

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

Although large editions of the reports of these two important and most interesting expeditions were printed by order of Congress, yet it has been supposed that the public demand would not be thereby fully met. It was also judged expedient to print the work in a shape which might render it accessible to every reader; divesting it of the scientific details, and the astronomical observations and calculations, which, although of the highest importance to the learned few, could not be supposed to afford material interest to the general reader. A work of this description should possess every facility for dissemination. There is not an individual in our entire population to whom its details are not of importance; there is scarcely one to whom its pages will not afford great interest. To every citizen of the United States it addresses itself with peculiar force, as relating entirely to American affairs, as being the result of American enterprise and skill, and as developing matters of the utmost importance to American interests. It is entirely a *home manufacture*, and it needs no other protection than that cheering approbation which the publisher feels sure the patriotism of his fellow-citizens will award to so meritorious a production. To the scientific public abroad, as well as to the liberal minded and inquiring reader of every country, the work will be very acceptable; exhibiting as it does a new page in the history of the world's surface, and spreading out before the eyes of mankind some of the grandest scenes in nature, which had scarcely ever before been viewed by civilized man.

Captain PARRY appears to have been peculiarly well adapted for the command of these expeditions. Possessed of more than an average share of bodily vigor, and mental energy and capacity; qualified by scientific attainments, and an ardent love of nature; and imbued with a taste for investigating the arcana of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, firm, yet conciliatory in his intercourse; modest, yet dignified in his manners; utterly regardless of self, but feelingly alive to the comforts, the rights, and the privileges of others; blending the decision and the vigor of a strict disciplinarian, with the kindness and consideration of a friend, to all who shared with him the perils and privations of his arduous journeyings—with this combination of qualities, his success is not to be wondered at. Seldom have so many accessories to success been united in the leader of such expeditions.

The first of these expeditions terminated at the Rocky mountains, and at the two points of greatest interest in that ridge—namely, the South Pass, and Frémont's Peak; the former being the lowest depression of the mountains, through which the road to Oregon now passes; and the latter the highest elevation, from the base of which four great rivers take their rise, and flow in opposite directions, toward the rising and the setting sun. The second, after approaching the mountains by a different route, connects with the first expedition at the South Pass, and thence finds the great theatre of its labors west of the Rocky mountains, and between the Oregon river and North California. The third expedition, now commencing, will be directed to that section of the Rocky mountains which gives rise to the Arkansas, the Rio Grande del Norte, and the Rio Colorado of California; and will extend west and southwest of that section, so as to examine the country towards the Pacific ocean, ascertain the lines of communication between the mountains and the ocean in that latitude, and complete the examination of the Great Salt Lake, and of the interesting region which embosoms it.

The first expedition west of the Mississippi, under the direction of the Government of the United States, was that of LEWIS and CLARKE, which has been justly characterized as one of the most extraordinary of the age. It was made in 1804, '5, and '6. These bold adventurers first made