

PREFATORY NOTICE.

THE immense region west of the Rocky Mountains, extending to the Pacific ocean, and bounded by the Russian frontier on the north, and California on the south, now attracts so much of popular regard, and is commingled with so many important national interests, that an accurate and minute acquaintance with the general topic is essential to every American citizen.

Several exploring tours of the western portion of our continent, within the geographical boundaries of the wilds now commonly known by the title, OREGON, have taken place during the present century. President Jefferson, in 1804, directed the first scrutiny in that country under the superintendence of Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, who devoted the larger part of three years to the examination of those trackless forests, and who were the pioneers of the movements which are now extending the limits of civilization, where Indians, or deer, bears, or buffaloes only roamed. The second expedition by Major Pike to survey the West, forty years ago, was restricted to the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains, and consequently communicated little direct intelligence concerning the lands, the possession of which is now the subject of controversy between the United States and Britain.

The other subsequent travellers in the western territory confined their researches within the country through which the Upper Mississippi and Missouri flow; and therefore imparted no information of any importance concerning the Oregon lands, rivers, and other topics of public interest.

During several years, however, from 1833 to 1838, Mr. Nicollet, a scientific tourist, explored a very extensive portion of the western country beyond the northern branches of the Mississippi. At the close of his amateur travels, the government of the United States engaged him to repeat his journey in another region; and Captain Fremont was united with him to assist his efforts. After an absence of two seasons, they returned and exhibited the