

by the name of the Sand Hills, which separate the waters of the Mississippi from those which fall into the Pacific ocean. The breadth of this great plain is not well ascertained. It is said by some to be at certain parts, or in certain directions, not less than two hundred leagues; but it is agreed by all who have a knowledge of the western country, that the mean breadth is at least two thirds of that distance. A branch of the Missouri, called the river Platte, or shallow river, is said to take its rise so far south as to derive its first waters from the neighbourhood of the sources of the Red and Arkansas rivers. By the expression plains or prairies in this place, is not to be understood a dead flat, resembling certain savannas, whose soil is stiff and impenetrable, often under water, and bearing only a coarse grass resembling reeds; very different are the western prairies, which expression signifies only a country without timber. These prairies are neither flat nor hilly, but undulating into gentle swelling lawns, and expanding into spacious valleys, in the centre of which is always found a little timber growing on the banks of the brooks and rivulets of the finest waters.

The whole of these prairies are represented to be composed of the richest and most fertile soil; the most luxuriant and succulent herbage covers the surface of the earth, interspersed with millions of flowers and flowering shrubs, of the most ornamental kinds. Those who have viewed only a skirt of these prairies, speak of them with enthusiasm, as if it was only there that nature was to be