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THE TERMS OF THE STAR

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FROM THE WESTERN SPY.

TO THE PRINTERS OF THE SPY,

Gentlemen,

As the United States are soon to acquire the possession of Louisiana, it may not be unapt to offer you a few notes that principally relate to the Missouri. They were made with others, several years ago, while the writer was in Upper Louisiana, and in the way of obtaining the best possible information concerning a region so little known to the world.

VIATOR.

Cincinnati, September 23, 1803.

The Missouri, which ought to have taken the name of Upper Mississippi, in preference to the smaller branch so called, has, according to the savages, its source in a chain of mountains, at no great distance from California. There is said to be a considerable cataract near the source. Fifteen years before C— of St. Louis, (whom I shall have frequent occasion to name) ascended this great river, to the distance of 500 leagues, in a general direction of west north-west.—No other person before him had ever penetrated so far—and none perhaps have since succeeded that distance—so that the source remains yet unknown to all but the savages. Whatever, then, may be said here of the river and country beyond this point, must be ascribed to information derived from the remote Indians.

After running a course of two or three and twenty hundred miles, the Missouri disembogues into the Mississippi, in lat. 38, 74, N. being about 15 1-2 W. from Philadelphia, and five leagues above St. Louis des Illinois, capital of Upper Louisiana. In ascending this stream, we find all its larger branches uniting with it on the southern shore—there being but few waters, and those inconsiderable, that empty on the opposite side.

The current of the Missouri is extremely rapid, very muddy, and far more difficult to ascend, than the Mississippi. Its turbidness is occasioned by a large river called, the Plate, which rolling impetuously for some distance through a sandy desart, rushes into the other, on its southern side, about 200 leagues from its mouth. The turbulence and impurities of the Plate are now communicated to the water of the Missouri and descend, though diminished, with the Mississippi, down to the Mexican gulph. Above the Plate, the stream of the Missouri is said to be clear and gentle, as is that of the Mississippi, above the Missouri's mouth. And yet we are told, that all the waters which fall in above the Plate are muddy, except one; while all below it are clear. If this be true it proves an astonishing degree of muddiness in the latter. Travellers do say, that about a fourth part of its bulk is formed of mud and sand—and so impetuous its stream, that although boats have sometimes ventured down, yet none ever attempted to ascend it.—From the name of this river, it would appear to be embarrassed with shoals. The desert through which the Plate takes its course, is said to extend a hundred miles on both sides; that it is made up of hills and plains, of arid sand—that in high winds, vast bodies of sand are taken up and carried through the air, burying irrecoverably whatever they happen to fall upon—and that in this dreary tract, there is little or no vegetation, nor any animals to be seen, excepting a species of rabbit, and an animal of the goat kind.*—Nor is it inhabited by any of the human race.

I have in my hands, the copy of an original M. S. map in the possession of a gentleman there high in office. It embraces the whole of the Missouri and Mississippi, with their waters and lays down (among other things) the various nations and tribes of savages, inhabiting those extensive regions. According to this map, the Plate extends southardly between twelve and fourteen hundred miles, interlocking its head waters with those of la Riviere du Nord, [North river] down which stands the city of Santa Fe, where the Spaniards have valuable gold mines.

About two hundred leagues further up the Missouri, that is, beyond the Plate's mouth, there is a remarkable bend called the Grand Detour, concerning the extent and position of which my informants were not perfectly agreed; some making it describe a circuit of 30 or 40 leagues; but Mr. C— in whose intelligence I place great confidence, affirms that it does not exceed eighteen leagues. Be that as it may—the beginning and end of this bend approach so near each other, that a man can walk across the neck between them in half a day—whereas it takes up 8 or 9 days to row up the stream, around it. Hence it would appear, that the stream here is by no means placid—and therefore an exception to what is said before, as to gentleness of the current above the river Plate.—My map lays down this bend as north of the general course of the river; but I have been told, it takes the opposite position.

In the neighborhood of the grand Detour and about ten leagues from the river, on its northern side, there is a lofty volcanic mountain, which is frequently in a state of eruption. This will account for the pumice stones so often found floating down the Missouri, and Lower Mississippi. To this volcano may be attributed a smart shock of an earthquake, felt at Kaskaskia, &c. at 3 o'clock, in the morning, January 8th, 1795, and which came in an apt direction from the mountain.†

The navigation of the Missouri is attended with difficulty and danger; danger from its numerous quicksands, and difficulty from the obstinacy of the current. The quicksands lie sometimes in shoal water, and sometimes from dry bars, or islands of various extent. If a boat happen to strike on one of the former, it is usual for the hands instantly to leap into the water, and push her off. Without this precaution, the sand would quickly boil over both bows and gunwalls, and swallow up the boat.

While at St. Louis, I was informed of a melancholy catastrophe that once happened to a party of traders on their return. Having landed on a dry sand bar to take some refreshment, the bar suddenly disappeared, carrying down with it both men and boats.

There is a non-descript quadruped found high up the Missouri, about the size of a full grown elk. He is covered with a coat of long fine hair, and has a horn on each side of the head, which turning upwards describes a volute and passes off horizontally parallel with the nose. Some of these horns were presented to the commandant of St. Louis, who informed me, that there diamater, at the root, was equal to the crown of his hat. He had sent them to the Baron de Carondolet, governor general of Louisiana which deprived me of the satisfaction of seeing them. This animal is said to be docile and very useful to the natives, as a beast of burden or an article of food.

Buffaloes are extremely numerous in the Missouri country, as far, at least, as it has been explored, and of various importance to the Indians. The flesh affords a nutritious and well flavoured aliment. Spoons, drinking vessels, &c. are made of the horns.—The tallow, and bones serve for several purposes. The hides they dress with the brains, leaving on the wool, and often decorating the other side with paints, or an embroidery of porcupine quills, dyed of various colors; of which the red yellow, and black are briliant; and sometimes both are employed together. Thus dressed, they serve as mats, mantles, and blankets, wearing the woolly side inwards in winter, and outwards in summer. They form besides an important article of traffic, many thousand of the dressed skins being brought into St. Louis, on every return of the Ausage and Missouri companies' servants. These *robes de Buffle*, as the French term them, are much used in the Illenois country, both by Spaniards and French, as coverlids in winter; and numbers are sent to New-Orleans, and sold to the shipping. Their wool might be valuably employed in the manufacture of felt hats; and the horns, which are of a glossy black, and readily take a high polish, are convertable to many purposes, both useful and ornamental; such as drinking vessels, handles for knives, forks and cutteaux, powder-horns, &c.

As to the country of the Missouri, it is reported to be desirable for the extent of 8 or 10 leagues from either margin of the river; and then it becomes sterile and sandy, intermixed with high hills. How far the barren country extends I am not informed.

With respect to the natives, it appears the farther they are removed from intercourse with the whites, the more civil and hospitable they are to strangers.—As an instance, I was furnished with the following anecdote by the gentlemen who gave rise to it.

"Having penetrated up the river so far that no white man had ever been seen there before, he landed at an Indian village. The chief dispatched to the party four Indians, with a buffaloe robe, with orders to bring up the leading man of the party. Mr. C— being pointed out to them as such, was (without even a word on their part) forcibly seized and thrown upon the robe. Each Indian now took hold of a corner of it, bore him off to the town, and placed him before the chief. A bowl of water was immediately presented for the stranger to drink—and thus ended a ceremony, rough enough in its outset, by which Mr. C— was adopted as a friend in the family of the chief, for whatever time he might think proper to remain in the nation.

Among this people there was an Indian known by the name of the Liar. An appellation so novel excited the curiosity of Mr. C. He desired the Indian to explain the cause of it. 'I have been a great traveller' said the savage. 'I once went to a very far country' (pointing in the direction of Callifornia) 'where I was stopped by a great water' (supposed to be the pacific ocean) 'and there I met with a man made like myself, but who was all over black, and his head was covered with black wool. On my return hither, I described the man I had seen; but no body would believe me ——— and ever since they have dubbed me the liar.' ———'Oh!' says Mr. C. there was nothing extraordinary in the man you met with. If you were to come to my town, I could shew you a hundred men as you all saw.' The poor savage leaped for joy at this corroboration of his disputed veracity, and ran through the village to communicate it. The Indians flocked around C. to hear from himself, the marvellous story. They received it, with marks of astonishment; and the liar was restored to his original name and credit.

* *There are probably two hundred millions of acres of land in the United States to which the Indian title has not yet been extinguished.*

* *A description of this goat-like animal, lately appeared in many of the public prints.*

† *Some years after the above was written, certain travellers proceeded to the mountain, and found it raging. They could not approach within a mile of it, for fear of suffocation from the sulphureous fumes it sent forth.*

From the Republican Spy.

DISSENTER:—No. III.

In the year 1620, our ancestors began their migrations from the cruel persecution of James, and Archbishop Laud, to the dreary and inhospitable wilds of America, to enjoy that toleration they soon refused to others. This shews the difference in men on change of condition. The poor know not what they would be in prosperity; so the powerless, are more under the directions of reason than those who are in possession of it, and here you find verified. Where persons who ventured their lives and fortunes on the rolling billows of the Atlantic ocean, and bid a finall adieu to their friends and native country, for the sake of religious liberty when they came to have the power in their hands, could persecute the innocent Quakers, even to banishment and death. The same spirit has been discoverable in the congregational churches ever since. Dissemblers of every denomination have been driven into corners, and law, and public opinion, have pronounced a lasting stigma upon them, quite inconsistent with the spirit and genius of the gospel. In the reign of terror, or of John Adams, when a plan was set on foot by Hamilton and co. to destroy the principles of our revolution, and introduce a monarchical, aristocratical government, we then discovered the intended establishment of a national religion; by the united force of the clergy, thundered forth by their agents, *Dwight*, *Morse* and *Strong*; and even a rev. D. D. of this vicinity, was found to re-echo the conspiracy of a *Robison*: And a political clerical scribler, of miner years, in a fast sermon, was heard to burst forth in this truly pathetic language, "Why may not the earth help the Woman now as well as formerly?" But I must beg leave to differ a little with this commentator on the text. The Dragon represents the civil and ecclestical governors of Rome. The woman, the true apostolic church. The earth represents the Goths and Vandals, which destroyed the Roman government, and gave the church rest*. But it seems that this modern commentator makes dissenters represent the dragon, civil government the earth, and the congregational churches, the woman. But if this be the true rendering of the text, we behold the woman (contrary to what John saw in vision) have get the upper hand, and the poor dragon, in his turn, is obliged to take to the wilderness. Thus we see what shifts and evasions preachers of the gospel make, to impose upon the credulous and ignorant, to procure the honors and emoluments of this world, which must soon be wrapt in flames. Milton has given a beautiful description of those preachers who prefer the trash of this world, and the praise of mortals, to the practice of virtue and the approbation of their God, in the following beautiful distich:

Save us, O Lord, from the devouring paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.

* *Mr. Pool's Annotations, and Mr. Credon's Concordance—Writers much approved by the literary world, however they may differ from our modern commentators.*

Extract from a pamphlet just published, entitled Reflections on the cession of Louisiana to the United States.

"We now shall have it in our power to propose to the Indian nations now settled within the United States an exchange of lands beyond the Mississippi, for those which they now hold*; by this means we shall be able to dispose of all the lands on this side of the Mississippi to those who will cultivate them, who are already civilized, who speak the same language with us, and who will be ready and willing to harmonise and become one people with us, if they be not so already.—The lands which we may acquire in this manner will probably be amply sufficient to pay for ten times the purchase of Louisiana, and this remote treasury, so dangerous to be touched whilst it remains at a distance, may be brought with safety to our doors, and used as occasion shall require, without fear of the consequences.

Such an exchange, if it can be effect- little doubt, will strengthen and cement our union beyond any other event of which I am able to form an idea. Our whole country, except the ports on the Atlantic, and at the mouth of the Mississippi, will consist of an extensive and numerous agricultural people, detached from all the other civilized nations of the globe, forming one general and powerful confederacy of republican states, nursed in the lap of liberty, spruug from one common stock, cherishing the same fraternal sentiments towards each other, and the same devotion to their common country, liberty and happiness. The demon of discord is the only enemy from whose effects or malignity the United States could have just cause of apprehension; and he might be chained for centuries, beyond the Mississippi, if the policy which is here recommended be adopted.

Of the same nature, though of less practicable aspect, is another. Eutopean idea, which I presume to suggest to the genuine friends of freedom, yet, I confess, without any sanguine hope, that it will receive countenance. The southern parts of Louisiana bordering upon the gulgh of Mexico lie under a climate more favorable for the African constitution than any part of the United States.—Thither, if under the auspices of a Divine Providence, the great work of the abolition of slavery should be accomplished in Virginia, or other southern states, we may colonise those unhappy people, whom our ancesters have brought in chains from their native country, and we continue to hold in bondage. Would to God, that I could flatter myself that this was not a mere visionary project!—Thither, at least, it may be adviseable to entice those to remove who have already, or may hereafter obtain their freedom, through the benevolence of their masters, and a relaxation of the rigid laws, which have heretofore existed to prevent emancipation. Thither, also, delinquents, whose lives may be forfeited to the considerations of self-preservation, may be banished for attempts to regain their native freedom. The distance of that part of Louisiana from the United States might recommend it as a place of exile, also for other criminals.—There they might form settlements, and perhaps repent, and become useful members of society among each other: but I am not more sanguine upon this subject, than the former. Time and experiment may enable us to judge better.

It formed no part of my plan in this essay to consider what temporary arrangements it might be necessary to adopt on this truly important occasion: many will no doubt be necessary.—But if what I have offered against the settlement of Louisiana be worthy of attention, I would beg leave to hint, that a measure intimately connected with those already mentioned, would be to invite those who are now settled in Louisiana, to remove into the United States, by proposing to them an advantageous exchange of lands. Thus shall we make them a full recompence for whatever they might abandon on the other side of the Mississippi, and gain an accession of population in the United States, by proposing to them an advantageous exchange of lands; and at the same time relieve ouselves from any expense necessary for the preservation of civil government among them. This, if it can be effected, will be a happy counterpart of the proposed exchange with the Indian tribes.

The island of New Orleans will no doubt claim the immediate attention of congress. If we can obtain from Spain a cession of that part of West Florida which lies to the west of the Mobile, or even of the Pearle river, or of the river Amitie, it might be worthy of an amendment of the constitution to incorporate that territory, together with the territory of New Orlean, with the present United States government upon the Mississippi; and admit the whole into the union as a new state, as soon as the population of it may entitle it to such admission. Such an arrangement would probably immediately conciliate the affections of the people of the ceded territory, and prove an additional motive to those beyond the Mississippi to remove to this side, where they might at once experience all the benefits of civil government, and the participation of the freest and happiest constitution upon the face of the globe.

Homer tells us that Ulysses on his return from Troy, paid a visit to Eolus, great favor to that illustrious chief presented him with a bag, in which all the adverse winds and storms, which might retard or endanger his passage to his native kingdom, were tied up: his companions, fancying that this bag contained some precious treasure, took the first opportunity, whilst the Ithacan sage was asleep, to open it;—upon which, the winds and storms instantly making their escape, the ship with all his indiscreet companions was immediately swallowed up in the ocean.

May no imprudent use of our late successful negociation with France induce the application of this fable to the people of the United States.

Singular Accident.

On Saturday last (says a late London paper) a most remarkable circumstance happened in Wyth street opposite the gate of the New Inn. About ten o'clock in the morning a woman very decently dressed came up to a man who was coming that way and attempting to lay hold of him, fell back and immediately expired.

On being searched there was nothing which could lead to a knowledge of her name, or who she was; for though some pawn broker's duplicates were found in her pocket, the articles appeared to have been pledged under some other names as the pawn broker declared he was unacquainted with the person of the woman. She was conveyed to the work house, where the Coroner's jury sat on Sunday last and found a verdict of *died by the visitation of God.*

The most extraordinary part of the anecdote is, that the man who was so accosted by the deceased, and who appears to have been a potter in the Brownlow-street Lying in Hospital, as soon as he came home, said he had received a shock from which he should never recover, and died in the course of the day.

DARING ROBERY.

We are informed that the State Treasury of New-Jersey was forcibly entered on the night of Thursday last by four villians disguised in large fur coats.—They seized upon Mr. Salter the treasurer, forcing him to conduct them to the money in his charge. After possesing themselves of about 12,000 dollars in notes and specie, they tied Mr. Salter hands and feet, and left him gagged in his apartmen. It was some time before Mr. Salter was relieved from this situation. A reward of 500 dollars has been offered for the apprehension of the perpetrators of this daring villainy.

Phil. Gaz.