# CHAPTER I.

Early appearance of the Upper-Country—Uncultivated and unabused by the Indians—The Upper-Country defined—The origin of its peculiar features and soil—The richness and magnificence of its scenery—Primitive beauties of the territory of Fairfield—Opinion of Lord Cornwallis—Wild Buffaloes, &c.

At this day the upper-country of South Carolina presents a very different aspect from that of the same territory in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was then new and beautiful, and as remarkable for the luxuriant richness of its landscape as it is still for the striking features of its rolling hills and towering mountains; but under the iron tread of what is called a progressive civilization, its ancient glories of forest, and flora, and fertile soil have been well nigh wasted and ruined.

When in the possession of the Indian hunter, it is true that its natural, productive energies were left uncultivated and undirected, except so far as satisfied the simple wants of his savage nature. He built no palaces, reared no cities, set in motion no time-saving machinery, and whitened no sea with the floating canvas of a wide-spread commerce; but then, while he used, to the full extent of his capabilities, the talent confided to his care, he never abused it; that sin cannot be laid at the door of the poor Indian.

He never wantonly took the life even of the least useful of the animals of his forest. His landed patrimony was given him from the hands of God a magnificent country, and a magnificent country still, he yielded it up to the more vigorous race which supplanted him.

In mapping out, for our purpose, that portion of the State, which may be styled the upper-country, we shall be guided not so much by its geographical limits, as by its revolutionary and primitive relations. The territory embraced in the modern Districts of Abbeville, Anderson, Edgefield, Greenville, Pickens, Newberry, Laurens, Union, Spartanburg, Fairfield, Chester, Lancaster, York and Richland, *is the classic ground of the American Revolution.* It abounds in associations of the "evil time," richer in romance, and the stern trials of the patriot's heart, than even the boasted fields of the section that would arrogate to itself all that is worth recounting in the past and present history of the country. It is hallowed too by associations connected with events long prior to the Revolution; and these, in their proper place, it shall be our business and pleasure to develope first.

The natural characteristics of this region present just such features of climate, surface, soil, and vegetable growth, as would attract and fix upon its valleys and hills, the energetic race, which, we shall see, by-and-by, were the first to clear away its forests and appropriate its vast agricultural resources. A country, whose landscape was neither wholly rugged with mountains, nor monotonously tame

with unbroken plains, but a scene of mingled elevated ranges, undulating hills, and flowery vales, formed a glorious analogue of the true Scotch-Irishman's heart and nature.

Rising abruptly from the sandy barrier that extends some sixty or a hundred miles into the interior, first in gentle undulations, then in higher, wave-like hills, bristling here and there with huge piles of granite, and last, in towering mountain heaps, whose blue tops stand like giant embattlements against the northern skies, it imparts, at a glance, the lesson taught by the geologist, that at a distant period in the past, some revolutionary convulsion of nature upturned the country, breaking its surface into a thousand hills and higher elevations, and driving the incumbent waters far to the south to occupy their present bed.

These subterranean forces, however, and the vast denudations which followed, were limited in their sway; the upheaved surface, like some agitated molten matter suddenly congealed, assumed a permanent form, and soon the tree and plant, after their kinds, whose indestructible germs lay locked up in its soil from the beginning, were developed into the shady woods and grassy plains, which rendered it a fit habitation for men and animals. When and how these, first found their way here, we shall leave to the speculative philosophers to determine, only reserving to ourself the right of deciding upon the truth or absurdity of their opinions.

It is sufficient to remark, that when our fathers

first penetrated this region, it was mostly covered with a wild, luxuriant vegetation, and possessed by a race of people totally different from themselves, in complexion, manners, customs, and religion. They were scarcely less struck, however, with its fertility and magnificent scenery, than with the remarkable race which inhabited it.

Ancient hunters and journalists spoke of these with rapturous enthusiasm. An old trader,* describing his impressions of the Blue Ridge in Carolina, says: "From the historical descriptions of the Alps, and a personal view of the Cherokee mountains, I conclude the Alps are much inferior to several of those mountains, both in height and rockiness; the last are also of a prodigeous extent, and frequently impassable by an enemy."

One of the earlier and most intelligent Governors of Carolina,† wrote a description of this section of the province, in connection with a larger territory, which we found still in manuscript in the office of Secretary of State: "The country lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River, is about a thousand miles in depth from east to west; it is intersected by a ridge of mountains running from north to south, called in Virginia the Blue Mountains or Alleghany, and in this province the Cherokee or Appalanthian Mountains. The rivers that flow from the east side of them have an easterly course, verging towards the south, and after running

* James Adair. † James Glen.

four hundred miles, fall into the sea, as those from the west side, after a much larger course westward, fall into the Mississippi. Some of the most sensible and credible of the Cherokee Indians, who have often traversed every part of the country, both in going to war and hunting, describe it to me as the most delightful, as well as the most fertile in the world; abounding in large, extensive plains and savannahs, swarming with deer and buffalo. I should be afraid to indulge myself with the liberty of copying, lest I should be thought to be drawing a picture or painting a landscape.

Numbers of rivulets water it; but it is the bed principally, of three great rivers. I have not rested satisfied with a verbal description of the country from the Indians, but have often made them trace the lines on the floor with chalk, and also on paper, and it is surprising how near they approach to our best maps.

It would not be difficult to demonstrate the benefits that must accrue to Great Britain by peopling and settling this country of which I am speaking; but all I plead for is, that we may, with the good will of the Indians, take, and keep, possession of it by means of forts."*

This last remark will be of great importance in the decision of an interesting question, discussed in a future chapter.

The beauty and fertility of this region, however,

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* 5th Vol. of Indian Books, in Sec. of St. Off., Columbia.

were not confined to the mountains; the valleys and ridges that lay along the rivers and creeks of the eastern slope, to the utmost limits of the Cherokee country on the south, abounded in forests, fertile lands, prairies, and every species of American game. This was the favorite hunting-ground of the lower Cherokees, whose principal settlements were situated on the head waters of the Savannah.

Pearson, in his manuscript history of Fairfield, described the region of country embraced in the present Districts of Richland, Fairfield, Chester, and York, as peculiarly noted in primitive times, for the great abundance of its game. Farther back than any aboriginal history runneth—perhaps for centuries—it had been an uninhabited waste. When the English came, they found this beautiful peninsular a dividing, and common hunting-ground between the Cherokees and Catawbas. The tradition related by the same writer, to account for this singular fact, is exceedingly interesting. It will be given in its proper place.

In the cane brakes of the Saluda,* Long-cane, Ennoree, Broad River, Buffalo of York, and numerous other streams, and on the extensive prairie ridges, the early pioneers and hunters found large herds of buffaloes and elks; while in the higher woodland country, deer abounded in vast numbers. Even here, though the blue tops of the mountains were only here and there dimly seen in the distance,

* Corrupted from Saluta.

the country exhibited many pleasant and romantic scenes.

The face of this region of romance, interspersed with forests, and prairies, and vast brakes of cane—the latter often stretching in unbroken lines of evergreen for hundreds of miles, from the alluvial country on the south, to the interior sources of the streams,* was not surpassed in picturesque beauty and grandeur, by the best portions of Texas of the present day; and its virgin soil was not then inferior to that of the same boasted State.

As late as 1775, the woodlands, carpeted with grass; and the wild pea-vine, growing as high as a horse's back, and wild flowers of every hue, were the constant admiration of the traveler and adventurous pioneer. The forests of those early times were far more imposing than any now remaining in this portion of the ancient Cherokee Nation. The trees were generally larger, and stood so wide apart that a deer or a buffalo could be easily seen at a long distance—there being nothing to obstruct the view but the rolling surface. On the elevated hill-tops the strolling hunter often took his stand, to sweep, at a single view, a large extent of country. The pea-vine and grasses occupied the place of the bushes and young forest growth that render the woods of the present time so gloomy and intricate.

The partizan soldiers of the Revolution, in Upper Carolina, frequently spoke of this striking feature of

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* Adair's Hist. N. Am. Indians.

the country. It sometimes favored their enterprises, but as often proved the cause of premature detection and defeat.

Pearson's description of the primitive territory, now known as Fairfield, is quite a glowing picture; but, no doubt, in the main, truthful to nature. The natural scenery, composed of forests and rivers, rolling hills, undulating plains, and gushing springs, was grand as well as beautiful. It caught the eye of Lord Cornwallis, while encamped with his army at Winsboro', in the winter of 1780.

In that season of ice and snow, he pronounced it a paradise. Conversing, on one occasion, with Walter Roberson, he observed: "I can conceive of no finer region, taking into consideration its fertile soil, mild climate, its long-drawn beautiful valleys, and glorious highlands." The force of this remark will be somewhat heightened, when it is recollected that Cornwallis was, at that time, in no very favorable situation for being attracted by the beauties of nature. The indomitable Scotch-Irish Presbyterian hornets of Mecklenburg, and Upper Carolina, had allowed him little opportunity for the exercise of the poetic inspiration.

The same chronicler adds: "His lordship was right. Whoever remembers woodland Fairfield, has in his mind's eye, a vision of nature's best finish and kindest prodigality."*

The wild pea grew chiefly on the highlands, while

* Manuscript papers.

the cane flourished best in the valleys, and filled the lower grounds of all the streams.* Upper Carolina was then not inferior to any portion of the Great West, as a grazing country. On certain rich soils, however, the cane was frequently found by the earlier settlers, growing luxuriantly on the tops of the highest hills.

That fertile section of the Old Ninety-six District, which was afterwards known as the Flat-woods of Abbeville, presented to the view of the hunters, and pioneer settlers, the magnificent prospect of the hills and valleys of an extended tract of prairie country, waving under a rich growth of cane, from five to thirty feet in height. Patrick and William Calhoun who, with several others, built the first Scotch-Irish cabins ever erected in this section of the present district, often affirmed, that when they settled it, it was one vast brake of canes—not a tree or a bush appeared to break the view of the astonished beholder.†

This was, no doubt, the primitive condition of most, if not all, the lands of the ancient Long-canes, of Duncan's Creek, in the present territory of Laurens, and numerous other streams of the upper-country; not a few of them have treasured up in their names, lasting memorials of these facts in their primitive history. Besides its Long-cane, Abbeville has a Reedy Branch; Laurens its Reedy

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* Both the pea-vine and maiden cane are still found in the up-country, but only in situations where they are shut in from hogs and cattle.

† Conversation of Col. John A. Calhoun and others.

Fork, and Reedy River; and Union, Spartanburg, Pickens, Lancaster, and Richland, their Cane Creeks.

When the first house was erected on the present site of Abbeville Village, it was designed to place it on the highest point of the hill; but afterwards, when the tall cane which covered the whole spot was cut away, an error of more than fifty yards was discovered. This house was built by Captain Andrew Hamilton, subsequent to the Revolution, and is still known as the Old Red House. One of the little shed-rooms of the same building, the same in which is still kept the village post-office, has become hallowed by a far more interesting association than that which connects it with the primitive scenery of the spot. It is the room which Mr. Calhoun used as his law-office, soon after commencing the practice of law in his native district. On the side-walk, immediately in front of this room, he was often seen standing, bareheaded, holding, in troublous times, with groups of his fellow-citizens, those inimitable conversations, for which he is still so fondly and gratefully remembered by hundreds, who were so fortunate as to be his auditors on such occasions. The Old Red House should be preserved as long as corroding time will suffer its perishable timbers to lie one upon another.*

The cane growth of the country soon became the standard by which the early settlers estimated the value of lands. If it grew no higher than five feet,

*It is built of logs.

or the height of a man's head, the soil was deemed ordinary; but a growth of twenty or thirty feet indicated the highest degree of fertility.* Hence, all the early settlements of the upper-country were planted on, or near, the rich hill-sides of the rivers and creeks. There was little danger to be apprehended then, from any billious diseases in such situations; even the old-fashion chill and fever were almost unknown, and the cabins, and premises of the pioneers, were far too recent to generate the miasm of the loathsome typhus.

Many wonderful accounts have been given of the prairies of the Great West. At the period when the hunters and cow-drivers first penetrated the upper-country, there were considerable portions of it, as before intimated, as destitute of trees, and as luxuriant in grass and flowers, as any prairie of modern times. The ordinary observer may discover that much of the forest of the present day is of comparatively recent growth; the greater number of the trees have sprung up in the memory of living men; few are so old as a hundred and sixty years, and only here and there, at immense intervals, towers a patriarchal pine or oak, whose germination dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century.†

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* Conversation of Joseph Duncan, of Duncan's Creek, one of the oldest residents of Laurens District.

† The concentric rings, easily counted in the trunk of a newly cut tree, indicate its age with mathematical precision. A pine was recently felled in the village of Greenwood, that began its growth in 1588.

It is well known that in the primitive history of the country, there were numerous prairies in the corresponding parts of Virginia and North Carolina. A judicious writer observes: "Emigration was encouraged and directed very much in the earliest periods, by the vast prairies, with pea-vine grass and cane brakes, which stretched across the States of Virginia and North Carolina. There are large forests now, in those two States, where, a hundred years ago, not a tree, and scarce a shrub, could he seen."*

It would be an interesting, as well as curious, subject of investigation, to inquire into the physical causes that have wrought so effectually in rearing noble forests of oak and pine on lands that were once flowered prairies. A reasonable solution of the question, would, no doubt, set at rest another, no less important: Why it is that lands once encumbered with heavy forests, have, on being cultivated a number of years, but not exhausted, and turned out, become as perfect prairies as any seen in Alabama or Texas. This is the present state of much of the land around old Ninety-six.

What remains of the oak forests of the Flatwoods, resembles, very much, the open woods of primitive times, and of many portions of the West, at the present day; and it is a fact not often observed in any Atlantic State, that so strongly is the soil impregnated with its own lime, that in a little while after the leaves have fallen from the trees in autumn,

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* Foot's Sketches of North Carolina.

scarcely a shred of them can be seen upon the ground.*

These lands, it appears, were originally quite boggy, particularly in winter, and so full of ponds of water, inclosed in curious depressions of the surface, that many pioneers and land speculators, not well versed in the nature of these new soils, passed them by as inferior for agricultural purposes. Of one, especially, a wealthy speculator from Charleston, it is related, that having rode over, perhaps, the entire body of these lands, with the privilege of several fine selections, he rejected them all, and found himself better pleased with a section near the present site of Mt. Carmel.

A body of lands of the same formation, with those of the reedy flats of the Long-canes, and lying equally as well, but in their virgin state not quite so attractive to the emigrant and experienced farmer, were discovered extending several miles in a circuit around the future site of Ninety-six.

It does not appear from any records, or even from tradition, that this was, in old times, like the former, a prairie region. Its forest growth was quite similar to that of the country generally, while the luxuriant canes covered its whole surface, from the valleys to the tops of the highest hills. If it was ever, at any remote period, a prairie, it contrasted then no more singularly with the surrounding coun-

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* Neither old leaves, nor ticks, nor stumps are ever seen in the Flat-woods.

try, than the larger portion of it does at this moment; for it is again, as before remarked, a natural prairie; and in spring and summer, scarcely less picturesque than when trod by the stealthy Cherokee, and roving herds of buffalo.

The fact is a curious one, and doubtless not yet accounted for, that since the oak and hickory have been cut from these lands, scarcely a solitary pine, and little of any other vegetable growth than a rich sward of grass, have sprung up to occupy their place. And this has not resulted from the sterility of exhaustion; for it is well known that if timber was convenient to enclose them, or a fence law in existence, the old Cambridge lands would, at once, command the highest market prices of the district.

We found among the records in Columbia, an old letter to Gov. Glen, from which may be learned several interesting particulars in regard to these lands, and many more of the upper-country, at the earliest period of its settlement. The following extract is sufficient for our present purpose: "The neighborhood begs leave humbly to propose to your Excellency, that one of the companies, at least, may be appointed to range these woods back of the settlements on the north side of the river;* for it is only there that the enemy can do us damage, there being no *livers* as yet at Ninety-Six, to receive any. The lands

* The writer refers here, to companies of rangers, just then organized for the protection of the traders and back-settlers, who were exposed to the incursions of the French, or northern Indians from the Ohio.

on and about Ninety-Six, are well known to be rich and good, but they are also known to be very thirsty, excepting what lies near the river Savannah. But those that lie to the north of us are of a kinder soil, generally, and far better watered with beautiful rivers and creeks, as far as the Catawba, and stand a fair chance to be sooner settled." This was written from Tugaloo, in the summer of 1751. We shall have occasion to refer to it in another place.

While upper Carolina thus abounded in attractions for the farmer and stock-raiser, it was no less inviting to the sportsman and hunter. Farther back than history or any tradition runneth, it had been the hunting-ground of the Cherokees.

In the swamps and low-grounds of the water-courses, the forest was often intricate and gloomy. The deep alluvial soil of those places nourished the largest trees and densest brakes. These afforded covert and food for wild animals of many kinds, and as numerous as those that lurk on the Trinity or Yellow-Stone; and with the natural pastures of the up-lands, rendered the country first the blest home of the Indian, and at a later period, the paradise of the Anglo-American hunter.

The buffalo, now to be met with only on the most distant plains of the great West, roamed in large herds through the open woods and prairies, and found both pasture and concealment in the cane-thickets of the rivers and creeks. At the earliest period of emigration into the upper-country, an old pioneer from Virginia often counted a hundred buffaloes

grazing on a single acre of ground, in the present territory of Abbeville and Edgefield.*

When the first settlers of Duncan's Creek arrived from Pennsylvania, and began to erect their cabins on that fertile stream, they found its valleys and hills abounding in buffaloes. Their deep-worn trails, leading to favorite ranges and licks, marked the country in every direction, and long after the struggling settlement had become a flourishing community, and not a buffalo remained in those parts, these paths could still be traced along the creek and its tributaries.†

The old hunters killed great numbers of them, every year, solely for their skins and tongues; deer and wild turkeys were too abundant to make them an object of pursuit for the sake of their flesh. Attacked on all sides in a wooded country, and by hunters armed with the deadly rifle, the buffalo was quickly exterminated, or driven away into the deeper wilds of the west. They were the first, of all the original game of upper Carolina, except the timid elk, to disappear, and hence the little traditionary information now lingering among the people in relation to this remarkable animal.

In the old manuscript records of our collonial his-

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* Henry Foster, father of the late Joseph Fox Foster, who died recently near Greenwood, at an advanced age. He settled first on the Saluda, in Edgefield, and afterwards on the place owned by his son at his death.

†Conversation of Joseph Duncan; asserted also by old Robert Long, one of the earliest settlers on the same creek, in evidence given in the trial of a case, many years ago, at Laurensville.

tory, reference is not unfrequently made to the wild animals of this region. The first mention, of any sort, that we discovered of the buffalo, is in the following note: "It is ordered by the Council for Indian Affairs, August, 1718, that the store-keeper in Charleston deliver Robert Blakeney, one buffalo skin from the public peltries, for his care in bringing down a periago* of skins and furs from Savannah Town."†

Bartram, in the narrative of his passage from this same ancient trading post, in 1773, by old Fort Charlotte to the Cherokee towns at the head of the Savannah, describes a spot, not far from the latter place, where he found large quantities of moss-covered bones, of both men and buffaloes, lying scattered indiscriminately over the ground.

The Cherokee Indians called the buffalo *yanasa* the very great bull, or the Bull of God; and this, says Adair, was the universal name among all the tribes of North America, for this animal—a presumptive proof of their common origin. The women fabricated from its thick, shaggy hair, a kind of cloth of great use among them for its warmth and durability. The gay young warriors often wore locks or rolls of this fur, drawn through their long slitted ears; and on great festive or military occasions, mounted upon their brows, already sufficiently hideous from paint,

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* A periago was a kind of boat, used in the peltry trade; it is written in the Statutes of South Carolina, pettiauger. It was derived from the Spaniards.

† Savannah Town stood just below the present site of Hamburg. We will have much more to say of it.

a pair of buffalo horns, with the appendage of the tail, also, in its proper place.

The skins of the buffalo and the bear, formed the chief coverings for their beds; and like the white hunters, they destroyed great numbers of the former animal simply for their skins and tongues.* In the year 1760, a Mr. Graves, an old man, crossed the Wateree at Grave's Ford, and formed a settlement in the present territory of Fairfield. When his people had kindled their camp fires, soon after passing the river, he looked into the larder, and announced to the company that their meal and meat were both entirely exhausted; "but," said he, "as we crossed the river, I saw tracks in the paths, leading up from it into the woods, which must be those of the buffalo. Let the young men take their guns and waylay the trails, and they will, no doubt, soon take us a fresh supply of meat."

Reuben Harrison, who was one of the party, immediately formed a hunting band, and going out, as directed, was not long in killing three fat buffaloes, which they succeeded in bringing into the encampment. After cutting from their carcasses what they needed for their present necessities, the rest was divided into small pieces, and spread upon a log, to cool, during the night. The wolves, however, of the neighboring swamps, having got scent of it, surrounded the camp, with the most hideous howlings, and when day-light came, scarcely half of the game could

* Adair.

be found.* "But," adds our chronicler, "the loss was easily supplied."

The venerable Busby, who lived to the advanced age of one hundred and ten years, related, that he had often seen, at one time, three thousand buffaloes on the Long Meadows of Little River, in the same territory.†

In the time of the old hunters, or as late as when the early settlers were building their cabins on Buffalo Creek, on lands now embraced in York District, that stream was famous for its herds of the animal from which it derives its name. The valleys of this stream are exceedingly fertile, and their cane pastures afforded inexhaustible pasturage. The hunters, we are told, sought the buffalo here, more frequently than in any other of their haunts in that region. They not only found them in great numbers, but secured them as game with greater ease; for, after being shot, they seldom escaped by plunging into the water, as they often did on Broad River.‡

When closely pursued, and brought to bay, the buffalo was not surpassed in fierceness by any other animal of these wilds; and it is said by those who knew well his habits, that, heavy and awkward as he was, with his huge head, ponderous shoulders, and projecting hump, he was swifter than either the

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* Pearson's MS.

† Pearson's MS. History of Fairfield.

‡ Conversation of the Hon. Wm. C. Black, of York District.

deer or elk. His great strength enabling him to plunge rapidly along over rolling hills as well as level plains.

Far back, in primitive times, the Cherokee Indians hunted the buffalo solely with the bow and spear, and on foot; and from its habit, so often witnessed at the present day, on the prairies of the West, of marching from one pasture to another, in a solid, compact body, the stealthy savages easily entered a herd, and singling out their victims, brought them down, at close quarters, with their flint-pointed arrows. At a later period, however, they were accustomed to hunt them on horseback, and armed with the rifle.

They occasionally resorted to the well-known method of driving them, when moving in large herds, over steep precipices. It was not often, however, they found them in a situation to allow of this advantage; and still less frequent were their necessities so great as to require this wholesale destruction of so noble an animal.

Adair, writing of the buffaloes in this region, about the commencement of the Revolution, tells us that they had then become scarce, as the thoughtless, wasteful Indians used to kill great numbers of them solely for their tongues and marrow-bones, leaving the rest of the carcass to the wild beasts.

The precise period when the last buffalo was seen in Upper Carolina, was, doubtless, never ascertained; they were abundant in Middle Tennessee, in 1775,

and it was probably about that time that the last body of them disappeared from the country east of the Blue Ridge.

Long ago they ceased to graze on the rich valleys of Tennessee, and are now only to be found in the astonishing numbers of their primitive strength, on the most distant plains of the Great West; yet their range is still confined, it appears, to the region east of the Rocky Mountains. One of the officers of the United States Exploring Expedition on the Pacific, observes: "It will perhaps excite some surprise that I include the buffalo in the fawna of our Pacific States, as it is a common opinion that the buffalo is, and has always been, confined to the Atlantic slope of the Rocky Mountains. This is not true. The range of the buffalo does not now extend beyond the Rocky Mountains; but there are many Indian hunters, who have killed them in great numbers, to the west of the Mountains, on the head waters of Salmon River. Great numbers of their skulls were found on the prairie there."*

This monarch of the American forest and prairie, was formerly found throughout the entire Eastern portion of the United States, to the Atlantic Ocean, and as far south as Florida. To the south-west, it extended over the whole of the Mississippi Valley through Texas, and into Mexico.†

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* United States Exploring Expedition.

† Ibid.