

## THE PIKE'S PEAK GOLD MINES.—[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

SOUTH FORK OF THE PLATTE, June, 1859.

PAN distant upon the boundless prairies stretching away toward the setting sun, and over four hundred and fifty miles from the border towns of the Missouri River, this letter is written for the amusement and instruction of your readers. The author, dressed in a soiled suit of corduroy, and with a ventilated alouche hat upon his head, is seated upon the tongue of a wagon, with a five-gallon vinegar-barrel for his writing-desk, while at the same moment the first teams of Colonel F. W. Lander's South Pass Wagon-road Expedition are entering the water at the crossing of the South Fork of the Platte.

At the present date both banks of the river are lined with the wagons and animals of the emigrants; and the happy owners of those which have successfully "passed over Jordan" may well cast their eyes across the swelling flood and gaze with Christian resignation upon the tolling and struggling pilgrims who have yet to prove their faith and endurance. The water rushing over the wagons, the plunging and kicking of the mules, and the impressions of the teamsters, render the scene one of peculiar interest; and to add to it, Dog Belly, chief of the Ogallala band of the Sioux tribe of Indians, with a small party of his braves, are grouped around Colonel Lander's carriage, smoking the pipe of peace. Mr. Albert Bierstadt, of Boston, the artist of the expedition, is engaged in sketching their appearance. And it is to his pencil we are indebted for the illustrations accompanying this article.

During the past ten days we have met thousands of the deluded and suffering gold-seekers retracing their steps to the quiet farms of the West. Many of them were in a starving condition, barefooted, ragged, and penniless; and it has caused much delay in the progress of the expedition, and materially diminished our supply of provisions, to feed these hungry, home-bound strollers. We counted upon one day ninety-three wagons, and the following one eighty-four, to each of which was attached from six to ten men; and besides these, hundreds of others who were wandering along without any mode of conveyance. Up to this point of our journey we have probably passed five thousand disappointed and disappointed men returning to the States, and this number is but small compared to those who have pressed on toward California.

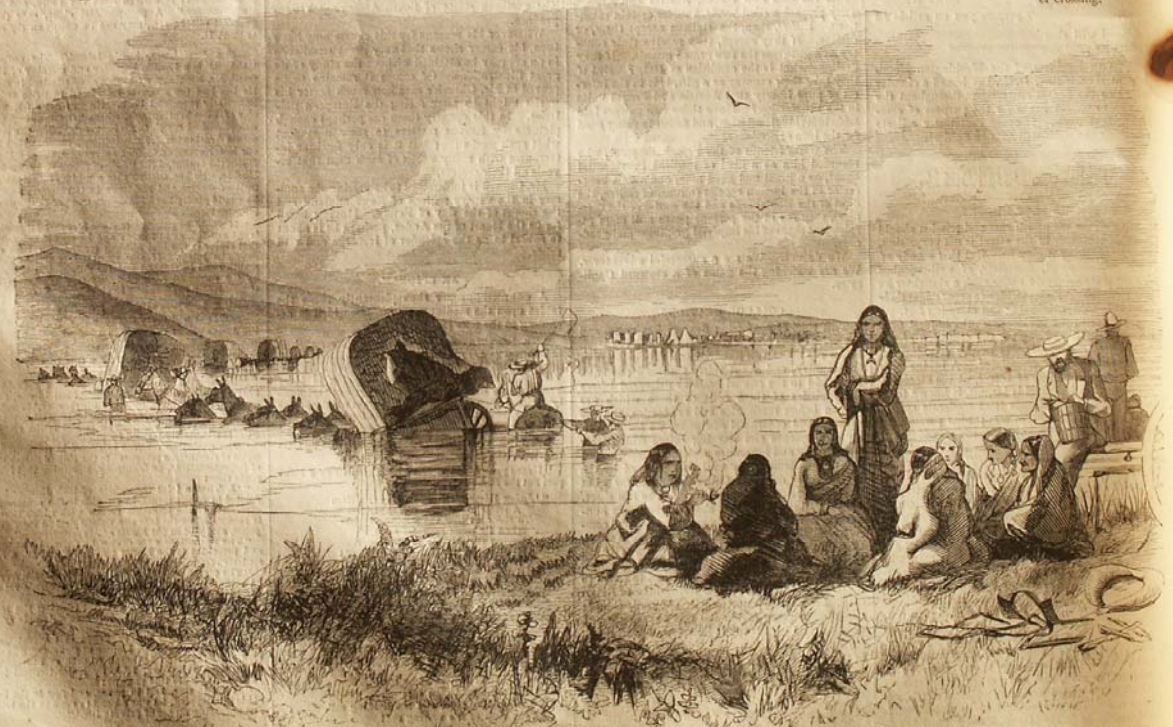
On the Smoky Hill Fork route the suffering has been much more extensive and aggravated.



A PIKE'S PEAKER.



CROSSING THE PLAINS.



CROSSING THE PLATTE.

Of one party some twelve or fifteen died in a state of starvation, and in some instances the survivors preserved their own lives by eating the dead bodies of their former companions. I conversed with a returning emigrant who saw and spoke to the insane survivor of three brothers by the name of Blew, from Whiteside County, Illinois, who had eaten the dead bodies of his brethren, and was found by the Indians in a dying state, and by them carried to the nearest passing train. These reports are confirmed by old and reliable mountaineers, and there is no reason to doubt that the full story of the emigrants' wrongs and suffering is yet to be told.

We hear that some of these deluded men, infuriated by the deception practiced upon them, have risen in their might, and in Denver City have visited a terrible retribution upon two or three of the prominent actors in the drama. It is also reported that the conflagration of the town is threatened.

Before closing this article I desire to refer to the advantages of this central, or, as it is termed, South Pass route, as a convenient road. Many years ago it was adopted by the old Northwest and American Fur Companies as the route of supply for their forts. It was selected and traveled, after long exploration of the mountains, by leaver hunters, who set traps upon every stream, and whose experience justified its adoption. Fremont followed this old trail in his passage to Oregon, and the overland emigrant parades it at this day. When the Congressional act was passed to construct a wagon-road to California through the South Pass, all that could be done to better the road was to shorten it where the travel had been compelled to pass around the dense forests of the Wasatch Mountains. This was done by Col. Lander's party, after a long exploration, and the bridge and ferries of the old road avoided. The next step is to bridge the Platte. The route is equally short to Oregon and California, and passes far enough north to avoid the fenced inclosures of the Mormons, giving the overland emigrants pasturage free of cost.

In connection with the danger of crossing the river, we have just received the distressing intelligence that two young gentlemen attached to the expedition, Gilbert B. Towles and John Marshall Wilson, sons of leading citizens of Washington, both taken ill from the inclemency of the weather and sent home from Fort Kearney, have been drowned, in the attempt to ford at the lower crossing.