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INTRODUCTION.

THE Expedition, a narrative of the operations of which is now laid before the public, was the first, and is still the only one fitted out by national munificence for scientific objects, that has ever left our shores. It would, therefore, appear proper that a more minute account of its outfit should be given, than could be expected of one despatched by an older nation. This is more particularly the case, as a great part of the difficulties it had to encounter, occurred previously to its sailing. I would not, however, have the reader to believe that I intend to enter into details of transactions of which, perhaps, no one knows the origin, or to speculate on the causes that operated to prevent its sailing within a reasonable time after the passage of the Act of Congress directing it to be undertaken.

The command of the Exploring Expedition devolved upon me, by orders from the Hon. Mahlon Dickerson, then Secretary of the Navy, on the 20th March, 1838. At that time, great confusion existed in its organization. It is unnecessary, and would be out of place here, to enter into its previous history. It is sufficient to refer to the fact, that it had already been denounced as an entire and complete failure, and that I was instructed to organize it anew.

Whatever others are disposed to think, I am inclined to believe, that the originating, getting up, and getting off a first National Expedition, is a work of no small difficulty, and this is much increased by the public thinking, talking of,