

EXCURSION TO THE OREGON.

high, extending nearly from shore to shore. The river is again compressed into a channel from fifty to a hundred feet wide, worn through a rough bed of hard black rock, along which it boils and roars with great fury for the distance of three miles. This is called the Long Narrows. Such are a few of the features of the Columbia or Oregon, as mentioned by Irving and other American writers; the impression left on our minds, from all we have read on the subject, being that it is a river in its present condition of little commercial value; and how many millions of pounds sterling would be required to provide its navigation with artificial side-locks and channels, it would be presumptuous for us to say.

The only establishments of the whites are the Hudson Bay Company's posts and settlements, and the missionary stations of the American Board of Foreign Missions, the country generally being still in possession of the native tribes. Fort Vancouver, the company's principal depôt, stands on the north side of the river, 100 miles from its mouth, in the midst of fertile and beautiful prairies. The fort is merely a stockade, inclosing the company's buildings, surrounded by about fifty huts, occupied by the mechanics and labourers, with their Indian wives and slaves, who number in all about 800 persons. The stations of the American mission board are Astoria and Clatsop, both situated near the mouth of the river—the former on the north and the latter on the southern shore. Besides these there are various posts scattered over the interior; latterly the territory has received a number of Anglo-American settlers from the states; and from the enterprising character of that people, it seems not unlikely that in a few years, in spite of every obstacle, it will be extensively settled upon by them.

As is generally known, the United States prefer a claim to the greater part, if not the whole of the Oregon territory, while Great Britain disputes this title, and asserts a claim to at least joint occupancy, a right of navigating the Columbia, and of forming settlements and trading posts in the country. To the British, with their feeble and cumbrous colonial policy, this far distant territory can never be anything but an engine of trouble and expense; or at best, the mere resort of hunters and fur-traders, from whose feats the nation at large can derive little economical advantage. Even did it present an average field for emigration—which is rendered more than dubious by the character both of the soil and climate—still, considering that it is between two and three thousand miles distant from the farthest verge of Western Canada, and of very tedious and dangerous access by sea, it can by no means form an acquisition of peculiar value to a country whose accessible possessions are already so extensive. Viewed in whatever light, it is exceedingly desirable that the conflicting claims of the British and United States governments respecting the Oregon were amicably and speedily adjusted.