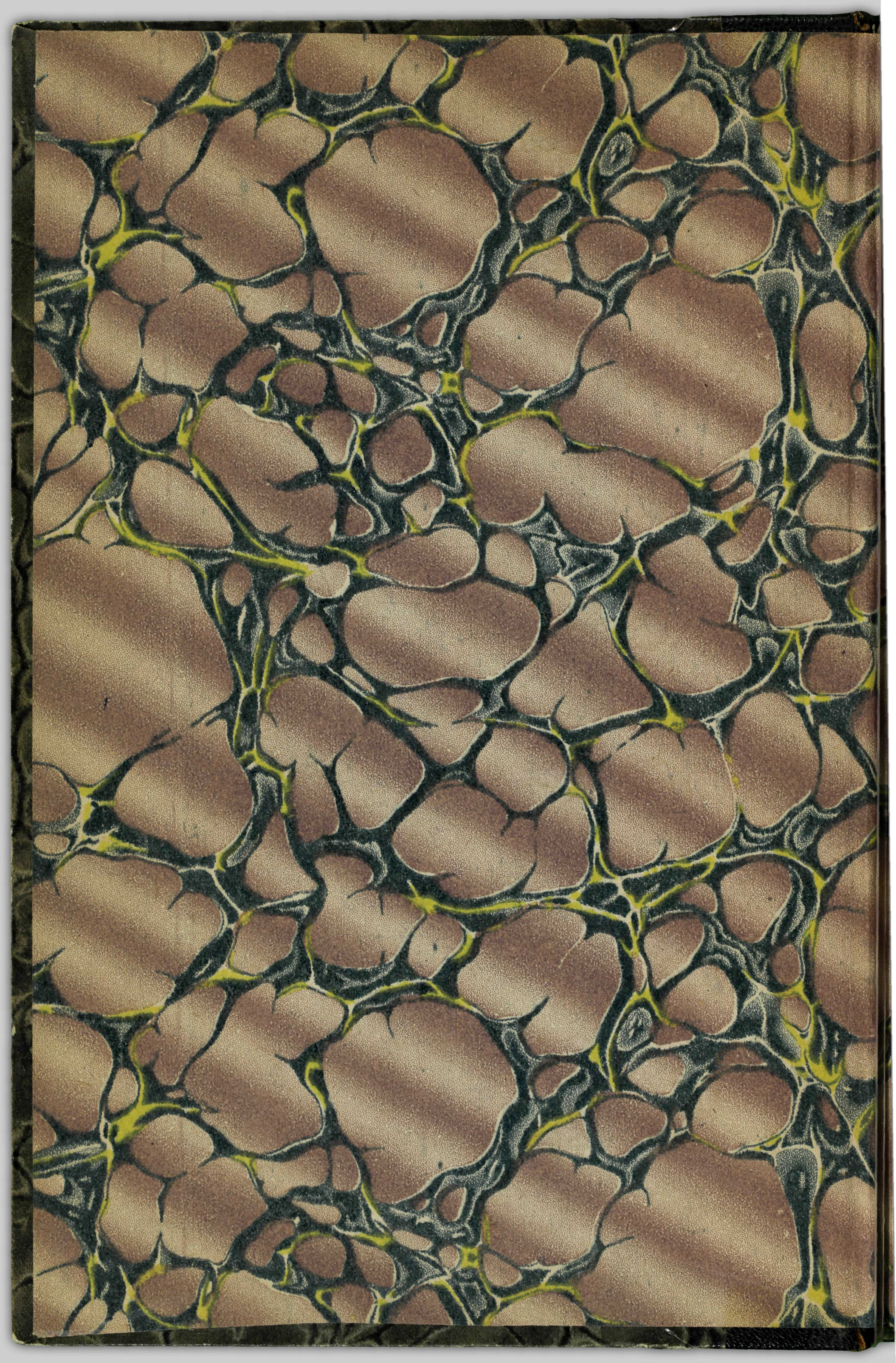

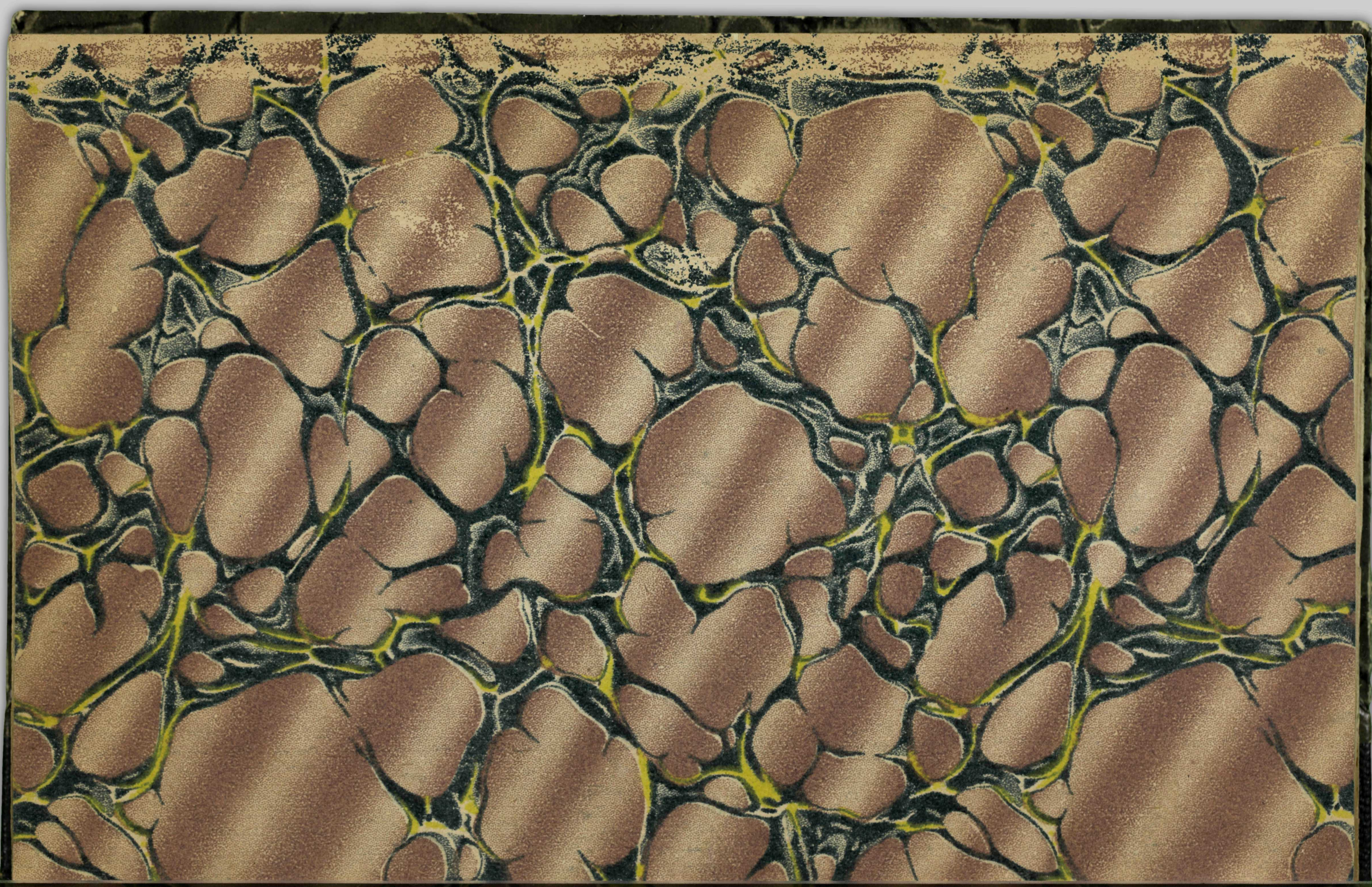

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ON THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF THE

NORTH-WEST COMPANY

OF

CANADA,

WITH

A HISTORY OF THE FUR TRADE,

AS CONNECTED WITH THAT CONCERN;

AND

OBSERVATIONS ON THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE COMPANY'S INTERCOURSE WITH, AND INFLUENCE OVER THE INDIANS OR SAVAGE NATIONS OF THE INTERIOR, AND ON THE NECESSITY OF MAINTAINING AND SUPPORTING THE SYSTEM FROM WHICH THAT INFLUENCE ARISES, AND BY WHICH ONLY IT CAN BE PRESERVED.

LONDON:
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1811.

ON THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF THE

NORTH-WEST COMPANY

OF

CANADA,

&c. &c. &c.

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1. THE Indian or Fur Trade, which commenced with the discovery of Canada, and was at first an insignificant barter, is now very considerable, and one of the most important branches of the commerce carried on between British America and the Mother Country. It is this trade which attaches to the British empire a race of men (the Indians) which no system merely political could maintain, either in subordination or fidelity; but whose fidelity and subordination are essential to the safety of the greater part of His Majesty's dominions in North

America. The influence of the traders over those who depend on them for the conveniences derived from civilization, and for facilities in obtaining food and clothing in greater abundance than before — is great in proportion to the amount of the benefit conferred.

2. Before the conquest of Canada, the Fur Trade of that part of the country known to the French, was carried on under the superintendance of the Government: the country was divided into trading districts; and, to prevent abuses, licences were granted, which enabled the holders to carry on the trade. The care of the Government, in this respect, was not ill repaid; which is manifest from the assistance it derived from the Indians in all its wars with the neighbouring Colonies.

3. Although it cannot be ascertained with accuracy what was the real amount of the furs collected from the several districts which were established by the French, yet the low price at which beaver-skins were sold, and the small extent of territory which was then explored, authorize the conclusion that it was small. Montreal was taken in the year 1760;

1760; and, in the spring of the following year, a few English and French traders sent goods to the borders of Lake Superior, and a few went as far North as the Rainy Lake, where they continued till the year 1763, when the Post at Michilimackinac was taken by the Indians. This event, and the Indian war by which it was occasioned, produced a temporary suspension of the trade; and it was not till the year 1771, that the British traders could safely traffic as far as the Sascatchiwan, on which river the most remote of the French Posts was situated. The subsequent progress of the Fur Traders in the interior, has corresponded with the wishes of the Indians to deal with them, and the success they have met with in their first enterprizes in a new region.

At the commencement of the English Trade, the whole was conducted by the unsupported efforts of individuals. The trader, who passed one winter with a newly discovered nation or band of Indians, or on some spot favourable to his traffic, heard, in the course of it, of Indians still more remote, among whom provisions might be obtained, and trade pursued, with little danger of competition. To the neighbourhood of these

he

he removed, and, while he was suffered to remain alone, generally preserved good order, and obtained the furs at a reasonable rate. But, as every person had an equal right to sell goods at the same place, the first discoverer of an eligible situation soon saw himself followed by other traders who were ready to undersell him, with a view to reap the harvest which he had sown at so much peril, and with so much difficulty. Thus circumstanced, he, in his turn, resorted to every means for securing to himself the preference of the Indians, and for injuring his competitor. This conduct provoked retaliation. The Indians were bribed with rum, and the goods were bartered away for a consideration below their value. The consequence was, that the traders ruined each other, the Indians were corrupted, and the English character was brought into contempt. In the struggle, innumerable disorders took place, and even blood was often spilt; till at length, after a competition injurious to all parties, mutual interests suggested the necessity of establishing a common concern, subject to general rules.

Accordingly, in the year 1779, the persons composing nine distinct interests became parties to an agreement for one year, by

by virtue of which the whole trade was rendered common property. The success, which attended this measure, led to a second and nearly similar agreement in the succeeding year, and to which a further duration of three years was given. As the parties to this agreement were less anxious, however, to fulfil it while it lasted, than to prepare themselves for the event of its termination, and for the consequent return of things to the original state of competition, all the benefit that was expected from it was not obtained, and at the end of two years it was renounced. The separate traders renewed, for a time, their feeble and unprofitable efforts; but the value of the principle upon which the two agreements had been founded was generally acknowledged; and, in the year 1784, to avoid the evils which then threatened the British subjects engaged in the Fur Trade, a third agreement, for five years, was entered into by them. The association of the traders, parties to this agreement, assumed the name of the NORTH WEST COMPANY; and the compact was renewed, from time to time, till the year 1802, when a more permanent one was executed, for

twenty

twenty years, from 1803. The trading body, thus constituted, is the present NORTH WEST COMPANY OF CANADA.

4. This Company, being thus established upon the principle of a coalition of interests of persons who were the rivals of each other, uniformly produced, whilst that principle was adhered to, all that was expected from it; namely, the prevention of animosities, violence, and losses among the traders; and an increase of the trade, through the peaceable industry of the Indians. Temporary departures from the principle have kept alive the recollection of its importance, by plunging the Indian territory, whenever they have occurred, into scenes upon which it would be painful to dwell; by leading to the commission of reciprocal injuries on the part of the traders; by producing idleness and quarrels among the Indians, and consequently diminishing the returns of the trade, both through the increased expense of its prosecution, and through the diversion of the Indians from the chase. The influence of the North West Company in increasing the Fur Trade is shown by the following statement of the returns, in 1784 and 1810:

1784

1784 ..... £30,000,
1810.... ..... 150,000.

Its influence in decreasing the consumption of spirituous liquors will be seen in the statement subjoined, in which the quantities sent into the Indian Territory in the years 1802, 3, and 4, (in which the coalition was interrupted) are compared with the reduced quantity by means of which the North West Company, conducted on the principle of coalition, is at present able to pursue the trade :

Year.		*Gallons.*
1800. The first year of the Company		10,098
1803	North West Company	16,299
	Traders opposing the North West Company.	5,000
		21,299
Excess, occasioned by competition, in 1803		11,261
1806		10,800
1807		9,500
1808		9,000
1809		
1810		

	Gallons.
Average decrease of the years 1806, 1807, 1808, 1809, and 1810, the competition being at an end..... ..	9,700
Consumption of 1803, as above.....	21,299
Decrease since the union of the contending parties . .	11,599

The disorders incident to competitions in the trade, that is, to departures from the principle upon which the Company was established, are manifest from the history of the Indian territory during the years 1802, 3, and 4, in which period they became the object of a parliamentary proceeding.* So numerous were the acts of violence then committed, (the recurrence of which is only prevented by the existence of the present Company,) that in compliance with a petition from Canada the Legislature of Great Britain was induced to pass an act, by which the whole of the Indian Territory was placed under the jurisdiction of the Courts of Justice in Upper and Lower Canada; in order that

* 43 Geo. III, c. 138. A.D. 1803.

that the perpetration of crimes, in those countries, should be restrained by the terror of a contiguous tribunal.

5. Such was the state of the Indian Territory, the Fur Trade, and its Traders, previously to the establishment of the North West Company, and during the temporary departures from its system; and the beneficial effects of preserving and supporting that system must be evident, from its preventing the evils which have been described, as well as from the consideration, that the interests of the Company, and the improvement of the condition of the Indians, are reciprocally dependent upon each other; for in promoting their own interests, and in order to obtain the greatest possible quantity of furs from the trade, the Company necessarily endeavour to maintain peace and sobriety among the Indians, and to induce them to devote their attention, entirely to the chace. Another object, essential to the well-being of the Indians, is, at the same time, necessary to the furtherance of the Company's interests; namely, that of maintaining sobriety and orderly behaviour among the resident traders and their servants: they therefore send into the Indian territory the smallest possible

quantity of spirituous liquors; and only necessity, which their experience has made them acquainted with, induces them to send even that. It is, moreover, contrary to their interests to send liquors in any considerable quantity, because, with few exceptions, they are not made an article of barter with the Indians, but are generally distributed gratuitously.—Thus much for the system of the Company, in what regards the article of spirituous liquors. But there is another view, under which the North West Company must be influenced by their own interests to do all that the Legislature could require, and more, perhaps, than legislative enactments could accomplish, for the preservation of order and good conduct among the Indians, since the justice of the Company's conduct towards the Indians, the good character they maintain in their dealings, and the ascendancy resulting from these causes, are the chief defence of their property, and of the lives of the persons entrusted with it. Their goods, a considerable proportion of which necessarily remains, at all times, unsold in the interior country, are often but weakly guarded; and what is then to save them, and the few men who

have

have the charge of them, from the power of the Indians, if the latter, through ill usage, real or imaginary, were to determine on seizing the one, and destroying the other? It is true, indeed, that the Company do not deem it consistent, either with their immediate interests, or with national policy, to avert the danger of such evils (the possible occurrence of which they constantly see before them) by abject submission, or profuse liberality; but, compelled, as they are, on the one hand, to maintain their own pretensions, and on the other to do justice, and to conciliate, there results that state of reciprocal dependence, between the Company and the Indians, which is the natural guarantee of mutual forbearance and good behaviour. An equally obvious consideration is, that the Company, by the perpetuity of interest, inherent in the constitution of an associated body, cannot find that advantage in partial acts of fraud and spoliation which but too often tempt solitary traders to commit them. A solitary trader, acting only for himself, and having no interest in the country, nor in the Indians, beyond the moment, may, by a fortunate act of villainy, acquire an instant benefit,

nefit, and, having done so, by returning into the country no more, avoid all disastrous consequences; but the interests of the Company require a continuance of the trade from year to year, and will not suffer them to abandon, for any temporary advantage, the foundations of their future hopes.

6. The extent of the Company's concerns, in which consists its *commercial* importance to the empire at large, has in part been stated. The British manufactures which they annually import into Canada amount to a considerable sum,* and their contribution to the

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* The principal articles exported from Great Britain, for the Indian trade by the North West Company, are :—

Blankets, manufactured at Witney, Oxfordshire.

Woollens ditto in Yorkshire, namely : Strouds, Coatings, Moltons, Serges, and Flannels, common Blue and Scarlet Cloths.

Cotton Manufactures, from Manchester : Striped Cottons, Dimities, Janes, Fustians, Printed British Cottons, Shawls and Handkerchiefs, Gartering and Ferretting.

Hardware, in large quantities.

Irish Linens, Scotch Sheetings, Osnaburgs and Linens.

Nets, Twine, Birdlime, Threads, Worsted Yarn, large quantities.

Brass, Copper, and Tin Kettles.

Indian Fusils, Pistols, Powder, Ball, Shot, and Flints.

Painters' colors, Vermillion, &c.

Stationary, Beads, Drugs, and

Large parcels of all kinds of Birmingham manufacture, with other articles of British manufacture.

the general mass of commerce and manufactures will be further deduced, from the consideration, that of the furs imported by them into this country, very few are re-exported in a raw state, a large proportion consisting of beaver-skins, furnishing the raw material for the extensive and profitable manufacture of fine hats. To this statement of the indirect or mixed operation of the Company's traffic upon the welfare of the Empire, is to be added its effect upon the prosperity of Canada, in the encouragement it affords to both the manufactures and agriculture of that Province, by the annual expenditure of about £50,000 sterling, in the payment of salaries and wages to the persons employed in its service, and in the purchase of various articles of the produce of the colony, which are employed in the trade, in addition to the imports from England above stated.

7. The commercial influence of the Company, in promoting the extension of the Fur Trade, and in preserving peace and good order among the Indians, has been already noticed; but their influence in a political point of view, is also worthy of regard. The present system of the Company, by the absence

sence of rivalry from within, enables them to carry on the trade at a comparatively small expense; and their interests require them to endeavour to undersell all rivals from without. These rivals are the citizens of the United States, to whom those parts of the British Territory which border on their boundary line are naturally, and were lately by treaty,* accessible. But the Indians will of necessity be attached to those with whom they maintain a trade. It is therefore the system of the Company which maintains and secures to Great Britain the attachment of the Indians. If the Company were without all other motive, if they were without national feelings, still their interests would require them to foster that attachment. By identifying themselves with His Majesty's government, they acquire increased importance among the Indians; a consequence of which they are so sensible, that they invariably, and they hope innocently, and even beneficially to the mother country, represent their visits and residence

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* The Treaty of 1793 being understood to have expired, it is considered that the Americans are *not* now entitled to access to these territories, for the purposes of trade.

sidence in the Indian territory as boons to the Indians from His Majesty, bestowed on account of their good behaviour, and to be withdrawn should they exhibit the reverse. It is to be understood, though it may be difficult to convey the idea, that the relations of buyer and seller, of trader and consumer, hardly enter into the view of the Indian,—of the Indian, at least, who lives remote from European settlements; of which description only are those with whom the dealings of the North West Company are carried on. The Indian of the Interior Country is placed beyond the reach of the direct influence of the British Government. His remote situation precludes him from any intercourse with, or knowledge of the military posts established on the frontiers of Canada, and of the Indian Department. He is a chief, or a warrior; he hunts, and, through friendship and in the spirit of generosity, he brings his furs to the trader: the trader he regards a as representative of His Majesty, through whose friendship and goodwill manufactures are permitted to be brought, and to be presented to him in return. Here, therefore, are less of the cold relations of

trade, than of the warm ones of national and individual attachment; and, hence, it will be seen, that any interruption of the English Trade, by a Foreign Power, would appear to the Indian, not so much a commercial injury to Great Britain as a direct and personal injury to himself; for, in his eyes, it would be no other than an attempt to cut him off from the benefits resulting from his friendship with the English. Such are the springs of this trade, and the sources of the political influence possessed by the North West Company. As to the description of men to whom this influence reaches, their number is large, and their fitness for military purposes the greatest of that of any Indians which could now be brought by the English into the field. In a population of nearly *sixty thousand souls*, between the Straits of Belleisle, in lat. 48° North, long. 55° West, and the Great Bear Lake, in lat. 67° North, long. 125° West, there are at least twelve thousand of them capable of the most active warfare; and these, not the vitiated and enfeebled neighbours of the settlements, but men in the full vigour of savage life. It is not necessary, here, to decide, what is the real military value of an Indian force, or the expediency

diency of employing it; it being sufficient to observe that in possessing it, we have that, of which, more than any other of our means of annoyance, the whole mass of the population of the United States is afraid. In the year 1794, when the treaty then recently negociated with Great Britain was under the consideration of Congress, in which its ratification was much opposed, one of the arguments most strenuously urged for acquiescing in it (an argument well adapted to the interests of many, and to the feelings of all,) was, the means which it afforded, of " arresting the " tomahawk of the Savage, raised over the " head of the innocent settlers on the fron- " tier.*"—At this day, the rumours which make the most serious impression upon the public mind in the United States, and which are consequently copied from newspaper to newspaper with the greatest eagerness, are those of *preparations on the part of the Indians*, under the influence of Great Britain, to commence hostilities. As supposed promoters of such preparations, the North West

 Company

* See a celebrated Speech by Mr. Ames, and the Note in page 23 post.

Company and its servants are, at the same time, constantly held up to the odium of the people of the United States;—a further illustration of the influence which in that country is imputed to the English Traders generally, and to the North West Company in particular. But, were additional testimony upon these points necessary, it might be found in the* embarrassments, which the government of the United States has unceasingly laboured to throw in the way of the British Indian Trade, and particularly in their total disregard of the provisions of the third article of the late treaty of 1794, by which access to the territories of both stations on either side of the boundary line, was allowed to their respective subjects; but after the acquisition of Louisiana by the United States, all intercourse to the west of the Mississippi was prohibited to all persons, *who would not abjure their allegiance, and become citizens of the United States*, which was a gross

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* See Mr. Atcheson's Observations on the Importance of the British North American Colonies, p. ix, edition 1808, for the various instances of vexatious conduct and exactions of the American Revenue Officers on the Canadian Fur Traders.

gross infraction of that treaty, as well as of the explanatory article of 1796. To conclude: the present attachments of the Indians to the subjects of Great Britain, in preference to the people of the United States, is matter of notoriety; and the Fur Trade of Canada, and the system of the North West Company, are the bases of those attachments.

8. Of the truth of these positions, the certainty becomes still more apparent, if we reflect on the inevitable consequences of the event of a dissolution of the North West Company. The Company, by the aid of their capital and exertions prevent the interference of other interests. The result is a state of peace, of order, of industry, and of British influence. From the epoch of the conquest of Canada (1759,) to that of the establishment of the Company (1784,) the Indian territory was frequently distracted with the animosities of the traders, who were all British subjects. There were no competitors for the trade but them, and there were no settlements, those of Canada excepted, in any degree contiguous to the seat of the trade. But what is the condition of things now, and what multiplied evils are not to be considered

dered as certain, if the British Indian Territory should again be abandoned to a trading competition! The Colonists of Great Britain on the Atlantic, who separated themselves from the mother country, have now become a foreign people; their settlements have been pushed so far into the interior as to place them at the doors of the Indian Territory; and the provisions of the late Treaty of Great Britain with the United States, opened those doors to all foreigners who were disposed to come in. Dissolve, therefore, the North West Company, and the Indian Territory becomes the theatre of contention, not only between British subjects, but between them and foreigners; a contention in which national rivalry, not to say national hatred, will mingle itself with commercial; in which spirits will be introduced among the Indians in profusion, and in which blood, on all sides, will assuredly be shed. The enterprize, the facilities, and the advantages, which the people of the United States derive from the aid and patronage of their government, will, it is to be feared, ultimately prevail; and unless prevented by the timely interference of the British

tish government, the Trade will be lost, not to the North West Company only, but to Great Britain; and, with the trade, the British influence over the Indians.

9. The claims of the North West Company, as the medium through which British commerce derives the greatest possible addition in the article of the Fur Trade, and through which the political interests of the Empire are maintained, in a quarter of the world * which is daily becoming more important,

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* It must not excite surprise should the French government resume the possession of Louisiana; for there is reason to believe it was *not sold* to the United States but only hypothecated: perhaps the discussions on Mr. Pickering's recent motion when made known to the public will tend to elucidate and explain this mysterious transaction. For much important information respecting that province, and the countries on the banks of the Mississippi, see a tract, entitled: "An Address to the Government of the "United States on the Cession of Louisiana to the French," printed at Philadelphia in 1803; amongst many observations in this curious publication are the following:——

In page 45 it is observed, "There is still another vein, "however, by which the fury of the STATES may be held at "pleasure—by an enemy placed on their Western frontiers. "The only aliens and enemies within their borders, are not the "blacks. They indeed are the most inveterate in their enmity; "but the INDIANS are, in many respects, more dangerous in- "mates. Their savage ignorance, their undisciplined passions, "their

portant, (for the possession of Florida and Louisiana by the United States, and the ultimate

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" their restless and warlike habits, their notions of ancient right,
" make them the fittest tools imaginable for disturbing the
" States. In the territory adjacent to the Ohio, Mississippi and
" Missouri, there are more than *thirty thousand men*, whose
" trade is hunting, and whose delight is war. These men lie at
" the mercy of any civilized nation who live near them. Such
" a neighbour can gain their friendship or provoke their enmity
" with equal ease. He can make them inactive, or he can rouse
" them to fury: he can direct their movement in any way he
" pleases, and make it mischievous or harmless by supplying
" their fury with arms and with leaders, or by withholding that
" supply."

" The pliant and addressful spirit of the French has always
" given them an absolute controul over these savages. The office
" which the laziness or the insolence of the British found im-
" practicable, was easily performed by us;—and will be still
" easier hereafter, since we shall enter on the scene with more
" advantages than formerly.

" We shall detach thither a sufficient force to maintain pos-
" session against all the efforts of the STATES, should they,
" contrary to all their interests, proceed to war *with* or *without*
" provocation. We shall find, in the Indian tribes, an army
" permanently cantoned in the most convenient stations; en-
" dowed with skill and temper best adapted to the nature and
" the scene of war, and armed and impelled with far less trouble
" and expence than an equal number of our own troops. We
" shall find a terrible militia, infinitely more destructive, while
" scattered through the hostile settlements, and along an open
" frontier, than an equal force of our own. We shall find, in
" the bowels of the STATES, a mischief that only wants the

" touch

mate fortunes of Mexico and New Spain have a strong bearing on this question); these though the most prominent, are not the only claims they have on the favourable consideration of Government. The Company have already done much, and are daily doing more, for the complete discovery of the Interior of North America, in the higher latitudes. In the peaceable progress of commercial enterprize, they have pushed their researches to the Frozen Ocean in one direction, and to the Pacific in

 another.

" touch of a well-directed spark to involve in its explosion, the " utter ruin of half their nation. *Such will be the power we " shall derive from a military station and a growing colony on " the Mississippi.* These will be certain and immediate effects, " whatever distance or doubt there may be in the remoter bene- " fits to France, on which I have so warmly expatiated. As a " curb on a nation whose future conduct, in peace and war, will " be of great importnace to us, this province will be cheaply " purchased at ten times the cost to which it will subject us."

In page 50 it is stated, and the words in a note are said to have been repeated by Talleyrand, as those of Buonaparte:— " My designs on the Mississippi will never be officially an- " nounced, till they are executed. Meanwhile the world if it " pleases, may fear and suspect, but nobody will be wise enough " to go to war to prevent them. I shall trust to the folly of " England and America, to let me go my own way in my own " time."

another. They have not merely visited those regions, in the capacity of traders, but, through the skill and perseverance of the gentleman who performed the difficult and dangerous voyages alluded to, their commerce has been the means of procuring descriptions of them, and thus enlarging the bounds of geography and of general knowledge. Many other voyages and journies of discovery, though of smaller extent, have been performed by the members and agents of the Company, and useful journals of them are carefully preserved; and one member, a gentleman of great scientific attainments, has passed many years in the Interior, solely occupied in perfecting its Geography, proposing, as early as an undertaking of so much magnitude can be accomplished, to communicate, on the part of the Company, the whole of its accumulated information to the world. These are undertakings, to which less powerful, and less wealthy adventurers would be unequal, and to which the Company could have no sufficient stimulus, if it did not promise itself, to reap where and what it sows. It is to be added, that the Company, in exploring New Countries,

and

and opening an intercourse with the natives of them, proceeds in no spirit of violence, the sure consequence of which would be its own permanent injury; but presents itself with the goods for barter, and is received and hailed as a benefactor.

10. But the prolonged existence of the Company will depend upon its prosperity under the encouragement and protection of the British Government; and if its merits are such as have been described, its existence must be an object of national solicitude, and it must be worth while, not only, to prevent its decay, but to give it a basis the most solid. Now, an extension of the field of adventure is always necessary to the prosecution of the Fur Trade, as it is to other trades in natural productions; such as the fisheries, and the timber trade of uncultivated countries. The animals of a particular region either become exhausted, or retire from pressing dangers. This consideration alone would prove the necessity of progressively extending the field of adventure of the North-West Company, for the Fur Trade is known to have gradually receded into the Interior, leaving in the country, where it has been long established, only very diminished

resources for rewarding the chase. The Company, however, has suffered from other causes. The Treaty with the United States placed the Fur Trade of Canada, south of Michilimackinac, under the controul of the American Government, by whom, as already intimated, no practicable step has been omitted to render nugatory the privileges of the English engaged in it. By the same treaty, the old and natural carrying-place, for goods passing into the North-West, was ceded to the United States; and the Company was compelled, at a large expense, to dig a canal, construct locks, and make other works, necessary to complete an artificial remedy. In short, the prosperity of the Company, by natural causes, by the effect of political arrangements, and by an increased expenditure, proportionate to an increased distance of transport, is annually diminished, and, without *the opening of new channels of traffic, and securing them by Charter to the Company exclusively for a certain number of years*, there is reason to fear the trade must ultimately be abandoned: to granting them this Privilege it is presumed no rational objection can be made, as it will not interfere with the

Rights

Rights of any of His Majesty's subjects, more especially as the East-India Company have agreed to grant a licence to the North-West Company to trade within the limits of their Charter.

11. The pursuit of new resources, so natural to the spirit of commerce and so essential to the existence of the British Fur Trade, has led to a constant extension of the geographical limits of the Company's concerns, gradually spreading them over a large portion of the North-Western British Territory in North America, explored, as already shown, at their own cost, and by their own labour. It is in this manner, that since the establishment of the Company in 1784, the consumption of British Manufactures has been progressively introduced throughout nearly the whole of the country lying between Canada and the Rocky Mountains, within which space the Company possess upwards of eighty posts, or trading stations.* Not stopping here,

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* Besides their trading stations in the Interior, the North West Company hold a lease from Government of the Tadousac, or King's Domains, on the North Coast of the River Saint Lawrence, below Quebec, extending eighty leagues from the River Saquinay, down to the River Moisée, and comprehending the country

here, the Company have passed the Rocky Mountains, and have already established three or four posts on the streams which empty themselves into the Pacific Ocean. Their further design has been (and in proceeding toward its accomplishment, every thing practicable, within the time, has been done) to explore the whole country west of the Rocky Mountains, and to form, upon the great river Columbia, which falls into the Pacific Ocean, in lat. 46° north, a general establishment for the trade of the adjacent country.*

12. The importance of this enterprize to the interests of the Empire, must be obvious, from the considerations already stated, and to which it will be needless to recur in this place, except in the briefest manner. The Company, in carrying the trade of Great Britain to the west of the Rocky Mountains, open new markets for British Manufactures, continue the supply of a valuable raw material,

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country bordering upon all the waters which discharge themselves into the River Saint Lawrence, within that space of coast. This lease is for twenty-one years from 1803, and the annual rent paid to Government is about £1,000 sterling.

* See those parts of the Map which are coloured.

material, and instil, into the people with whom they traffic, the most powerful motives for attaching themselves to the interests of Great Britain. In addition, (and this, perhaps, is itself the most pressing view of the subject,) by maintaining their own prosperity, the Company maintain their own existence, and, with that, preserve their Political influence over that part of the Indian Territory which immediately borders upon Canada and the United States. If even the whole country, between the Saint Lawrence and the Rocky Mountains were exhausted of its furs, still the Trade of the country west of the Rocky Mountains, if properly secured, would enable the Company to maintain its present establishments, and with them, the attachments of the Indians at large.

13. The objects contemplated by the Company, it is completely in their power, if sanctioned and supported by His Majesty's Government, to accomplish. But the Government of the United States,—stimulated, in part, by an avarice of territorial acquisition, to which they are moved by the circumstance, that the sale of public lands is one of the principal sources of their revenue ;—and still more by their anxiety to destroy the British Fur Trade, the political,

as

as well as commercial importance, of which they well know;—have long affected to consider the river Columbia, and the adjacent coasts, as part of their territory, and have lately encouraged, an expedition to be fitted out at New York, by a chartered commercial company, the object of which is *to take possession of and form settlements upon that coast.* The pretensions of the United States are represented to be grounded on a pretended right of discovery; for, in the year 1806, the American Government sent a Captain Lewis on an expedition across the Rocky Mountains; and, in order to give the undertaking as much as possible the air of a voyage of discovery, and to make it appear that they were taking possession of an unknown country, Captain Lewis, in his progress, bestowed new names on the rivers, mountains, &c. as *Jefferson's River, Madison's River,* &c. disregarding all that the English had done before him.* It is also stated, that the United States claim this river as

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* See the Travels of Captains Lewis and Clarke from St. Louis, by the Missouri and Columbia Rivers to the Pacific Ocean in 1804, 1805, and 1806. Reprinted in London, 1809.

as part of *Louisiana* ;* but it is not considered necessary to enter into any detailed observations on this point, as it must be obvious to every one acquainted with the circumstances under which that colony was settled by the French, that there is no foundation for it.

 14. The

* In Major Pike's " Exploratory Travels" to the Source of the Mississippi, performed by order of the American Government, and lately published in London, the following extraordinary passage appears in page 140, *viz.* speaking of Mr. Thompson's Surveys of the Interior Country, the Major says: " I find, from " the observations and suggestions of Mr. Thompson, that it was " his opinion, the line of limits between the United States and " Great Britain must run such a course from the head of the " Lake of the Woods, as to touch the source of the Mississippi, " and this I discovered to be the opinion of the North West " Company, who, we may suppose, speak the language held " forth by their Government. The admission of this pretension " will throw out of our territory the upper part of Red River, " and nearly two-fifths of the territory of Louisiana, whereas, " if the line is run due west from the Lake of the Woods, it " will cross Red River nearly at the entrance, and, it is conjec- " tured, strike the Western Ocean at Birch Bay, in Queen " Charlotte Sound."

This is, indeed, a sweeping claim to territory, and it is the first time that such extravagant pretensions have been openly advanced. There is, however, reason to believe, that the American Government may seriously urge them, if they find Great Britain neglecting to maintain her just rights, and to protect her subjects who come in contact with them. The ambitious and encroaching disposition of that Government is well known, and if not resisted, it is difficult to say how far their pretensions may be carried.

14. The claim of the United States, if attempted to be founded upon the purchase of Louisiana, is absurd; and if the right of *discovery* is what they assume, facts pronounce immediately against them. The coasts were long ago explored by Captain Cook, and after him, by Captain Vancouver; the latter surveyed the River Columbia; and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, one of the partners of the North-West Company, in the year 1793, (thirteen years before the expedition under Captain Lewis,) crossed the Rocky Mountains, explored the country to the Columbia, and to the Pacific Ocean. Besides several British subjects, partners and servants of the North-West Company, have been some years in possession of the Columbia, and the country adjacent, in virtue of the Three Posts before stated to have been established there by them.

15. The claim, therefore, on the part of the United States, must be considered without any foundation. But the Company, cannot be expected to contend with the Government of that country unless they are supported by His Majesty's Government. Nor is the question simply, whether British

subjects

subjects shall with impunity be deprived of their just rights, by a Foreign Power; or whether the British Nation will tamely part with a valuable territory to which its title is indisputable;* but whether the commercial and political importance of the Fur Trade, does not deserve, on the part of His Majesty's Government, as much anxiety

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* In a tract published in 1763, entitled, "An impartial "enquiry into the right of the French King to the territory "West of the great River Mississipi, in North America, NOT "ceded by the preliminaries, and comprehending a vindication "of the English claim to that whole continent, from authentic "records, and indisputable historical facts;"—it is stated, that, in the Charter granted by King Charles the first to Sir Robert Heath, his Attorney-General, the province of Carolina is described to extend from the River St. Mattheo on the South part, to the River Passo Magno on the North. St. Mattheo has been found to be in thirty degrees Northern latitude, and Passo Magno in thirty-six, and from East to West this province was to extend from the Atlantic Ocean to the great South Sea, aud of course includes all Louisiana; for "*as to the country to the West of* "*the Mississipi, that lies farther North than thirty-six degrees*; "*it is to be included in the dependencies of Canada, and to be* "*esteemed a part of it, and of course becomes a portion of the* "*British dominion by the cession which is made of Canada* "*with all its dependencies, by the twenty-second article of the* "*published preliminaries*," and what has not been given up by any subsequent treaty; as the treaty of 1783 did not cede to the United States any territory, West of the Mississippi. See the 3d article of that treaty.

anxiety to retain it, as it actually does excite, on the part of that of the United States, to take it away?—As to the value of the territory considered without reference to the objects hitherto discussed, it may be worth while to remark,

1. That the Columbia River completes a line of inland navigation, intersecting the whole continent of America, and joining the Atlantic to the Pacific, since its sources, which are in the Rocky Mountains, are nearly adjacent to those of the rivers, which taking various directions from the eastern side of these mountains, fall respectively into the Northern Pacific, or Frozen Ocean, Hudson's Bay, and the Gulph of Mexico.

2. That this great River receives all the streams which fall Westward from the Rocky Mountains, in their outlet to the sea, and is the only river, in the whole extent of country, capable of navigation. And

3. That the banks of this River compose the first level country along all the coast, southward from Cook's Entry, and consequently afford the most northern situation, on the main land, that is suited to the use of a civilized people,

ple, or, in other words, to the establishment of a British Colony.*

Such, then, is the country of which, by means of the North-West Company, the possession may be secured to Great-Britain; and upon the possession of which depends the future prosperity of the Fur Trade, and, with it, a most important source of political influence on the continent of North America; exclusive of the advantages which may be derived from rivalling the Fur Trade of the Americans

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* See Humboldt's Political Essay, on the kingdom of New Spain, Vol. I. p. 20; wherein it is stated, "that the government "which should open the communication between the two oceans, "by forming regular establishments in the *interior* of the country, "and at the extremities of the rivers could get possession of the "whole Fur Trade of North America, from the 48° of latitude "of the pole, excepting a part of the coast which has long been "included in Russian America. CANADA, from the multitude "and course of its rivers, presents facilities for internal commerce similar to those of Oriental Siberia. The mouth of the "river Columbia seems to invite Europeans to found a fine colony "there; for its banks afford fertile land in abundance covered "with superb wood."——London edition, 1811.

ricans to China; which, by the obtaining possession of the River Columbia, they expect to carry on with increased facility and success.

THE END.

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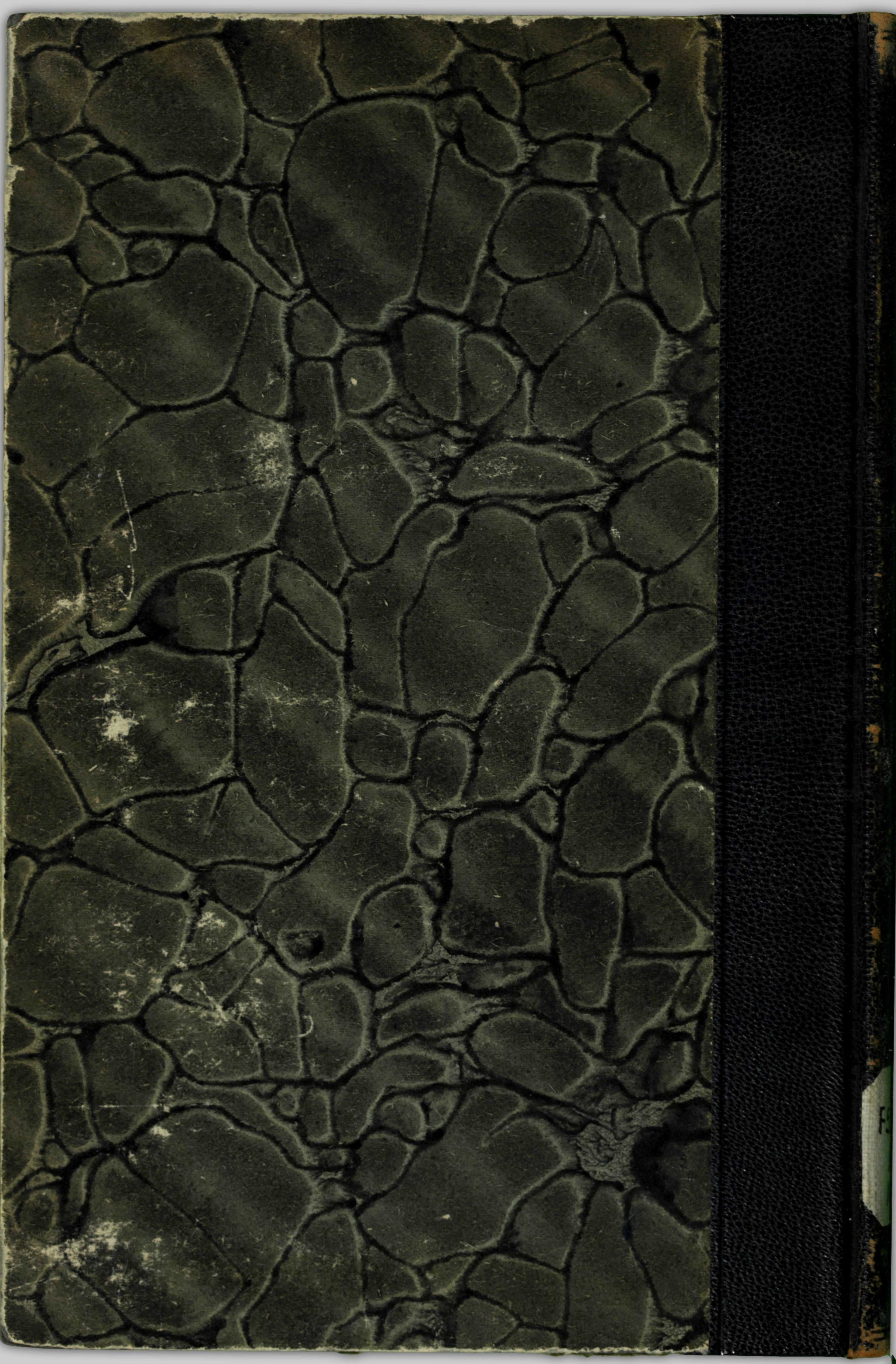

A MAP OF AMERICA,

between Latitudes 40 and 70 NORTH, and Longitudes 45 and 180 WEST,

Exhibiting

THE PRINCIPAL TRADING STATIONS

of the

NORTH WEST COMPANY.