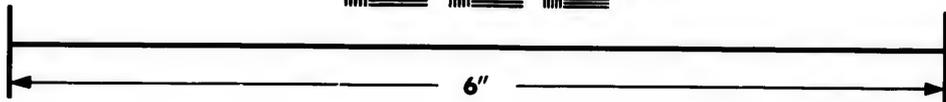
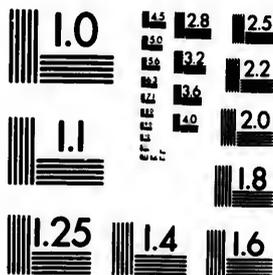


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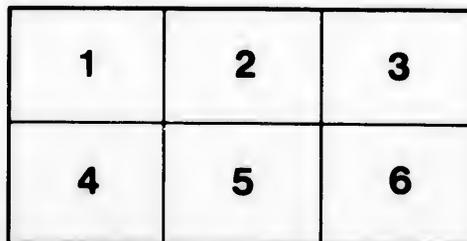
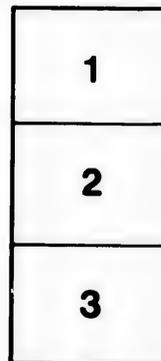
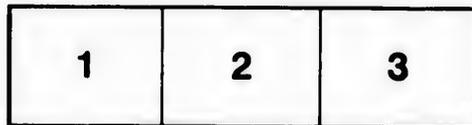
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XXVII.—*Route in Exploring a Road from Albernie Canal to Nanaimo, in Vancouver Island, in May, 1861, with a Track Chart.* By Commander RICHARD C. MAYNE, R.N., F.R.G.S.

[Communicated by the LORDS COMMISSIONERS of the ADMIRALTY.]

Read, May 12, 1862.

To Captain G. H. RICHARDS, R.N., F.R.G.S., H.M.S. *Hecate*.

SIR,

H.M.S. *Hecate*, Vancouver Island, May, 1861.

I HAVE the honour to inform you that, in compliance with your orders, I left the Albernie settlement at 10 on the morning of the 29th of April, with six Indians, one man from the *Hecate*, and Mr. Bamfield, the Indian agent. After crossing the low coast-ridge we passed over about 2 miles of level land, and then commenced a gradual ascent, and continued to ascend till we camped,—our camp being about 800 feet above the sea. During the latter part of the day the old hunter, who was the leader among the Indians, had been edging more to the northward than I liked; and I explained that we wanted to pass between Mounts Arrowsmith and Moriarty, and pointed it out on the chart to him. He insisted that if we went that way we should have to cross snow mountains,

he having been there hunting; and he said he knew a way farther north by which we could get into the valley beyond the "steep ridge," though farther than that he did not know. Having satisfied myself that he did not mean to go by "Horne Lake," I agreed to let him pilot, as the Indians showed great reluctance to trying the southern way, and some desire to return at once, and I knew it would be easier to make them go my way returning. As it turned out, it was fortunate we did not try that way, for I afterwards found Arrowsmith and Moriarty are joined by a snow-covered ridge: and if I had had to turn back, the Indians would have been so disheartened that I probably should not have been able to get them to try again.

Next morning (30th) we continued to ascend for an hour, when we reached the summit of the ridge, about 1200 feet above the sea. The whole of this ascent had been by a very easy grade; nothing to prevent a road being led straight up it; and I found on returning that even then we did not cross in the lowest part of the ridge, which might have been passed at an elevation of 700 or 800 feet, if not less. We descended on the north side somewhat more abruptly, and at the bottom came to a good-sized stream, 30 or 40 yards wide, running to the northward, which I called "Elk River." Crossing this we walked along a lightly-timbered level land, here and there rather swampy, for 3 or 4 miles, when we came to a small lake, about 3 miles long, and lying east and west, into which the Elk River empties itself. The soil from the mountain foot appeared very good, and the elk are numerous; we saw upwards of a dozen, and shot one, without going out of our course.

Arrived at the lake, the Indians' knowledge of the country ceased; none of them had ever seen this lake before, and they gave up all charge. One old fellow expressed great disgust with my compass, because it could not tell me where the high mountain (Arrowsmith) was; but as I confidently asserted I knew the way to Nanaimo perfectly, they were content to go on. We walked along the south shore of the lake about half its length, and then camped, and made a raft to continue our journey on.

I was at this time uncertain if the lake did not extend farther than we could see, as there appeared a gorge in the south-east corner; and as it caused no delay in making, I thought a mile or two on the raft would rest the Indians, who were pretty heavily laden. We found next morning that the rafting saved us an awkward struggle over two bluffs which we came to about half a mile farther on, and which projected perpendicularly over the lake, extending over 100 yards each, and 150 feet high; and though the bluffs themselves are not more than this height, it is very steep up to the summit of the mountain in this part.

I have mentioned these bluffs in my letter to the Governor from

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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.

At 1 P.M. on the 3rd, as I have said, we opened the sea about half a mile off, and I found, to my disgust, that I was much farther north than I thought. I had imagined, by keeping easterly from the lake, we should have passed behind (south of) the hills south of Nanoose. At first I attributed it to bad steering since leaving the lake, but when I got bearings on my return journey I found the mistake was on the other side: I had put the lake too far south.

After making the sea we steered south, to avoid Nanoose Harbour, and at 3 came out at the head of it. As I intended passing behind the south Nanoose hills on my way back, I did not press the men, some of whom were showing signs of being knocked up, to go behind them now, as they were very anxious to go round the beach, and then cut straight across to the eastward of the hills. Accordingly we walked along the beach to the long point beyond Entrance Island, and camping there for the night, took to the bush in the morning (4th), and reached Departure Bay at 3, and Nanaimo at 5 P.M. on the same day. I was again misled in steering for Nanaimo, by the two small lakes being marked much too far south. When I reached them I laid off my course for Nanaimo on the chart, and instead of coming out there I came out in Departure Bay, 3 miles north of it. The country between Nanoose and Nanaimo is fairly level; and though in some places there is a good deal of fallen timber and one or two small swamps, a road might easily be made along it.

I remained at Nanaimo two days to recruit the party, and sent from thence the original of the annexed letter and a tracing of my route, approximately half an inch to a mile (nautical), to his Excellency the Governor. My route is a good deal altered in the one I have now prepared, having corrected it on my way back. On my way to Nanaimo, as I have said, the increasing rain prevented my seeing anything whenever I did get on high ground, and I had to be guided wholly by compass course and estimated distance.

When I mustered my party to prepare for return, I found three of the Indians quite unable to go. One had been ill from the first, and was nearly turning back from the first day's walk; the other two had such swollen feet and legs that I saw they would be more hindrance than help if I took them into the bush. These Indians are not used to travelling, as those on the main are; for the difficulties of this travelling are not to be compared to my last trip in British Columbia, when none of the Indians were done up. The only thing to be done was to start with the other three, as we could not then get any Nanaimo Indians to go; and we accordingly prepared to start, leaving everything but the blankets and six days' provisions with the sick, to be brought by them across the Qualicum trail as soon as they were able to move. At the eleventh

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hour, however, Mr. Horne got a Nanaimo Indian to go with us to show us as much as he knew of his part of the country: when he agreed to go, two others asked to accompany him; and at last all three wanted to go all the way. As the provisions were as much as the three Albernie Indians could carry, and Mr. Bamfield and I were packing our own blankets, instruments, axes, &c., I was not sorry to take the Nanaimos, and gladly unpacked myself, and added a bag of flour to our provisions, so that we were safe for ten or twelve days.

We got away at noon on Tuesday (7th), and followed up the Mill Stream and along Pearse Plain till 6, when we camped at the western entrance of the clear land, and on the east bank of the Mill Stream, or Millstone River, as it is sometimes called.

I marked, on the tracing sent to the Governor, the track I intended endeavouring to pursue on my way back to Albernie, which was nearly that proposed by you on the outward journey, and marked on the tracing you sent to his Excellency, that is to say, passing between Mounts Arrowsmith and Moriarty. When I passed the small lakes on Saturday, I ascended the knoll over the eastern one, and from that I saw the land north-east of Mount Benson was very clear for several miles—or perhaps I should say lightly timbered, rather than clear—and at the same time that there was a ridge east of Benson, which must be passed to the northward. Accordingly we steered so as to cross the good land and ascend a middle ridge, which I had seen between the south Nanoose Mounts and the one due west of Benson Mount, to get some bearings, and if possible to see also, as the weather was now fine and clear, whether there was a valley between the two snow peaks (Moriarty and Arrowsmith), or if it was, as the Indians said, snow-covered from one to the other. We kept about west all day, skirting the south side of the south Nanoose Hills, keeping above the valley, through which runs the Nanoose River. At 3 P.M. we descended, and crossed the Nanoose River, here about 30 or 40 yards wide, and continued along level land till night.

Next morning (9th) we ascended the ridge on the west side of the Nanoose River, and reached the summit at 8, and by getting up a convenient tree I got the desired bearings. Finding by them that I was again farther north than I wished to be, I kept along to the ridge to the south-west, till at 9 we came to a clear bare nob, from which we had a splendid view of both Moriarty and Arrowsmith; and, alas for the direct route! an equally clear view of a ridge about 2000 feet high joining the two. The Indians, of course, chuckled immensely when we saw this proof of their superior knowledge, and the old hunter said we should be up to

our necks in snow if we tried to cross it. I had, however, not the slightest wish to try the experiment. I saw at once that it would be quite useless as a road-way even if we succeeded in crossing it, and I determined to return by the lake; but, instead of going down on to the level land again, to keep the ridge, correct my chart, and get a better idea of the lay of the land. We crossed the eastern of the two large rivers at 10, and the western one at 4 P.M.; the gorges of both of these streams were much deeper here than where we had crossed them below, and the rivers deeper. We had great difficulty in fording the second one. At 9 the next day (10th), having kept a little northward, we met one of our old marks at the southerly bend, marked on my outward journey, and imagining we were nearly up to the lake, kept to the south-west, to get on the summit of the ridge, which we reached at 4, and saw the opening of the lake beneath us. Descending the west side of the ridge, we reached the end of the lake at 6. We found the timbers of the raft lying on the beach, and soon put it together again. Next morning (11th) we started on the raft, and went the whole length of the lake with it, reaching the west end at 10; it took us a little longer than walking, but the rest to the Indians was worth the delay. At 10 we started along the Elk River, and by keeping its west bank avoided the swampy ground we had passed before, and at 1 reached the foot of the ridge.

We were not so fortunate with respect to the elk as when going; for though we saw signs of fresh trails, we were disappointed in not getting a shot at one, and had to content ourselves with the remains of the pork, we had kept on purpose for frying the elk with, for our breakfast; which was the more annoying, as we had all along bargained on getting an elk when we crossed the lake. I determined, instead of going through the gorge, to cross the east summit of the ridge, so as, if possible, to catch a glimpse of Mount Arrowsmith, which I had not seen since the 9th, when on the other (north) side of the lake. We ascended, keeping well to the south, and reached the summit at 2. We then continued along the ridge, and just when we were beginning to descend, and I had almost given up the hope of seeing anything, we came to a clear spot, and saw Mount Arrowsmith, as it is seldom seen, perfectly clear to the very top. From this we kept south-west, and descended the ridge by almost as easy a slope as we had ascended it by when setting out on the 29th-30th, followed the small river which runs into the Somas about a mile above the mill, and camped about 4 miles from Albernie. Next morning we proceeded down the hill, and reached the settlement at 10, coming out on the beach about half a mile below it.

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coast, and filled in as much topography as I am able. I have made a tracing of this, according to your orders, for his Excellency the Governor.

I have marked on the tracing the route I think it advisable a road should take if one is cut. I mentioned, in my letter from Nanaimo to the Governor, the advantages the northern, or coast-route, appeared to me to possess over the more direct one, before I knew the direct one to be impracticable; and it is needless repeating them now we know that no direct valley exists, and that, if another way be required, it must be sought for southward of Mount Benson, and towards the entrance, rather than the head, of the Albernie Canal.

I have marked a proposed line nearer the coast than I myself passed. I imagine this will be found preferable, as the river gorges mentioned will probably be found considerably less steep near the shore than higher up, as I have mentioned I found them much steeper, and the streams deeper, when I crossed the second time than at the first. You will see I have drawn the proposed line by two ways from Nanoose to Nanaimo, because as a matter of expense or difficulty in cutting I believe there would be found little or no difference between them, as they would take advantage of all the clear land to the western extreme of Pearse Plain in either. The southern one would open up the largest tract of available land, the other Nanoose harbour, though the southern might by a little deviation be made to do this also. The choice of these, therefore, appears to be entirely a question of colonial policy—whether his Excellency deems it most advantageous to the colony to take it through the valley of the Nanoose River, in which there is considerable available land, or bring Nanoose more prominently forward, and have this magnificent harbour for loading and unloading vessels.

There is one other consideration, which is the line the Colonial Surveyor has determined on for the road between Nanaimo and Victoria. If he intends bringing it into the south-west of Mount Benson, through the valley of the Nanaimo River, as he will probably have to do, the southern road will for about 10 miles answer as the commencement or termination of the Victoria road; and you well know that in this country a mile of road represents a considerable sum of money.

In conclusion, I must thank Mr. Bamfield for the assistance he rendered me by his knowledge of Nootka language.

I have, &c.,

RICHARD C. MAYNE, R.N.

