

of a year or two, it was believed their interest would be promoted by cultivating and securing the friendship and confidence of the tribes inhabiting the waters of that great river; to which end the town of Astoria was maintained by about thirty men, whilst the rest established themselves at five other points, to become fixed stations, to raise their own vegetables, trade with the natives, and receive supplies of merchandise from the general depot at Astoria, and return to it the fruits of their labor. One of these subordinate establishments appears to have been at the mouth of Lewis' river; one at Lantou; a third on the Columbia, six hundred miles from the ocean, at the confluence of the Wantana river; a fourth on the east fork of Lewis' river; and the fifth on the Multnomah. Thus situated, this enterprising little colony succeeded well in all their undertakings, nor met with but one misfortune, which seemed to partake largely of that kind which had, for a long time, so certainly and so unseen, been inflicted upon our western inhabitants: this was the loss of the Tonquin, a vessel they had taken from New York, whilst trading down the coast, where, in time past, she had been, in common with the ships of some European powers, enjoying the friendship and confidence of the natives. This confidence had, by some means, been destroyed, and, whilst they induced many of the ship's company to go on shore, many of their own number went on board the ship, and suddenly attacking the crew, the whole were destroyed, as well as the vessel. This, though a great affliction to the survivors on the Columbia, did not dishearten them, as other vessels were expected soon to arrive, and, with these expectations, they continued their trade, which, becoming profitable, they were less inclined to abandon. But the operations of the war of 1812, which took place between the United States and Great Britain, was destined to mar their prosperity. That government, it appears, dispatched a vessel of war, called the Raccoon, to destroy or possess Astoria, which, by the assistance of the Indians, influenced by the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies of fur traders, they were easily enabled to do; and have, from that period to the present time, continued to reside at it, as well as on the river above, though a messenger, or agent, was sent by the authority of the United States to receive, and did receive, that post from them at the close of the late war.

From every reflection which the committee have been able to bestow upon the facts connected with this subject, they are inclined to believe the Columbia, in a commercial point of view, a position of the utmost importance; the fisheries on that coast, its open sea, and its position in regard to China, which offers the best market for the vast quantities of furs taken in those regions, our increasing trade throughout that ocean, seems to demand immediate attention.

The fur of every country which has produced it, has been ever esteemed one of its most valuable commodities, and has long held a rank among the most profitable articles of commerce; it was much sought for even in the days of Tatila, a Visigoth, who reigned in Italy about the year 522, at which time they drew their supplies from the Suethous, who inhabited that part of Europe called Sweden. The