

and a level country, to his stations; or, taking the route by the Missouri to the Mandan villages, thence, by a portage of ninety miles, to his place of destination. The exports of this company, for a short time past, have been very little less than that of the North West Company.

The Committee, from carefully examining all the facts connected with the subject referred to them, are well persuaded that the situation of the United States is such as to enable it to possess all the benefits derived from this trade, which, in the hands of others, amount to millions; many of whose trading establishments east of the Rocky mountains, are within the acknowledged limits of the republic, as fixed by the convention of London of the 20th of October, 1818; and, it is believed, that no power, with the exception of Spain, has any just claim to territory west of them, or on the Pacific. The dependence for subsistence of many of those establishments, is upon the buffalo beef hunted by the Assiniboin Indians, who inhabit the country between the river of that name and the Missouri; their hunting ground is far within our boundary: To succeed in procuring to the people of the United States all the wealth flowing from this source, it is only necessary, to occupy with a small trading guard the most north-eastern point upon the Missouri river, and confine the foreigners to their own territory; at the same time occupying, with a similar guard, the mouth of Columbia. The great profit derived from this trade by the Canadian companies, when we know the distance and obstructions in their rivers, and in the various streams they ascend in carrying it on, the advance of price consequent upon it becomes rather a matter of amazement than otherwise, and inclines us to examine our own rivers with a view to the same object. Instead, however, of those formidable obstructions, we find a smooth and deep river running through a boundless extent of the most fertile soil on this continent, containing within its limits all those valuable furs which have greatly enriched others; a certain, safe, and easy navigation, with a portage of only two hundred miles, uniting it with another river equally smooth, deep, and certain, running to the great Western Ocean. Thus are those two great oceans separated by a single portage of two hundred miles! The practicability of a speedy, safe, and easy communication with the Pacific, is no longer a matter of doubt or conjecture: from information not to be doubted, the Rocky Mountain at this time, in several places, is so smooth and open that the labor of ten men for twenty days would enable a wagon with its usual freight to pass with great facility from the navigable water of the Missouri to that of the Columbia: the actual distance from river to river several hundred miles from their source, that is, from the great Falls of Missouri to the fork of Clark's river, is one hundred and forty-nine miles; the distance, therefore, of two hundred miles is to good navigation on the Columbia, which is the only river of any magnitude upon that whole coast, north of the Colorado of California, though there are several good harbors, secure and safe for vessels of any size.