

PAPER VIII.

NARRATIVE OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION, 1872-76.

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The boundary between the British possessions and those of the United States on the Continent of North America had, previous to the appointment of this Commission, been marked from the Atlantic Ocean, westward, to the north-west angle of the Lake of the Woods, and from the Pacific Ocean, eastward, to the summit of the Rocky Mountains.

In the interior of the continent between these terminal points, the boundary was unmarked, though determined, geographically, by the Convention of the 20th October, 1818. This portion of the country comprised between the meridians of $95^{\circ} 14'$, and 114° west longitude, was, to a great extent, unknown, but was believed to be all prairie land or bare plain, with the exception of the swampy districts between the Lake of the Woods and the Red River of the North. West of the 100th meridian the great American desert, alluded to in most of the books of travellers in these regions, was supposed to lie; further on the "bad lands" of the Missouri were said to be crossed by the line, and further on again were the hunting grounds of the Blackfoot and Blood Indians, who were reported to be unfavourably disposed to intruders. All these obstacles turned out, as will be seen in the course of this narrative, to be overrated. The great American Desert was certainly deserted; but grass, water, and, at one time of the year, buffalo abounded in it; the "bad lands" were small in extent, and the Indians were friendly.

The north-west angle of the Lake of the Woods had been identified and marked by Commissioners from both nations in the year 1826, and from this point, according to the Convention, the boundary was to run due south as far as the 49th parallel of north latitude, and then along the said parallel to the Pacific Ocean. The portion between the Pacific Ocean and the summit of the Rocky Mountains having been marked in 1858-62, the work of the present commission came to an end when the latter were reached.