

**A NARRATIVE OF A TOUR
OF OBSERVATION, MADE
DURING THE SUMMER OF
1817**

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A narrative of a tour of observation, made during the summer of 1817 by James Monroe

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JAMES MONROE

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A
NARRATIVE
OF
A TOUR OF OBSERVATION,
MADE DURING THE SUMMER OF 1817,
BY
JAMES MONROE,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
THROUGH
THE NORTH-EASTERN AND NORTH-WESTERN
DEPARTMENTS OF THE UNION:
WITH A VIEW TO
THE EXAMINATION OF THEIR SEVERAL MILITARY
DEFENCES.
WITH
AN APPENDIX.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1818.

INTRODUCTION.

A CONSIDERABLE degree of public interest having been excited by the late tour of the President of the United States, undertaken soon after his induction into office, and constituting one of the first important acts of his administration, the editor has thought himself warranted in the publication of the following account of its course, and of the events attending it. In the numerous addresses, delivered to him by the citizens, and in the replies which they received, the sentiments of the people, and the views of the executive, are constantly developed; and the preservation of these could in no way be more properly effected, than by collecting them under one general head, and blending them with intermediate descriptions of his journey, in the form and character of a Narrative.

During the late war with Great Britain, a practical opportunity was afforded to the government of the United States, to discover the relative importance of the defences erected along the frontier, dividing the American and British possessions, and the strength and utility of the various fortified places on the marine exterior. The frequent and sometimes successful, incursions of the late enemy, enforced the necessity of selecting new points for the erection of strong and efficient batteries, to protect

the country against future invasion; of demolishing such works, as were thence found to have been constructed in improper situations; and of concentrating the regular forces, at such positions as should render their co-operation speedy and effective.

Impressed with the magnitude of this subject, Mr. Monroe had no sooner passed through the forms of his inauguration, than he directed his attention to the means by which to accomplish so desirable an object. A mere theoretical knowledge would be insufficient for the consummation of his views; and, indeed, could not be entirely depended upon. Availing himself, therefore, of the experience acquired before the close of the late contest, he determined to engage in a personal examination of the situation, strength, and condition, of all the citadels and military posts in the northern and eastern departments of the union. To the early execution of this intention, he was urged, as he has himself intimated, by a desire to look into the economical expenditure of the public monies, which had been liberally appropriated by congress; to facilitate the completion of these measures; and to ascertain the propriety of adopting plans, suggested by the agents employed in the service of fortification.

Not long after the expiration of the congressional term, in the spring of 1817, the President entered upon this laudable undertaking, and prosecuted his route through all the principal towns and cities, which he had marked out for his first tour of observation. Departing from the capital, he passed

through Baltimore to the state of Delaware, to the cities of Philadelphia, New York, and the chief towns in Connecticut and Rhode Island, to Boston, and other parts of Massachusetts, to the capital, and other towns in New Hampshire, and through the province of Maine to the town of Portland. Thence he extended his journey westward through Vermont; inspected the works at Plattsburg; and passing through the forests, to the St. Lawrence, he embarked for lake Ontario; visited Sacket's Harbour, and Fort Niagara; and, advancing along the strait to Buffalo, sailed through Lake Erie, and landed at Detroit, the extremity of his tour. He took a direction thence through the woods of the Michigan territory, and through the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, towards the District of Columbia, where he arrived after an absence of more than three months.

From this long, laborious, and fatiguing journey, which the President had imposed upon himself as a public duty, many and great advantages will be derived, as well by the general community of the United States, as the particular districts of the country through which it was necessarily made. The persevering manner in which it was performed, and the entire accomplishment of its ulterior objects, are strong and certain indications of its beneficial results. With an alacrity paralleled only by the prompt aid of the citizens to accelerate his movements, the President inspected garrisons; examined fortifications; reviewed infantry regiments at cantonments:

and obtained a knowledge of the condition of the military arsenals and naval depots, along the Atlantic and inland frontiers. To these numerous duties, he added the desire to promote the prosperity of the people; to correct abuses in the public offices; to avert the calamities incident to any future period of hostilities; to ameliorate the condition of the poorer classes of society; and to unite and harmonize, the sentiments and affections, of the citizens of one section with those of another. These desirable and happy consequences could not be achieved, without infinite labour, excessive fatigue, and numberless privations; all which were greatly increased, by his determination to return to the capital, through a succession of forests, wildernesses, and Indian settlements, by which Detroit and the settled parts of the state of Ohio is intercepted. In traversing this district of the union, the President encountered all the difficulties attendant upon bad roads, and the impediments of deep mires and unbridged streams. His fare too was not of the most sumptuous kind, and he frequently slept, with his suite, in Indian huts, his great coat and saddle serving the purposes of bed and pillow, and his person guarded only by the chiefs of the different tribes. He sustained, however, all the inconveniences of comfortless lodgings, and unpleasant and fatiguing travelling, without any abatement of that cheerfulness, and sense of public duty, manifested in the commencement of his tour, the advantageous results of which will long be remembered and acknowledged by the nation.

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