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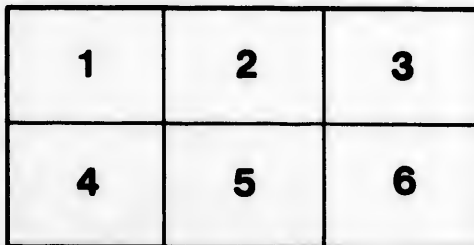
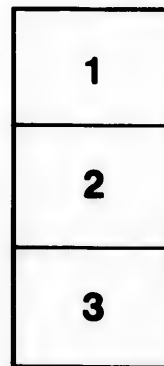
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*Description of the Country from Lake Superior to Cook's River*

EXTRACT of a LETTER from \*\*\*\*\*  
of Quebec, to a Friend in London.  
(See our Plate I)

SIR, Quebec, Nov. 7, 1789.

IN my last letter I gave you some account of the extent of the commerce &c. of this country; and, as I am convinced that common report or estimation of distances, &c. will not be satisfactory to a philosophic mind, and as, since, I have had an opportunity of seeing a map or chart of this lately explored country, made by a gentleman of observation and science, who has actually traversed it, and made his map in it, and with whom I have this week had several conversations, with the map before me; I am able to give you all the satisfaction that you wish for, exclusive of the map itself, which I could not get a copy of, but I hope to find it you next Summer.

The following are observations that I took from the map. It begins at the upper end of Lake Superior, in lat. 46° 47' North, where there is a *Portage* (or carrying-place) of near nine miles, before you enter the waters communicating to the North-west. The Mississippi here is in the same latitude with the head of Lake Superior, about 12 degrees of longitude to the Westward of it; and from the portage there is a water-communication to that river, and down it, which is only intercepted by the Falls of St. Anthony. The traders go on this course Westward, leaving the Mississippi to the Eastward 1000 miles, and may go South-west down the Mississippi to its mouth. The fur is much superior to those on the North-west trading posts. From the end of the portage at the head of Lake Superior, all the lakes and waters, as high up as lat. 47° and long. 114°, set first to the North-west and North, and then take a South-eastward and South course, and empty into York River (Hudson's Bay). These lakes and rivers are almost innumerable, and some of them very large; such as the Lake Winipeg, the Lake of the Woods, and others. The mouth of the York River lies in long. 94° West, and lat. 57°. It is an extensive large river, setting nearly West, and is supplied by the above lakes and rivers, which fall into it from the North and South. The Hudson's Bay Company have posts several hundred miles West from them, but none to the Northward. Our traders pass them at one of their posts, about the lat. 57° and long. 110°. A chain of

GENT. MAG. March, 1790.

lakes, &c. continue from the lat. 45° and long. 124°, where a small portage, they enter into lakes that run a North-west course, and empty into other lakes, which all finally communicate and empty into a great lake, the Slave Lake, which lies between 62° and 65°, being 3 degrees and longitude 122° to 135°; lake is the last water before you to the great Northern Ocean in and in long. 134°, and there are ebbs and flows, of which the great gave me indubitable proofs. That empty into the great Slave least the largest of them, are the Aratabka (which has a large opening into Slave Lake, of 3 or 40 less in length, its course North the Lake, or rather the Upper the Woods, or Lake of the Hills being one near Lake Superior); lake extends itself near eight degrees longitude, and lies in lat. 60°. Lake Peloton, which is also lake besides these, there are a number lakes. The river that carries waters into the Slave Lake Slave River, and is very large. North-west, several hundred length. From the head of the great Lake runs a very large river, almost South-west, and has the falls on it in the known world, least, near two miles wide, with falls are, and an enormous body. This river leaves the lake in lat. long. 137°, and the falls are 141° — The great chain of mountains that extend from Mexico to the Western, or Pacific Ocean, Northern Pacific Ocean, term lat. 67° and long. 130°; the Slave River runs to the West them, and empties into the ocean in about lat. 69°. The wood to the Northward of Slave there is only a little low brush is filled with a species of buffalo have no tails, but have long backs of their thighs and legs resembles a tail, and they are than the common buffaloes. We have proceeded thus far, and traced over your map, you will conjecture what river the above Slave River is known by when it empties into the ocean. To save you much I will tell you it is Cook's River he penetrated upwards of 70

## Lake Superior to Cook's River. 197

Lakes, &c. continue from thence to the lat. 55° and long. 124°, when, with a small portage, they enter into rivers and lakes that run a North-west course, and empty into other lakes and rivers, which all finally communicate with, and empty into, a great lake, called the Slave Lake, which lies between the lat. 62° and 63°, being 3 degrees in width, and longitude 127° to 135°; and this lake is the last water before you come to the great Northern Ocean in lat. 68½°, and in long. 134°, and there the water ebbs and flows, of which the gentleman gave me indubitable proofs. The lakes that empty into the great Slave Lake, at least the largest of them, are named the Aratabka (which has a large river running into Slave Lake, of 3 or 400 miles at least in length, its course North-west), the Lake, or rather the Upper Lake of the Woods, or Lake of the Hills (there being one near Lake Superior); and this lake extends itself near eight degrees of longitude, and lies in lat. 60°, and the Lake Pelicou, which is also large; and besides these, there are a number of small lakes. The river that carries all these waters into the Slave Lake is called Slave River, and is very large. It runs North-west several hundred miles in length. From out of the great Slave Lake runs a very large river, its course almost South-west, and has the largest falls on it in the known world; it is, at least, near two miles wide where the falls are, and in a freezing body of water. This river leaves the lake in lat. 64° and long. 135°, and the falls are in long. 141° — The great chain of mountains that extend from Mexico along the Western, or Pacific Ocean, and the Northern Pacific Ocean, terminates in lat. 60° and long. 130°; so that the Slave River runs to the Westward of them, and empties into the ocean by its course in about lat. 59°. There is no wood to the Northward of Slave Lake; there is only a little low brush, which is filled with a species of buffaloes, that have no tails, but have long hair on the backs of their thighs and legs, which resembles a tail, and they are smaller than the common buffaloes. When you have proceeded thus far, and have looked over your map, you will readily conjecture what river the above Slave Lake River is known by when it empties into the ocean. To save you much trouble, I will tell you it is Cook's River, which he penetrated upwards of 70 leagues North.

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North-eastward, as you will see by his chart. Cook's River, as he has laid it down in his chart (that is, the mouth of it); is in lat.  $50^{\circ} 40'$ , and long. West  $154^{\circ}$ . His calculation and laying it down was East longitude; but if you deduct his Eastern longitude from  $36^{\circ}$ , you will find it to be  $154^{\circ}$  West. His course up the river was North-easterly; the course of the river out of Slave Lake was South-westerly. He traversed his river that course near 70 leagues North-easterly; and the river out of Slave Lake is known as far South-westerly: therefore the distance to form the junction, or to ascertain the river to be the same, is very short. The mouth of Slave River, at the lake, is in lat.  $64^{\circ}$ , and long.  $134^{\circ}$ . The mouth of Cook's River is in lat.  $50^{\circ} 40'$ , and long.  $154^{\circ}$ . The courses are North-easterly and South-westerly. The degrees of longitude in that latitude are but little more than 25 miles upon the average to a degree, and the difference of the latitude only about 4 degrees, hence, as there is no other known vent for the river setting out of Slave Lake, nor any other river in that route, to the Northward or Southward of Slave Lake, to form such a river as Cook's, there can be little doubt but the source of Cook's River is now fully discovered and known. There are other proofs that are incontestable. Cook found a great quantity of drift-wood on the coast. This wood is only found on the banks of the rivers that empty into the Slave Lake. There is no wood to the Northward of the Slave Lake; neither are there any rivers of any size, from the most approach of the mountains to the Sea, to the Southward of the lake. The rivers of Arakaska, Slave, and Neutun Lake, which empty into Slave Lake, are annually twice overflowed,—in the month of May, by the breaking-up of the ice; and in the month of August, by the melting of the snow on the mountains. Hence, then, the quantities of drift-wood which Captain Cook met with are accounted for; and these could only be launched into the ocean from Cook's River: for, as I have above observed, there can be no extensive river to the Southward of Cook's River, or the river that empties out of Slave Lake, as the great chain of mountains approach to the verge of Slave Lake and River. Another proof is, that the gentleman (from whose chart and from whom I have collected the above information) met with two

## *Description of the Country from Lake Superior to Cook's River.*

ard, as you will see by his chart (that is, the mouth of the river) in lat. 49° 40', and long. West 104° 40'. Calculation and laying it out in East longitude; but if you lay it out in Eastern longitude from 36°, it will be 124° West. His calculation of the river is North-easterly; but if you lay it out of Slave Lake easterly. He traversed his route near 70 leagues Northward and South-westerly: therefore the junction of the river to be the same, as the mouth of Slave River, is in lat. 64°, and long. 124°. The courses of the river are North-easterly and South-westerly. The distance is not more than 26 miles from the junction to the mouth of the river, and the distance is only about 4 leagues; and there is no other river in that country, nor any other river in that country, to form such a river as the mouth of Cook's River is now fully discovered. There are other rivers in the country, but they are not so large as the mouth of Cook's River, which empties into the Slave Lake, and are annually twice in the month of May, by the melting of the ice; and in the month of August, by the melting of the ice in the mountains. Hence, then, the quantity of drift-wood which is carried down the river to the mouth of Cook's River: for, as you have observed, there can be no other river to the Southward of the mouth of Cook's River, or the river that empties into the Slave Lake, as the great chain of mountains approach to the verge of the Slave River. Another proof of this is, that a gentleman (from whose information I have collected

Indians, who came (as they said) up a river from the Northern Pacific Ocean all the way to the Slave Lake. They brought him a blanket in 1787, which they received from vessels which were at the mouth of the river. They said that the river they were in is large to the place of discharge, and navigable; so that, if we take the latitude and longitude of the two rivers, the courses, and all the other circumstances, into consideration, little doubt remains but that they are the same.

In the Northern part of the Slave Lake there was a great quantity of ice on the 15th of July, 1787; and in that year the Indians from that lake penetrated North, and where the waters ebb and flow. At the Northern Ocean they met with and killed a number of the Esquimaux Indians; which Indians are to be found only on the banks or boundary of the ocean, from the Labrador coast Northward, and they are found on the whole extent of that coast as far North as we have any knowledge. — Cook went as far North as 72° or 73°, and was there obstructed by the ice. He was there in August. My informant tells me, that, if he had been a month later, he would have met with no obstruction from ice in that quarter. This I believe; and at the middle of September he might have passed the Northern coast of America, and have returned to Europe by that route. On the North-western coast of America there is a large or long point of land, that extends to the latitude of 71°, or further, and then the coast trenches South-easterly; so that, when you are in long. 128°, the ocean washes the land in the latitude of 68° 1/2.

The inferences that I shall now draw are,

1. That Lake Superior lies in the first range of high lands between this and the Western Ocean, in lat. 46° 47'; and the waters from thence are discharged by the rivers St. Lawrence and Mississippi.
2. That the waters to the Westward and Northward of that lake, up as high as lat. 55° and long. 124°, discharge themselves, by an Eastern course, into York River, which empties into Hudson's Bay.
3. That in lat. 58° lies the great height of land, from whence the waters divide and run Easterly and Westerly; the former into the Atlantic, and the latter into the Pacific Ocean.
4. That the great Slave Lake is the most Northerly large piece of water before



fore you arrive at the Northern Ocean; and that the river which rises from that lake empties into the Northern Pacific Ocean, and is the river that Cook discovered.

5. That an easy communication with, and an advantageous commerce, may be carried on by posts established on Lakes Slave, Arabaska, and Pelican, &c. and to deliver the fruits of their commerce at the mouth of Cook's River, to be thence carried to China, &c. &c.; and that, as Cook's River and the lands on Slave Lake, Arabaska, &c. are very fine, some advantageous settlements may be made thereon, which may be beneficial to Government.

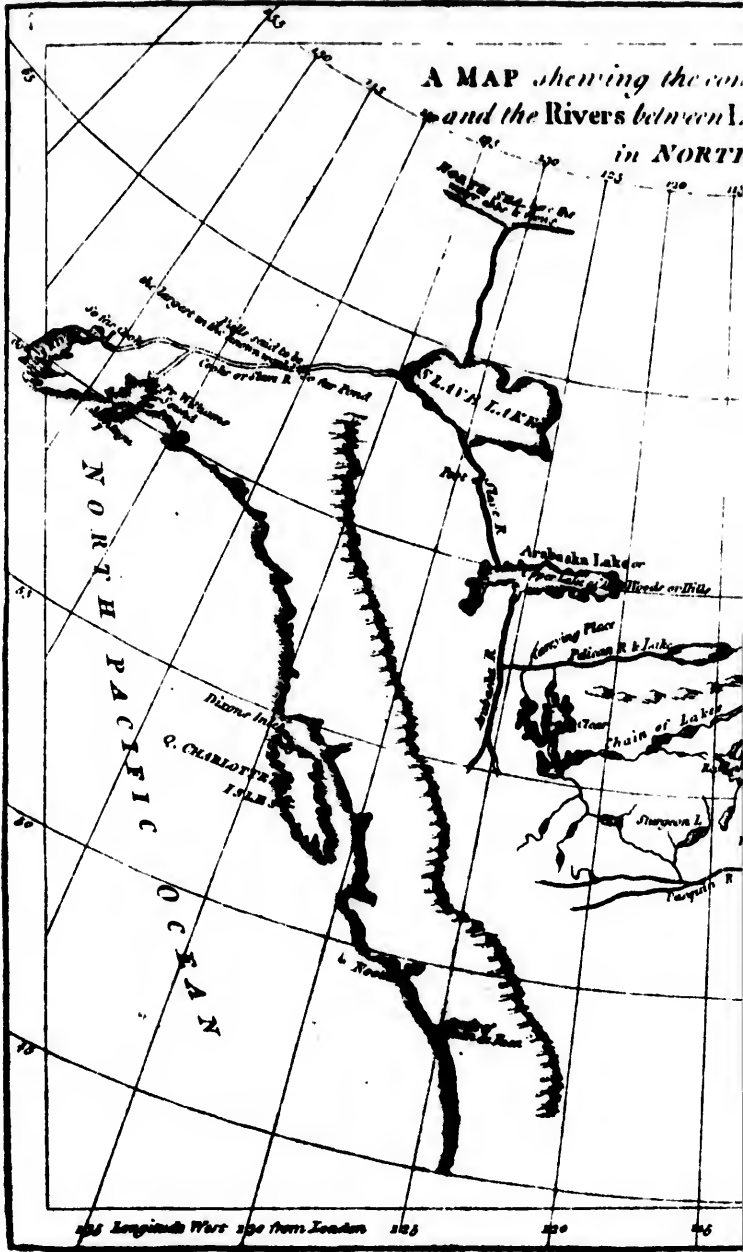
The country about Arabaska is exceedingly fine, and the climate more moderate than it is here, which is owing to its propinquity to the Western Ocean. The distance is not more than 200 leagues, if so much, in a West-south-western course. We have a post there, as we have on the different lakes from Lake Superior to the upper end of Slave Lake. The number of posts are 21 in that distance, where traders are posted to trade with different tribes of Indians. The distance from this town to the head of Lake Superior is 750 leagues, and from the head of Lake Superior to the great Slave Lake is 1000 leagues; in the whole, 1750 leagues.— The person from whom I had my information is Peter Pond, who was supplied with the proper instruments here to take his latitude, and instructed fully in the knowledge of astronomy, &c. &c. His latitude is undoubtedly right, and his longitude is nearly right. It was taken by some persons sent from York River, several hundred miles to the Westward of it; and from thence, by the courses of the rivers and lakes, no great mistake can be made. Another man, by the name of M'Kenzie, was left by Pond at Slave Lake, with orders to go down the river, and from thence to Unalaska, and so to Kamtsaska, and thence to England, through Russia, &c. If he meets with no accident, you may have him with you the next year. Yours, &c.

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Longitude West 180 from London

MAP shewing the communication of the Lakes  
and the Rivers between Lake Superior and Slave Lake  
in NORTH AMERICA.



