

EXCURSION TO THE OREGON.

explored it except hunters. The attention of travellers has been chiefly confined to the river Columbia or Oregon, the latter name having been communicated to the country. This river, politically and commercially, is the great point of attraction; for from it is expected a means of descending to the Pacific from the interior. The upper part of the river is formed by two main branches, winding their way amidst the valleys of the Rocky Mountains; and the more southerly of these tributaries is said to reach to within 200 miles of the head waters of the Missouri. Formed by these and many smaller streams, the Oregon flows in a westerly direction to the Pacific, pretty nearly dividing the country into two equal parts. In a direct line, the space over which it runs is 650 miles in breadth; but as it winds considerably, the entire length of the river is probably as much as 1000 miles.

According to the accounts of Townsend, Lewis and Clark, Washington Irving in his "Astoria," and others, the Oregon, though a large river, is exceedingly difficult of navigation, being very various in breadth and force of current, impeded by rocks, islands, cascades, and rapids, and exposed to furious gusts of wind, against which no skill can afford protection. In some places the banks are flat and marshy, covered with trees and bushes which flourish only in swamps, and in others they are high and precipitous, hemming in the waters which dash to and fro at their base. The bar or estuary is infested with breakers, which render the ingress and egress always hazardous; the tide rises about eight and a half feet at the mouth, and ascends the stream about 160 miles. Vessels of 300 tons may reach the Multnomah branch, about sixty miles below the great falls, and sloops of small burden go up nearly to the rapids. Beyond this point all is difficulty and danger, and the smallest craft have to be taken from the stream, and carried over the numerous rocky impediments.

The greatest of the falls is at about 180 miles above the mouth of the river. The first is a perpendicular cascade of twenty feet, after which there is a swift descent for a mile, between islands of hard black rock, to another pitch of eight feet divided by two rocks. About two and a half miles below this the river expands into a wide basin, seemingly dammed up by a perpendicular edge of black rock. A current, however, sets diagonally to the left of this rocky barrier, where there is a chasm forty-five yards in width. Through this the whole body of the waters roars along, swelling, and whirling, and boiling for some distance in the wildest confusion. Through this tremendous channel the first explorers of the river, Lewis and Clark, passed adventurously in their boats; the danger not being from the rocks but from the great surges and whirlpools. At the distance of a mile and a half from the foot of this narrow channel is a rapid formed by two rocky islands; and two miles beyond is a second great fall over a ledge of rocks twenty feet