

thrown upon the history of the Upper Mississippi, which was previously known only through the fascinating, but imperfect, and in many instances, fabulous accounts of old travellers, and through the hasty observations of the late General, (then Lieut.) Pike, an officer whose zeal made him overlook difficulties which would have arrested a less hardy explorer, but who unfortunately was not provided with the means of making accurate observations.

All the later travellers who had visited the Upper Mississippi concurred in mentioning a river, discovered at the end of the seventeenth century, and known by the name of the St. Peter. This river, which discharges itself into the Mississippi at a short distance below the Falls of St. Anthony, had not been visited by any traveller but Carver, whose account of it, published about the year 1778, contains many circumstances which might induce us to question the accuracy of his report.

The extent of the fur trade carried on by the British and American trading companies in that part of the country, the report of the easy communication between the head of the St. Peter and that of the Red River, whose waters running into Lake Winnepeek finally empty themselves into Hudson's Bay, and the various contradictory reports of the quality of the soil and the nature of the country on Red River, resulting from the conflicting interests of the two rival British companies, made it an object of interest to our government, to obtain correct information upon the country which lies on the St. Peter and the Red River to the 49th parallel of north latitude, as well as to ascertain the nature of the country along our, as yet unsurveyed, northern boundary.

Accordingly, it was determined in the spring of 1823, "by the Executive, that an expedition be immediately