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National Affairs.

The Secretary of War to the President of the United States.
Department of War, Dec. 1824.

Sir: In compliance with your directions, I herewith transmit reports from the various branches of the Military Establishment, lettered from A to K, which contain a full statement of the administration of that portion of the public service which is confided to the Department of War. The reports afford satisfactory evidence, that a high degree of excellence has been attained in the administration of the different branches of the Department. Not an instance of delinquency, or loss, has thus far occurred, and there is every reason to believe that the disbursements of the year will be made without the loss of a cent to the Government. The accounts have already been rendered for nearly all the money which has been drawn from the Treasury in the three first quarters of the year, on account of the army, fortifications, ordnance and Indian affairs, and it is anticipated, with confidence, that the accounts of the whole of the disbursements, these quarters, will be rendered before the termination of the year. The old unsettled accounts of the Department which, at the commencement of the present administration, amounted to \$45,111,123, have been reduced to \$3,136,991; and further accumulation is effectually prevented in the Department by strict fidelity and punctuality in expenditure and settlement of accounts.

In order to improve the discipline of the artillery, eleven companies have been collected at Fortress Monroe, at Old Point Comfort, which have been formed into a corps as a school of practice for the artillery. The dispersed condition of the artillery rendered the measure necessary to the improvement of its discipline. By passing the whole corps, in succession, through the school, a degree of perfection will be given to the discipline of the artillery, nearly, if not quite, equal to that which could be attained, were it practicable to collect it into one body, instead of being dispersed, as it is, in garrisons in the different fortresses along the whole line of the coast. To carry the arrangement into full effect, will require the aid of Congress. An appropriation, in particular, will be necessary to furnish horses for instruction in the light artillery exercise, which may also be used in instructing the cavalry drill; a branch of service in which the army is now without skill or instruction.

A board of officers has been constituted to revise the book of field exercise and manoeuvres of infantry, which was adopted at the close of the late war, in order to a new and more correct edition; and to adapt it, as far as practicable, to the service of militia. It is proposed also, to add to it a system of light infantry and cavalry drill, and to correct and enlarge the military rules and regulations, so as to render them as perfect as is practicable with our present experience.

The organization of the Indian Department has been much improved in the course of the year; the beneficial effects of which is already apparent in its improved administration.

The hostilities of the remote tribes on the Missouri still continue, and has extended in some degree to those on the upper Missouri and the upper lakes. The continued hostility among the various tribes themselves in that quarter, it is believed, has contributed, in no small degree, to the murder of our citizens and depredations on their property which have occurred; and measures have been taken to effect, if possible, a general pacification among them.

The season was too far advanced when the act passed to carry into effect the intention of Congress in authoriz-

ing treaties to be held with the remote tribes on the Missouri by Commission-
and to be accompanied by a military escort. The Commissioners have, however, been appointed, (General Atkinson and Major O'Fallon, the agent on the Missouri,) and measures adopted to carry the provisions of the act into effect as soon in the spring as the season will admit. It is believed that much good will result from the measure, by giving increased security to our citizens and trade in that remote region; but is feared that nothing short of permanent military posts will afford complete security to either.

The appropriation of the sum of \$10,000 annually, for the civilization of the Indians, is producing very beneficial effects, by improving the condition of the various tribes in our neighborhood. Already 32 schools are established in the Indian nations, and for the most part, are well conducted, in which during the present year, 916 youths of both sexes have been instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, and all of the ordinary occupations of life. So large a body of well instructed youths, of whom several hundred will annually return to their homes, cannot fail to effect a beneficial change in the condition of this unhappy race.

The acts making appropriation for the repairs of Plymouth beach, the improvements of the entrance into the harbor of Presq' Isle, on Lake Erie, and of the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi, claimed the early attention of the Department. The execution of the two first of these works was placed under the superintendence of officers of the corps of engineers. The first is nearly completed, and preparatory arrangements have been made for the early execution of the second. An officer, also, of the corps, was assigned to the execution of the act for the improvement of the navigation of the Ohio, to examine it, and to report on the sand-bars which obstructed the navigation of that river. The officer was prepared to make the experiment, but the river remained too full during the fall for a fair trial. Under the other provisions of the act directing measures to be taken to remove the snags, sawyers, and planters, which obstruct the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi, a contract has been formed, with a gentleman experienced in their navigation, to free both of those rivers from all such obstructions, in conformity with the provisions of the act, for the sum of \$60,000, to be paid on the execution of the work. In the contract, it is stipulated, that it shall be executed under the superintendence and inspection of an officer of the corps of Engineers.

In order to carry into effect the act of Congress, of the 30th April last, authorizing the President "to cause the necessary surveys, plans, and estimates, to be made, of the routes of such roads and canals, as he may deem of national importance in a commercial or military point of view, or necessary to the transportation of the public mail," a board was constituted, consisting of General Bernard and Colonel Totten, of the Engineer Corps, and John L. Sullivan, an experienced civil Engineer. It became necessary, in giving orders to the board, under the act, to determine what routes for roads and canals were of "national importance;" in the views contemplated by the act, as such only as the President might deem to be of that description, were authorized to be examined and surveyed. In deciding this point, it became necessary to advert to our political system in its distribution of powers and duties between the general and state Governments. In thus regarding our system, it was conceived that all of those routes of roads and canals, which might be fairly considered as falling within the province of any particular state, however useful they might be in a commercial or political view, or to the transportation of the mail, were excluded from the provisions of this act. The states have important duties to perform, in facilitating, by means of roads and canals, commercial and political intercourse among their citizens; and within the spheres of these duties, they are more

competent to act than the General Government; and there can be no rational doubt but that, as the population and capital of the several states increase, these powerful means of developing their resources will receive from their respective Legislatures due attention. But, as numerous as this class of improvement is, and important as it may be to the General Government, in the discharge of the various duties confided by the constitution to it, there are other improvements not comprehended in it, of a more general character, which are more essentially connected with the performance of its duties, while they are less intimately connected with those belonging to the state governments, and less within their power of execution. It is believed that this class, and this only, was comprehended in the provisions of the act. In projecting the surveys in this view of the subject, the whole Union must be considered as one, and the attention directed, not to those roads and canals which may facilitate intercourse between parts of the same state, but to those which may bind all of the parts together, and the whole with the centre, thereby facilitating commerce and intercourse among the states, and enabling the Government to disseminate promptly thro' the mail, information to every part, and to extend protection to the whole. By extending those principles, the line of communication by roads and canals, through the states, the General Government, instead of interfering with the governments within their proper spheres of action, will afford (particularly to those states situated in the interior) the only means of perfecting improvements of similar description, which properly belong to them.

These principles being fixed, it only remained to apply them to our actual geographical position, to determine what particular routes were of "national importance," and which accordingly, the board should be directed to examine, in order to cause surveys, plans, and estimates to be prepared, as directed by the act.

The first and most important, was conceived to be the route for a canal extending from the seat of government, by the Potomac, to the Ohio river, and thence to Lake Erie; and accordingly as soon as the board was organized, it was ordered to examine and cause this important route to be surveyed, Dr. William Howard and Mr. James Shriver, both of whom were well acquainted with the localities of the route, were associated as assistants with the board. Two topographical brigades (all that could be spared from the survey of the coast, for the purpose of fortification) and one brigade of surveyors, under Mr. Shriver, were placed under the orders of the board.

The examination of the route was completed in September; but the survey will not be finished till the next season. That part of it, however, which is most interesting, the section of the summit level of the Alleghany, including its eastern slope, is completed, which, it is hoped, will enable the board to determine, during the present winter, on the practicability of the project. Should it prove practicable, its execution would be of incalculable advantage to the country. It would bind together, by the strongest bond of common interest and security, a very large portion of this Union: but, in order fully to realize its "importance in a national point of view," it will be necessary to advert to some of the more striking geographical features of our country.

The United States may be considered, in a geographical point of view, as consisting of three distinct parts; of which the portion extending along the shores of the Atlantic, and back to the Alleghany mountains, constitutes one; that lying on the Lakes and the St. Lawrence another; and that watered by the Mississippi, including its various branches, the other. These several portions are very distinctly marked by well defined lines, and have naturally but little connexion, particularly in a commercial point of view. It is only by artificial means of communication that this natural separation can be overcome; to effect which much has already been done. The

great canal of New-York firmly unites the country of the Lakes with the Atlantic through the channel of the North-River; and the National Road from Cumberland to Wheeling, commenced under the administration of Mr. Jefferson, unites, but more imperfectly, the Western with the Atlantic states. But the complete union of these separate parts, which geographically constitute our country, can only be effected by completion of the projected canal to the Ohio and Lake Erie, by means of which the country lying on the Lakes will be firmly united to that on the Western waters, and both with the Atlantic states, and the whole intimately connected with the centre. These considerations, of themselves, without taking into view others, fairly bring this great work within the provision of the act directing the surveys; but when we extend our views, and consider the Ohio and the Mississippi, with its great branches, but as a prolongation of the canal, it is of the highest national interest, in a commercial, military, and a political point of view. Thus considered, it involves the completion of the improvements of the navigation of both these rivers, which has been commenced under the appropriation of the last session of Congress; and, also, canals round the falls of the Ohio at Louisville, and Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee river; both of which, it is believed, can be executed at a moderate expense. With these improvements, the projected canal would not only unite the three great sections of the country together, as has been pointed out, but would also unite, in the most intimate manner, all of the states on the Lakes and the Western waters among themselves, and give complete effect to whatever improvement may be made by those states individually. The advantages, in fact, from the completion of this large work, as proposed, would be so extended and ramified throughout these great divisions of our country, already containing a large portion of our population, and destined, in a few generations, to outnumber the most populous states of Europe, as to leave in that quarter no other work for the execution of the general government, excepting only the extension of Cumberland road from Wheeling to St. Louis, which is also conceived to be of "national importance."

The route which is deemed next in importance in a national point of view, is the one extending through the entire of the Atlantic states, including those on the Gulf of Mexico. By diverting to the division of our country through which this route must pass, it will be seen that there is a striking difference in geographical features between the portions which extend south and north of the seat of government, including the Chesapeake bay, with its various arms in the latter division. In the northern parts of the division, all of the great rivers terminate in deep and bold navigable estuaries, while an opposite character distinguishes the mouths of the rivers in the other. This difference gives greater advantages to improvement, by canal, in the northern, and less in the southern division. In the former, it is conceived to be of high national importance to unite its deep and capacious bays by a series of canals; and the Board was accordingly instructed to examine the routes for canals between the Delaware and the Rariton, between Barnstable and Buzzard's bays, and Boston harbor and Narraganset bay. The execution of the very important link, in this line of communication between the Delaware and the Chesapeake, having been already commenced, was not comprehended in the order. The orders will be executed by the Board before the termination of the season. The important results which would follow from the completion of this chain, in a commercial, military, and political point of view, are so striking, that they need not be dwelt on. It would, at all times, in peace and war, afford a prompt, cheap and safe communication between all of the states north of the seat of government, and greatly facilitate their communication

with the centre of the Union. The states of New Hampshire and Maine, though lying beyond the point where these improvements would terminate, would not, on that account, less participate in the advantages, as they are no less interested than Massachusetts herself, in avoiding the long and dangerous passage round Cape Cod, which would be effected by the union of Barnstable with Buzzard's bay.

In the section lying south of this, none of these advantages for communication by canals exist. A line of inland navigation extends, it is true, along nearly the whole line of coasts which is susceptible of improvement, and may be rendered highly serviceable, particularly in war, and on that account may be fairly considered of "national importance." The Dismal Swamp canal, from the Chesapeake Bay to Albemarle Sound, which is nearly completed, constitutes a very important link in this navigation. But it is of the highest national interest, in a commercial, military, and a political point of view. Thus considered, it involves the completion of the improvements of the navigation of both these rivers, which has been commenced under the appropriation of the last session of Congress; and, also, canals round the falls of the Ohio at Louisville, and Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee river; both of which, it is believed, can be executed at a moderate expense. With these improvements, the projected canal would not only unite the three great sections of the country together, as has been pointed out, but would also unite, in the most intimate manner, all of the states on the Lakes and the Western waters among themselves, and give complete effect to whatever improvement may be made by those states individually. The advantages, in fact, from the completion of this large work, as proposed, would be so extended and ramified throughout these great divisions of our country, already containing a large portion of our population, and destined, in a few generations, to outnumber the most populous states of Europe, as to leave in that quarter no other work for the execution of the general government, excepting only the extension of Cumberland road from Wheeling to St. Louis, which is also conceived to be of "national importance."

The completion of this work, and the line of canals to the north, would unite the several Atlantic States, including those on the gulf, in a strong bond of union, and connect the whole with the centre, which would also be united, as has been shown, with those on the lakes and western waters, by the improvement projected in that quarter.

These three great works, then, the canal to Ohio and Lake Erie, with the improvement of the navigation of the Ohio, Mississippi, and the canal round the Muscle Shoal; the series of canals connecting the tops north of the seat of government, and a durable road extending from the seat of government to New-Orleans, uniting the whole of the southern Atlantic states, are conceived to be the most important objects within the provisions of the act of the last session. The beneficial effects which would flow from such a system of improvement, would extend directly and immediately to every state in the Union; and the expenditure that would bear a fair proportion to the wealth and population of the several sections of the country, at least, as they will stand a few years hence. When completed, it would greatly facilitate commerce and intercourse among the states, while it would afford to the government the means of transmitting information through the mail promptly to every part, and of giving effectual protection to every portion of our widely extended country.

There are several other routes which, though not essential to the system, are deemed of great importance in a commercial and military point of view, and which the board will receive instructions to examine. Among these, the most prominent is the connexion, wherever it may prove practicable, of the Eastern and Western waters, through the principal rivers discharging themselves into the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico: for example, the Alabama and Savannah rivers with the Tennessee, James river with the Kenawa, and the Susquehannah with the Alleghany; which last will be more particularly adverted to in a subsequent part of the report. To these, we may add, the route from Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence, and from the river St. John across Florida Neck, to the Gulf of Mexico. They are both deemed important; but the latter particularly. Should it prove practicable, its beneficial effects would be great, comprehensible and durable. The whole of the Atlantic and Western States would deeply partake in its advantages. Besides the facility of intercourse which it would afford between those states, our trade with Mexico, Guatemala, and the central parts of the continent, would not only be greatly facilitated, but rendered much more secure.

The board have, besides those already mentioned, examined, in conjunction with Pennsylvania commis-