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National Intelligencer.

AT the last sesison of Congress, the President of the United States communicated a message embracing a statement of "Discoveries made in exploring the Missouri, Red river, and Washita; by captains Lewis, and Clarke, Doctor Sibley and Mr Dunbar, with a statistical account of the countries adjacent."

Owing to the mass of interesting matter, which about that time pressed for insertion in our gazettes, the interesting contents of this message did not receive the detailed notice, which otherwise would have been given them. As time has in no ways diminished their value, we now purpose to occupy a few of our columns with them. It is especially desirable that full and correct information of this Western country should be widely diffused among our citizens at a period, when steady and systematic efforts are making to deceive them.

OBSERVATIONS

Made in a voyage commencing at St. Catharine's landing, on the east bank of the Mississippi, proceeding downwards to the mouth of Red river, and from thence ascending that river, the Black river, and the Washita river, as high as the hot springs in the proximity of the last mentioned river, extracted from the journals of William Dunbar, esq. and doctor Hunter.

Mr. Dunbar, doctor Hunter, and the party employed by the United States to make a survey of, and explore the country traversed by the Washita river, left St. Catharine's landing, on the Mississippi, in latitude 31 deg. 26 min. 30 sec. N. and longitude 6 h. 5 min. 56 sec. W. from the meridian of Greenwich, on Tuesday the 16th of October, 1804. A little distance below St. Catharine's creek, and five leagues from Natches, they passed the White Cliffs, composed chiefly of sand, surmounted by pine, and from one hundred to two hundred feet high. When the waters of the Mississippi are low, the base of the cliff is uncovered, which consists of different coloured clays, and some beds of ochre, over which there lies, in some places, a thin lamina of iron ore. Small springs possessing a petrifying quality flow over the clay and ochre, and numerous logs and pieces of timber, converted into stone, are strewed about the beach. Fine pure argil of various colours, chiefly white and red, is found here.

On the 17th they arrived at the mouth of Red river, the confluence of which with the Mississippi, agreeably to the observations of Mr. de Ferrer, lies in latitude 31 deg. 1 min. 15 sec. N. and longitude 6h. 7 min. 16 sec. west of Greenwich. Red river is here about five hundred yards wide, and without any sensible current. The banks of the river are clothed with willow; the land low and subject to inundation, to the height of thirty feet or more above the level of the water at this time. The mouth of the Red river is accounted to be seventy five leagues from New Orleans, and three miles higher up than the Chafalaya, or Opelousa river, which was probably a continuation of the Red river, when its waters did not unite with those of the Mississippi but during the inundation.

On the 18th the survey of the Red river was commenced, and on the evening of the 19th the party arrived at the mouth of the Black river, in latitude 31 deg. 15 min. 48 sec. N. and about 26 miles from the Mississippi. The Red river derives its name from the rich fat earth, or marle, of that colour, borne down by the floods; the last of which appeared to have deposited on the high bank a stratum of upwards of half an inch in thickness. The vegetation on its banks is surprisingly luxuriant; no doubt owing to the deposition of marle during its annual floods. The willows grow to a good size; but other forest trees are much smaller than those seen on the banks of the Mississippi. As you advance up the river, it gradually narrows; in latitude 31 deg. 08 min. N. it is about two hundred yards wide, which width is continued to the mouth of Black river, where each of them appears one hundred and fifty yards across. The banks of the river are covered with pea vine and several sorts of grass, bearing seed, which geese and ducks eat very greedily; and there are generally seen willows growing on one side, and on the other a small growth of black oak, packawn, hickory, elm, &c. The current in the Red river is so moderate as scarcely to afford an impediment to its assent.

On sounding the Black river a little above its mouth, there was found twenty feet of water, with a bottom of black sand. The water of Black river is rather clearer than that of the Ohio, and of a warm temperature, which it may receive from the water flowing into it from the valley of the Mississippi, particularly by the Catahoola. At noon on the 23d, by a good meridian observation, they ascertained their latitude to be 30 deg. 36 min. 29 sec. N. and were then a little below the mouths of the Catahoola, Washita and Bayau Tenza, the united waters of which form the Black river. The current is very gentle the whole length of the Black river, which in many places does not exceed eighty yards in width. The banks on the lower part of the river present a great luxuriance of vegetation and rank grass, with red and black oak, ash, paccawn, hickory, and some elms*. The soil is black marle, mixed with a moderate proportion of sand, resembling much the soil on the Mississippi banks; yet the forest trees are not lofty, like those on the margin of the great river, but resembling the growth on the Red river. In latitude 31 deg. 22 min. 46 sec. N. they observed that canes grew on several parts of the right bank, a proof that the land is not deeply overflowed; perhaps from one to three feet: the banks have the appearance of stability; very little willow, or other productions of a newly formed soil being seen on either side. On advancing up the river, the timber becomes larger, in some places rising to the height of forty feet; yet the land is liable to be inundated, not from the waters of this small river, but from the intrusion of its more powerful neighbor the Mississippi. The lands decline rapidly, as in all alluvial countries, from the margin to the Cypress swamps, where more or less water stagnates all the year round. On the 21st they passed a small but elevated island, said to be the only one in this river for more than one hundred leagues ascending. On the left bank, near this island, a small settlement of a couple of acres has been begun by a man and his wife. The banks are not less than forty feet above the present level of the water in the river, and are but rarely overflowed: on both sides they are clothed with rich cane brake, pierced by creeks fit to carry boats during the inundation.

They saw many cormorants, and the hooping crane; geese and ducks are not yet abundant, but are said to arrive in myriads, with the rains and winter's cold. They shot a fowl of the duck kind, whose foot was partially divided, and the body covered with a bluish, or lead coloured plumage. On the morning of the twenty-second, they observed green matter floating on the river, supposed to come from the Catahoola and other lakes and bayaus of stagnant water, which, when raised a little by rain, flow into the Black river; and also many patches of an aquatic plant, resembling small islands, some floating on the surface of the river, and others adhering to, or resting on the shore and logs. On examining this plant, it was found a hollow, jointed stem, with roots of the same form, extremely light, with very narrow willow shaped leaves projecting from the joint, embracing however, the whole of the tube, and extending to the next interior joint or knot. The extremity of each branch is terminated by a spike of very slender, narrow seminal leaves from one to two inches in length, and one tenth, or less, in breadth, producing its seed on the underside of the leaf, in a double row almost in contact: the grains alternately placed in perfect regularity: not being able to find the flower, its class and order could not be determined, although it is not probably new. Towards the upper part of the Black river, the shore abounded with muscles and periwinkles. The muscles were of the kind called pearl muscles. The men dressed a quantity of them, considering them as an agreeable food; but Mr. D. found them tough enough and unpalatable.

On arriving at the mouth of the Catahoola, they landed to procure information from a Frenchman settled there. Having a grant from the Spanish government, he has made a small settlement, and keeps a ferry-boat for carrying over men and horses travelling to and from Natchez, and the settlements on Red river and on the Washita river. The country here is all alluvial. In process of time, the rivers shutting up ancient passages and elevating the banks over which their waters pass, no longer communicate with the same facility as formerly; the consequence is, that many larger tracts formerly subject to inundation, are now entirely exempt from that inconvenience. Such is the situation of a most valuable tract upon which this Frenchman is settled. His house stands on an Indian mount, with several others in view. There is also a species of rampart surrounding this place, and one very elevated mount, a view and description of which is postponed till the return; their present siteation not allowing of the requisite delay. The soil is equal to the best Mississippi bottoms *.

They obtained from the French settler the following list of distances between the mouth of Red river and the post on the Washita, called fort Miro.

From the mouth of Red river to the mouth of Black river,	10 leagues
To the mouth of Catahoola, Washita, and Tenza,	22
To the river Ha-ha, on the right,	1
To the Prairie de Villemont, on the same side,	5
To the bayau Louis, on the same side, rapids here,	1
To bayau Boeufs, on the same side,	4
To the Prairie Noyu, (drowned savanna),	3
To Pine Point, on the left,	4 1-2
To bayau Calumet,	3 1-2
To the coal mine, on the right, and Gypsum on the opposite shore,	3
To the first settlement,	12
To Fort Miro,	22
Leagues,	91

From this place they proceeded to the mouth of Washita, in lat. *35 d. 37 m. 7 s.* N. and encamped on the evening of the 23d.

This river derives it appellation from the name of an Indian tribe formerly resident on its banks; the remnant of which, it is said, went into the great plains to the westward, and either compose a small tribe themselves, or are incorporated into another nation. The Black river loses its name at the junction of the Washita, Catahoola, and Tenza, although our maps represent it as taking place of the Washita. The Tenza and Catahoola are also named from Indian tribes now extinct. The latter is a creek twelve leagues long, eight leagues in length and about two leagues in breadth. It lies west from the mouth of the Catahoola, and communicates with the Red river during the great annual inundation. At the west or northwest angle of the lake, a creek called Little river, enters, which preserves a channel with running water at all seasons, meandering along the bed of the lake; but in all other parts its superfices, during the dry season from July to November, and often later, is completely drained, and becomes covered with the most luxurious herbage; the bed of the lake then becomes the residence of immense herds of deer, of turkeys, geese, cranes, &c. which feed on the grass and grain. Bayau Tenza serves only to drain off a part of the waters of the inundation from the low lands of the Mississippi, which here communicate with the Black river during the season of high water.

Between the mouth of the Washita, and Villemont's prairie on the right, the current of the river is gentle, and the banks favorable for towing. The lands on both sides have the appearance of being above the inundation; the timber generally such as high lands produce, being chiefly red, white and black oaks, interspersed with a variety of other trees. The magnolia grandiflora, that infallible sign of the land not being subject to inundation, is not, however, among them. Along the banks a stratum of solid clay, or marle, is observable, apparently of an ancient deposition. It lies in oblique positions, making an angle of nearly thirty degrees with the horizon, and generally inclined with the descent of the river, although in a few cases the position was contrary. Timber is seen projecting from under the solid bank, which seems indurated, and unquestionably very ancient, presenting a very different appearance from recently formed soil. The river is about 80 yards wide. A league above the mouth of the Washita, the bayau Ha-ha comes in unexpectedly from the right, and is one of the many passages through which the waters of the great inundation penetrate and pervade all the low countries, annihilating, for a time, the currents of the lesser rivers in the neighborhood of the Mississippi. The vegetation is remarkably vigorous along the alluvial banks, which are covered with a thick shrubbery, and innumerable plants in full blossom at this late season.

Villemont's prairie is ſo named in conſequence of its being included within a grant under the French government to a gentleman of that name.—Many other parts of the Waſhita are named after their early proprietors. The French people projected and began extenſive ſettlements on this river, but the general maſſacre, planned and in part executed by the Indians againſt them, and the conſequent deſtruction of the Natchez tribe by the French, broke up all theſe undertakings, and they were not recommenced under that government. Thoſe prairies are plains or ſavannas, without timber; generally very fertile, and produce an exuberance of ſtrong, thick and coarſe herbage. When a piece of ground has once got into this ſtate in an Indian country, it can have no opportunity of reproducing timber, it being an invariable practice to ſet fire to the dry graſs in the fall or winter, to obtain the advantage of attracting game when the young tender graſs begins to ſpring; this deſtroys the young timber, and the prairie annually gains upon the woodland. It is probable that the immenſe plains known to exiſt in America, may owe their origin to this cuſtom. The plains of the Waſhita lie chiefly on the eaſt ſide, and being generally formed like the Miſſiſſippi land ſloping from the bank of the river to the great river, they are more or leſs ſubject to inundation in the rear; and in certain great floods the water has advanced ſo far as to be ready to pour over the margin into the Waſhita. This has now become a very rare thing, and it may be eſtimated that from a quarter of a mile to a mile in depth, will remain free from inundation during high floods. This is pretty much the caſe with thoſe lands nearly as high as the poſt of the Waſhita, with the exception of certain ridges of primitive high land; the reſt being evidently alluvial, although not now ſubject to be inundated by the Waſhita river in conſequence of the great depth which the bed of the river has acquired by abraſion. On approaching towards the Bayau Louis, which empties its waters into the Waſhita on the right, a little below the rapids, there is a great deal of high land on both ſides, which produces pine and other timber, not the growth of inundated lands. At the foot of the rapids the navigation of the river is impeded by beds of gravel formed in it. The firſt rapids lie in latitude 31 deg. 48 min. 57. 5 ſec. N. a little above which there is a high ridge of primitive earth, ſtudded with abundance of fragments of rocks or ſtone, which appears to have been thrown up to the ſurface in a very irregular manner. The ſtone is of a friable nature, ſome of it having the appearance of indurated clay—the outſide is blackiſh from expoſure to the air, within it is a greyiſh white—it is ſaid that in the hill the ſtrata are regular, and that good grindſtones may be here obtained. The laſt of the rapids, which is formed by a ledge of rocks croſſing the entire bed of the river, was paſſed in the evening of the 27th; above it the water became again like a mill pond and about one hundred yards wide. The whole of theſe firſt ſhoals or rapids embraced an extent of a mile and a half; the obſtruction was not continued, but felt at ſhort intervals in this diſtance. On the right, about 4 leagues from the rapids, they paſſed the "Bayau aux Boeufs," a little above a rocky hill; high lands and ſavanna are ſeen on the right. On ſounding the river they found three fathoms water on a bottom of mud and ſand. The banks of the river, above the Bayau, ſeem to retain very little alluvial ſoil; the highland earth, which is a ſandy loam of a light grey colour, with ſtreaks of red ſand and clay, is ſeen on the left bank; the ſoil not rich, bearing pines, interſperſed with red oak, hickory and dogwood. The river is from 60 to 100 yards wide here, but decreaſes as you advance. The next rapid is made by a ledge of rocks traverſing the river, and narrowing the water channel to about 30 yards. The width between the high banks cannot be leſs than 100 yards, and the banks from 30 to 40 feet high. In latitude 32 deg. 10 min. 13 ſec. rapids and ſhoals again occurred, and the channel was very narrow; the ſand bars at every point extended ſo far into the bend as to leave little more than the breadth of the boat of water ſufficiently deep for her paſſage, although it ſpreads over a width of ſeventy or eighty yards upon the ſhoal.

In the afternoon of the 31ſt they paſſed a little plantation or ſettlement on the right, and at night arrived at three others adjoining each other. Theſe ſettlements are on a plain or prairie, the ſoil of which we may be aſſured is alluvial from the regular ſlope which the land has from the river. The bed of the river is now ſufficiently deep to free them from the inconvenience of its inundation; yet in the rear the waters of the Miſſiſſippi approach, and ſometimes leave dry but a narrow ſtrip along the bank of the river. It is however now more common, that the extent of the fields cultivated [from 1-4 to 1-2 mile] remains dry during the ſeaſon of inundation; the ſoil here is very good, but not equal to the Miſſiſſippi bottoms; it may be eſteemed ſecond rate. At a ſmall diſtance to the eaſt are extenſive cypreſs ſwamps, over which the waters of the inundation always ſtand to the depth of from 15 to 25 feet. On the weſt ſide, after paſſing over the valley of the river whoſe breadth varies from a quarter of a mile to two miles, or more, the land aſſumes a conſiderable elevation, from 100 to 300 feet, & extends all along to the ſettlements of the Red river. Theſe high lands are reported to be poor, and badly watered, being chiefly what is termed pine barren. There is here a ferry and road of communication between the poſt of the Waſhita and the Natches, and a fork of this road paſſes on to the ſettlement called the Rapids, on Red river, diſtant from this place, by computation, 150 miles.

On this part of the river lies a considerable tract of land, granted by the Spanish government to the Marquis of Maison Rouge, a French emigrant, who bequeathed it with all his property to M. Bouligny, son of the late colonel of the Louisiana regiment, and by him sold to Daniel Clarke. It is said to extend from the post of Washita with a breadth of 2 leagues, including the river down to the Bayau Calumet; the computed distance of which along the river is called 30 leagues, but supposed not more than 12 in a direct line.

On the 6th of November, in the afternoon, the party arrived at the post of the Washita, in lat. 32 deg. 29 min. 37 sec. 25 N. where they were politely received by lieut. Bowmar, who immediately offered the hospitality of his dwelling with all the services in his power.

From the ferry to this place the navigation of the river is, at this season, interrupted by many shoals and rapids. The general width is from 80 to 100 yards. The water is extremely agreeable to drink, and much clearer than that of the Ohio. In this respect it is very unlike its two neighbors, the Arkansa and Red rivers, whose waters are loaded with earthy matters of a reddish brown color, giving to them a chocolate like appearance; and when those waters are low, are not potable, being brackish from the great number of salt springs which flow into them, and probably from the beds of rock salt over which they may pass. The banks of the river presented very little appearance of alluvial land, but furnished an infinitude of beautiful landscapes, heightened by the vivid coloring they derive from the autumnal changes of the leaf. Mr. Dunbar observes, that the change of color in the leaves of vegetables, which is probably occasioned by the oxygen of the atmosphere acting on the vegetable matter, deprived of the protecting power of the vital principle, may serve as an excellent guide to the naturalist, who directs his attention to the discovery of new objects for the use of the dyer. For he has always remarked that the leaves of those trees whose bark or wood are known to produce a dye, are changed in autumn to the same color which is extracted in the dyer's vat from the woods; more especially by the use of mordants, as allum, &c. which yields oxygen: thus the foliage of the hickory and oak, which produces the quercitron bark, is changed before its fall into a beautiful yellow; other oaks assume a fawn color, a liver color, or a blood color, and are known to yield dyes of the same complexion.

In lat. 32 deg. 18 min. N. Dr. Hunter discovered along the river side a substance nearly resembling mineral coal: its appearance was that of the carbonated wood described by Kirwan. It does not easily burn; but on being applied to the flame of a candle, it sensibly increased it, and yielded a faint smell, resembling in a slight degree that of the gum lac of common sealing wax.

Soft friable stone is common, & great quantities of gravel and sand upon the beaches in this part of the river. A reddish clay appears in the strata, most indurated and blackened by exposure to the light and air.

The position called fort Miro bein the property of a private person, wh was formerly civil commandant here the lieut. has taken post about 400 yds lower; has built himself some log houses, and inclosed them with a sligh stockade. Upon viewing the countr east of the river, it is evidently alluvi —the surface has a gentle slope fro the river to the rear of the plantation The land is of excellent quality, bein

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* Among the plants growing on the margin of the river is the *cheria root*, used in medicine, and the *cantac*, occasionally used by the hunters for food: the last has a bulbous root, ten times the size of a man's fist. In preparing it, they first wash it clean from earth, pound it well, and add water to the mass and stir it up; after a moment's settlement the water and fecula is poured off; this operation is repeated until it yields no more fecula, the fibrous part only being left, which is thrown away as useless; the water is then poured from the sediment, which is dried in the sun and will keep a long time. It is reduced into powder and mixed with Indian meal or flour, and makes wholesome and agreeable food. The labor is performed by the women whilst they are keeping the camp, and their husbands are in the woods hunting.

* There is an embankment running from the Catahoola to Blach river (inclosing about two hundred acres of rich land), at present about ten feet high, and ten feet broad. This surrounds four large mouds of earth at the distance of a bow shot from each other; each of which may be twenty feet high, one hundred feet broad, and three hundred feet long at the top, besides a stupendous turret situate on the back part of the whole, or farthest from the water, whose base covers about an acre of ground, rising by two steps or stories tapering in the ascent, the whole surmounted by a great cone with its top cut off. This tower of earth on admeasurement was found to be eighty feet perpendicular.