

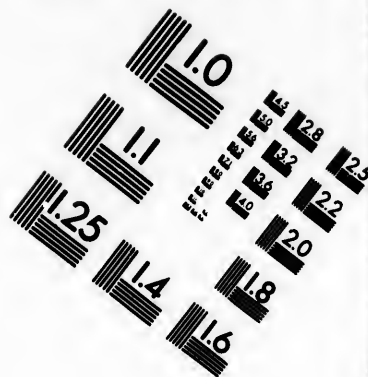
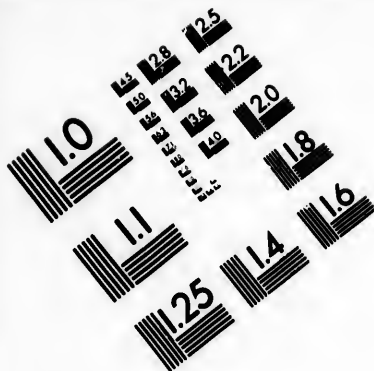
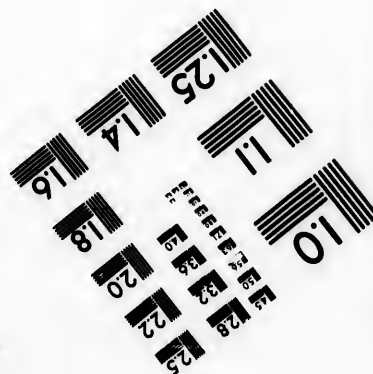
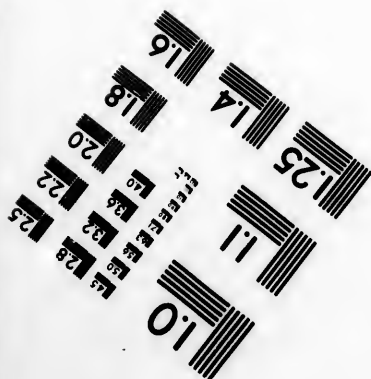
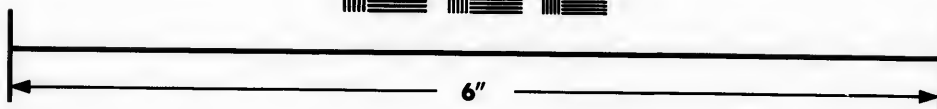
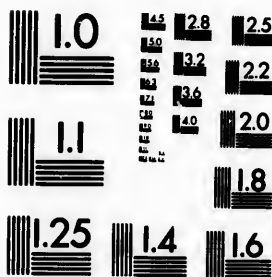


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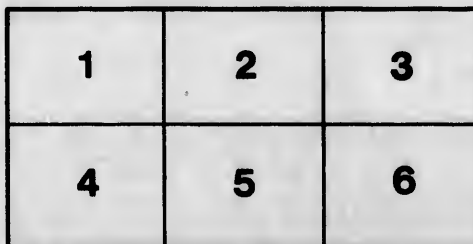
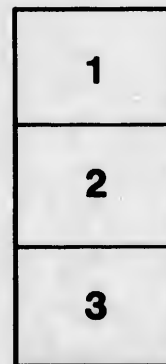
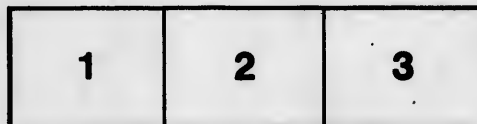
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E. B. Tappan

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1878

LETTER

FROM

A GENTLEMAN TO HIS FRIEND,

IN

ENGLAND,

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE DIFFERENT

SETTLEMENTS IN THE PROVINCE

OF

UPPER CANADA.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed by W. W. WOODWARD, Franklin's Head,
New Sign, South Side Chestnut street.

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TO THE PRINTER.

AS all new settlements in their progress, exhibit new scenes to the eye of the curious, and more or less attract the attention of the farmer, the merchant, and philosopher, it becomes a pleasant task to a liberal mind, from time to time to mark that progress, and impartially transmit any information to the community, whereby they may be likely to benefit, but more especially to that class of men who cultivate the soil; for by their prosperity are every other description of men benefited, and commerce, arts, and sciences promoted.

If the following letter should answer any of these desirable ends, the object of the publisher will be fully attained,

37322

A
L E T T E R.

New-York, 20th November, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

SINCE I had last the pleasure of writing to you from this city, in which I gave you a particular description of the lands in this state, and in the state of Pennsylvania, together with the mode of settlement, and the manner in which they are to be purchased, I have made a tour through the province of Upper Canada, and shall endeavor to give you a particular and impartial account of that country, so far as I have travelled through it, with its laws, government, and commercial advantages. In my letter from Albany, I mentioned that I went to that city by water, from thence I proceeded to Schenectady, fifteen miles by stage. Schenectady is a handsomely situated little town on the banks of the Mohawk river, inhabited mostly by Low-

Dutch, but from the appearance of the place, one would imagine it a deserted village, the houses being generally old, small, and mostly shut up, but surrounded by the finest flats of interval land you can possibly imagine, which continue to the source of that river. The desolate appearance of this town was accounted for to me by the current of Indian trade turning down the River St. Lawrence, since the revolution. It has, however, the prospect of becoming a flourishing place, ere long, by the vast increase of the settlements to the west of it, the produce of which must centre there.—At this place I took an open boat, navigated by three men, in which I passed to Lake Ontario, without any other interruption than two short portages, one at the little falls of half a mile, round which they are now cutting a canal; the other of one mile, at Fort Stanvix, about one hundred miles west of Schenectady; at which place we leave the Mohawk river, and descend the current to Oswego, one hundred miles more to the west, where the British hold a post at the entrance of Lake Ontario, commanded by a captain, from whom I received every mark of civility and attention. A Custom-House Officer is also stationed there to prevent an illicit trade being carried on between the United States and the British Colonies. No merchandize in, nor furs out,

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are permitted to pass this post, without a passport from the Governor of Upper Canada ; but settlers moving into that province to reside, are permitted indiscriminately to pass with all utensils of husbandry, household furniture, and stores for their own consumption.—The high prices which hatters' fur at present command in the United States is the only inducement I conceive for smuggling past that post, for except a few articles imported from the East Indies, I found the retail shops at Kingston and Niagara, selling as low, and many articles, particularly woolens, lower than in the City of Philadelphia.

From Oswego, vessels sail to Niagara, Kingston, and any other port on the lake ; but settlers more frequently continue along the south shore of the lake to Niagara, about one hundred and twenty miles in the same open boats which bring them hither, as they are generally manned by themselves. But finding a vessel here ready to sail for Kingston, I dismissed my boatmen, and embarked in her for that place, about twelve hours sail.

Kingston is a new, but growing town, situate on the north east corner of Lake Ontario, where that Lake empties itself, and forms the river St.

Laurence, the banks of which are thick settled down to Lake St. Francois, where the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada are divided. This river is navigable for vessels of one hundred tons, and upwards, to Oswegatche, seventy miles below Kingston, but vessels seldom go down the river, as the fort which is at Kingston serves as a deposit for all the public stores, provision, and merchandize for the upper posts.

The land immediately about Kingston, is covered by valuable quarries of lime-stone, and through all the settlements round it are plenty of thin valuable stones, which are considered by the inhabitants rather as an acquisition than detriment to their plantations. The most flourishing part of this settlement is round the bay of Kenty, the soil of which is rich, easy worked, and produces from one to three crops, without any other cultivation than what is done by the iron tooth harrow, and yields from 20 to 30 bushels of wheat to the acre; those lands are somewhat heavily timbered, having vast quantities of the sugar-maple, hickory and bass wood, and in some places white pines of a surprising height, but where the latter grows the land is more sandy, and although it is warm, sweet land, it is not so stony as the maple or oak land. This bay is seventy

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miles in length, beginning about twenty miles South West from Kingston, leaving a neck of land from two to twelve miles wide, between it and the lake, all of which is settled, and round the whole bay so thick settled, that their improvements already meet, and form the appearance of a beautiful old settled country. This bay and the creeks emptying into it, abound in great quantities of wild fowl, and fish of various kinds.

From Kingston I proceeded to Niagara, in a schooner of upwards of one hundred tons burthen across this little sea of fresh water; a sea it may justly be called, for we were a great part of the time for three days out of sight of the land; though passages have been made in twenty hours; we enter the Niagara river between the fort and the town called Newark, with a beautiful prospect of both.

The fort stands in a commanding situation, on a point formed by the junction of the river and lake, upon the East side of the river, and is a regular fortification, in good repair, and well garrisoned.

The mouth of this river affords a safe and capacious harbour, sufficiently large for half the British navy.

The town of Newark is situate in latitude 43 north, on the West banks of the river, extending along the lake about a mile, enjoying in the summer the fresh breezes from this little sea, in almost every direction, plentifully supplied with fish at all seasons of the year. In the winter here are caught by seines, quantities of white fish, which seem to be peculiar to that river, they are generally from two to six pounds weight, and are considered the best fish in the lakes; besides there sturgeon, bass, and many other excellent fish, are in great plenty; salmon are taken in all the creeks round the lake; these varieties of fish are not only esteemed a luxury, but a great assistance to new beginners in supporting their families, many laying in a half dozen barrels or more for their winter's use.

The land about the town of Newark for many miles, though not so good as the land further back is well inhabited each way upwards of fifty miles around.—What gave me a more particular knowledge of this settlement was, being intimate with the Surveyor-General, a gentleman of liberal education, good information, and indefatigable in the duties of his office, by which means he has collected notes, from the different field-books of his Deputies, of the soil, timber,

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and streams, of all that country; and such parts as I went over I found his notes very correct, and by no means exaggerated. In many places there is little more for the farmer to do, than cut a sufficiency of timber to fence his fields, girdle or ring the remainder, and put in the harrow, for in few places only is it necessary to make use of the plough, till the second or third crop, there being little or no under brush; yet in many places, there is beautiful white pine, oak and black walnut timber; sugar wood which is also found here in plenty mixed with beach, hickory, and bass wood.

At Newark resides the Governor whose character is well known in England, and is deservedly held here in high estimation.—Here are also most of the principle officers of government, besides many other gentlemen of respectability who form a very intelligent and agreeable society.

Besides Newark there are several important situations in this part of the province, which bid fair to become places of consequence, the most important of which are, the landing places at each end of the portage, Fort Erie, the head of

Lake Ontario, and York, *called by the natives Toronto.*

The lower landing or Queenston is about seven miles up the river from Newark, where the vessels discharge their cargoes, and take in furs collected from three to one thousand five hundred miles back, there have I seen four vessels of sixty and one hundred tons burden unloading at the same time, and sometimes not less than sixty waggons loaded in a day, which loads they carry ten miles to the upper landing place or Chipawa Creek, three miles past the great falls. This portage is an encreasing source of wealth to the farmers for many miles round, who carry from twenty to thirty hundred weight for which they get one shilling and eight pence N. Y. currency, per hundred weight, and generally load back with furs &c.—From Chipawa the merchandize is transported in batteaux to Fort Erie a distance of eighteen miles and are shipped there on board of vessels for Detroit and Michilamackinac.—Detroit I was told was a pleasant country, though a low and marshy soil, more noted for its furr trade, than its agriculture.

At the head of Lake Ontario, about fifty miles west from Newark a small town is laid out and

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public stores are building, being a central place between Newark, York and Detroit, from thence a road of twenty two miles to the grand river is cut out and crosses that river about fifty miles above its entrance into Lake Erie, and continues in a southern direction to the river La Trenche, now called the *Thames*, which empties itself into Lake St. Clair, about twenty miles above Detroit. Settlements are making on this road, and along the river *Thames* partial ones are made for an extent of eighty or ninety miles in length.—On these two rivers are extensive open flats of land equal to those of the Mohawk river, on which may be cut a sufficiency of hay for many thousand head of cattle yearly; the lands on this road are of an excellent quality and in many places light timbered, in others covered with thrifty oak, black walnut, sugar maple, beach and lindar.

York formerly *Toronto* is situate on the best harbour round the lake, opposite Niagara, and about forty miles distance across the lake, but round by land near one hundred miles, along the shore of which great quantities of fish are caught; a town is here in great forwardness, and should the seat of government be removed from Newark thence, as is contemplated, it will soon become a flourishing place.—From this a road is cut out

across to Lake Simcoe, or the Rice Lakes thirty three miles, the outlet of which empties itself into Lake Huron a distance of forty five miles from Lake Simcoe, thirty six miles in length; this route affords an easy communication with Michilimackinac.—From York to that lake, a tier of lots of two hundred acres each, is laid out on each side of this road called *Dundas-street*, granted on the express condition of building and improving on them, within one year from the time they are taken up; many of these are now built upon and occupied.

On the east side and joining the rear of these lots is a settlement of near one hundred German families, on an excellent tract of land, much of which is open, white oak woods; these Germans came on this summer, furnished with every thing necessary to make their situation comfortable and enable them to improve their land to advantage, and no doubt in a short time will make a fine settlement; they are supported by a company who have liberally supplied them. With teams, farming utensils and provisions, sent them a Clergyman of their own country, and are about to build them mills, a church, and school house.

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If this generous example was with equal spirit followed by a few more companies, it would add to the population of the country, more than any other mode yet pursued.——There is still plenty of vacant lands of the best kind, and such as shew a disposition to settle and improve them, meet from the Governor every encouragement they merit, who makes liberal grants to all such as do actually bring on settlers, and prove themselves desirous of promoting the interest of the country, the whole of which is well adapted for raising wheat, indian corn, and other summer grain; flax (where the land has borne a few other crops) succeeds remarkably well, and the face of the whole country yields grass in abundance; hops of a good quality grow here spontaneously, also a variety of wild fruits such as plumbs, mulberry, blackberry, strawberry, raspberry and grapes.—Orchards are in great forwardness, for the age of the settlement, some of which already bear fruit.——Peaches, cherries, and currants are plenty among all the first settlers.—The farmers raise great quantity of pork, without any other expence than a little indian corn, for a few weeks previous to killing, and often kill their hogs out of the woods, well fattened on nuts; in many places salt springs have been discovered, and some of them already work-

ed to such advantage that in all probability that article, which generally comes heavy in the interior part of a country, may in a short time be afforded here, as low as in many of the old settled places in the United States — Many valuable streams for water works, run in every direction through this country; and upon some of them are mills built, which prove very lucrative to the owners, particularly saw-mills, from the quantity of good timber and great demand of boards, as more buildings are going on than carpenters and masons can be found to finish: stones being scarce, bricks are generally used in mason work.

This settlement was begun by a few disbanded troops after the peace of 1783, and being but little known by the people of the United States, who had imbibed an opinion that it was entirely under control of the military, few emigrants bent their course this way, till they were convinced of the civil government, being well established, and upon a constitution happily adopted to the minds of the people, since which numbers of respectable inhabitants have come in from the different States. Some of whom have come in their waggons quite from North Carolina, but as there is a space of country, for about seventy miles, between Niagara and the Genesee coun-

try, where the roads are not sufficiently open for waggons, they transport them from the mouth of that river to Niagara in boats. However this obstruction will probably be soon removed, when it will be a pleasant jaunt to get into a carriage at Niagara, and drive to this city, which may be effected without difficulty, in about two weeks, particularly by sleighs in the winter.—The mode of settlement generally pursued here, and which seems best calculated to save expence, is by two, three or more men coming on in the summer, who throw up a log house each, put in a field of wheat, and return for their families, which they bring on the following spring, by the rout before described past Oswego, if by water; but such as come by land, bring their families as far as the mouth of Genesee river, there take boat, and send their cattle by land. This country from the reduction till the year 1790, was included in the province of Quebec, and from the year 1774, the civil administration was vested in a Governor and Legislative Council, at that time best adapted to the ideas of the people, who were most entirely French, and from prejudice, preferred that form of government, being most analogous to what they had been accustomed to prior to the conquest of Canada, but at the conclusion of the late dissensions between Great Britain and Ame-

rica, Upper Canada, then called the back posts, was held out as an assylum to those who had adhered to the unity of the British Empire, and who generally came under the denomination of Loyalists.—From the peace to the year 1790, government delegated to land boards the power of granting lands to any applicants, if men of morality and sobriety.

In the year 1790, the wisdom of the British government, was eminently evinced in dividing that large country, into two separate governments, and granting to each a constitution, on the most liberal and disinterested principles, a constitution for freedom and the just rights of man, perhaps unequalled in the historic page, with all the advantages, enjoyed by the British colonies in America previous to the revolution, and with many additional, the British Parliament having renounced for ever the right of taxation.—Here no man's property for any cause whatever, is taxed, directly or indirectly; the British government most generously paying for even the surveying of the lands, and the whole support of the civil establishment.

You will naturally wonder, how with all these advantages this country has hitherto escaped the

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notice and keen observations of Land Speculators, and the elegeums of Pamphleteers too frequently the hired and useful assistant of the former class of men, but this I have found is accounted for on the best of principles. The Indians being undoubtedly the original proprietors of the soil, and it even has and continues to be the policy of the British government to extinguish their right, by fair and equitable purchases. Large purchases of this kind has been made from time to time by government, as the population of the country required, and as yet there is not a single instance of dissatisfaction on the part of the Indians; having thus liberally paid them for their lands, very advantageous terms are held out to actual settlers, (the only class which at first can enrich any country) who get a grant of two hundred acres each. However for the encouragement of men, commanding the means of improving on a larger scale, by proper application they get a handsome additional quantity. By this means the substantial farmer becomes the inhabitant, and large tracts to the detriment of any country, never lie waste.

Had I not resolved on examining minutely, and adding for myself, I should never have become acquainted with a country which for richness of

soil, agriculture and trade, in fact every thing that will conduce to make an industrious man happy, yeilding to none I have as yet seen.

Niagara is at present the temporary seat of government, consisting of a governor, a legislative council, and house of assembly chosen by the people; here annually in the month of May, they meet for the purpose of legislation.—Members of the assembly are chosen for four years, and have already sat three sessions.—In this time they have made many wholesome and necessary laws.—Weekly courts, called courts of request, are held throughout the province, by two justices of the peace, who have cognizance of all debts under half a Joe; there are also district courts every three months, in which a judge presides, and gives trial by a jury of twelve men, in sums not exceeding twenty four pound York currency, whose judgment is unappealable, and all sums above that, are tried by a jury before the chief justice and two associate judges, who make an annual circuit through the province; from them is an appeal to the governor and council.—The people have it fully in their power to regulate all local matters which respect their several towns, such as constables, path-masters, and other town officers, in the same manner as formerly in the other colonies,

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now United States of America.—The militia in the several districts have an annual meeting, and all males from the age of sixteen to forty-five are mustered, except the Friends, Tunkers, and Menonists, and those of that religious description, who are exempted from bearing arms. In short, sir, it would swell a letter to too great a bulk to give a more minute account of the local laws that have been already made for the public good, suffice it to say, that, with respect to that government and its laws, its administration is conducted with every wish and attention to render the situation of those who may settle under it comfortable and happy, being neither land tax, quit-rent, or any other tax whatever; excepting the county rates, to be paid by the freeholders, for the regulation of their internal police.

The noble river St. Laurence supplies this country for an extent of two thousand miles with commercial advantages inferior to none on this side of the Atlantic.—Conceive to yourself vessels of six hundred tons burthen, unloading all kinds of British goods at the port of Montreal, five hundred miles from the sea, and again receiving in return, furs from the interior parts of the country, as far as the Mississippi is known to the westward; and the waters emptying into Lake Superior from the northward.—This town, when the banks of

the different lakes and rivers are settled by husbandmen, which is at no distant period, must have a vast increase of trade, for without doubt all British manufactures, through these vast water communications, will come much cheaper, through the whole course of its windings, than can be afforded from any other quarter. Goods on importation being liable to no duty; which will undoubtedly give this country a vast advantage over the new settlements that I described in my former letters; indeed nature points out this place as the emporium of trade for the people inhabiting both sides of these lakes and rivers emptying into them as far as they extend to the west. From Montreal *boats* called by the Canadians *batteaux*, containing twenty five barrels bulk, are worked by four men to Kingston, a distance of nigh two hundred miles up the river in the course of six or eight days, and again return in three, loaded with furs, potash, and other produce of the country.—Vessels, generally schooners, receive the goods at Kingston, and convey them in a short time to the landing or Queenston, below the great falls of Niagara. Here the portage gives employment to a number of teams in transporting them to Chipawa, as before described: they are again received at Fort Erie in vessels of the same burthen as formerly, which navigate all Lake Erie, Huron,

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and Michigan. The expences incurred during all this rout are comparatively trifling, as you will observe there is but one portage, and that only ten miles in the course of this communication. And when one reflects on the temperate climate, rich soil, and other natural advantages of this interior country, you anticipate a great population in a short time.—The streights of Niagara, from its peculiar situation, being the channel through which all the produce of the vast country above must pass, is looked forward to as a place of the first consequence, and where a farmer will at all times find a market for his produce, the transport being easy from thence to the Atlantic.—Here have I seen with amazement that famed cataract, which exceeds every description I have ever heard of it, but it would be idle in me to pretend to give you an idea of it—It strikes the eye with more grandeur and sublimity than the pen can convey.—Amongst many other natural curiosities, a spring, about two miles above these falls, attracts the attention of the curious; emitting a gas, or inflammable air, which, when confined in a pipe, and a flame applied to it, will boil the water of a tea-kettle in fifteen minutes:—whether this may hereafter be applied by machinery, to useful purposes, time will determine.

It was lately discovered in clearing away and burning the brush under the bank of the river, to erect a mill, and was observed after the brush was consumed to burn for days together, to the great astonishment of the inhabitants.

About three hundred miles west of this is Fort Detroit, situate on the east side of the streights, between Lake Erie and Huron, around which, a French settlement was established before the reduction of the province, but attending more to the Indian trade than agriculture, made but little progress as farmers. The English settlements lately begun on the opposite shore are already in a higher state of cultivation, however the French have fine orchards, from which Niagara is at present supplied with cyder and apples. About one hundred miles west from Detroit lies a valuable country on the waters emptying into the Mississippi, now unhappily contested by the United States and the natives of the soil.

To the northward of Detroit about three hundred and fifty miles, lies Fort Michilimackinac, on an island between Lake Huron and Michigan, is about five miles round, and an entire bed of gravel incapable of cultivation, but most remarkable for being the general depot and grand rendez-

vous of all the Indian traders, who meet in the month of June from every quarter, deliver their furs and receive their outfits for the ensuing year. Spanish settlements many miles down the Mississippi are supplied with British goods through this channel, to much greater advantage than from New Orleans, where the rapids of the Mississippi oppose almost unsurmountable difficulties in ascending it.

This fort, the forts of Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego, fell within the United States, when the lines of separation were drawn, at the treaty of peace, in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty three; fort Miami, which was built by the British lately, is also within those lines.— Previous to that peace, stores of deposit had been occupied at the foot of the Miami rapids, where the fort now stands, and the annual presents to the Indians, which they have long been in the habits of receiving from the British government, were there issued. This place was prudently chosen for that purpose, in order to prevent the Indians from coming through the settlement, crowding about and mixing with the troops at Detroit, where the too frequent use of spiritous liquors would have occasioned numerous quarrels and ac

cidents, which might have terminated fatal to that friendly intercourse and good understanding which has ever prevailed between the English and the natives in America.

Hitherto, have I said little respecting the aborigines of this country.—Various are the opinions entertained by different people, and different historians have risked conjectures how this continent was originally peopled; their own ideas of it are not less curious than extraordinary. They do not believe, nor have they the smallest vestige of traditional memorial to induce them to believe, but that they are a distinct race of men from the whites, some of the most intelligent amongst them will at this day relate in detail the natural and original history of themselves and the continent they live upon.—They fully believe in a good and evil spirit, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, and have certain times in the year for their particular modes of worship, when they more generally endeavor to appease and avert the wrath of the bad, than invoke the good Spirit, to which, however, after favorable crops, a good hunt, or success in war, they, in a fervent manner, return thanks.—They say that the face of the globe was first covered with one great water, in which the turtle was the principal

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inhabitant. That the Great Spirit caused this turtle to grow to such a size that the waters could no longer float it, and in consequence, it became stationary; continuing to grow until the moss and rubbish collecting on his back, became a soil, and shot forth herbs, bushes, and at length trees, and now forms this great island (as they term it) upon which they were created a distinct race of men, and that the Great Spirit made, after them, every kind of beasts and birds of the forest, for their food and use, (from the first twelve of which they took the names of their twelve tribes,) and that these are as different in their kind, from those given by the Great Spirit to the white people, for their use, as they are themselves from us.— That they encreased in strength and numbers, till the white people came amongst them, and introduced their habits, with the use of strong drink, *to which they* justly impute their degeneracy.

When the feeling mind reflects on the former situation of these credulous people ; the various deception practised on them under the mask of friendship, the artless, and faithful attachment they bear to the white people where they are treated with, upon seeming principles of justice

and candor, it must truly sympathize with them in their present gloomy prospects.

This people who were two centuries ago possessed of the whole of this vast continent, affording them spontaneously every comfort of life, without rivals in the enjoyment of it, now driven back step by step, to the last spot of their fertile soil, and that contested. Contested by the very people whom they have been led to consider, as their brothers, fathers and protectors.—Prejudice from education, habit, and particular situations in life may warp the minds of the best of men, but a virtuous and penetrating mind, will always estimate in a proper degree, the relation and ties they have a claim to on us, if it is only from our superior cultivation of mind and manners. Would it not therefore argue a greater degree of virtue, and redound more to the honor of humanity, for Christians, bordering on the remains of their country, to turn their attention to the civilization of these people, than to endeavor by art and arms to extirpate them from the face of a country, which they conceive to have been given by the Great Spirit, to them alone. It is idle to say that people of their quick ideas, and lively imagination, are incapable of civilization, for where education, and a proper at-

tention to their morals has been bestowed, there are proofs to the contrary.—Instance Joseph Brant a full blooded Indian, who having received an early education, though residing still with the Indians, is much the gentleman, easy in his manners, mild and friendly in his disposition, regular and methodical in his whole deportment, and has by his good examples, brought many of his nation into a regular system of husbandry, and a decent way of living in their families.

Thus have I now as generally made you acquainted with this great country, as correctly as my short stay in it would admit of; but I cannot conclude this without giving you a piece of information equally new to every body here as to me.

For many years past adventurers have attempted without success to cross to the Pacific Ocean. The honor of this arduous task was left to a Mr. Alexander Mac Kenzie, a partner in the Northwest fur company, who lately returned by the way of the lakes, having fully accomplished the object of his undertaking in the course of two years, by traversing the Continent of America to the northward of west, over vast mountains covered with ice, which obliged him to make new canoes, where-

ever he had the waters in his favor. On his arrival on this coast, seven weeks sail from Canton in China, and 2 degrees to the north of Nootka Sound, he found the Indians without fire-arms, but furnished with some cloathing and ornaments, principally Spanish manufacture. The Indians accompanying him were not understood by those on that coast, and appeared to be perfect strangers to one another. It was with difficulty he could reconcile them to him as a white man, on account, as he understood, of some injury given them by people of his color, a few days before that time. These are supposed to have been the Americans from the port of New York, who had touched there in their trade with China.

After remaining a few days and making the necessary observations, he returned and brought along with him some valuable skins of the sea otter, and other natural curiosities, peculiar to that coast; but as the gentleman himself has it in idea to go soon to London, I have little doubt but he will meet with the reward due to his exertions, and give to the world an account of the wild and uninhabited tract he traversed.

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