

the Caspian Sea, but those of Aral and Baikal have been commemorated, so the vast lakes, above mentioned, may here be considered as detached inland seas.

The lake Superior, Michigan, and Huron, in this point of view, form one large inland sea, which might be called the sea of Canada, or that of Huron. This expansion of water, as already mentioned, is about 350 miles in length, and more than 100 at its greatest breadth: according to the French charts, that part of this sea, which is called Lake SUPERIOR, is not less than 1500 miles in circumference. The greater part of the coast seems to consist of rocks and uneven ground, like those of the sea of Baikal. The water is pure and transparent; and the bottom generally composed of large rocks.—There are several islands, one of which called Minong is about 60 miles in length: the savages suppose that these islands are residences of the Great Spirit. More than thirty rivers fall into this lake, some of them of considerable size, but the geography is far from being perfect. The banks of a river on the north-west abound with native copper. The chief fish are sturgeon and trout; the latter being caught at all seasons, and said to weigh from twelve to fifty pounds. This part of the sea of Canada opens into the lake Huron, by the straits of St. Mary, about 40 miles in length, and in some places only one or two miles in breadth; with a rapide towards the north-west extremity, which may however be descended by canoes, and the prospects are here delightful. The storms on this large expanse of water are as dangerous as those on the ocean, the waves breaking more quick, and running nearly as high. The circumference of that part called Lake HURON is said to be about 1000 miles; and on the northern side are some islands called Manatulan, implying the place of spirits. Another short strait leads into the third lake called MICHIGAN, also navigable for ships of any burthen. When the population of North America shall have diffused itself towards the west, these lakes may become the seats of flourishing cities, and of arts and sciences now unknown in Europe. Their latitude corresponds with that of the Black Sea, and the gulf of Venice; nor are the rigours of the Baltic here to be apprehended. From the descriptions it does not appear that these lakes are ever impeded with ice.

The lake of Winnipeg or Winipic may also

well aspire to the name of an inland sea: but it yields considerably to the great Slave lake, or rather sea, a recent discovery, from which Mackenzie's river extends its course to the arctic ocean. The Slave sea, according to Mr. Arrow-smith's maps, is about 200 miles in length, by 100 at its greatest breadth. The geography of this lake is rather imperfect; and it is not improbable that other large lakes may be found in the western regions of North America, which remain unexplored.

The smaller lakes shall be briefly described in the divisions of territory to which they belong. It may here suffice to observe that there are probably above two hundred lakes of considerable size in North America; a singularity which distinguishes it from any other portion of the globe. A theorist might perhaps consider this an additional argument for the novelty of this continent, as the waters still cover so much of its surface.

In the ancient continent the rivers and mountains are usually confined within the limits of some great state; to which, of course, the description becomes appropriated. But in America these features are on so great a scale, that they pervade immense territories, divided among distinct nations, whence it would be difficult to assign a just arrangement. The river of Amazons, for example, pursues a long course in Spanish America, and an equal extent through the Portuguese territory, if the French do not now claim the northern shore. The river Mississippi, or rather Missouri, belongs in part to the American States and in part to Spain. Amidst this uncertainty, it seems preferable to describe the chief rivers and mountains under the general heads of North and South America.

Length of course seems universally and justly considered as the chief distinction of a river, which becomes noble as it were by the extent of its genealogy; while the great breadth and depth of a short stream issuing from a lake would deserve little attention. In this point of view the Mississippi is the most distinguished among the rivers of North America; its source having already been traced to three small lakes above lat. 47 deg. and it enters the sea in lat. 29 deg. after a comparative course of about 1400 British miles. Nay, of late, the sources of the Missouri (the chief stream) have been detected about 600 British miles more remote. The account of this noble river shall be transcribed