

In the region lying about 300 miles west of the Missouri, nature seems to have formed a boundary that will fix limits to the permanent habitation of man. Here most of that great expanse of country, spreading out to the Pacific ocean, is a wild waste, in a manner devoid of wood and water, consisting of spacious prairies, hills and mountains, productive only of scanty vegetation, except on the margin of water courses. Lakes or running streams of pure water are rarely to be found—and although some long rivers flow through this immense desert in the rainy seasons, they are generally so languid and dried up in the summer months, as to afford but occasional means of slaking the thirst of the disconsolate traveller. It is however perhaps fortunate, as it respects the long duration of the American republic, so extensive in territory, that nature has opposed a barrier other than the ocean, on the west, to the migration of emigrants and the expansion of population.

The most valuable portion of the western lands belonging to the United States, lies between 29° and 42° north latitude, being nearly one thousand miles in extent from lake Michigan on the north, to the Gulf of Mexico. The above mentioned boundaries, with the exception of Michigan and the northwestern territory, includes perhaps nearly all the public lands, which will be considered a subject of enquiry for permanent settlements during the present century.

In giving a general description of the western country, it has been thought expedient to deviate from the beaten track of geographers, by presenting a view of the great outlines which distinguish the natural face of the country. Accordingly, disregarding the artificial divisions by states and territories, we shall give under one head the