

sections of the United States, and to interweave closely all the mutual interests and affections that are calculated to consolidate and perpetuate the vital principle of the Union."

With these great objects in view, what was there to tempt the Legislature of Virginia to indicate any one particular spot in the District of Columbia for the commencement of the work, in preference to another? Was it in the spirit of so vast and beneficent a project to descend to any thing so minute as a designation of the precise spot at which the canal should commence? Was it not, on the contrary, entirely within the spirit of the project, and all sufficient for its purposes, that the Legislature should indicate, in general terms, the two great termini of the work, as, for instance, that the canal should connect and chain together the navigable waters of the Ohio with the tide waters of the Potomac, within the District of Columbia? It was wholly immaterial to this great purpose, whether the canal should begin at the head of tide water in the District, or one, two, three, four, five, or six miles below it. The great objects of the law would be equally accomplished, whether the canal should strike the tide water at its head or in the middle of the District, or any where else within its limits.

Again. Was the Legislature of Virginia in a condition to designate, to advantage, the precise point in the District at which the canal should set out?—Had they the information necessary to this selection? A general geographical knowledge of the country was not sufficient for the purpose. The best point of beginning depended on a comparison of the difficulties which were to be overcome above. This required topographical surveys to be made by skilful engineers, a minute knowledge of details, a comparison of routes, and of their respective advantages and disadvantages, the power of experimenting on the soil, and rock to be excavated and removed, and the power of changing the route whenever experience should dictate such a change. The Legislature of Virginia well knew, what was known to the public at large, that from the natural obstacles to be encountered, the work would be attended with difficulties. It was highly problematical, at that time, whether a practicable route for a canal through the whole distance, could be found at all. The law of Virginia, and the laws of the other States confirming it, contain the evinces of this doubt. At best, it was well known, that, in choosing a route, the measure