

Description of the Country from Lake Superior to Cook's River

EXTRACT of a LETTER from *****
of Quebec, to a Friend in London.
(See our Plate I)

SIR, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1789.

IN my last letter I gave you some account of the extent of the commerce &c. of this country; and, as I am convinced that common report or estimation of distances, &c. will not be satisfactory to a philosophic mind, and as, since, I have had an opportunity of seeing a map or chart of this lately explored country, made by a gentleman of observation and science, who has actually traversed it, and made his map in it, and with whom I have this week had several conversations, with the map before me; I am able to give you all the satisfaction that you wish for, exclusive of the map itself, which I could not get a copy of, but I hope to find it you next Summer.

The following are observations that I took from the map. It begins at the upper end of Lake Superior, in lat. 46° 47' North, where there is a *Portage* (or carrying-place) of near nine miles, before you enter the waters communicating to the North-west. The Mississippi here is in the same latitude with the head of Lake Superior, about 12 degrees of longitude to the Westward of it; and from the portage there is a water-communication to that river, and down it, which is only intercepted by the Falls of St. Anthony. The traders go on this course Westward, leaving the Mississippi to the Eastward 1000 miles, and may go South-west down the Mississippi to its mouth. The fur is much inferior to those on the North-west trading posts. From the end of the portage at the head of Lake Superior, all the lakes and waters, as high up as lat. 47° and long. 114°, set first to the North-west and North, and then take a South-eastward and South course, and empty into York River (Hudson's Bay). These lakes and rivers are almost innumerable, and some of them very large; such as the Lake Winipeg, the Lake of the Woods, and others. The mouth of the York River lies in long. 94° West, and lat. 57°. It is an extensive large river, setting nearly West, and is supplied by the above lakes and rivers, which fall into it from the North and South. The Hudson's Bay Company have posts several hundred miles West from them, but none to the Northward. Our traders pass them at one of their posts, about the lat. 57° and long. 110°. A chain of

GENT. MAG. March, 1790.

lakes, &c. continue from the lat. 45° and long. 124°, where a small portage, they enter into lakes that run a North-west course, and empty into other lakes, which all finally communicate and empty into a great lake, the Slave Lake, which lies between 62° and 65°, being 3 degrees and longitude 122° to 135°; lake is the last water before you to the great Northern Ocean in and in long. 134°, and there are ebbs and flows, of which the great gave me indubitable proofs. That empty into the great Slave least the largest of them, are the Aratabka (which has a large opening into Slave Lake, of 3 or 40 less in length, its course North the Lake, or rather the Upper the Woods, or Lake of the Hills being one near Lake Superior); lake extends itself near eight degrees longitude, and lies in lat. 60°. Lake Peloton, which is also besides these, there are a number lakes. The river that carries waters into the Slave Lake Slave River, and is very large. North-west, several hundred length. For 100 miles of the great lake runs a very large river, almost South-west, and has the falls on it in the known world, least, near two miles wide, with falls are, and an enormous body. This river leaves the lake in lat. long. 137°, and the falls are 141° — The great chain of mountains that extend from Mexico to the Western, or Pacific Ocean, Northern Pacific Ocean, term lat. 60° and long. 130°; the Slave River runs to the West them, and empties into the ocean in about lat. 69°. The wood to the Northward of Slave there is only a little low brush is filled with a species of buffalo have no tails, but have long backs of their thighs and legs resembles a tail, and they are than the common buffaloes. We have proceeded thus far, and traced over your map, you will conjecture what river the above Slave River is known by when it empties the ocean. To save you much I will tell you it is Cook's River he penetrated upwards of 70