

PREFACE.

THE following pages are devoted, principally, to the description and history of the portion of North America bordering on the Pacific Ocean, between the 40th and the 54th parallels of latitude, which is traversed and in a great measure drained, by the River Columbia, and to which the name of OREGON is now usually applied. It has, however, been found necessary, for the objects of the work, to bestow almost equal attention on the regions embraced under the general appellation of CALIFORNIA, extending southward from the Columbia countries, to the arm of the Pacific, called the Californian Gulf; and also to take into consideration the coasts and islands north and north-west of those countries, as far as the Arctic Sea.

The vast division of America, comprehending these territories, remains, with the exception of a few isolated spots on the coasts and on the margins of the larger streams, uncultivated and inhabited only by tribes of wandering savages. Its shores and some of its rivers have been examined with care, and their course may be found delineated with considerable minuteness on maps. Of its interior regions, some have never been explored, and are indeed apparently impenetrable by man; others, which offer fewer obstacles to the traveller, are only known through the vague and imperfect accounts of traders or missionaries; and in those which have been the most frequented by civilized persons, much remains to be effected by the aid of scientific observations, in order to obtain satisfactory ideas of their geography and physical characteristics.