

LETTER OF FATHER DE SMET.

FORT VANCOUVER, W. T., May 28, 1859.

DEAR CAPTAIN :

In compliance with the request of our worthy brigadier-general, I herewith give you a short narrative of the upper Washington Territory, as yet occupied by various Indian tribes, as far as my views and observations may have extended during several years' residence in that region, and particularly during the last winter trip I performed under the special directions of the general.

The distance from Fort Walla-walla to the great Spokane prairie, through which the Spokane River flows, is about 150 miles. This whole region is undulating and hilly, and though generally of a light soil, it is covered with a rich and nutritious grass, forming grazing fields where thousands of cattle might be easily raised. It is almost destitute of timber until you are within thirty miles of the Spokane prairie, where you find open woods, and clusters of trees scattered far and wide ; this portion, particularly, contains a great number of lakes and ponds, with ranges of long walls of large basaltic columns, and beds of basalt. The country abounds in nutritious roots (bitter-root, camash, &c.), on