

INCIDENTS OF WESTERN HISTORY.

[Pike in the Mountains.]

The explorations of Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike follow next, in point of time, after those of Captains Lewis and Clark. There was a great difference, however, in the natures of their expeditions. The captains were sent out by the president, to explore the vast region he had just purchased from the French. The lieutenant was dispatched by the general of the army to plant the flag of the young nation in the face of the hostile neighbors on the north and southwest. In 1805, the year following Lewis and Clark's setting out, Pike was ordered to the headwaters of the Mississippi, to stop the advances of British furtraders among the Sioux and their neighbors. This errand he discharged so well that he was selected to lead another party in the year following to make a military demonstration among the Indians who were exposed to Spanish influence from Mexico—which then covered part of Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming, and all south of the Oregon line. The United States was at this time a great, helpless, shapeless thing and its future was very uncertain. How much Pike's two expeditions may have had to do with deciding its final destiny, who can tell?

Pike himself was a New Jersey man, born in 1779, and as he said of himself, "a soldier from the time he was able to bear arms." After his return from Mexico, he advanced rapidly in his profession, and commanded as general at the siege of York, Canada, in 1813; where he received a mortal wound in the moment of victory, and died on the field with his head pillowed on the captured British flag.

The expedition of 1806 is the most interesting episode in his story. The Spanish were then making their last bid for this region that we live in; their last military party had passed so lately that the grass was still bent behind them when Pike and his 22 men came along. Among the Pawnees on the Arkansas river, in Republic county, Kansas, he hauled down the last Spanish flag—an event which Kansas still celebrates yearly. Then he marched on westward. What he was to do with summer-clad foot-soldiers among the mountains of southern Colorado in the dead of winter is a mystery to this day; but this 27-year-old commander and his army were soldiers, and they had only to obey the orders of General Wilkinson, who seems to have been a precious rascal.

Lieutenant Pike did not climb Pike's Peak, nor try to, nor did he give it his name. It was first ascended in 1820, and named James' Peak. He did, however, in the closing days of November,

climb what was probably Cheyenne Peak, and had a good view of Pike's, as will appear from the following:

"Sunday, Nov. 23.—I concluded to put my party in a defensible situation, and ascend the north fork to the high point of the Blue Mountain, which we conceived would be one day's march; in order to be enabled from its summit, to lay down the various branches of the river, and the positions of the country. Killed five buffaloes.

"November 24.—After giving the necessary orders for the government of my men, during my absence, in case of our not returning, we marched at one o'clock with an idea of arriving at the foot of the mountain, but found ourselves obliged to take up our lodging this night under a single cedar, which we found in the prairie, without water, and extremely cold.

"November 25.—Marched early, with the expectation of ascending the mountain, but was only able to encamp at its base, after passing over many small hills covered with cedars and pitch pines. Our encampment was on a creek; we found no water for several miles from the mountain, but near its base found springs sufficient. Killed two buffaloes.

"November 26.—Expecting to return to our camp that evening, we left all our blankets and provisions at the foot of the mountain. Killed a deer of a new species, and hung his skin on a tree with some meat. We commenced ascending; found the way very difficult, being obliged to climb up rocks sometimes almost perpendicular; and after marching all day we encamped in a cave without blankets, victuals or water. We had a fine clear sky, whilst it was snowing at the bottom.

"November 27.—Arose hungry, thirsty, and extremely sore, from the unevenness of the rocks on which we had lain all night; but were amply compensated for our toil by the sublimity of the prospects below. The unbounded prairie was overhung with clouds, which appeared like the ocean in a storm, wave piled on wave, and foaming, whilst the sky over our heads was perfectly clear. Commenced our march up the mountain, and in about one hour arrived at the summit of this chain; here we found the snow middle deep, and discovered no sign of beast or bird inhabiting this region. The thermometer which stood at 9° above 0 at the foot of the mountain, here fell to 4° below. The summit of the Grand Peak, which was entirely bare of vegetation, and covered with snow, now appeared at the distance of fifteen or sixteen miles from us, and as high again as that we had ascended; it would have taken a whole day's march to have arrived at its base, when I believe no human being could have ascended to its summit.

This, with the condition of my soldiers, who had only overalls on, and no stockings, and were every way ill provided to endure the inclemency of this region, the bad prospects of killing anything to subsist on, with the further detention of two or three days which it must occasion, determined us to return. The clouds from below had now ascended the mountain, and entirely enveloped the summit, on which rest eternal snows. We descended by a long deep ravine with much less difficulty than we had contemplated. Found all our baggage safe, but the provision all destroyed. It began to snow, and we sought shelter under the side of a projecting rock, where we all four made a meal on one partridge and a pair of deer's ribs, which the ravens had left us, being the first food we had eaten for forty-eight hours.

"November 28.—Marched at nine o'clock. Kept straight down the creek to avoid the hills. At half past one o'clock shot two buffaloes, when we made the first full meal we had eaten for three days. Encamped in a valley under a shelving rock. The land here was very rich, and covered with old Indian camps.

"November 29.—Marched after a short repast, and arrived at our camp before night. Found all well."

What this handful of brave men went through in their wanderings in this terrible country, which lasted until February, one must read Pike's journal to understand. We quote one week's entries:

"January 17. Marched about four miles when the Great White Mountain presented itself before us; in sight of which we had been for more than a month and through which we supposed lay the long sought Red river. We now left the creek on the north of us, and bore away more east to a low place in the mountains. About sunset we came to the edge of a prairie, which bounded the foot of the mountain, and as there was no wood or water where we were, and the wood from the skirts of the mountain appeared to be at no great distance, I thought proper to march for it. In the middle of the prairie crossed the creek which now bore almost east. Here we all got our feet wet. The night commenced extremely cold. When we halted at the woods at eight o'clock for encampment, after getting fires made, we discovered that the feet of nine of our men were frozen, and to add to the misfortune, of both of those whom we called hunters among the number. This night we had no provision. Distance advanced twenty-eight miles. Reaumur's thermometer stood at 18½ degrees below zero.

"January 18. We started out two of the men least injured; the doctor and myself (who fortunately were untouch-