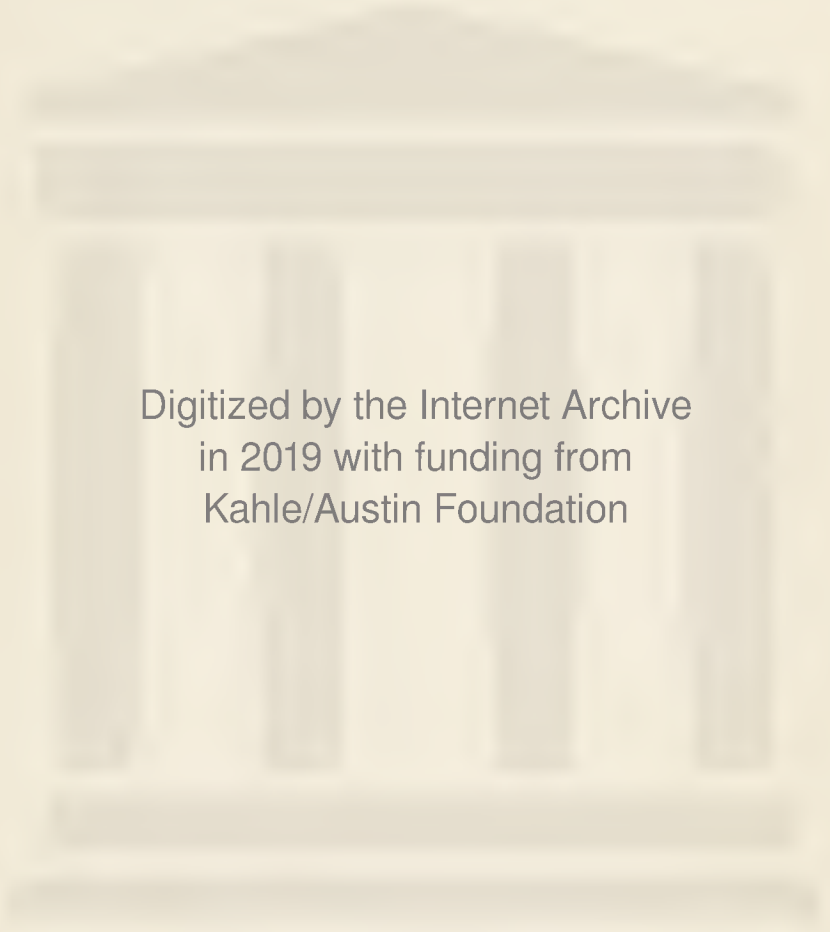

RELUCTANT GENERAL

The Life and Times of Albert Pike

By the same author
BUFFALO COUNTRY

RELUCTANT GENERAL

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ALBERT PIKE

By ROBERT LIPSCOMB DUNCAN

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TO
WILLIAM F. McLAUGHLIN
scholar, good friend . . .

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AN OUTING IN AUTUMNAL WOODS: A FOREWORD

He was a lonely old man when he made his last appearance in the West, and the fires of bitterness that had consumed him for so long had finally died away. In the fall of 1881, in the hazy and unseasonal warmth of a late Indian summer, he came back to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to camp out in the deep woods near the frontier town where he had hunted as a younger man. General Albert Pike was then seventy-two years old, and his three-hundred-pound body, once capable of prodigal indulgence and immense endurance, was such a discomfort to him that his host, Charles C. Scott, mounted a wide chair on the back of a wagon to make him more comfortable during the long ride to the camp grounds.

Riding in this ambulatory throne, Pike attracted a great deal of attention in Fort Smith, for there were few men of his day more widely talked about, with alternate bursts of praise and damnation, and there were few men more physically compelling. His skin was pale, almost translucent, and his eyes had the dull, withdrawn look of a mystic about them. The magnificent mane of hair that once had fallen in glossy black billows around his shoulders had now turned snow white, so white that it sparkled like glass in the sunlight, and the great bush of patriarchal beard, of the same color as his hair, now obscured his mouth.

The hunting party camped near Cold Springs, and while the other men fished and hunted in the woods, General Pike swung a massive kettle over the campfire and began to put together one of his famous stews, a potpourri of squirrels and rabbits and prairie chickens and venison, all dumped into the pot and augmented by slabs of bacon, chopped into small pieces, and baskets of potatoes and onions. While the stew was simmering, he seasoned it with

vast quantities of red pepper and garlic. And when it was done, Pike ate, amazing his companions with the great quantities of food he stowed away, his wide mouth champing while the juices ran down his white beard, washing down his enormous meal with large beakers of raw brandy.

The eating continued around the clock, interrupted only by an occasional pipeful of strong tobacco fuming from his large meerschaum, or by one of Pike's famous stories told to the ever-present visitors, Indians and settlers who had heard that the general was back for a visit and who had come to talk to him. He spoke to the Indians in their native dialects, and to the settlers in the easy pattern of their colloquial speech, occasionally punctuating his stories with an erudite discussion of the great mysteries of the world, of translations of the *Rig-Veda* and the *Zend-Avesta,* and of the ancient rituals that now absorbed all of his time.

If he slept or even dozed during the days and nights of the camp at Cold Springs, his companions did not know it. For in the late hours of the night, when they came awake by the campfire, they were immediately aware of the old man's quiet and wakeful vigil, of his pipe glowing in the darkness, and of his jaws moving rhythmically as the general dipped into the pot and continued to eat as if he would never get enough. And when the week's camp was over and the huge kettle had been exhausted, the general went back to Washington, D.C., leaving behind another story to be embellished and added to the growing body of legends about one of the most controversial characters in the turbulent period of the Civil War.

Few Americans have ever provoked so much adulation and praise and so much vitriolic condemnation as did Albert Pike during his lifetime. As the man who revitalized the Masonic movement in America, he has achieved the status of a saint, and yet, as late as 1945, he was still being described by one English clergyman as a creature in league with the devil, "the Viceregent of Lucifer . . . a Grand Master of the witches," comparable to satanists like Francis Bothwell, Cagliostro, Jacob Falk, and Adam Weishaupt. This colorful charge is echoed in the folk stories still told in the South about Pike and the alfresco and frankly sexual orgies he indulged in with the devil as participant.

Historians are still attempting to unravel the ambiguities of his politics, for he had the dubious distinction of being accused as a

traitor by both sides during the Civil War. There are still many Southerners who say that Pike lost the war for the Confederacy single-handed, because in the moment when the key battle of the western border was in the balance, and Pike was precipitated into command, he became confused, and, when confronted by a choice, did nothing at all. As a military man, he was damned for cowardice, lauded for bravery, accused of unspeakable atrocities, and praised for his sense of justice.

He was a man of prodigal tendencies, an adventurer with an enormous capacity for excess, a man who vacillated between violent extremes, capable both of great gushes of sentimentality and of vitriolic bursts of outrage in the space of a single day. As a philosopher, he veered between clear wisdom and confused foolishness; as a lawyer, he made and spent a fortune with a singular flourish; as a writer, he is unsurpassed by any other American for the sheer volume of his output, which ranges from very inferior poetry to very superior prose. As a diplomat to the Indian tribes, he was remarkable for his ability to outmaneuver a great many politically adroit chieftans and for his success in allying diverse and savage bands to the Confederate cause. He spent years building rapport with the Indians, only to destroy all that he had accomplished in a brief and fitful moment of pique.

It is the extremes that were a part of his life and his career that have fractionated his image as a man and have made him seem so many things to so many different people—saint and devil, wastrel and wise man, philosopher and bigot, hero and coward. This book, then, is an attempt to merge these images into a unified portrait of Albert Pike and the world in which he lived. It is a study in human contradictions at a time when such violent excesses caused a national disaster, as well as a personal tragedy.

ONE

PORTRAIT OF AN IMPROPER BOSTONIAN

The pattern for Albert Pike's life was set before he was born, in the basic and continual conflict between his parents. His father was Benjamin Pike, a young Boston cobbler, twenty years old, a constant rebel against the traditions of respectability, which were especially strong in a family that had produced generations of distinguished men in its century and a half in Massachusetts. In this august family Benjamin was a black sheep, a rather stout young man who laughed too easily, drank too much, and refused to take life seriously. In 1808 he made an unlikely marriage with a pretty black-haired woman three years his senior. Her name was Sarah Andrews. She had come to Boston from Ipswich, and was Benjamin's antithesis. Sarah was sober, intensely religious, stanchly Puritan, with a clear view of this troublesome world as a brief and necessary prelude to the happier vale of heaven.

And Albert, making his appearance in the modest house on Greene Street in Boston on December 29, 1809, as the first child born to Benjamin and Sarah, was destined to be forever torn between the two extremes, between the penchant for moral order, which would eventually lead him into the bizarre religions of the ancient world, and the ungovernable appetites of the flesh, which he would satisfy in unusual ways.

By the time he was old enough to understand any of the words in the huge illustrated Bible (with commentary by John Brown of Haddington) that his mother read to him daily, he had been joined by five sisters which Sarah produced with fecund regularity. As he was her only son, Sarah favored Albert above her girl children, and was determined to keep him from following in his father's licentious footsteps; but amidst the clamor of a house filled with

six children and troops of relatives who always seemed to be present at mealtime, she had little freedom to devote to Albert's spiritual education, and he was allowed to develop much as he pleased.

He was a fair-complexioned, normal child, and very quick-witted. But he disturbed his mother by alternating attitudes of bright responsiveness with prolonged spells of withdrawn moodiness. As he listened patiently to the reading of the Testaments, his mother was encouraged to believe that the rapt attention he displayed was really the budding of religious fervor. But as he grew older, Albert began to take on more and more of his father's traits. He lost interest in the Bible readings, and was frequently absent from the house for hours at a time on solitary walks. He showed an aptitude for the violin, and, encouraged by his father, was soon proficient enough to accompany Benjamin as he played on the double-bass. Despite his mother's promptings, Albert had no interest in hearing about his illustrious and accomplished ancestors. To the despair of his mother, he showed every evidence of having a strong will of his own, and little tolerance for anyone's attempts to guide him on the proper path.

With six children and a wife to support on a weekly wage of four dollars and fifty cents, Benjamin was soon forced to make the sad decision to leave Boston and move back to Newburyport, the small town of his birth, where he could farm to supplement his income as a cobbler. Albert was quite pleased with the change of scene, for Newburyport was flanked with woods for him to explore. It was in this village that he went through primary and grammar school, and his studies were so undemanding that he had plenty of time to follow more pleasurable pursuits. When he was not tramping through the woods, he was reading; but if his mother encouraged his studious habits, she could not approve of his choice of reading material, the volumes of florid and often gloomy poetry then coming into vogue in New England.

To divert his energies away from poetry and bird hunting and into more useful channels, she encouraged him to pattern himself after his uncle, Alfred W. Pike, a sober, studious gentleman who was making something of a scholastic reputation for himself as a professor in Framingham Academy. Albert's excellent marks in the Newburyport schools convinced Sarah that he had a high degree of intellect, and she was determined that he should not waste him-

self on a trade. Once he had graduated, she insisted that he continue his education. Benjamin, of course, was much too poor to be able to afford to send Albert to Framingham Academy; but the professor declared that if Albert really wanted to learn, and would come to Framingham, he would tutor him on the side and try to arrange a way for him to go to Harvard when he was ready.

Eternally restless, Albert was agreeable. At the age of sixteen, he went to the small industrial town to live with his uncle. Not long after Albert's arrival, the professor made a marvelous discovery. One night Albert borrowed a set of history books from his uncle. A few evenings later he brought them back and asked his uncle to question him on the contents of the books. The professor was dubious. The books were weighty historical tomes, and he doubted that Albert had even had time to read them. Nevertheless, the professor picked up the topmost volume, opened it at random, and asked Albert a question. Albert answered it correctly. His uncle was amazed. He continued the impromptu examination for the rest of the evening, and Albert continued to supply the right answers. There was no mistake, the professor concluded: Albert possessed a prodigious memory, capable of absolute retention and complete recall, an invaluable gift for a scholar. Once the professor discovered this ability in his nephew, this sponge-like mind, he poured facts into it, filling it with Latin and Greek and mathematics and philosophy. Eight months after Albert's arrival in Framingham, his uncle knew he was ready to take the Harvard entrance examinations.

2

Albert was precocious, there was no doubt of that, but his precocity proved to be a mixed blessing. For Albert was keenly aware of his unusual intelligence, and from this realization came self-confidence, and from his self-confidence stemmed the conceit and vanity that would plague the rest of his life. Wearing his self-righteousness like armor, he would never be able to see his own shortcomings. He would be forever convinced, in any dispute, that his intellect carried with it a perfect judgment that made him invincibly right, and that, as a consequence, anyone who either opposed or contradicted him was wrong. And whenever society rejected his views, he would feel compelled to cry out bitterly for

the judgment of posterity to vindicate him. At the age of sixteen, these traits were well developed within him and he was already exhibiting the tender pride that would characterize him as a man. The first display of this pride stemmed from his frustrated attempts to enter Harvard.

He went into the city with his uncle and took his entrance examinations while the professor looked around Boston for someone to sponsor Albert's education. Albert found the examination very simple, writing later, with characteristic candor: "I passed a very high examination. Exceedingly good in mathematics, but rather exceptionally good in Greek." If Albert was successful, his uncle was not, for the professor was unable to find anyone to supply either cash or credit for Albert's tuition. He even had an interview with the president of Harvard, but all his attempts were fruitless.

When he found himself balked, Pike was more determined than ever to go to Harvard. Now, however, there was more involved than the simple matter of an education. He would return, but not in an ordinary manner. He planned to enter Harvard with a dazzling display of his prowess as a scholar that would fill his examiners with awe. To finance his tuition, he would teach school for a while, educating himself at night in the courses that were given in the freshman and sophomore years at Harvard. Then he would take the junior entrance examinations and enter as an advanced student, thereby cutting the cost of his tuition in half.

It was not difficult for Albert to find a teaching position. Education was still a rather crude affair in New England, and a man could teach in a common school if he was one year ahead of his students. Filling a vacancy in the common school at Gloucester, Pike settled down in a boardinghouse owned by a sea captain, and began his rigorous schedule. Teaching by day, he spent his nights in a small room, pouring over Adam's *Roman Antiquities,* Blair's *Lectures,* and Lowth's introduction to English grammar. Because the courses were easier than he had thought they would be, he added Spanish and Italian to his self-imposed curriculum.

He also had time for diversion in the big house at Gloucester, and plenty of opportunity. Two girls resident in the house were both, fortunately, romantically inclined. The sea captain had a daughter who was a golden-haired beauty, and she had as her companion an equally pretty girl whose father was an invalid sailor.

Pike had no trouble making a double conquest, for he was a very handsome boy. A silhouette made of him at this time shows the profile of a young man with curly hair extending down to his shoulders, a straight forehead with a slightly protuberant brow, a long straight nose, a short upper lip slightly dominant over the lower, and a weak chin, a combination of features guaranteed to make any girl's heart beat faster. Too, Gloucester was besieged by long spells of blustery weather that winter, and the three of them were forced to spend much time indoors. As a consequence Pike enjoyed making love to both of them as a respite from his studies, and later recorded that he felt he had spent a pleasant and profitable winter there.

During the summer he went home to Newburyport to save the money he would have to spend for room and board if he lived elsewhere, and for three months he crammed incessantly until he was sure he had mastered his studies. Then he went back to Boston for another try at Harvard. His self-education had been remarkably successful, for he had taught himself in one year all the knowledge that Harvard taught in two. The junior entrance examination was elementary to him, and he breezed through it confidently. It was only when he approached the bursar to pay his tuition that he ran into difficulty.

Harvard had rules to guard against precocious individuals like Pike. The school would be delighted to have him as a junior, he was informed, but he would still be required to pay the tuition for the two preceding years. The total amount came to two hundred dollars.

Pike was aghast. Two hundred dollars was a fortune to him, and he did not have nearly that much money. He argued against the rule as a scandalous and prohibitive piece of nonsense, but the officials were politely adamant, and the rule held firm against the torrent of his protests. He was so embittered by this experience that fifty years later he was still moved to anger as he remembered the woman behind the desk who had dashed his last hopes of Harvard. "She refused to permit us to enter there in the junior class," he wrote, "unless we would pay, out of our slender earnings as teacher of a common school, the tuition fees of the two preceding years. . . . We owe her as little as Paul Jones owed to Scotland."

But eventually Pike would have his chance for revenge. In 1859, when his contemporary fame as a poet was secure, and when he was being hailed as a champion of the oppressed Indians, Harvard would try to make amends by offering him an honorary Master of Arts degree. The legend would grow that Pike had taken savage pleasure in rejecting it with a statement that they had closed their doors against him when he was poor but that now, when he was wealthy and famous, he had no need for their tributes. Though the legend is in keeping with Pike's character, and it is possible he started it himself, it is, after all, only a legend. Harvard was a symbol of educational elegance to him, and he could not resist the vindication their proferred honor gave him. When the honorary degree was conferred upon him, he accepted immediately, with thanks.

3

Bitter over his treatment at Harvard, he decided to devote the rest of his life to poetry, returning to schoolteaching as a temporary livelihood until he could support himself as a writer. Obtaining a position in the school at Newburyport, he spent much of his free time in the production of very poor imitations of Byron and Shelley, verses like "To a Mocking Bird":

I cannot love the man who doth not love
(Even as men love light) the song of birds;
For as the first visions that my boy heart wove
To fill its sleep with, were, that I did rove
Amid the woods, what time the snowy herds
Of morning clouds fled from the rising sun
Into the depths of heaven's heart, as words
That from the poet's lips do fall upon
And vanish in the human heart; and then
I revell'd in those songs, and sorrowed when
With noon heat overwrought, the music's burst was o'er.

His poetry and essays found ready acceptance in Boston magazines and newspapers but brought him no money, for these periodicals gave their contributors nothing but a limited and local prestige. Trying to make his writing pay in something more negotiable than glory, Pike launched a magazine called *The Scrap Book,* which

promptly floundered and sank beneath the weight of the laborious prose and poetry with which he filled it.

Despite his local reputation as a poet, Pike was miserable in Newburyport. His mother was unalterably opposed to his poetic ambitions. To her they were not only frivolous but sinful as well, and, living in the same town with Albert, she was in a position to let him know how she felt about it, loudly and frequently. His mother reflected the attitude of the town, for Newburyport was one of a confederacy of Puritan towns with a strong code of morality and little tolerance for those who broke it. The Newburyport school board was especially strict regarding their schoolteachers, expecting them to live chaste lives free from censure.

The more pressure that was put on Pike to reform him, the more he rebelled. He continued to write poetry. He took long walks, tramping through the woods and sporting with the "romping girls from Rowley," as he describes his feminine companions. Living apart from his family, he held gay parties in his rooms and consumed a considerable amount of wine. He did not care what the town thought of him.

The town fathers decided to help his reformation by promoting him to a position of greater responsibility. When a vacancy occurred at the school, they made him principal. Pike responded by playing the fiddle on Sunday with his windows wide open. With sighs, the school board realized their mistake. The next day they brought a formal charge of "impiety" against him, and confronted Pike with the choice of repentance or dismissal.

If he would promise to lead a blameless, pious life, it was probable the school board would let him go with a reprimand. But Pike's vanity would not allow him to apologize to anyone. Now he would demonstrate a trait that was to plague him for the rest of his life: the inability to let a rebuff or a personal slight be forgotten, and an insistence on magnifying a small issue until it grew out of recognizable proportions.

He refused to apologize. Instead, he opened a counterattack against the school board, and accused them of penury in not supplying him with the assistant he felt he deserved as principal. In his opinion, they were petty, niggardly men. After his attack, the breach was too wide to be healed. The school board met, decided

that nothing could be done to redeem the errant Pike, and fired him on the spot.

4

According to Pike, his decision to go west was based on purely romantic considerations. He explains in his later writings that he fell desperately and hopelessly in love with a blond beauty named Elizabeth Perkins, and, realizing that he could never afford to marry her on a teacher's salary, decided to go far beyond the frontier where he could forget her. This explanation is, of course, in the best Byronic tradition of martyrdom for love, but Pike's justifications for his actions cannot always be taken literally. He was an incurable romantic, and at times dramatized facts to make them conform to a more romantic pattern.

It is far more likely that the idea of western travel was just another stage in his rebellious career, more attractive to him, perhaps, because conservative New Englanders were so opposed to it. A concerted "anti-western" movement had developed in Massachusetts in the late 1820's to counteract the glowing tales of the fortunes being made on the frontier, tales that were luring increasing numbers of New Englanders each year to desert their low-paying trades at home for opportunity in the West. Newspapers, preachers, and pamphleteers strenuously opposed this wanderlust, branding the stories as lies, and giving prominence to firsthand reports of men who had been in the country beyond Ohio and had come back penniless and in ill health. To a rebel like Pike, more than ready to discount anything that reflected the Puritan viewpoint, such opposition made him more determined than ever to go. There must be something glorious in the West, he felt, to call forth such a flood of denunciation.

This suspicion was confirmed when he read an obscure work of fiction called *Francis Berrian,* written by a man named Flint who described the Indians as "noble" and who, with the blind certainty of a Rousseau, declared that their state of simple savagery was the finest flowering of human society. Pike was overwhelmed by the thought of Santa Fe as depicted in the distorted tales he heard about this remote city. In his mind's eye he could see himself cooled by refreshing waters spraying from the fountain in front of the

Governor's Palace; he imagined the dark, smoldering beauty of the women, the ease of a life devoted to poetry, interrupted only by an occasional foray into the mountains to pick up gold and silver from the ground. Pike expressed his feelings about Santa Fe in a description of a friend who was "allured by the supposed immense riches in that country and the opportunity which he imagined there was in making a fortune there. He looked on New Mexico as a sort of Utopia, a country where gold and silver were abundant and easily obtained. In short, his ideas of it were precisely such as the word Mexico suggests to the mind. Neither was he alone in his delusion."

Pike had been able to save some money from his teaching, intending at first to use it for his higher education. Now, abruptly, he decided to invest it in a western journey. Not wishing to make the trip alone, he recruited two companions named Chase and Titcomb from a social club to which he belonged, an organization known as "The Seven Devoted Friends." They set their departure for March 10, 1831, and on the preceding night the four remaining "Devoted Friends" gave an enthusiastic going-away party for the three travelers. Pike tried to make sure that Elizabeth Perkins would be anxious to forget him by making love to her sister. The party was a great success, lasting well into the night. Dull-eyed by the early morning of the tenth, Pike set out with his two companions, leaving his mother to weep bitter tears over the son who had gone astray.

Pike would not see his father again, nor would he return to Massachusetts until late in his life, at a tragic time in his career when the people there who still remembered him would shake their heads and say that their early predictions that the Pike boy would come to no good end had been confirmed. Pike's father would die in 1833, and his mother would come to the frontier to visit her son briefly before she returned to Boston to marry again. This time she would do better in a conjugal alliance with a sober, industrious widower named Paul Pillsbury who spent his time in useful pursuits and made considerable money by inventing a machine for making shoe pegs and a contraption for grinding tanner's bark, and whose unflagging religious fervor matched her own.

TWO

PORTRAIT OF A POETIC PRAIRIE TRAVELER

Pike's adventures in the West resemble the episodes from a picaresque novel in which the hero, eternally optimistic, pursues the elusive shadow of opportunity only to have it disappear just as he is about to seize it, and who, undaunted, plunges headlong into the next equally fruitless adventure. For the next year and a half, Pike would wander over the West, led by rumors and half-truths mistaken for fact into ill-planned enterprises and one disappointment after another. At the end of his travels, he would be ragged, half starved, dirty, ill, penniless, and disillusioned. And yet, this unhappy period in his life would lay the foundation for his later wealth.

As he left Boston in March of 1831, he and his companions had no idea at all where they were going and, as a wag has commented, "no idea what they would do once they got there." Before they had gone very far, Chase began to get more homesick by the day as he learned that the life of an adventurer consists for the most part of nothing more than miles and miles of walking, poor food, and the discomforts of dust, mosquitoes, rain, and boredom.

They made the first part of their trip by stagecoach over rutted, infrequently traveled roads that stretched between Boston and Cleveland by way of Albany, Rochester, and Buffalo (where Pike registered disappointment over Niagara Falls). At Cleveland they decided to go south to Tennessee, walking the greater part of the distance when they were unable to get a ride. It was all that Pike and Titcomb could do to keep the nostalgic Chase from turning back. Tennessee was a disappointment. One look at the rough life of the dirt farmers along the road was enough to convince them that there was little opportunity for them here. They did, however, get their first taste of frontier violence in Tennessee as they watched

one man stab another to death in an argument. From Nashville, they meandered up to Paducah, Kentucky, and caught a ride on a keelboat to Cairo, Illinois.

At Cairo, Chase's spirits began to flag once again, but Pike and Titcomb managed to get him on the deck of a steamboat bound up the Mississippi for St. Louis, keeping his mind off Boston by discussing the heady possibility of following the Missouri River all the way up to the Yellowstone country, where they would trap and get rich and then make a triumphal return to Boston as highly successful and prosperous heroes.

By the time the steamboat docked at St. Louis, however, Chase had suffered another setback. He had had enough of the adventurous life, and wanted nothing more than to go home, rich or not. Neither Pike nor Titcomb was able to dissuade him. So, footsore and soul weary (he had walked some five hundred miles in the past four months), Chase turned back to Boston, and Pike and Titcomb, saddened at his departure, looked around to see what St. Louis had to offer them.

By coincidence, they arrived in St. Louis in August, at a time when recruiting agents were combing the city in a feverish attempt to staff a few wagon trains to Santa Fe before the cold weather could set in on the Plains. Having nothing better to do, Pike and Titcomb signed on with a tough veteran of the Santa Fe traffic named Charles Bent. Buying mules and supplies, they rode to Independence, where the train was forming, and by the middle of August, Bent's force of ten oxen-pulled wagons and thirty men moved out on the Santa Fe Trail.

Pike was quite pleased that fate was leading him to Santa Fe, and he settled down to enjoy the trip and record his impressions for use in a later book. The first days of the journey were very pleasant ones as Bent's party followed the well-traveled road to Council Grove, a comfortable tree-shaded resting place about ten or twelve days from Independence. Since this was the last place on the trail where hardwood could be obtained for repairs, Bent paused here long enough to have his men sling spare timbers under the wagons, a necessary precaution against the treeless Plains ahead. At Diamond Spring the men gathered fresh mint from a planting of mint roots provided by a thoughtful traveler of an earlier day, and the only early discomfort occurred when some of the wagons

bogged down in the crossing of Mud Creek and the men had to fan out into the prairie to cut grass to throw beneath the mired wheels.

Pike had plenty of time to record his impressions of the new country in which he found himself: "We may speak of the incessant motion and tumult of the waves, the unbounded greenness and dimness, and the lonely music of the forests, and the high magnificence, the precipitous grandeur and the summer snow of the glittering cones of the mountains; but still, the prairie has a stronger hold upon the soul, and a more powerful if not so vivid an impression upon the feelings. Its sublimity arises from its unbounded extent, its barren monotony and desolation, its still, unmoved, calm, stern, almost self-confident grandeur, its strange power of deception, its want of echo, and in fine, its power of throwing a man back upon himself and giving him a feeling of lone helplessness, strangely mingled at the same time with a feeling of liberty and freedom from restraint."

Very shortly, the sublime vista of the prairies that inspired him to such lofty prose was to prove so uncomfortable that he would have little inclination to write at all. The summer had been miserably hot in the waterless country beyond Mud Creek, and the parched grass had shriveled and turned yellow beneath a scorching sun. Turned out to graze in the evening, Bent's oxen snorted in the dust and found nothing to appease their appetite. Then, in the torturous days before they reached the Arkansas River, the expedition ran short of water. Bent had no choice. His only salvation lay in pushing ahead at a steady pace, driving the lean-ribbed oxen even harder than before. If the men could stand the thirst and the heat, the animals could not, and during the night camps many of the oxen died. Leaving the carcasses behind, Bent moved on, his train followed by a pack of wolves that howled in the wagon track, driven by a sporadic rifle fire to stay just beyond range, waiting for another of the lean animals to drop.

Finally the train reached the broad flat meandering valley of the Arkansas River, and men and animals alike splashed into the muddy water. During the rest camp at the Arkansas, the men conferred with Bent, who was now faced with the decision that confronted every wagon master on this trail. In a short time they would reach the fork in the trail, approximately three hundred and fifty miles west of Independence, and Bent would have to decide whether to

follow the northern route to Santa Fe by way of Bent's Fort, or whether he should take his train southwest on the lower trail, a shorter but much more hazardous route, with less water and more chance of encountering hostiles on a route that followed the upper Cimarron and then veered across to the Point of Rocks and the settlement of San Miguel, coming into Santa Fe from the south. By following the northern route, he would be assured of water, but it was late in the season and he could not expect the warm weather to hold much longer. Because, very shortly, the snows would clog the Sangre de Cristo Pass and make the mountain route treacherous, Bent decided to go to the south.

Writing about the country they encountered below the Arkansas, Pike had a profound influence on the western travelers of his day, perpetuating the myth of "The Great American Desert," a descriptive concept that was to persist into the middle of the century. "The world of prairie," Pike wrote, "which lies at a distance of more than three hundred miles west of the inhabited portions of the United States and south of the Arkansas River and its branches, has been rarely, and parts of it never trodden by the foot or beheld by the eye of an Anglo-American. Rivers rise there in the broad level waste, of which, mighty though they become in their course, the source is unexplored. Deserts are there, too barren of grass to support even the hardy buffalo; and in which water, except in here and there a hole, is never found. Ranged over by the Cumanches, the Pawnees, the Caiawas, and other equally wandering, savage and hostile tribes, its very name is a mystery and a terror. . . . It is into this great American desert that I wish to conduct my readers. . . ."

On the long trek across the dry Plains from the Arkansas River, Pike looked forward thirstily to the Cimarron, or the "Semaron," as he calls it, but when the wagon train reached it he was disappointed. "It is a singular river," he wrote. "You may see it one day running flushly in one place, and sinking, just below, entirely in the sand; and the next day the case will be reversed. The dry place will then run water, and the place which was before running will be dry as a desert. The bed of the river and its banks are covered with salt; not like the salt of the Brazos, pure muriate of soda, but bitter and nauseous, like the sulphate of soda." And Pike mused, looking down at the river, that drinking that unpalatable water would have undoubtedly a laxative effect.

By late in October it was apparent that the wagon train was not going to reach Santa Fe on schedule, for the weather suddenly turned bitterly cold and the first blizzard struck without warning on the 26th. Blinded by snow, the oxen stopped in their tracks, and only the insistent cracking of the whips would make them move at all. Even then, progress was slow. By nightfall the company reached the middle spring on the Cimarron, one of the infrequent holes of drinkable water on the river, and Bent circled his wagons and bedded down for the night. Almost miraculously, or so it seemed to the men who had been dreading a night watch in a blizzard, the snow stopped about sunset. But as the clouds broke and the skies cleared, the temperature plummeted toward zero.

It fell to Pike to stand the last night watch, a period of eight hours during the coldest part of the night, just before dawn. Shivering violently from the cold, he walked back and forth for three hours, beating his arms against his sides to keep warm, and finally he could stand it no longer. He took enough buffalo chips from the mess supply to build himself a fire, and, as if to justify this breach of company rules, he wrote, "During my watch, a horse froze to death."

From that day on, the weather continued bitterly cold, and the wagon train crept past Upper Cimarron Spring to Rabbit Ear Creek and Round Mound, with the breath steaming from the nostrils of the oxen like plumes of smoke. On November 18th, another ferocious snowstorm vented its fury on them, the ice particles driven by a screaming wind. By squinting through the white screen of the blizzard they could see the vague outlines of the Point of Rocks in the distance, a high ridge of mountain towering above the level prairie, and sending out three rocky spurs into the flat. As the train struggled toward the refuge of the rocks, the wind died down and the snow abated. It was still early in the day, but because, to the north, Bent could see the heavy dark blue haze of another storm approaching in the distance, he decided to make camp in one of the deep canyons between the spurs.

He ran his wagons across the mouth of the northern canyon to make a barrier against the wind, and all afternoon the men of the party cut cedars from the sides of the mountains and dragged them to the fortress, piling them up on the outside of the wagons. The oxen and the horses were driven up the canyon where they would

be better protected from the approaching storm. By nightfall the camp was secured, but when Pike went out to stand guard the storm had not yet struck. His tour of duty started at ten, and he promptly climbed the side of the canyon to the ridge, where, finding a sheltered hollow in the rocks, he wrapped himself in his blankets and lay down. After two hours, when his guard duty was finished, he went back to camp. By pulling two blankets and two buffalo robes on top of him, he managed to get warm enough to go to sleep.

Shortly before daylight it was apparent that Bent had made a tragic mistake. He had chosen the canyon as a natural shelter against the wind, never for a moment considering that the wind might whip over the top of the ridge and roar down the canyon from the opposite direction. But this was exactly what happened. The shrieking of the wind aroused Pike from a sound sleep.

"Two or three hours before daylight, the storm commenced with a terrific violence, and I never saw a wilder or more terrible sight than was presented to us when day came. The wind swept fiercely out of the canyon, driving the snow horizontally against the wagons, and sweeping onward into the wide prairie, in which a sea of snow seemed raging. Objects were not visible at a distance of twenty feet, and when now and then the lull of the wind permitted us to look farther out into the plain it only gave us a wider view of the dim desolation of the tempest. There was small comfort at the fires, immense though they were; for as gust after gust struck the wagons, the snow blew under them and piled around us, while the cold seemed every moment to increase its intensity. For some time in the morning, we were crowded together in our tent, but while eating our breakfast in it, the pins gave way and we were covered with snow.

"We then pitched it again in the lee of the wagons, with its mouth to the prairie. In the evening we all turned out, although the cold was hardly supportable, and cut and carried wood to a sheltered place on the side of the mountain where our sapient captain had directed us to stand guard. We then stuffed boughs of cedar under the wagon, in the lee of which the mess fire was built, and also built us a shelter at each end of the wagon, and managed to enjoy some small degree of comfort."

By the time the storm had abated on the second day, the tragedy

of Bent's error became apparent, for when the men went up the canyon to collect the animals they found a half-dozen of the oxen frozen to death. This left the train short of draft animals, but Bent's position was untenable here, and he knew it; so, despite the deep drifts of snow that had obscured the trail, and the continuing bitter cold, he decided to push on. The surviving oxen were hitched to the wagons. The whips popped, and the lumbering animals plowed into the deep snow. Despite the buffalo robe wrapped around him, Pike was so cold that his feet turned numb and dead in the stirrups. To keep from freezing, he abandoned his horse and ran back and forth in the wagon tracks all day to keep the blood circulating in his legs, but despite his exercise his feet were frostbitten before the train stopped for the night.

In the next few days the weather relented, and Bent's sadly depleted party staggered south along the east slope of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, the oxen single-yoked, the men bone tired, half sick from the ordeal of the blizzards they had passed through. They were destined to arrive in Santa Fe during the first week in December, when Charles Bent would be credited with another successful trip and at the same time would be a step closer to his eventual career as a wealthy governor of the Territory of New Mexico.

Inexplicably, Pike was not with the train when it reached Santa Fe. On the 24th of November, for an undisclosed reason, he and Titcomb left the wagon train and struck out over the precipitous mountain trail to Taos. Perhaps he quarreled with Bent, as he was to quarrel later with the leader of another expedition, or perhaps he was so impatient to reach civilization that he hazarded the short cut rather than wait for the slow-moving oxen to pull the wagons into Santa Fe. Nevertheless, he and Titcomb left the train and did not see the golden city until much later. By then his disillusionment had already set in with the realization that there is nothing romantic about a primitive people. He found the Mexicans to be ignorant and purposefully vague, and he typified them in the description of the guide he hired to lead him into Santa Fe which he included in his *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country:*

"We were told at the start, that it was five leagues to the city, and after travelling more than that distance, we inquired of the guide, 'How far now?' *'Cosa de media lequa?'* (about a mile and a

half). In the Course of two or three miles, I inquired again. It was now, *'Quizas lequa y media,'* (perhaps four and one-half miles). I had a great idea of shooting him. At length, getting entirely out of patience, I inquired again. Poking out his chin, and pouting out his lips, as if to indicate the place, he said it was *'Mui cerquita,'* (close at hand). 'Is it half a league?' inquired I. *'Si es lejitos,'* he replied. Now, *lejitos* and *cerquita* are the exact antipodes of each other, but I have always observed that in that country when you are told a place is *cerquita,* it is proper to lay in three days' provisions. I have been told that a place was three leagues off, when it was a two days' journey. Finally, surmounting a small eminence, our guide turned, with an air of immense importance, and ejaculated—*'Ai esta!'* There it was, sure enough."

As Pike and Titcomb rode into Santa Fe, into the glorious city that had occupied so much of their thinking for many months, they were vastly disappointed. It was a physically dirty village, consisting of low adobe structures that reminded Pike (as they did many other travelers of the day seeing Santa Fe for the first time) of brick kilns. The streets were narrow and filthy, for there was no sanitation system, and the people were ragged and poverty-stricken, pathetically flamboyant in the garish sashes they had bought from the American wagon trains. Pike rode into the plaza, the dogs barking at his horse, and had his first look at the Palacio de Gobernadores, the structure that had so captured his imagination in New England.

"Neither is the Governor's palace in Santa Fe anything more than a mud building, fifteen feet high with a mud covered portico, supported by rough pine pillars. The gardens and fountains and grand staircases, etc., are, of course, wanting. The Governor may raise some red pepper in his garden, but he gets his water from the public spring."

Once they reached Santa Fe, Pike was left alone, for his companion, Titcomb, decided that Chase had had the right idea all along, and went east as soon as he could find a way. Pike was more at home here, since he spoke Spanish, and if he did not like the Mexicans he did not let this antipathy keep him from looking around at the prospects of making some immediate money. As he talked to the Americans who were wintering in Santa Fe, his dreams of picking up gold and silver from the mountains quickly evapo-

rated. And after meeting again some of the men who had ridden in Bent's party with him, he soon was discouraged from becoming a merchant as he learned the hidden hazards of the Santa Fe trade.

One of Pike's friends, a Missouri farmer who had saved for many years to accumulate enough money to buy wagons and oxen for the long trek to Santa Fe, served as a good example. The farmer outfitted his train in St. Louis where a supplier filled his wagons with yard goods, including domestic cloths, silks, and ribbons, commodities that were bringing an excellent price in the cloth-starved markets of the Southwest. The farmer left St. Louis owing $1,750 to the supplier, with every prospect of doubling his money in Santa Fe.

Unfortunately, he was not prepared for what happened when he drove his wagons into the *Alhóndiga* in Santa Fe and unloaded them for official inspection. The customs officers were very polite. They took a complete inventory of his goods, and then, through an interpreter, presented him with the bill. The farmer was stupefied, outraged. The duties amounted to $2,104, almost seven hundred dollars more than the original cost of the goods. In addition, the interpreter charged an extra $250 for his services.

The farmer turned merchant had no choice. At the moment he did not have the money to pay the duties, but the customs officials were very lenient. They told him he could pay when the goods were sold, and while he was disposing of them they promised to keep a close eye on him to make sure he did not leave the country prematurely.

It took the farmer a full year to dispose of his yard goods. His total receipts came to $3,854. After he paid the customs house and the interpreter, he had $1,500 left, but he still owed $1,750 to the outfitters in St. Louis. In other words, Pike reckoned, the farmer had brought his wagons all the way to Santa Fe and spent a year in the Mexican trade to realize a net loss of $250.

Under this kind of prohibitive taxation, Pike saw that it would be impossible to make any money as a trader. Since he could read and write English and speak Spanish, Pike had no trouble finding employment as a clerk and a traveling salesman, and he spent the winter in and around Santa Fe, writing poetry and looking for opportunities to advance himself while he enjoyed the crude social life of this queen city of the frontier.

He spent some of his time at the *fandangos,* the democratic dances held in a dirt-floored hall where everyone, regardless of race or condition, was admitted without charge to dance to the music of a fiddle and guitar and to get indigestion from sweetbreads and drunk on *pasa* whisky, the two items of refreshment that were sold at double prices to the participants. Aside from the *fandangos,* Pike amused himself by walking in the country around Santa Fe, and spent much of his free time at the *estanquillo,* the small shop on the plaza that was licensed to sell cigars, and a gathering place for American trappers.

As he listened to the trappers' talk, Pike's ambitions began to stir again. At the moment the United States had gone fur crazy, and most of the current fashions used fur in one form or another. More lucrative than any other fur at the moment was beaver for use in men's hats, and the fashion houses of the East were buying all the beaver pelts they could find in the fur warehouses in St. Louis. The supply was still far short of the demand, and a good beaver trapper who knew his business might very soon find himself rich.

Trapping beaver sounded fairly simple to Pike. You had only to find a beaver stream and the path the animals followed in and out of the water. Then you had to set your trap in this path, placing it about four inches underwater and securing it with a chain attached to a stake. You baited the trap with a twig that had been dipped in dissolved castor, a scent which even the most canny beaver found irresistible, and which lured him to his doom. Sniffing the twig, the beaver would step in the trap, find himself caught, thresh around a while in panic, and drown. All that the trapper had to do was to remove the beaver pelts and reset the traps, changing the location occasionally when the beaver grew too wary to take the bait.

Of course, as the trappers in Santa Fe freely admitted, the business was not quite that simple, but beaver were plentiful and there was no reason why a man shouldn't make good money at it. Pike decided to try it.

In August of 1832, Pike heard that a Missourian named John Harris was forming a party in Taos to go after beaver in the little-trapped Comanche country near the heads of the Fausse Washita and the Red River. Meeting an American named Campbell in Santa Fe who was also going to Taos to join Harris' party, Pike struck up

a conversation with him and asked what supplies he would need for the journey. As a result, Campbell promptly sold him a complete outfit at exorbitant prices, one horse (for riding), one mule (for carrying), six traps, and an ample supply of powder, lead, and tobacco. Pike was now ready to enter the fur trade.

2

The journey to Taos, a comparatively short distance when measured against the proposed journey into Comanche country, did not bode well for the new trapper. Riding into the valley of the Picuris on his way to Taos, Pike and a companion from Santa Fe promptly got lost. After spending a night in the mountains, Pike ran into a camp of Mexicans and decided to stay in the area rather than risk the chance of getting lost again, for the Mexicans told him that the trapping party would undoubtedly follow this valley down from Taos. By waiting here, he could intercept them.

On the 4th of September the expedition came into view, a motley collection of thirty Americans, two Indians (a Ute and an Apache), and about fifty Mexicans. Of this congregation, not one man was familiar with the country toward which the party was now headed, yet each man had a definite opinion of the route they should follow. Before long, this ignorant stubbornness would result in open and continual bickering, completely negating any possible chance of success. The expedition camped in the valley of the Picuris for two days, and Pike had a chance to get acquainted with the rest of the Americans in the party. He was not impressed. He characterized the whole lot as "better at boasting than fighting, and few upon whom a man might depend in an emergency."

The most picturesque of the trappers was Bill Williams, a man who had already achieved a reputation as a frontiersman. "Old Bill," as the men called him, was a trapper, over six feet tall, a gaunt, nervous man with red hair and a leathery face deeply pitted with smallpox. He had been in the West so long he was "all muscle and sinew," and Pike characterized him as a "shrewd, acute, original man, and far from illiterate."

Another of the trappers was a Virginian named Tom Banks, an inveterate yarn spinner who sat around the campfires and indulged himself in long accounts of his fantastic adventures. Pike had not

yet learned to appreciate this form of frontier humor. He wrote that Banks had a "boasting mouth" and also that Banks "claimed to have been a prisoner among the Cumanches three months, but he lied, for he could not utter a word of their language."

The first serious disagreement came before the party was a day's ride out of the Picuris camp. All day the trappers bickered about the course they should follow, and on the afternoon of September 6th, as they came into the valley of the Demora River and camped in the ruins of Old Village, the argument was still raging. A temporary truce was declared while the men built their fires and set about cooking supper. Old Village was a settlement that had been raided by the Pawnees and Comanches so often that the Mexican settlers had finally decided to abandon it altogether rather than face the prospects of a continual battle with the Indians. And once the trappers had finished supper, Old Village came alive with a verbal battle as the men argued far into the night.

There were no maps of the region, and everyone had a conflicting idea of its topography. The only man who had done any extensive traveling in the country east of the Staked Plains was Aaron Lewis, who had wandered, half blind and almost frozen to death, along the Canadian for many weeks during the preceding winter. Despite the fact that he had been lost during much of this miserable journey, he was certain that he knew the terrain better than the rest of the men. He advised crossing to the main fork of the Canadian branch of the Arkansas and pushing on to the Washita. After they had trapped it, they could make a wide loop and follow the Red River back to its head. But Lewis had no authority at all, and his plan met with a very cool reception.

Finally, after much discussion, the party decided to stay under the mountains and follow the Gallinas until it ran into the Red River. Of course, as they later discovered, the Gallinas does not run into the Red at all, but into the Pecos; but at the moment they were all pleased with the decision that had quieted the argument, and everybody bedded down to dream about the colonies of beaver waiting to be trapped.

To make sure they would not get lost, Harris sent Pike and three Mexicans into the village of San Miguel to hire an old Comanche guide named Manuel, who had been converted from his heathen ways and who had married a wife according to the laws of the

church, to lead the party through the Indian country. Harris refused to trust the Mexicans, and as Pike was the only man in the group with a fluent command of Spanish he was forced to go along. As Pike rode off toward San Miguel, Harris continued on down the Gallinas, instructing Pike to catch up with him after he had talked with the old Comanche.

It took Pike a day and a half to ride into San Miguel, a dirty little village with nothing to recommend it except amenable women. "The women in particular seemed to take a great interest in our well-being," Pike confides. After considerable discussion the old Comanche agreed to go along as guide, and, his work done, Pike rested a while and talked with the residents of the village about the country into which the trapping party was heading. The Mexicans were not encouraging. The savage Plains tribes were very hostile, they said, and they did not like Americans to enter their country, and went to great lengths to discourage them. As a matter of fact, one hapless traveler had recently been shot to death by the Kiowas only four days' journey out of San Miguel.

All of this talk made Pike highly nervous, and he grew openly wary of Manuel, describing him as "an old faithless Indian, of a tribe to which a white man is like a smoke in the nostrils." Anxious to rejoin the trappers, Pike rode out of San Miguel on September 12th, with the villagers clustered behind him, shouting benedictions and prayers for his safety. For two days Pike and his escort rode through the barren country down the Gallinas River, passing through the last small inhabited village and the scattering of abandoned *ranchos* to the south of it, and then overtook the expedition, which was camped on the river.

That night the old Comanche was consulted by the members of the party and it seemed at first that Manuel would provide the leadership necessary to weld the fractured party together again. Squatting in the dirt, the old Indian sketched the trail with the tip of his finger, following the river as far as Bosque Redondo, or Round Grove, and then turning east into the high flat treeless country of the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains. The men nodded in agreement. The route was settled.

The agreement was short-lived, for the next day Harris and Campbell began to argue again. It was inevitable, of course, that there should be friction between the two men, because both of

them were headstrong and fractious, and both claimed the nominal right of leadership; Harris, since he had organized the expedition at Taos in the first place, and Campbell, since he had brought a sizable number of his own men into the party. Harris had no confidence in the Comanche at all, and as the trappers followed the Gallinas to its confluence with the Pecos River he felt that they should leave the river and move east across the open country in the hope of finding the Little Red River.

The two men argued violently, and the rest of the party split into two factions. Shortly afterward Harris took his followers and, in a fit of bad temper, marched out across the prairie while Campbell and his men followed the Indian guide along the river. Pike chose to go with Campbell.

Not long after Harris left the Pecos, he changed his mind, realizing the foolhardiness of marching blind across an uncharted prairie with no guide to lead him. Reversing his direction, he led his men in a wide circle back to the river. But rather than admit that he was wrong, still angry at having his authority challenged, he refused to camp with Campbell, and the two parties went down the river separately, maintaining a cold aloofness from each other, despite the fact that very often they were only a few hundred yards apart.

About 120 miles from San Miguel, the travelers encountered a deep, narrow rocky canyon through which the Pecos made a wide bend to the south, and the old Comanche called a halt to Campbell's party. Harris, following some distance behind, did likewise, waiting to see what Campbell was up to. The Comanche wisely advised Campbell not to follow the river at this point, but to by-pass the canyon and intercept the Pecos on the other side where the country once again flattened out. This Campbell did, but Harris, still angry, and still determined not to follow Campbell, plunged into the canyon and went a considerable distance before he saw that further progress was impossible. His men had to scramble up a sheer precipice to level terrain before they could proceed.

Campbell's section of the expedition was running into trouble of a different sort now, for as they rode through the red rolling hills, barren of trees, the Mexicans began to get highly nervous as they strained their eyes against the bright sunlight for the first sign of the hostile Indians they knew these hills contained, savages waiting

for a chance to pounce on an unwary caravan. Twice they sounded the alarm and prepared for battle for no reason at all, and it took all of Campbell's skill as a leader to keep them from turning back to Santa Fe. Shortly before the expedition reached Bosque Redondo, the Mexicans snatched up their rifles once again when they spotted a body of horsemen raising dust in the distance. Happily, the riders turned out to be members of a Mexican trading party that had just returned from the Cañón del Resgate in the Staked Plains where they had been trading with the Comanches.

The members of this trading party were for the most part half-breeds known as Comancheros, men with the fortunate ability to trade with both the Mexicans and the Indians without being molested by either. Dressed in their flat hats, armed with both bows and rifles, riding horses decked out with trappings made of woven straw, the Comancheros were an unwelcome sight to Pike and Campbell. With the Mexicans as nervous as they were already, the wily Comancheros could be as disruptive as a pack of marauding hostiles. That night the Comancheros camped with the Mexicans of Campbell's party, conversing in low tones around the campfire. After a few minutes the apprehensive Mexicans were so upset that they asked Pike and Campbell to join them. They wanted the current plans revised in the face of the things the Comancheros had told them.

The Comancheros were very shrewd men who realized what an invasion of their trade territory by an expedition of American trappers might mean, and they subtly played on the fears of the Mexicans in order to discourage the whole business. Of course, they said, it was possible that the Indians might not molest the Mexicans, but the Indians were at present very unfriendly to the Americans, and the whole expedition would certainly encounter trouble once it reached the Cañón del Resgate. For a large war party of Comanches and Kiowas were gathered in the canyon, celebrating a recent victory over an American wagon train in which they had captured fifteen hundred mules and one scalp. Intoxicated by this triumph, the Kiowas and Comanches had come to a mutual decision: No Americans were to be allowed to trap in their territory.

And now, knowing that the trapping party could not proceed without their guide, the Comancheros went to work on the old Indian, Manuel. They told him that his Comanche brothers knew

about his presence on this train and that they had sent a message to him. If he led these interlopers into the country of his people, they would have no mercy on him. He would die alongside the Americans he guided. The strategy was successful, for Manuel was an old man, there were few years left for him anyway, and his stomach had been filled with fighting in his youth and he wanted no more of it. Shaking his head, he told Pike he wanted to return to his wife. The trapping party was not worth dying for. He would not enter the Staked Plains, he said, not if one American remained in the party.

The Comancheros went one step further to quench the last spark of hope. Even if this party managed to escape the Indians, which was not likely, they would certainly starve to death, for it had been a bad year on the Plains and the buffalo had moved on, and there was no meat to be had.

Under the added pressure of this last disclosure, the Mexicans collapsed. To save face, they began to argue that the expedition had been foolhardy from the very beginning. Since neither Campbell nor Pike was noted for his tact, the discussion exploded into a violent argument that terminated with the Mexicans being fired on the spot, a rather meaningless gesture since the Mexicans were determined to quit anyway. Pike was so angry that, three years later, he could still write about this incident: "I had tried these men for the last; had put confidence in them, and knew that if they were not worthy of it there were none in the country that were; and I found this last, best specimen of character as treacherous, as cowardly, as any other portion of the province."

Despite the loss of the Mexicans and the guide, Pike was determined to continue; but Campbell had been disheartened, and, too stubborn to join Harris who was camped half a mile above him, he decided to go back to Taos. The next morning Pike took his horse and his mule and, saying goodbye to Campbell, went to join Harris. Harris refused to be intimidated by the Comancheros and was determined to push on, with or without a guide. In complete command now, he would make all the decisions. From the Comancheros Harris learned that the Staked Plains extended for fourteen days to the east, at which time the party might expect to find themselves on the edge of an escarpment (which the Mexicans called a *ceja,* or eyebrow) and that below this escarpment they

would find a system of rivers, the Azul, the San Saba, the Javalines, the Las Cruces, and one other, the name of which Pike could not remember.

About the 21st of September, Harris led the way north along the Pecos, looking for the Comanchero trail leading eastward into the Staked Plains, the edge of which, from this distance, looked like a low flat ridge to the east. On this first day, terrified at the prospects awaiting them, two or three of the Mexicans deserted. But Harris would tolerate neither insubordination nor desertion. Realizing that such defection would set a dangerous precedent for the rest of his Mexicans, he sent a party of armed men after the deserters to bring them back, by force, if necessary.

The Llano Estacado was to prove every bit as miserable as the Mexicans had feared. "This Stake Prairie," Pike wrote, "is to the Cumanche what the desert of the Sahara is to the Bedouin. Extending from the Bosque Redondo on the west, some twenty days' journey on the east, northward to an unknown distance, and southward to the mountains on the Rio del Norte, with no game and here and there a solitary antelope, with no water except in here and there a hole, and with its whole surface hard, barren and dry, and with the appearance always of having been scorched by fire, —the Cumanche alone can live in it. Some three or four human skulls greeted us in our passage through it, and it is said that every year some luckless Spaniard leaves one of these mementos lying in the desert. It is a place in which none can pursue. The Cumanches, mounted on the best steeds which the immense herds of the prairie can supply, and knowing the solitary holes of water, can easily elude pursuit."

The party wasted no time worrying about Indians as they entered the Llano Estacado, for they were immediately confronted with a much more persistent pair of enemies—hunger and thirst. Bill Williams was appointed hunter for the group, and for the first two days he had good luck, bringing an antelope and a crane back to camp. At first the men found plenty of water. Passing through sandhills, they scooped holes in the low places into which water soon seeped, and on the second day they found a spring. But on the third day their short-lived luck ran out and they found themselves with neither food nor water. Once again the Mexicans began to talk of desertion, and Harris was forced to kill a mule for meat

to keep them happy. Despite Pike's ravenous appetite, he was revolted by the sight of mule meat roasting on a fire. Most of the white men in the party felt the same way. They decided it was better to go hungry than to feast on mule meat, and vowed to starve two days longer before they would resort to eating it.

The next day, weak with hunger, some of the men organized a hunt on which Bill Williams killed an antelope and other sharpshooters managed to down three buffalo. They returned with the meat to find the rest of the camp exultant over the discovery of a spring. They prepared for a feast, and cut up the animals, only to make the unhappy discovery that they had no fuel for a fire, no wood, and no buffalo chips, which were usually found in abundance. Finally, in ravenous desperation they set fire to a clump of tall weeds and tossed the meat in, pulling it out raw and scorched from a brief exposure to the fire. Pike's voracious hunger was now greater than his reluctance. He ate heartily.

On September 27th the store of water was again exhausted. To add to the general discomfort, the weather turned cold, and an icy north wind swept across the Plains. Harris again found himself in trouble, for the Comanchero trail he had been following led through soft, deep sand, and then disappeared altogether. Pike, Bill Williams, and a Frenchman named Girand were dispatched ahead of the main party to scout the trail and look for water, guided by a Mexican trapper named Antonio who claimed he had camped near here at one time and knew where they could find a water hole. They rode to the top of the hill, and then, through the dim haze of the blowing dust, they saw a herd of animals in the distance. Leaving Antonio to wait for the pack mules, Pike and his two companions galloped down the hill and across the plain, certain that they were charging into a buffalo herd.

And then, suddenly, as they came within a half-mile of the animals, Pike reined his horse to a sudden halt, amazed and startled. What had appeared to be a herd of buffalo in the haze of dust was in reality a Comanche camp, with clumps of horses hobbled on the edge of a timbered water hole, and the smoky brown hides of the tepees glinting dully in the overcast. There was no sign from the Comanche camp that the Indians were aware of the intruders. Not knowing what else to do, the trappers stayed where they were until a few more men from the party rode up to join them. It was

only then that they saw a rider on a distant hill, a Comanche woman who had been out in the hills gathering wood, and who now rode toward the tepees as if she were oblivious to these mounted strangers watching her. Suddenly, Bill Williams panicked. The woman had seen them. She was riding faster now, galloping toward the camp to spread the alarm. He drew his pistol and was about to shoot the woman from her horse when Pike stopped him. It was no time for violence. It was only a matter of time until the Comanches discovered their presence, and killing the woman would make any peaceful meeting impossible.

The trappers held a hasty conference, faced as they were with a practical dilemma. Their horses had been a long time without water, and now they had to be reined in tight to keep them from running toward the Comanche camp and the water hole. Dry-throated, equally desperate for water, the men could sympathize with their animals, and they looked longingly toward the pond shimmering in the distance, reckoning the price they might have to pay for a drink in terms of a battle with the Comanches. There was the possibility that, if they by-passed the Comanche village, they would be unmolested, but that would solve nothing. The problem of water would still be with them. It might be days before they ran across another water hole. On the other hand, a fight for the water was out of the question. Even a handful of warriors mounted on their fresh ponies would prove to much for a band of dried-out trappers mounted on exhausted horses. Too, they would not rely on the Mexicans in a battle, for the Mexicans had already scampered some distance back where they were firing their rifles aimlessly, as if the dull popping of the firearms gave them courage.

As the trappers talked, they saw a stir of movement in the village as a band of ragged, middle-aged Comanche warriors mounted their horses and wheeled away from the camp, led by an old chief. At the sight of the Indians riding across the plain in small clusters of twos and threes, Bill Williams again panicked. He was sure the Indians meant to fight, and he pulled his pistol once again and pointed it toward the chief, only to have it knocked to one side. If he tried that again, the trappers yelled at him, they would kill him on the spot. "Old Bill" calmed down. He knew they would. The pistol went back in the holster.

The main body of the Indians hung back, halting in an uneven

line as the old chief and three of his warriors rode forward for a parley. Antonio was the only man among the trappers who could speak Comanche, but he did so very hesitantly, wanting desperately to keep as far away from the Indians as possible. With great dignity and a display of calculated calm, Harris stared at the chief and glanced at the stream of warriors that continued to pour out of the village. He could not see any firearms among the Indians. They were mostly older men, armed with lances and bows, and he could see a few young warriors in the group. There was every chance that they might not care to fight against the superior firepower of the trappers.

"Ask them if they are friends," Harris said.

Nervously, Antonio relayed the question to the chief, and then turned back to Harris to translate the guttural reply. The chief said he had shaken hands with the Americans, Antonio said. As proof of his friendliness, the chief was extending an invitation to the Americans to camp near his village and share his water hole.

As Harris hesitated, considering the proposition, he saw the mass of Comanche riders moving toward him, very slowly. Quickly, he directed Antonio to tell the old chief to keep his men at a distance, but if Antonio relayed the order it had no effect, for the ragged wave of warriors continued to inch forward. Suddenly Pike shouted in Spanish for the chief to keep his men at a distance or they would be fired upon. Only then did the chief raise his hand. The Comanches stopped and moved back to their original position. It was now evident to Harris that the Comanches did not want to fight. Through Antonio, he told the chief that the Americans would accept his invitation. The chief nodded and pointed the way, and Harris moved his pack train to one side of the tepees, to a spot near the edge of a marsh where there was good grass, as well as sweet water.

Camping so close to the Comanches, Pike was highly nervous, for the stories told by the Comancheros had had a palpable effect on him. Looking at these destitute savages, dressed in scraps of leather and blankets, with their long uncut hair bound up behind with a swatch of buffalo or horse hair and trailing to the ground, he could well believe that they were capable of the most bestial behavior. He was particularly apprehensive of the Comanche women, with their "high cheek bones, long black hair, brown, smoked,

parchment-like skin, bleared eyes and fiendish look." He had heard many stories of the delight with which these Comanche women tortured captives, and as he looked at them he could not keep from seeing himself as a potential victim of their knives.

The old chief summoned the Americans to a council. The interview did nothing to ease Pike's apprehensions, and indeed increased his suspicions that the Indians were up to no good. He was so nervous that he believed nothing the old chief told him. The chief assured him that there were two kinds of Comanches, the southern tribe (friendly to the Americans) and the northern tribe (hostile to the Americans), and as proof that this band was from the southern tribe he exhibited a collection of red and green American blankets which he said had come from a trading expedition in San Antonio. Pike was not convinced. It was just as possible that these blankets could have come from trading with the hostile Snake Indians in the north.

Harris was curious about the scarcity of young men in the village, and Pike asked the Comanche chief where they were.

"To the north, hunting," the chief replied.

Pike did not believe this either. Instead, he was dead certain the young men of the village were out with the Kiowas, tracking the Campbell party that was returning to Santa Fe.

The old chief, as if to end Pike's doubts once for all, said that in the near past he had personally gone to Santa Fe to make peace with the Americans and that he had shaken hands with the white man. But Pike, determined to believe the worst, remembered that there had been a recent rash of Indian depredations around Santa Fe, and came to the instant conclusion that this band of Comanches was responsible.

Although there was no evidence to support any of these conclusions, Pike was not alone in making them. All of the trappers believed the old chief was lying, and his explanations and his protestations of friendship left them unconvinced. Harris was sure that the Comanches were hostile and that they were restrained from an immediate attack only because the young warriors were away from the village. He decided to push on just as soon as the horses were properly rested. This resolve was strengthened the day after the council when the trappers awoke to see the few remaining young warriors in the village mounting their horses and riding out

into the Plains. Pike was sure that they were going out to spread the alarm to other villages, and to the scattered bands of Comanche warriors, to alert them to the presence of the American trappers.

Despite his continual and unrelenting fear, Pike made the most of his days in the Comanche camp, spending much of his time questioning the old men of the village about the customs of the tribe and the structure of the Comanche language. It is to his credit that he correctly identified the Comanches as a branch of the Shoshoni tribe, and he was already conversant enough with Indian dialects to be able to recognize that the Comanches spoke nearly the same language as the Snakes in the north. He also came to a conclusion (proved inaccurate by later historians) that the Comanche Nation had a total of five thousand warriors, though how he came to that figure after observing one Comanche village he never explained. Though he spent but a short time among the Comanches, he went away with an unshakable conviction that he was now an expert on the tribe.

The old chief continued to woo the friendship of the trappers. He volunteered to show them a herd of buffalo on the banks of a nearby lake. His offer was refused. He then told them of a trail that led to a nearby village where he said his son and daughter-in-law would join them to show them where to find beaver, but the more determined the old chief was to prove his good intentions the more the trappers distrusted him. Finally, on September 28th, feeling that the horses had rested enough, Harris broke camp and led his party eastward, following the trail made by the chief and his followers, who had come from that direction only a few weeks earlier.

For the next few days the trappers wandered aimlessly in the barren country around the Cañón del Resgate, thinking that they were near the head of the Red River, and frustrated because they could not locate it. The fall rains had begun in earnest and the weather was continually cold, and finally the men abandoned all thought of beaver in the never-ending search for enough food to keep alive. In the portion of Pike's *Narrative of a Journey in the Prairie* which deals with these days, he lists the menu on which they managed to subsist. They picked berries from a hackberry tree; they killed an antelope and some ducks on a pond and sucked the bones clean. They killed prairie dogs and they trapped terrapin, which they considered an excellent economy because it cost no bul-

lets to get them. When they camped one night in a grove of hackberry and cottonwood, and discovered the place to be a favorite roost for hawks, buzzards, and crows, they supplemented their diet with a few hawks. "Hawks and prairie dogs do very well," Pike comments. "But there is little meat upon a terrapin."

Through the early part of October, they were never far from Indians. They were constantly stumbling across debris left by camping Comanches or spotting a lone Comanche hunter riding in the distance, and on October 3rd they came across another Comanche village and were spared the rigors of a battle once again only because the camp was devoid of young warriors. Pike notes that the village was full of women who had lacerated their ankles in grief for the casualties in a recent battle and who spent the nights wailing laments for their dead.

About two miles below the village, they came to a large lake and a river, and as they paused to rest, the usual bickering commenced and a heated debate occurred over where they should go from here. No one had any idea where they were, but Antonio, who claimed to know this region like the palm of his hand, insisted that they should leave the river that fed the lake and go south until they struck the Mochico. Four or five days past the Mochico, he said, they would find the San Saba and plenty of beaver. Harris was dead set against it. Since the day he had started out, he had been plagued by advisers and the promise of beaver on some remote stream. Now he had had enough. He was sure that the river on which they were camped was the South Fork of the Canadian and that by following it downstream he would find a continual supply of fresh water and game and an eventual beaver ground where the Canadian joined the Red. Antonio was overruled; muttering to himself, he helped pack the mules and got ready to ride again. And, as always seemed to happen when Harris made a firm decision, the party was once again plagued with ill fortune.

At the place where they had camped, the water was sweet and clear, but before they had traveled two days the river turned to salt and the water was undrinkable. Pike and Aaron Lewis, hungry and thirsty as usual, found some large watery deep-purple prickly pears and ate them, and as a consequence suffered with a "terrible ague" all night. The next day's diet was a little better, consisting of a blind Comanche horse.

On the 9th of October, Pike, Lewis, and an Englishman named Irwin, who had come from California to join the ill-fated party, crossed the river to break a trail and do some hunting in the labyrinth of gullies in the eroded barren red hills. They promptly got lost. The rest of the company was supposed to follow, but after waiting a while and seeing no sign of Harris and the rest of the men, Pike returned to the river. He could find no trace of the main party. Harris and his group had disappeared. Mystified, Pike's party followed the river downstream for seven or eight miles and then stumbled across Bill Williams and another group of men who were likewise lost. For the next twenty-four hours their wanderings became an unfortunate comedy of errors, replete with mixups and misunderstandings. Early on the morning after Pike and Bill Williams merged their groups, they were separated again. They spent all day firing shots and sending up smoke signals in an effort to locate each other, and in crossing the serrated ridges of the rough country near the river, where they had to dismount and lead the horses down the steep side of a gully and up the opposite bank, riding only a few feet before they had to dismount and go through the torturous business all over again.

After another night of separation, they finally met and continued downriver where they found Harris and the main party. Harris seemed totally unconcerned that Pike and his men had spent a miserable two days, an attitude which Pike, exhausted and irritable anyway, found insulting. After a few bitter words he promptly withdrew from the main party, and was joined by five other men who were also dissatisfied with the way Harris was leading the expedition. The dissenting group consisted of Pike, Lewis, Irwin, and two Missouri boys named Ish and Gillette who had been hired by Harris in Santa Fe. They took their horses and mules and made a survey of their equipment. Each man was equipped with a rifle and, except for Irwin, a pistol or two. But Irwin had a double-barreled English fowling piece, excellent for bringing down birds, and Pike was sure they could live off the country. In high good spirits, now that they were free from the arbitrary Harris, they set out on a new course, determined to follow the route Antonio had suggested earlier. By moving south they would cross Mochico Creek, and seventy miles farther on they hoped to find the sweet

running waters of the Río Azul, and then, by following it for seven or eight days, they hoped to hit the San Saba and lush beaver country.

Unfortunately, they could not keep to the course they had planned. The country through which they passed was rough and irregular, covered with hackberry and mesquite bushes, and instead of traveling south they were forced to move in a general easterly direction. When they had the good fortune to come across another river, which they assumed was another large branch of the Brazos, they found it dry. The only water they could find was in a shallow hole in the riverbed, but it was so salty the animals wouldn't drink it. Frantically, they spent the day ranging up and down the river, looking for fresh water. Coming across the remains of a Comanche camp on the riverbed, they took it as an indication that they would find fresh water there. Feverishly they scratched a hole in the sand and waited for the water to seep into it. They tasted it with despair. It was salt, and undrinkable. That night Pike had the first of many nightmares in which he dreamed he was drinking huge quantities of water. "Once in the night," Pike writes, "I conceived myself lying flat by a river, with the water touching my lips, but entirely unable to get a drop of it into my mouth."

The next day, October 14th, dawned bright and hot, and the men resumed their search for water, sweltering in the heat as they followed the dry valleys of creeks that led to the river, hoping to find a hollow in the flat rocks where a pool of water might have collected. As the sun climbed into the sky, the heat was almost overpowering and the animals grew glassy-eyed from thirst. And then, at two o'clock, the men stumbled across a rocky hollow containing shallow pools of stagnant water. The water was brackish and briny, but by this time the thirst of the animals and the men was so intense that they paid no attention to the taste, and joined in a communal slaking, gulping down immense quantities that Pike estimated at three gallons per man.

For six days they traveled from waterhole to waterhole, drinking all they could hold of the brine, and never getting enough, for, as Pike commented, "Salt water satisfies a man only while he is drinking it." Finding no game, they killed one of their horses, and Pike, ravenously hungry, found it "far from unpleasant. It was tender,

sweet and very fat; and on the whole is preferable to the meat of a lean deer." In his hunger, Pike experimented with horse tongue, but he did not find it palatable.

On October 20th the travelers paused in a hollow bordered by cottonwood and willows to make the frank admission that they were hopelessly lost. The search for water had led them in so many diverse directions that they had no idea how far they had come from the last Comanche village, or in which direction they had traveled. They now abandoned the idea of the San Saba, having wandered so far east. They supposed that they had passed the head of the Red River and now were to the north of it. If this were true, they should be fairly close to the Washita, which they should be able to find by following a course due north.

They changed direction and traveled north until nightfall, and the next morning plunged along the same course, eagerly anticipating the Washita, only to be suddenly confronted with visible evidence of their error as they came through the brush onto the bluff banks of the course of a very broad river running due east and west, with not a drop of water visible in the dry sand bed. The river was much too large to be the Washita. It could only be the Red, the long-sought river where they had thought to make their fortunes. Since the Red was bone dry, they decided to move on to the Washita. Crossing the dry bed they found a small channel of salt water under the northern bank, and after slaking their thirst they pushed on to the north.

Fortunately, the country improved, and the buffalo ran fat and plentiful on the good grass. But the rigors of the trail had proved too much for the horses. They died, one by one, until the travelers were left to make the rest of the journey on foot. Without horses they could not hope to search for beaver, and now they abandoned their commercial enterprise altogether and decided to return to civilization as fast as they could make it.

By the end of October, they had moved into the cross timbers, that strange belt of scrub oak and blackjack that stretches up from Texas, across Oklahoma, and into Kansas, a wilderness of grapevines and thorny briars in thick underbrush that lacerated Pike's ankles and left them covered with blood as he pushed through it. They came to the Washita River. Because it was running full, they did not recognize it, thinking that the Washita was a smaller stream.

Unable to ford it, they followed it downstream, and came across a band of friendly Osages who were hunting in the area. Pike was much more impressed with the Osages than he had been with the Comanches. "These Osages," he says, "were generally fine, large, noble-looking men supplied with immense Roman noses." The trappers followed the Indians through the woods to a village of thirty lodges where they met a French trader who informed them that their property would be safe with these Indians, and introduced them to the chief and his council. That evening the Osages demonstrated their friendliness with a banquet, and "fed us bountifully on the meat of the buffalo, bear, deer and polecat; the latter of which, however, we partook merely out of compliment."

The Osages urged Pike and the trappers to hunt with them, but the trappers, sick of the wilderness, were hell-bent for civilization. Leaving the Indians, they followed the Washita and once again plunged into another period of privation. The moccasins they wore had grown very thin and were now no protection at all against the sandburs and the sharp gravel, and Pike suffered greatly, for his feet were size fourteen, and very sensitive. The weather turned cold again, and a snowstorm whistled out of the north. They nearly froze to death as they traveled east for twelve days, and came at last to the Blue River. During this period they went for two full days without eating, and when they managed to kill a deer they gorged, eating the whole of it in one sitting. Stumbling down the Blue, they came to the Red River again, and rested for a while.

The rest of the journey is best told in terms of Pike's menu, for even at this early age his memory for food and the places where he ate it is excellent. On November 25th Lewis killed an old bear and a cub in the Red River bottom, and Pike supplemented this ration with wild turkey. On the same day, having crossed the Blue River and started north, Pike chopped down a large tree to get some grapes growing on it. On the 27th, Pike raided a bee tree for honey to go with the bear meat they had packed, and on the same day they ran across a wagon road that he thought would lead to the frontier outpost of Fort Towson. As they followed the road, it soon tapered down to a footpath and then disappeared altogether, so they left it and continued in a general easterly direction.

On the 1st of December they met a Choctaw Indian who told them that they were very close to a military road, but Pike was

distracted by the sound of an ax. Investigating, he found six Choctaws cutting down a bee tree. He tried to buy some of the honey. The Indians not only refused to sell it, but tried to beg gunpowder and balls as well. "A Choctaw is, without exception," Pike comments, "the meanest Indian on earth."

In midafternoon they came to the road the Choctaw had told them about, and as a final irony, which seemed an apt climax for a highly unsuccessful enterprise, Pike made another great mistake. In the many long nights he had spent with Lewis on the trail, Lewis had talked much about Louisiana and the glories of New Orleans and the good life he had lived there. And so, undaunted by their current fiasco, Pike decided to live in New Orleans for a while until he could accumulate enough money to go to the jungles of South America, where the opportunities to get rich were many and varied. As a consequence, when they reached the military road Pike led the group in what he thought was a southerly direction, believing he was heading toward Fort Towson and Louisiana. He was wrong in both suppositions. They were on the Fort Smith military road, and because the afternoon was cloudy he inadvertently walked north instead of south. The next morning, when the sun came up, he realized his mistake. "When we got up in the morning and saw we were mistaken, we were all so tired out that we concluded to give up Louisiana—we concluded to go to Arkansas."

Since their food was once again exhausted, the men traded their guns to the Choctaws and a roving band of Delawares for something to eat, and in the second week of December, 1832, footsore and exhausted, Pike and his bedraggled party finally reached the Arkansas River and saw the fort sitting high on the bluff of the opposite side.

"On the 10th we reached Fort Smith," Pike says, "and we must have made a ludicrous appearance. Falstaff's ragged regiment was nothing to us. I had a pair of leather pantaloons, scorched and wrinkled by the fire, and full of grease; an old greasy jacket and vest, a pair of huge moccasins, in mending which I had laid out all my skill during the space of two months, and in so doing, had bestowed upon them a whole shot-pouch; a shirt, which, made of what is commonly called counterpane, or a big checked stuff, had not been washed since I left Taos; and to crown it all, my beard

and mustachios had never been clipped during the same time. Irwin, for example, had not half a shirt. In short, we were, to use another western expression, 'as pretty a looking set of fellows as ever any man put up to his face.'"

THREE

PORTRAIT OF A FRONTIER SCHOOLMASTER

Fort Smith, when Pike first saw it in 1832, was little more than a clearing in the forest, a cluster of log houses and trading posts built around the now abandoned fort itself, a large stockade sitting on a bluff called Belle Point where the Poteau River joins the Arkansas. As Pike and his companions ferried across the river, they found themselves in the midst of as polyglot and notorious a group of men as ever drew breath. The dirt streets were full of grizzled settlers who had packed in salted buffalo meat from the western Plains to send downriver to the New Orleans market; Indians from many tribes who came to trade here, dressed in discarded white man's clothing and blankets and occasionally full tribal regalia; and missionaries, decked out in black broadcloth, supplying their wagons for a trek into the soulless no man's land between the Arkansas River and the Red where preachers were considered fair game.

Fort Smith occupied a unique position on the frontier, sitting as it did on the edge of the territory which had been set aside for the displaced Indian tribes of the East, and fringing a section of rough and inaccessible mountains that had become a traditional dumping ground for fugitives since the day in the 1700's when the Spanish lieutenant governor at Natchitoches described the residents of this country as vagabonds who "have either deserted from the troops and ships of the Most Christian King or have committed robberies, rape or homicide. . . ."

The country around Fort Smith was seething with a continual and unsettling violence generated by the pitched battles between the Osages and the Cherokees and the Delawares in the woods across the river, and in the conflict between the respectable settlers, who were pouring into this country in greater numbers each year,

and the lawless renegades who did not welcome intruders. At one time, for a few years after it was founded in 1817, Fort Smith had been the chief military garrison for this part of the frontier; but as more and more settlers poured across the line into Indian country, the troops were moved first to Fort Coffee, a few miles up the Arkansas, and then to Fort Gibson, eighty miles to the north, a more propitious site (according to the vacillating and harried War Department) from which to protect the Indians and the white settlers from each other. Now the only troops in Fort Smith were lounging around, waiting to catch a boat upriver.

Coming into town and looking for a place to stay, Pike was directed to the only hotel in town, a large log structure containing two immense rooms separated by a large hallway. It was here that he had the remarkable good fortune to meet a middle-aged, pudgy-faced man named Captain John Rogers, a former military officer, now very wealthy, who was obsessed with all things western and had established this quasi-hotel (which he called "a house for the accommodation of visitors") to attract western travelers and give him an opportunity to talk to them. Ever since the day he had arrived in Fort Smith in 1822, he had dreamed about making a journey into the Indian country, but with a young and beautiful wife to hold him back, and the tangling exigencies of his business commitments (he owned a cotton gin, warehouses, a large trading post, several thousand acres of fertile bottom land and a ferry service across the Arkansas), he could never tear himself away, and therefore traveled vicariously by entertaining anyone who had come from the West.

He was entranced by Pike because this heavily bearded poet was an excellent storyteller. He insisted that Pike stay at the informal hotel as his guest, and Pike was more than ready to accept. The hungry days on the Plains had left him with an insatiable appetite, and for the rest of his life he would find security in consuming immense quantities of food that he could not find elsewhere. Here the food was plentiful, cooked by slaves in the kitchen behind the hotel and served to him in front of the massive stone fireplace that heated the rooms. Too, he was ill from his journey, plagued with frequent bouts of malaria, and his lacerated ankles had become infected owing to lack of medical attention. Even after the rest of the trappers moved on and dispersed to find jobs in Fort Smith or

go back to Missouri, Pike stayed on, spending his evenings telling stories to the eager captain and developing a great fondness for his benefactor. "Good old John Rogers," he calls him in his later writings.

Once Pike was well enough, Rogers introduced him into Fort Smith society, which was an unusual mixture of traditional southern graciousness and frontier roughness, typified in one eccentric planter named Elias Rector who entertained Pike lavishly and made him acquainted with his friends. Rector represented the new aristocracy in the frontier settlement, and in the seven years since he had settled here he had founded an immense plantation that he worked with a large force of slaves while he occupied himself with his political position as United States Marshal for the Indian Territory, an appointment which included all the Indian tribes settled west of the Mississippi.

Pike was most impressed by Rector, and his interest in the man almost amounted to a study, for in later years Pike would grow to be much like the famous planter, following the example of lavish living Rector had set. Elias was the lion of the community, an incomparable raconteur, a prodigal host, a spendthrift who occasionally chartered a private steamboat to carry his cotton crop to New Orleans, going along himself to dispense money like water and to enjoy the raucous night life of the city before he returned home. He was such a celebrity in New Orleans, and so thoughtlessly generous, that a hotel there affixed a permanent silver plate bearing his name to the door of the suite reserved for him whenever he came downriver.

His most immediate influence on Pike was a tonsorial one, for Major Rector had an affectation that made him stand out in a frontier community where eccentricity was the rule rather than the exception. He wore his hair long, in wavy tresses around his broad shoulders. This was not uncommon with frontiersmen, who had little opportunity to cut their hair, and actually welcomed a bushy mane as protection from the sun and wind, but with Rector there was a difference. His hair was extremely fine, and the slightest breeze would whip it around his face and make of his head a tangled, unruly bush. But rather than cut it, Rector pinned his hair up beneath his hat, like a woman, and only occasionally, when atmospheric conditions were right, let it down.

The story was often told that one happy night in New Orleans, at Mardi Gras time, his long hair saved his life. Rector was at a gay ball when a band of drunks stormed into the hall and turned it into a glorious free-for-all. The lights went out, and the dancers ran shrieking for the doors, Rector among them. One of the rowdies grabbed him in the dark and was preparing to hit him when his hand accidentally touched Rector's long, soft hair that billowed down to his shoulders. The rowdy drew back suddenly, said, "Excuse me, ma'am," and Rector escaped safely.

Following Rector's example, Pike forbore to cut the mane of glossy black hair he had grown on his tour of the prairies, and, outdoing Rector, kept his bushy beard intact.

It was at Rector's parties, where Pike recited poetry to the ladies and recounted his western adventures to the men, that Pike first saw the advantages that great wealth could bring. Despite his acceptance among the planters, he still felt like an outsider because he was penniless and they were rich. These planters were no more intelligent than himself, he knew, no more gracious, no better educated, no more talented. The only difference between their estate and his was the amount of money they possessed. As he wrote in his good-humored, sharply cynical "An Aunciente Fytte, Pleasaunte and Full of Pastyme, of a Dollar or Two":

With circumspect steps we pick our way through
This intricate world, as all prudent folks do,
May we still on our journey be able to view
The benevolent face of a Dollar, or two.
For an excellent thing is a Dollar, or two;
No friend is so staunch as a Dollar, or two;
In country or town,
As we stroll up and down,
We are cock of the walk with a Dollar or two.

During the last weeks of December, Pike spent much of his time thinking about money and his lack of it. He was still determined to continue his career as a poet, for he had no doubt that with proper application he would eventually become famous as a poet, and with fame would come money. But in the interim he would have to find a position with an income, for he felt he had imposed

on Captain Rogers long enough, and the prospect of making any money out of poetry at this point was poor indeed.

2

While he was staying with Rogers, he made a number of forays into the woods around Fort Smith, prospecting for a job, almost drowning in an attempt to navigate the Arkansas River in a flood when he could not swim a stroke, and riding out to investigate the possibilities of settling on a piece of land and devoting himself to agriculture. One look at the way the settlers had to live was enough to eliminate that alternative forever, for the families that squatted on timbered lands and set out to clear the jungle of trees and underbrush had a very precarious grip on life. Their cabins were rough-hewn; their diet was an eternal round of pork and greens; their only measure of wealth was the number of lean-backed pigs they turned loose to root in the forest; and the men could look forward to years of poverty for their families while they worked at wages for the rich planters and tried to get their own crops to grow in fields dotted with tree stumps. And even when their fields were fenced and fruitful and their houses tightly chinked, they could never be sure that the land would remain theirs, for boundaries had been shifted back and forth in the area around Fort Smith with unsettling frequency in the past ten years, and a man might gamble five years of his life away only to find himself facing eviction for living on Indian lands.

No, the life of a farmer was not for Pike. About the first of January, 1833, he felt that he had recovered sufficiently from his ordeal to move across the river and board with a farmer named George M. Aldridge, mauling rails in return for his room and board. But he was not yet well, and suffered recurrent chills and malarial fevers, and was forced to spend much of his time in bed, waiting for the convulsive ague to pass.

A number of legends about Pike grew out of his days in Fort Smith. He was a popular and colorful man, and it is on such individuals that folk stories are built. In one of these tales, Pike and Rector had a bitter disagreement over a lovely girl with whom both men were in love. According to this tale, the girl chose the rich planter over the poor poet, and Pike was so incensed that he wrote

a scandalous piece of verse about Rector which circulated so widely and so damaged Rector's reputation that he lost his government position.

Another of these tales has Pike galloping down to Fort Towson to help Colonel James Bowie defend his band of Texans against a horde of Comanches, a story that ends with hundreds of Indians dead on the ground and a weary Bowie shaking hands with his bearded benefactor.

Neither of these stories happens to be true, but they are both illustrative of two of Pike's dominant traits, his intrepidity and his pride, both of which were shortly to lead him to presumption on a grand scale.

Finding no other way to make a living, it was inevitable that Pike would return to schoolteaching. Hearing that there was a vacancy at Fort Gibson, he caught a boat up the Arkansas in March, 1833, only to find that the position had been filled. But while he was at the fort, talking with the dragoons and enjoying a brief vacation before he went back to Fort Smith, he heard talk of an impending expedition that fired his imagination and seemed like a logical opportunity for him. The dragoons said that Sam Houston of Tennessee was about to lead a military force into the Plains to negotiate a treaty with the hostile Comanches, who were making life miserable for settlers and travelers alike, since the Indian hunting trips became raiding parties whenever the opportunity presented itself.

When Pike heard of Houston's plans, he was aghast. In his opinion Houston was about to make the biggest mistake in the history of Indian affairs. Prompted by an innate presumption that was to grow as the years passed, he sat down and wrote an advising letter to the Secretary of War for the United States, Lewis Cass. His first mistake came in the first line of his letter to Lewis Cass. He addressed him as "John."

The letter is remarkable only for the nerve it took to write it in the first place. Though Pike had been a mere three months on the Plains, and of that time had spent only a very small part with the Comanches, he now undertook to advise the Secretary of War with the aplomb of an expert. It was a mistake, Pike cautioned, to send Houston to treat with the southern Comanches, because they were already friendly to the Americans, and if Houston tried to approach

the hostile northern Comanches he would immediately be scalped.

The Comanches, he commented, upping his earlier estimate, had from eight to ten thousand warriors, and Judge Carr of St. Louis, who had recently arrived at Fort Gibson after having one man killed and another wounded in a brush with the Comanches on the Canadian River, could testify to their savagery. But, the letter implied, if the government wanted to persist in this foolish undertaking, Pike and Aaron Lewis, who was now living in Fort Smith, would go along to serve as guides. In addition, Pike volunteered to serve as interpreter, for he spoke Spanish, as did most of the Comanches.

Pike waited, but the silence on the part of the Secretary of War was interminable. Disappointed, Pike went down to Van Buren and taught school for a while. In June, when the hot weather settled down to a constant broil, Pike grew restless again and decided to go to the mountain town of Fayetteville, where it might be cooler, to look for work. Irwin, the little Englishman, was working in a small shop in Van Buren, and he volunteered to go along and finance the trip with three otter skins that he would sell in Fayetteville, using the money to support them until they could find work. Since Pike was broke, the agreement suited him, and they rode through the Boston Mountains to Fayetteville, only to have their pleasant journey interrupted by a man on horseback who, red faced and sweating, galloped up to them just as they were approaching Fayetteville, and placed them under arrest. The charge was that of stealing three otter skins from Van Buren. Sheepishly, Irwin admitted it was true. Pike examined the warrant and made the feeble legal point that since the warrant had been drafted in Crawford County and they were now in Washington County, the warrant was no good. But the constable, tired after the long canter from Van Buren, was in no mood to argue technicalities, and Pike and Irwin were taken back to Van Buren for trial.

The informal trial was held in July, and Irwin vindicated Pike, admitting that he, Irwin, had taken the skins without Pike's knowledge, and Pike was set free, only to find himself in exactly the same position he had occupied before going to Fayetteville. He was still in Van Buren, still broke, and still confronted with the specter of schoolteaching as a livelihood. Not wanting to stay in Van Buren, he went down the Arkansas River in the heat of the summer to a

settlement on Little Piney Creek in Pope County, evidently having heard that they had no teacher, and looking for a remote hamlet where he could settle down to a serious poetic career.

"After travelling over a fine, rolling, upland country," Pike says, "I descended into the bottom of a creek called Little Piney, nine miles from the river, and came at once upon a small log-house. I stopped to make a survey before entering the house, to which I had been directed by a settler. The settlement was like most others in this country: A field of about 40 acres under cultivation, filled with huge blackened trunks, gigantic skeletons of trees, throwing their bare, withered sapless branches forth, as though a whirlwind had been among them with its crushing destruction. About the house were a number of peach trees, scattered about with very little regard to regularity. The house itself was roughly built of logs, and in front was a shelter made of poles, covered with green branches."

As Pike approached, he saw an old man, dressed in leather clothes, sitting on the porch and sawing away on a fiddle. "He greeted me heartily," Pike comments, "but without any attempt at politeness, and in two minutes we were on the best terms in the world. He, too, had been at Santa Fe, and, as old travellers on the prairie, we had a claim upon one another's kindness. . . . He had been a journeyer over deserts and mountains, and a soldier at the Battle of New Orleans. Of course, he was an excellent Jackson man."

Pike was more interested in finding out about the school and the possibility of his teaching here, so he worked the conversation around to it.

" 'Why,' said the squatter, 'If you would set in right straight, I reckon thar' might be a right smart chance of scholars got, as we have had no teachers here for the best of two years. Thar's about fifteen families on the creek, and the whole tote of 'em well fixed for children. They want a schoolmaster pretty much too. We got a teacher about six months ago—a Scotchman, or an Irishman, I think. He took for six months, and carried his proposals 'round, and he got twenty scholars directly. It warn't long, though, before he cut up some ferliques, and got into a priminary; and so one morning he was found among the missing.

" 'What was the trouble?'

"'Oh, he took too much of the essence of corn, and got into a chunk of a fight—no great matter, to be sure; but he got whipped and had to leave the diggings.

"'And how am I to get a school?'

"'I'll tell you. You must make out your proposals to take up school; tell them how much you ask a month, and what you can teach; and write it out as fine as you can (I reckon you're a pretty good scribe). In the morning there'll be a shooting match here for beef; nearly all the settlement will be here, and you'll get signers enough.'"

Pike stayed the night in the settlement and prepared his proposals, listing the subjects he could teach, and early the next morning the hunters began to drift in from the woods. For the most part they were mountain men transplanted from the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee, tall, leathery men dressed in buckskin, carrying their long rifles and small smoke-blackened boards that would serve as targets in the match. They stood around, patting the flanks of the ox that would be killed and cut up for the prizes, speculating on their chances in the rich, deep laconic drawl of the hill country. The four quarters, the hide, and the tallow were the best prizes, but the rest of the butchered ox would make enough edible meat to give every contestant something for his trouble.

The contest was for the best six shots out of eleven, and a man could shoot offhand (without a rest) at forty yards, or prop his long barrel on a log and take his chances at sixty yards.

"The judges were chosen, and then a blackened board, with a bit of paper on it about an inch square, was put up against a tree. 'Clar the track!' cried the first marksman, who lay on the ground at a distance of sixty yards, with his gun rising over a log. The rifle cracked, and the bullet cut into the paper. 'Put up my board!' cried another; 'John, shade my sight for me!' and John held his hat over the sight of the gun. It cracked, and the bullet went within half an inch of the center. 'My board!' cried another; 'I'll give that shot goose!'—and he did, fairly boring the center with the ball. The sport soon became exciting. It requires great steadiness of nerve to shoot well, for any irregularity in breathing will throw the bullet wide of the mark. The contest was longer than I had anticipated; but was decided without quarrel or dispute. The judges decided, and their decision was implicitly obeyed. The whole eleven shots of

one man, who won two quarters, could be covered with a half dollar."

Once the shooting match was over, Pike circulated with his proposals, and the people squinted close at the handwriting and turned the paper this way and that to judge its form, but few of them could read enough to have any idea what the writing said. However, Pike was a persuasive man and an eloquent speaker, and just by looking at him and listening to the smooth words flow out of him you could tell he was a scholar, and before the day was over, he had signed twenty students. Now he inquired about his pay. The settlers were cash poor, and could scrape together barely enough to cover his room and board. His profit would have to be in pigs. Pike was escorted to the brush, where squealing through the undergrowth was an intermittent stream of razorback hogs, already wild from running free in the woods, their ears notched with the marks of their owners. However, the settlers insisted it was up to the schoolmaster to do the catching.

Pike inspected the schoolhouse. It was a small log building "with a fireplace the width of one end—no floor—no boarding or weather boarding—a hole for a window and one for a door."

He made arrangements to board with a man named Abraham or Abram Smith in a log cabin not far from the school, and very shortly settled down to teach what he called his "collection of urchins." It was not the kind of position he wanted, and he could not bring himself to scrounge through the underbrush after his quota of pigs, but, no matter, teaching the children would take little of his time, and he could devote himself to the muse. Sharpening a supply of quill pens, he settled down to establish himself as a writer.

3

He could not hope for riches as a reward for his writing, for, unfortunately, the magazines paid nothing to amateur contributors like Pike. But at the moment, seeing himself as the true artist whose concern is not with money but the creation of something beautiful, Pike was interested only in fame, and in the reputation that he was sure his writings would bring him. He set about establishing himself as a writer by producing reams of poetry characterized by Vance Randolph as "bad imitations of inferior poets." Trained in

the classical tradition, falling quite early in his life under the influence of the English romanticists, he seemingly could not escape them, and practically all of his poetry is patterned after the bright lyrics of Shelley and Keats, and the melancholia of Coleridge and Byron. He lauds these poets in a very long poem which he called "Fragments (Of An Unfinished Poem)" and he constantly tries to superimpose their poetic patterns over frontier materials, with disastrous results. The range of his poetry covered everything from classical allegories to doggerel.

In 1831, when he left New England, he wrote a poem with the appropriate title "Farewell to New England," containing the following lines:

Farewell to thee New England!
Farewell to thee and thine!
Good-bye to leafy Newbury,
And Rowley's hills of pine.

The western climate did not improve his poetry, although Pike liked to tell how he stood by the side of his horse at night, inspired by this new country, jotting down his verses while the inspiration stirred him. On his arrival in New Mexico in the winter of 1831, he saw a robin, which called forth a poem entitled "To a Robin," and the introductory note, "Written in New Mexico on Hearing the Song of the Only Red-breast I Ever Saw There":

Hush, where art thou clinging,
And what art thou singing,
Bird of my own native land?
Thy song is sweet as a fairy's feet
Stepping on silver sand.

Even when he dealt with strictly western materials, the end result was always an English ballad with a western flavor:

Oh, who with the sons of the plains can compete,
When from the west, south and north like the torrents they meet?
And when doth the face of the white trader blanche,
Except when at moonrise he hears the Comanche?

By the light of sputtering candles, Pike completed a volume called *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country*

and sent it back east, and then turned his attention to a local paper, the recently established Little Rock *Advocate.* To vary his style somewhat, he composed a very long political poem that has something of the flavor of an obscure Scottish battle cry about it. He called it "Los Tiempos," and in it versified world history and current affairs in stanzas like the following:

Hartford Convention, was, short time ago,
South Carolina's only cri de guerre;
And he who loved Calhoun, could hardly show,
Too much or horror at New England's blurr.
This, chimed in every key, from high to low,
Was to their loyalty a noble spur;
But now they hold a right good precedent
Ay! Good enough to write, and die, and bleed on't.

The first canto of this poem was published by the *Advocate,* and Pike was much gratified by the resultant local fame it brought him. As he sat in his drafty schoolhouse, surrounded by illiterate backwoodsmen, serenaded by the rooting of wild hogs in the woods, he could have no idea that very shortly his poetry would have to be abandoned for a time as he was precipitated into the rough-and-tumble arena of frontier politics.

4

Pike's political involvement came about quite by chance, because 1833 was an election year, and because his landlord, Abram Smith, was an ardent supporter of a youthful congressional candidate named Robert Crittenden. Early in his career Crittenden had been known as the "Boy Wonder of Arkansas," and later by the more significant name "Cardinal Wolsey" because in the fourteen years he had been in the Arkansas Territory he had built up a tremendous political empire that had usurped the power of two governors and put the legislature in his back pocket. Crittenden was a lean young man with a boyish face and a slightly protruding underlip that gave him an imperious, pouting look, and his youthful appearance was enhanced by curly hair that formed ringlets at the nape of his neck. If a man was not extremely careful, he might take one look at this young politician with the innocent eyes and underestimate him, a judgment that could be very dangerous indeed.

For Crittenden was an opportunist with nerves of steel, and he could be very deadly when aroused. He had challenged one political opponent to a duel, and, arriving early at the dueling ground, had stretched out on a blanket for a brief nap before the time came when he stood up and shot the man to death.

In the summer of 1833, Crittenden was in desperate trouble as his political empire began to crumble. He had recently bribed the backwoods members of the legislature with thirty-one hickory-smoked hams in an attempt to rob the public treasury. After his scheme was exposed, public sentiment turned against him and he was forced to abandon his career as a political manipulator and to make a personal campaign for the delegate's seat in Congress. It was the only possible way he could vindicate himself, and regain his prestige.

Crittenden's opponent was a smooth, popular man named Ambrose Sevier, christened "Don Ambrosia" by the newspapers, a politician with a personal grudge against Crittenden, for he was a blood cousin to the man Crittenden had killed in the duel. In the backwoods the heated campaign assumed bloody proportions as heads were cracked and duels were fought and men battered one another unmercifully as the hard core of Crittenden's supporters campaigned for their hero's election and return to power.

The persistent legend has grown up that Pike, incensed at the unmerciful treatment Crittenden was getting at the hands of a man named William Woodruff who published the *Arkansas Gazette*, wrote a series of brilliant articles purporting to be a packet of intercepted letters between Ambrose Sevier and William Woodruff, damning articles that Pike signed with the name of "Casca." In this legend, Crittenden read the articles in the *Advocate*, and immediately jumped on his horse and rode into the backwoods to seek out the brilliant and undiscovered genius.

Unfortunately, the story is not true, for Pike was currently trying to entune himself with the muse, and his interest in the election was purely that of a spectator. This was the first backwoods campaign he had seen, and he was amazed at the intensity of the political fever. If he had any preference in the matter (and he had not publicly expressed himself one way or the other), it was probably for Crittenden, but not for any of the usual reasons. The Little Rock *Advocate*, which had been printing his poems, had been

founded by Crittenden's brother-in-law, Charles P. Bertrand, with Crittenden's aid, and this fact was bound to influence Pike's political loyalties.

It was only by accident that Pike met Crittenden at all. Crittenden was touring the Territory, using his best rhetoric to promise his audiences better roads and statehood, and advocating forty acres of land from the public domain for every settler—in short, anything that might bring him the backwoods vote. He pounded hard on the theme of vindication, asking the people to elect him as proof that they believed in his innocence. In the steaming days of his midsummer campaign, Crittenden was having a very unhappy time of it, for this was his first public race and he did not mingle well with the people of the settlements. He had been cloistered in Little Rock for so long that he had lost the ability to communicate with basically illiterate people. As a consequence, his rhetoric was so lofty and his speeches so involved that few of the people knew what he was talking about. "Don Ambrosia," in contrast, was smooth, glib, easily understandable. So Sevier was rapidly becoming the popular champion of the people, while Crittenden was being dubbed with the damning epithet "aristocrat," the worst thing anyone could call a politician seeking the rural vote.

On a miserably hot day in July, Crittenden appeared at the little town of Spadra for an afternoon rally, and Abram Smith, Pike's landlord and an ardent Crittenden supporter, went to hear him. After the speeches were over, he brought Crittenden home to spend the night, and Pike interrupted his versifying long enough to meet their distinguished guest. Pike was most impressed with him. Later, he wrote of Crittenden, "as he was one, to know whom was an honor and to hear whom was a pleasure, to meet him was quite an event in my life."

Crittenden was equally impressed with Pike, and surprised to find such an eloquent man in the backwoods school, for the average schoolmaster of the day was a drifter, floating from settlement to settlement, knowing just enough to satisfy the rudimentary demands of students who knew nothing at all. It was a relief for Crittenden, who had been stumbling through questions and answers all afternoon, to find an educated man with whom he could talk. They sat out on the porch and conversed well into the night, and Pike related his adventures on the western Plains. Pike spoke very well that

night. He seemed to have an ear for colloquial speech and he was a persuasive writer. Crittenden concluded that he could use such a man in his organization.

Crittenden, on his return to Little Rock, talked with his brother-in-law about Pike. Charles Bertrand was a dapper little man who had been dubbed "Beau Charlie" by the press for his sartorial elegance, but he had little stomach for the rough-and-tumble journalism of a political sheet. He had been looking for a man to take over some of the duties of putting out the paper, and Pike seemed a likely candidate. He promptly wrote to Pike, offering him the assistant editorship of the *Advocate.*

When Pike received the offer, he was immensely flattered, certain that it had been made because of the high quality of his literary efforts. There was no reason why he should not accept it, because there was nothing to keep him where he was. He did not enjoy schoolteaching and he was getting poorer by the day. Too, he had suffered from another bout of the recurrent malarial chills, and life in the backwoods was not so poetically inspiring as he had hoped it would be. He managed to collect three dollars in cash from his patrons, and had the additional good fortune to meet a man who wanted to send a horse to Little Rock, and offered to let Pike ride it.

In October, 1833, Pike set off for the capital, following a road that had been built in 1828, at great expense, and shortly abandoned to the wilderness when nobody used it. He fell in with an old soldier who was also going to Little Rock and who volunteered to show Pike the way. Pike intended to use his three dollars to give him a start in the city, but he had not reckoned with the cost of getting across the swollen Arkansas River into the capital. There was no way to cross except by ferry, and the old soldier happened to be penniless. Pike wrote regretfully: "The last money I had I paid for his fare across the ferry to get into Little Rock. I got there without a penny."

5

Pike's alliance with Crittenden was to be short-lived, however, as the brilliant politician with the face of a boy soon played out the last act of his personal tragedy. In the August election Sevier's revenge for the death of his cousin was complete and final, for he beat Crittenden by a crushing majority of 1,956 votes out of a

total of 6,996, and the people had overwhelmingly rejected Crittenden for the last time.

Following his defeat, Crittenden drove himself unmercifully in his law practice, trying to keep ahead of his creditors. In December of the following year, he was in Vicksburg, arguing a case before the Mississippi Supreme Court, when, suffering from complete exhaustion after a seven-hour speech, he collapsed and died shortly thereafter. He left behind a few stanch political supporters who followed him to the end and who, with his demise, looked around for a new man to lead them. Albert Pike was destined to be that man.

FOUR

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN ON HIS WAY UP

When Pike arrived in Little Rock and reported to "Beau Charlie" Bertrand at the *Advocate,* ready for work, he found that the offer of a position as an assistant editor had been a bit misleading. The *Advocate* was a small weekly newspaper with a total circulation of seven to eight hundred copies, and it was housed in very cramped quarters. The assistant editor was expected to be a general handy man about the place, and Pike soon found himself learning to set type and wielding a broom along with his strictly editorial duties.

"Beau Charlie" was not a very good manager. He was a highly personable young man with a great deal of charm, but the constant financial worries connected with the paper kept him in a highly nervous state and undermined his health. He was hard put to keep the paper solvent in the face of a combination of adverse circumstances over which he had no control. His main problem was that Crittenden was his brother-in-law and had helped finance the paper by signing the notes for the printing presses brought in from Cincinnati. And now that Crittenden had received a decisive drubbing at the hands of the voters, the prestige of the *Advocate* was following a similar downward curve. Try as he might to disassociate his newspaper from the political fortunes of his brother-in-law, Bertrand found it impossible.

Particularly was this true in official circles. One of the biggest political plums in Arkansas was the position of "Printer for the Territory," and it was when Bertrand entered a bid for the contract that he learned just how low the stock of his paper had fallen. When the proposals were opened, the *Advocate*'s bid was found to be the low one, but so great was official animosity against the Crittenden sheet that the legislature ignored it altogether and

awarded the contract to William Woodruff's *Arkansas Gazette.* When Bertrand received word of the award, he was aghast. He had counted on the contract to help pull the *Advocate* out of a financial hole, and now that it had been awarded to Woodruff he was at his wit's end.

Furious, he called Pike into his small office and gave him his first editorial assignment. Show the legislature and the people in general that the *Advocate* would not accept such inequity without protest. Expose this example of political chicanery to the public gaze. Perhaps in some way an editorial blast and proof of favoritism in the awarding of a public contract might cause the legislature to reconsider its action.

As Pike sat down at his desk with a supply of quill pens and black ink and blank paper, he found himself in a very ticklish position. His pay at the *Advocate* was very small indeed, and in order to supplement his income he had taken an extra job as Assistant Secretary of the Council (as the upper House of the legislature was called). It was obvious that the legislators, anxious to do anything to keep from being associated with the Crittenden newspaper, were the villains in this episode, but as an employee of the legislature Pike could not very well attack it without risking his much-needed position.

The only other possible target was Woodruff himself, but it would be difficult to convince anyone that Woodruff was guilty in this affair. A short, heavy-set man with thinning reddish-brown hair and an outspoken manner, Woodruff was very popular. He had published the first issue of the *Gazette* in a log cabin at Arkansas Post shortly after the Territory was established, freighting his press and types to the frontier on two dugout canoes lashed together. So far, he had survived every attack made on him and his newspaper, and there had been many. Part of his political favor stemmed from the fact that he had destroyed the Crittenden machine almost single-handed.

Pike's attack was ingenious, though politically naïve, but it must be remembered that he was treading a very thin line in his efforts to keep from antagonizing the legislators. To set the direction his subsequent articles would follow, he first roundly damned Woodruff with sweeping prose:

"We may prove him a liar and a perjurer a hundred times, but

it injures him not—nay it renders him more valuable to the *party,* for upon that capacity depends his employment. Let him become honest, and they discard him.—But let him be ready to invent whatever falsehood—to assail whatever character—and to prostitute his paper to whatever ends—and they hug him to their heart. In proportion to the degradation of his moral worth, is the increase of his worth to them."

To exonerate the legislature and thereby extricate himself from a sticky situation, Pike took another course and made it appear that the legislature had been bilked. He claimed in his attacks that Woodruff, with scurrilous underhandedness, had deliberately written an ambiguous bid that had so confused the honest members of the legislature that they had awarded him the contract without knowing what they were doing.

The charge was so farfetched that Woodruff paid little attention to it, and answered Pike in a rather bored way, wearily declaring that a "new hand" was pumping the bellows of the Crittenden organ, and concluding: "In a controversy with an adversary so utterly destitute of moral principles, even a triumph would entitle the victor to no laurels. The game is not worth the ammunition it would cost. We therefore leave the writer to the enjoyment of the unenvied reputation which the personal abuse he has heaped on us will entitle him to from the low and vulgar herd to which he belongs."

Despite Woodruff's continuing refusal to debate with Pike through the columns of his newspaper, Pike did not let up his attack for a moment. Over the months he became a political gadfly with an incessant barrage of satirical poems ridiculing Woodruff, the "Casca" letters belittling Woodruff, and long analytical articles vilifying Woodruff. So persistent were these attacks that in March of the following year, Woodruff was finally moved to action, and Pike was to learn his first lesson in frontier politics, the subtle art of diversion.

To attack Pike directly would gain Woodruff little, for as a penniless newcomer Pike had nothing to lose. By this time Woodruff had accurately measured Pike as a man of great personal pride, a man who would fly into a towering rage if his integrity were questioned, and who would be anxious to avenge himself. Pike's honor would now come under attack, but not by Woodruff himself. The charges would be made in the *Gazette* by an anonymous correspondent, and

Pike would be so busy trying to track down the illusive character assassin that he would forget about harassing Woodruff. The strategy worked perfectly.

Pike was stunned by the first blast against his character, which was published in the March 4th issue of the *Gazette* under the name "Vale." The anonymous correspondent did not resort to innuendoes. He called Pike a thief. He said Pike had stolen mules from Harris during the Santa Fe expedition; he accused Pike of continuing his sticky-fingered career in Arkansas with the theft of some otter skins in Van Buren. The charges caught Pike off balance, coming as they did from an unexpected quarter. Outraged, he used the *Advocate* of March 7th for a denial, sending immediately to Santa Fe and Van Buren for documents to vindicate himself, and demanding that Woodruff reveal the name of this perfidious slanderer who disguised himself under a pastoral pseudonym.

Woodruff said nothing, and Pike, frustrated, stormed throughout Little Rock in an unsuccessful search for "Vale," asking his friends to keep their ears open. Finally he learned through the grapevine that the culprit might be one James W. Robinson in Pope County. Without further inquiry, Pike jumped to the conclusion that Robinson was guilty, and, following the honorable route that would eventually lead to the dueling ground, sent a message to Robinson through his friends, demanding that he either confirm or deny his complicity. Robinson did neither. To Pike, silence was tantamount to an admission of guilt, and he determined to get Robinson onto the dueling ground at all costs. On April 11th he wrote an open letter in the *Advocate,* making it known "to the world that Jas. W. Robinson *is by his own admission* a base LIAR and a SLANDERER."

If Robinson was a liar and a slanderer, he was also a very canny gentleman, for nothing that Pike could do would pry so much as a single word out of him. Preoccupied with his own defense and his attempts to get Robinson to fight, Pike lessened his attacks on Woodruff, and finally stopped them altogether. And Pike never did find out if Robinson was really responsible for the "Vale" letter. Woodruff's strategy had been immensely successful.

It took Pike a long time to realize what Woodruff had done, and it had a profound effect on him. Once he learned a lesson, he never forgot it. In the next few months of comparative silence, Pike waited patiently until conditions were perfect for a new

attack, and then, displaying a remarkable grasp of the subtleties of political infighting, gained from his first bout with Woodruff, he used these changed conditions to excellent advantage.

Shortly after the "Vale" incident, a rift began to develop between William Woodruff and Governor Pope. One-armed, gruff, frugally honest, Governor Pope had been the ideal man to assume office in Arkansas after the disgraceful antics of political bosses like Crittenden, and he ruled the state with an iron fist, tolerating no nonsense. Woodruff had supported him all the way, both as a chief executive and as a man. Besides being political allies, they were also friends. This warm relationship came to an abrupt end in June of 1834 when the National Congress appropriated $3,000 for compiling and printing the laws of Arkansas Territory, and, taking note of the recent wave of corruption in the legislature, left it to the governor to award the contract.

Woodruff wanted this political windfall very badly, and everyone assumed that he would get it because he was a close friend of the governor and his stanchest supporter. After all, Woodruff owned a competent printing plant and was the logical man for the job. But because the governor was determined that friendship should not influence him one way or the other, he looked for a printer with a knowledge of the law (which Woodruff did not have), and awarded the contract to a lawyer named John Steele who had started a newspaper in Helena the year before.

Woodruff was furious. Considering the governor's act a personal rebuff, he aired his feelings in the *Gazette* on August 26, 1834: "We think the governor treated us rather shabbily, to say the least of it. . . . It is but justice to Mr. Steele for us to add that, in the above remarks, nothing is intended to his disparagement, either as a lawyer or as a printer. He got a good fat job and we congratulate him on his good luck. We hope that he will execute it in a manner that will entitle him to credit."

As summer cooled into fall and winter, even so the relationship between the two men continued to grow colder by the day, and by December of 1834 it was icy. It was at this point that Pike decided to capitalize on the bad feelings between the two men. The eventual prize in this new battle was the public printing contract that Woodruff still held.

From his first bout with the canny Woodruff, Pike had learned

that it was better not to attack him directly, so, harping on the theme that the cost of printing was too high, he condemned the governor for permitting such a state of affairs to exist. To document his charge, Pike set up two parallel columns in the *Advocate* showing the price charged by the *Gazette* and the considerably lower price for which the work could be done elsewhere. Then he called on the governor to explain why.

The governor was not used to having his integrity questioned, and he promptly passed the charges on to Woodruff, demanding that Woodruff answer them. If Woodruff could not furnish a strong explanation, the governor insisted that he lower his prices in accord with the scale printed in the *Advocate*. Woodruff was now impaled on the horns of a dilemma. As a proud man, his prestige would suffer if he let Pike dictate to him through the governor's office, but to lower his prices would be tantamount to an admission that they had been too high in the first place. As a consequence, he did neither. Very angry at Woodruff, the governor used his personal influence to have the printing contract withdrawn from the *Gazette* and awarded to the lowest bidder, which, by a strange coincidence, happened to be Pike's *Advocate*. And, for the moment at least, the governor now found himself allied with the head of the Crittenden faction he had formerly opposed, and Pike was credited with a clear triumph over Woodruff.

But in the confused atmosphere of frontier politics, alliances were as quickly broken as they were formed, and as Pike came to favor with the governor of the Territory, the governor fell out of favor with the President of the United States. On January 28, 1835, Andrew Jackson removed Pope from office and elevated Territorial Secretary William S. Fulton to the position. Fulton was a very close friend of Jackson, and had been his private secretary for a number of years in the old days. As a stanch party man and a rabid Democrat, he had little tolerance for Whigs like Pike, and Pike lost any immediate personal advantage his victory over Woodruff might have gained him.

2

As Pike proved himself adept in the political arena, he also became a social lion in the village of Little Rock, where he served as a symbol of the culture that the ladies of the town were striving

so eagerly to cultivate. After all, Pike was an established poet and his work had been published in the respectable periodicals of that center of American culture, Boston. His accomplishments, and the fact that he was resident, did much to offset the unkind words travelers used to describe Little Rock after a visit there. For some reason, none of them were impressed with the territorial capital. The internationally known sportsman and traveler Friedrich Gerstäcker was typical of its detractors in the mid-thirties. "Little Rock is a vile, detestable place. . . ." he wrote. "Little Rock is, without any flattery, one of the dullest towns in the United States and I would not have remained two hours in the place, if I had not met with some good friends who made me forget its dreariness."

Pike enjoyed his new social position tremendously, and cultivated in himself those traits necessary to its preservation. He was especially popular with women, for, like the romantic poetry he wrote, he was personally gracious, gallant, and chivalrous. He again began to play the violin, and, tucking the instrument beneath his chin, performed soulful and romantic airs to match the expressions on the faces of the lovely women who gathered to hear him. His artistic accomplishments guaranteed him entry into any social gathering. He composed songs and set them to music and sang them in a soft, melodious voice, and when his audience had had enough of music he would discourse on politics or tell stories of his western adventures guaranteed to excite the emotions of men and women alike.

The bulk of his early reputation, however, came not from his poetry or his music, but from his excellence as an orator. By 1834 the art of oratory had reached a very high level in the United States as a literary form. The orator of this period, in order to earn a reputation, had to pay close attention to the formal composition of his speech, judging how it would appear in print as well as the effect it would have on the audience that heard it.

Very soon after his arrival in Little Rock, Pike had joined one of the most influential organizations in town, the Little Rock Debating Society, and it was with this group that he made his debut as an orator, being invited to deliver the annual Fourth of July address the club sponsored every year. The Fourth of July had become a big event in the social life of the settlement, and all business was suspended for the day. The 1834 celebration was no exception. The

whole town turned out to watch a company of Arkansas Militia fire an artillery salute with all the pomp and zeal of a local fire brigade demonstrating new equipment. Later, the people went to the Presbyterian church to hear a reading of the Declaration of Independence and the oration by Little Rock's new sensation, Albert Pike.

His oration followed a standard pattern, using rhetorical devices that had been polished to perfection by great speakers like Daniel Webster. After the formal salutations, the bowing acknowledgments, the smooth introduction, it was standard to paint a gloomy picture of world conditions, bring the audience to a pitch of anxiety, lead them by the hand to peer over the precipice of imminent disaster, and then, just as they are about to pitch headfirst over the brink, snatch them back and suffuse the horizon of the future with a rosy glow.

As so many other Fourth of July orators were doing in 1834, Pike concentrated on the dissatisfaction currently felt by many of the states, the breaches in the solidarity of the Union, the dangers of civil war, the talk of disunion engendered by the Webster and Hayne debates over states' rights, and the battle of the South Carolinians over a "tariff law" imposed on them unjustly—so they thought—by the federal government. "It is the fault of all parties —it is the fault of human nature—of our weakness and frailty—that the elements of disunion are working secretly and darkly in our land—that the dragon Anarchy is stirring himself unquietly, where he lies pressed down by mountains—that the earthquake is already moaning in his caves. It cannot be denied that at this day and hour we are almost ripe for war. . . ."

And then, when Pike had brought his audience almost to the point where they were listening for the boom of distant cannons, he abruptly reversed his direction and blew away the storm clouds. "Civil War may threaten, but it will not come; the storm may spread to the zenith, but it will pass away, and leave the sky as clear and cloudless as before."

In this speech Pike came out, hesitantly perhaps but surely, on the side of "states' rights," including in his final remarks a warning against "encroachment," which could only be interpreted to mean federal encroachment on the sovereign rights of the states. All of these frankly political remarks, however, were embroidered with

flattering references to the young ladies and the worthiness of the debating society, and so watered down that no one could take offense at his remarks if they happened to disagree. It is doubtful that anyone left the hall fired with political zeal or changed opinions or with anything except a feeling that Albert Pike, twenty-three years old, was already one of the finest speakers for miles around.

Allowing sufficient time for a brief respite from the activities of the afternoon, the festivities resumed in the evening with a banquet at which Pike's prowess as a speaker was toasted in wine. He found himself surrounded by well-wishers and by more than a few men curious to probe his political opinions. For Pike, by accident rather than design, and through the peculiar circumstances of frontier politics, was now recognized as Crittenden's political heir and the head of the Whig party in southern Arkansas. In the early days of territorial politics, the settlers had been divided according to their loyalties for the cliques set up by individuals, and a man would declare himself for the Conway dynasty or the Crittenden faction rather than for the Democrat or the Whig party. But as the Territory became more cosmopolitan and more conscious of national affairs, the local factions merged with the national parties in the public mind until "Conway" became synonymous with "Democrat" and "Crittenden" became interchangeable with "Whig." And when Crittenden fell, Pike became his successor, for few people took "Beau Charlie" seriously, and it was evident that Pike was making more and more of the policy decisions for the *Advocate* as a Whig organ.

But the public adulation heaped on Pike at this point merely served to frustrate him, for there was a vast gap between his social reputation and the state of his finances. As an orator and a writer, he might continue to gather public acclaim, but all the compliments in the world would never build a mansion to compare with the new and luxurious home being erected by William Woodruff, and the vocal plaudits of ten thousand people could never be exchanged for the comforts of wealth. It was quite apparent, too, that there was little future to be had with the *Advocate* as editor and typesetter. Sitting in the office of the newspaper, he could look out on the street and watch the fancy carriages roll by with their teams of high-bred horses, and he could see no reason why he should remain penniless when men of lesser mental powers were getting rich.

Obviously, observing the financial rewards gleaned by both Crittenden and a renowned lawyer named Chester Ashley, the easiest road to immediate wealth lay in the practice of law. For, as a recently settled Territory now approaching statehood, the Arkansas courts were already overworked. Many of the cases centered upon clouded and contested titles to property in the Territory, and these battles for land carried substantial fees for the lawyers prosecuting them. After long and thoughtful deliberation, Pike decided to become a lawyer.

Though his daily schedule was already crowded, he had free time at night. He accumulated a library and began wading through the laborious prose of Blackstone's *Commentaries* and various other books he thought might be helpful, committing large portions of them to memory and sleeping only four or five hours a night.

He was diverted from his rigorous schedule during the winter of 1833–1834 by occasional social excursions to the fashionable houses of Little Rock, and it was at one of these soirees that he met a pretty brunette named Mary Ann Hamilton who was in Little Rock to attend a legal hearing in which she was interested. One evening with Mary Ann was sufficient to convince Pike that he was in love with her, and he set about wooing her with all the passionate conviction of the romantic poet he liked to think he was. It is entirely probable that, along with the stirrings of the love that had so recently blossomed within him, Pike could see the practical advantages of marriage, for in the South of his day a single man, no matter how charming and sincere he might be, was considered irresponsible until he took a bride and settled down to married life. Too, Miss Hamilton was a woman of some property. She lived at Arkansas Post downriver with her guardian, the very influential Colonel Terrence Farrelly, and Pike was too practical a man to ignore the obvious benefits of an alliance with respectability and property. As he wrote on the subjects of love and money in the poem that expressed many of his candid opinions:

Do you wish to emerge from the bachelor crew,
And a charming young innocent female to woo?
You must always be ready the handsome to do,
Although it may cost you a Dollar, or two.
For love tips his darts with a Dollar, or two;

Young affections are gained by a Dollar, or two;
And beyond all dispute
The best card of your suit
Is the eloquent chink of a Dollar, or two.

Once he had fixed a covetous eye on Mary Ann and decided to make her his wife, he began an ardent courtship containing more elements of pursuit than of entreaty. Apparently, if Pike was smitten and overwhelmed by the thought of marrying Miss Hamilton, his zeal was not returned. But for the reluctant Mary Ann, there was no escape, either from Pike or from the poems he slipped into her hand whenever he could do so unobserved. She was not moved to a favorable decision by verses comparing her to a "little purple violet that hangs its blushing head sae weary, with brow as white as is the mist that sleeps on heaven's forehead starry, or mountain snow by sunrise kissed; and with e'en like an eagle," or by such Burnsian parodies as, "I ken a charming little maid, as sweet and winsome as a fairy; I wadna ask wi' wealth to wed, if I could wed wi' thee, Mary!" Her head spinning, Miss Hamilton fled to Arkansas Post. Pike followed in ardent pursuit, and promptly came down with another siege of malaria. The sight of her suitor in agony accomplished more than all the poems he had dedicated to her, and Miss Hamilton at last consented to become his wife.

The wedding celebration lasted a month. The high point was the wedding day itself, November 18, 1834, and everyone in the dying community of Arkansas Post turned out for the festivities as Judge James H. Lucas performed the ceremony and Mr. Pike and Miss Hamilton became legally one. Following the wedding, there was a dance that lasted late into the night as Pike whirled around the floor with his new bride, serenaded by the music of a plantation orchestra conducted by a white-haired Negro.

The newlyweds returned to Little Rock where their union was celebrated by a round of gay parties, and then Pike went back to work at his old pace, studying law in his spare moments. Then, as if to compound his good fortune, "Beau Charlie" decided to retire from the newspaper business in January, 1835. He had been in ill health; he was tired of trying to collect his debts, and he agreed to sell Pike control of the *Advocate* for $2,500. Though Pike had little money

of his own, Mary Ann was helpfully solvent, and Pike became the proud proprietor of a newspaper.

In the early months of the year, the *Advocate* took on a new look as Pike brightened its political pages with considerable amounts of his own writing, publishing excerpts from his *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country* (which had been published as a book by Light & Horton in Boston the year before), as well as a narrative of his western adventures and reprints of other articles and poems of his that had been published in New England magazines. And very shortly the settlers in the backwoods who could read just enough to make out the names one politician was calling another could have their cultural tone lifted a notch by deciphering poems by Shelley and Byron.

If Pike had the determination and opportunity to become a literary man, he had neither the temperament for it nor the thick skin that is so indispensable to the professional man of letters. He was hypersensitive to any criticism of his writing. Praise pleased and excited him, but it was insufficient to offset the defensive despondency he felt when his creative efforts were attacked. As a matter of fact, he had only one significant battle with the critics, but it was enough to kill his ambitions as a professional writer once for all and to make of him a dedicated amateur determined to avoid criticism at any cost by limiting the circulation of his poems to those who were certain to appreciate them.

The skirmish came over the publication in book form of his *Prose Sketches and Poems.* He had paid to have the volume printed, and was so concerned by what the critics might say about it that he wrote an unusual preface for the work in which he tried to ward off possible criticism by anticipating it, by explaining away the obvious flaws and, in effect, answering charges before they were made.

In this preface Pike revealed a fear he faced every time he wrote a line of poetry: the unsettling apprehension that his prodigiously retentive memory might recall a phrase or a stanza of a poem that he had read somewhere and that he might inadvertently set it down as his own without realizing it. And he tried to guard himself against this possibility.

"With respect to the poems," he writes, "the kind public will

indulge me in saying a brief word: For them I have to ask no indulgence, and the public, I know, ought to have none to grant. It is not my intention to bespeak for them any degree of favor, but merely to mention in passing, that if there be in them imitation of any writer, I trust that it extends only to the style; and I know that I have not willfully commited [*sic*] plagiarism. It is possible that the imitation may extend farther than I suppose. It is some time since I have seen the works of any poet, and the things of memory have become so confused with those of my own imagination that I am, at times, when an idea flashes upon me, uncertain whether it may be my own, or whether, like the memory of a death, it has clung to my mind from the works of some of the poets, 'til it has seemed to become my own peculiar property."

Then, casting a self-critical eye on the obvious weakness in his poetry, he emphasizes it by denying that it exists: "If I am accused of affectation, I needs must deny the charge. What I have written has been a transcript of my own feelings—too much so, perhaps, for the purpose of fame. Writing has been to me always, a communing with my soul. These poems have been written in desertion and loneliness, and some times in places of fear and danger. My only sources of thought and imagery have been my own mind, and nature, who has appeared to me generally in desolate fashion and utter dreariness, and not infrequently in the guise of sublimity."

And what reviewer, reading this appeal, if he had any whimsy about his nature at all, could keep from leveling the very charge that Pike goes to such pains to avoid? Pike continues:

"I have acquired, by wild and desolate life, a habit of steadily looking in upon my own mind, and of fathoming its resources: and perhaps solitude has been a creator of egoism. Of this, the public may judge. By all whom I remember as my friends, the faults of the book will be forgotten; and if there be in it no *vatis spiritus*, those who know me will at least recognize it is the breathings of one who has parted from among them—as the expression of his feelings and as such they will love them. Fame is valueless to me, unless I can have it breathed by those I love. To the world, therefore, and to my old Mother City, I bequeath my last gift. If unworthy of her, let her remember that, poor and weak though it be, the tribute of the heart is not to be despised."

Most reviewers who noticed the book were kind to it, but there was one who was not kind at all, and, taking the words out of Pike's mouth, accused his work of affectation. Pike, stung to the quick, fired back a defensive letter to the *New England Magazine,* in whose pages the derogatory review had been printed:

"I see that someone in your magazine has reviewed my unpretending work, and accuses me of affectation, because I wrote in too gloomy and melancholy a vein. Sir, it is easy for men who dwell in New England to chide the luckless wanderer of the desert and sojourner in solitude,—for gloom and despondency; I hope that those who blame me may never suffer what I have suffered. Part of that book I wrote in a foreign country, while traveling about alone, among men of a different language—part in the lodge of an Indian —part in the solitudes of the mountains; in the loneliness and danger of the desert; in hunger and watching, and cold and privation—part in the worse loneliness of a schoolroom—all in poverty, trouble, and despair. It is easy to *imagine* a desolation of the heart; I *know* what it is."

Ordinarily, perhaps, in a man of lesser pride, an incident such as this, a hostile review and a defensive letter prompted by pique, could be discounted as youthful inexperience, to become an amusing memory as the man seasoned and matured. But Pike neither forgot nor forgave the critic for this adverse notice. Twenty years later, when he published a volume of poems called *Nugae,* he had it privately printed and circulated to a select group of his friends, remarking, "Critics will get no chance to carp at it, and money cannot buy it."

Actually, the hostile review in the *New England Magazine* was an isolated one, and was completely overshadowed by the later praise of another critic named John Wilson (more famous under the pseudonym of "Christopher North") who through his laudatory comments did more to make Pike's poetry popular in America than any other man. In the late thirties Pike resurrected an earlier work he had written before his western travels and, refurbishing it somewhat, sent it to one of the most distinguished literary reviews in the world, *Blackwood's Magazine,* in Edinburgh. The work was a pretentious classical poem of more than six hundred lines, entitled "Hymns to the Gods" and divided into separate evocations to ancient deities, like the following appeal to Mars:

Turn thy wild coursers from our lovely land!
Let not thy hoofs trample our golden strand!
Shake not thy spear above our fruitful hills!
Or turn to blood the waters of our rills!
Crush not our flowers with thy remorseless wheels,
Nor let our grain be trod with armed heels!

Once again, Pike was not content to let his work go out into the world alone, and he sent it to John Wilson with a flowery letter that is a courtly study in flattery and modesty:

Little Rock, State of Arkansas, August 15, 1838

SIR: It is with much doubt and many misgivings I have been induced by the entreaties of some friends in Boston to send to you the accompanying trifles in verse from this remote corner of the Union—beyond the Mississippi. I would fain believe them worthy of a place in your estimable magazine, which regularly reaches me here, 1,000 miles from New York, within six or seven weeks of its publication in Edinburgh, and is duly welcomed as it deserves. Should you judge them worthy of publication, accept them as a testimonial of respect offered by one resident in southwestern forests, to him whose brilliant talents have endeared him not only to every English, but to multitudes of American bosoms, equally dear as Christopher North and Professor Wilson.

Most respectfully, sir,
Your obedient servant,
ALBERT PIKE

According to the eminent poet and critic John Gould Fletcher, North was busy dissecting Alfred Lord Tennyson's poems at the time when he received Pike's "Hymns to the Gods," and probably gave it a hasty and summary judgment. It is possible too that Pike's letter had had its desired effect and so startled the estimable North with the implication that this classical composition had been written on the wild frontier, that he overrated its merits. In any event, he published the poem and affixed a note to it.

"These fine hymns," North wrote, "which enable their author to take his place in the finest order of his country's poets, reached us only a week or two ago, though Mr. Pike's most gratifying letter is dated so far back as August, and we must mention this that he may not suppose such composition could have remained unhonored in our repositories from autumn to spring. . . . C. N."

In a way, perhaps, it is ironic that the classical compositions that brought Pike his greatest contemporary fame were so quickly forgotten and that the only poem of his to achieve any lasting popularity was a composition that was dashed off on the spur of the moment at an alcoholic party in Washington, D.C., when his old friend Elias Rector (the man of the fine, long hair) was being honored. A wit named William Burwell had begun the poem, intending it to be sung by a melodious and distinguished politician named Robert W. Johnson, but at the last moment he handed the first couple of verses to Pike, and asked him to finish it. And in the pressure of that moment, scrawling the verses on paper as fast as he could write, with no time to alter and polish and interpolate and embellish, Pike created a masterpiece of frontier humor, capturing the exuberant life of the southern planter with such accuracy and such spirit that this one poem of ten stanzas, "The Fine Arkansas Gentleman," achieved more lasting fame than all the rest of his poems put together:

Now all good fellows, listen, and a story I will tell
Of a mighty clever gentleman who lives extremely well
In the western part of Arkansas, close to the Indian line,
Where he gets drunk once a week on whisky, and immediately
sobers himself completely on the very best of wine;
A fine Arkansas gentleman,
Close to the Choctaw line!
This fine Arkansas gentleman has a mighty fine estate
Of five or six thousand acres or more of land, that will be worth
a great deal some day or other if he don't kill himself too
soon, and will only condescend to wait;
And four or five dozen negroes that would rather work than not,
And such quantities of horses, and cattle, and pigs, and other
poultry, that he never pretends to know how many he has got;
This fine Arkansas gentleman,
Close to the Choctaw line!

3

Despite his efforts to transform the *Advocate* into a literary journal, it was no more popular than it had been before, and he accelerated his study of law until, in August of 1834, he felt he

had read enough to approach Judge Thomas Lacy of the Superior Court of Arkansas to request a license to practice law. The judge, being a man with a droll sense of humor and a realistic view of the backwoods bar, did not insist on an examination. He promptly awarded Pike his license, remarking that granting a legal license was not like issuing a medical diploma, because Pike could not kill anyone by practicing law.

There was a vast difference, however, between having a license and having clients. As Pike examined the situation, he saw that the lawyers who benefited most were those who represented the interests of the wealthy and slaveholding planters, so he set out to woo the planters in every way he could. He entertained them in Little Rock, played cards with them, drank and ate with them, and when the Territory was swept into a bitter fight over statehood he unofficially espoused their cause and represented their interests in the approaching battle.

In 1835 the agitation for statehood was reaching a clamorous roar in the southern part of Arkansas Territory. The planters wanted action on the question of statehood before the current Democratic administration could be swept out of power and replaced with an administration hostile to the admission of another slave state. Much of this sense of urgency was kept alive by a national Democratic party anxious to put two more Democratic senators into the one house of Congress where they were having trouble maintaining leadership. The current practice in Congress was to admit states in pairs, one free and one slave. At the moment Michigan was pushing for statehood, and would be admitted as a free state. If Arkansas did not seize this opportunity, Florida certainly would. Then Arkansas would have to wait for Wisconsin, a Territory that at the moment was far from ready to be admitted into the Union.

If the planters living in the south wanted immediate statehood, the hillmen in the mountainous northern part of the Territory did not. Living in the rugged, rocky-soiled valleys of the Ozarks, and having no need for slaves, the hillmen were fiercely competitive for the federal monies that poured into the Territory. The talk about statehood worried them, for they were isolated from the seat of government by rutted, often impassable roads, a condition the federal government had promised to correct. But if Arkansas were admitted as a state, federal funds would be cut off and it would

be a long time before the new state would have adequate finances to resume a road-building program.

Because southern Arkansas was Democratic, the northwestern part of the Territory was rapidly becoming a rallying ground for the Whig party. The Whig leaders were certain that, if Arkansas went into the Union as a Democratic state, they would never have a chance to come to power.

The southern planters had a distinct advantage in that "Don Ambrosia" Sevier, still in Congress in 1835, was a stanch believer in "statehood now" because he owned many slaves himself. Early in the year Sevier introduced a bill calling for a census of Arkansas to establish that the Territory had the 60,000 residents necessary to qualify for admission. But his orderly plans were upset as a delegation from Michigan descended unannounced on Washington, pressing for the immediate admission of their Territory. Sevier knew that he should communicate this information to the people at home and sound out their opinion, but there was no time. The Florida delegate was out of Washington at the moment, but he could be expected back at any time, and it was certain he would immediately introduce a petition asking for the admission of Florida. If he did, Arkansas would be squeezed out. Sevier therefore took the decision on himself, and hastily introduced a resolution "inquiring into the expediency of permitting the people of Arkansas to form a constitution and come into the Union on an equal footing with the original states." His hurried action came to nothing when both the Arkansas and the Michigan enabling acts were turned down for the time being.

When Congress adjourned, Sevier returned to Arkansas to lead the fight in person, and to bring the people to such a pitch of feverish excitement that they would by-pass the laws of the United States and, instead of waiting for permission from Congress, call a convention, draft a constitution, and submit it to the federal government. "Let Michigan get into the Union without us," Sevier warned in a public statement, "and we are then completely at the mercy of both houses of Congress."

Immediately, William Woodruff put the *Gazette* squarely behind Sevier and statehood, calling for an immediate convention, and echoing Sevier's warnings. Unless Arkansas seized this opportunity to go in with Michigan, he said, she might have to enter the Union

without her slaves. And there was no time to be wasted now, for Michigan was already holding an election for delegates to a constitutional convention to meet in May.

As Woodruff now brought pressure on Governor Fulton to call a special session of the legislature, Pike made his move. As a prominent Whig, he would be going against the expressed policy of his party by advocating statehood; but the planters wanted it very badly, and Pike could see that nothing would delay it very long anyway. Putting aside his animosities toward his old enemy, he joined Woodruff in promoting the movement.

Besides crusading in the *Advocate*, Pike stumped for statehood, debating the issues wherever and whenever he had the chance. On June 13, 1835, he made an especially stirring plea in Little Rock, and so outtalked the seasoned debater Colonel A. S. Walker that he was invited to become a member of a committee of seven to draft an address to the people of Arkansas in favor of statehood.

At the meeting of the committee, Pike found himself across the table from Woodruff. They were most polite to each other. There was no mention of their past differences, and as the only two writers on the committee the bulk of the work fell to them. They worked together very harmoniously. The end result was an expression of Woodruff's ideas in Pike's characteristically flowery prose. The address contained a number of purposeful exaggerations, excusable, perhaps, in the light of the loud and angry debates over the Territory that precluded the use of subtleties. Pike and Woodruff estimated that the Territory already had a population of 60,000 and that the state government could operate on a pittance of $25,000 a year. If the first figure was excessively high, the second figure compensated for it by being excessively low. The address ended with a dismal view of any man who might object to statehood on the grounds of the resultant higher taxes: "Poor indeed is the plea of poverty, when liberty and man's dearest rights are at stake. Craven-hearted and unworthy American must he be who would be contented to remain a bondman and hewer of wood to escape paying the paltry pittance of twice his present tax."

No one doubted that the sheriffs who were busily engaged in conducting the biennial census in the backwoods would confirm Pike and Woodruff's population estimate, for the census takers were paid one to three cents for every head they counted. And for the

first time there would be no one pouring over their rolls to try to separate the imaginary characters from the real. Encouraged to be liberal, it was certain that the sheriffs would not count less than the 60,000 people the Territory needed for statehood.

At the last moment Woodruff ran into an unexpected snag. Governor Fulton, cautious in his first high political position, anxious to do nothing that might conflict with established legal procedures, refused to put the statehood question on the ballot for the general election in August. So, on May 26th, Woodruff took matters into his own hands, suggesting in the *Gazette* that the election clerks mark off two columns in their poll books, one "For State Government" and the other "Against State Government," to allow the people to express their opinions. And without legal sanction (for elections have always been informal in Arkansas) the clerks followed Woodruff's suggestion and duly entered the results in their poll books.

The results of the election surprised no one. The vote returned Sevier to Congress—he was a permanent fixture now and had no opposition—and clearly indicated that the people wanted statehood desperately. Even the vote from the northern part of the Territory showed that the dissenters there had weakened, probably because they felt that they were powerless to stop the statehood movement anyway, and wanted to get it over with.

The legislature met in the fall and, interpreting the unofficial vote as a mandate, passed a bill authorizing a constitutional convention by such a majority that the unhappy governor felt powerless to question it. The whole procedure was a direct violation of the national law, of course, for Congress had clearly marked out the steps by which a Territory could gain admittance as a state, and it was first necessary that an enabling act be passed before any Territory could start its legal machinery. But when mass sentiment is against established law, the law becomes ineffective, and the scholars of jurisprudence who follow the tide of popular opinion dig into history to find justification for ignoring the law, and so they did in 1835. They piled up case histories to prove that Vermont, Kentucky, and Maine had also gone into the Union without paying any attention to the law. What these states had done before, Arkansas felt justified in doing now.

From the moment the date for the convention was set, and once the cohesive unity necessary to bring affairs to this point was no

longer required, a bitter wrangle broke out between the slaveholders and the non-slaveholders. The fight was not over the institution of slavery itself, for that would lead nowhere, but over whether or not slaves should be counted as people in figuring the proportionate representation of the two sections in the convention.

Oddly enough, the northern faction insisted that the slaves were chattel, and should no more be counted as population than cattle or hogs. It was the southern faction that contended (for purposes of this controversy only) that slaves were indeed people and had been counted as such in the census enabling Arkansas to qualify for statehood. Finally, seeing the argument could not be resolved, both sides agreed to discard population as a determining factor for the number of delegates, and each faction agreed to send the same number of delegates to the convention, twenty-six.

No sooner had the members of the northern faction agreed to this compromise than they learned that it had solved nothing at all, for in the preconvention discussions the same problem erupted again in a slightly different form as the planters insisted that the slaves should be counted in figuring representation in the new state legislature. It was in this second battle, fought in the month before the convention assembled, that Pike proved his loyalty to the planters and won their undying gratitude.

As Pike's *Advocate* supported the planters, there was a new paper in the Territory, the *Times,* which represented the opposition, and accused Pike of trying to throw the balance of power to the planters by insisting that their Negroes be counted. Pike replied that if the slaves were not counted, the southern planters would soon find themselves in the minority, dominated by policies imposed on them by non-slaveholders who had no idea of their problems. But Pike could understand how the hillmen felt about it. So, to effect a balance, he suggested that the House of Representatives should indeed be elected on the basis of the free white male population, but that the Senate (to replace the Territorial Council) should be formed on the basis of districts to give the southern part of Arkansas an equal voice.

When the Constitutional Convention met on January 4, 1836, they eventually turned to Pike's plan as an effective compromise and a relief from the nonproductive debate the first days of the convention produced. The House and Senate were organized along

the lines Pike had suggested. Equitable as the plan was in theory and on paper, the southerners could see a victory in the offing, for the majority of the immigrants to the state were settling in the southern part, which would soon have the balance of power.

Pike was duly rewarded for his stand and for his efforts in behalf of the planters. The convention awarded him their printing contract and he was appointed the first reporter for the Arkansas Supreme Court and was given a contract to revise and codify the statutes of the new state.

On June 15, 1836, after a heated battle in the national Congress, despite the fact that Arkansas had ignored the prescribed legal steps for such action, she was admitted to the Union as the twenty-fifth state. Ironically, the Territory of Michigan, whose impatience had been used as a catalyst to precipitate action in Arkansas, was denied immediate admittance on a technicality, and did not come into the Union until January 26, 1837.

Shortly thereafter Pike decided he had been a newspaperman long enough. He had his hands full with his new official duties and with the cases pressed on him by jubilant planters. In April, 1837, he decided to abandon the newspaper altogether, and when the *Times* made him an offer, he took it. "I owned the *Advocate,* and was editor and typesetter, and generally useful in the office," Pike writes, "for two years and three months; and then sold it for $1,500, and after trying for a year to collect the accounts due the office, I one day put the books in the stove, where they served for fuel, and I had no further trouble with the accounts."

FIVE

PORTRAIT OF A ROUGH-AND-READY JUSTICE

A story told by a frontier wag effectively characterized the parody of law that prevailed in the new state of Arkansas in the hectic days of the late 1830's. According to the tale, a penniless Irishman, recuperating from a spree and awakening to find himself in jail, was hauled before a local court to be tried for vagrancy. The judge, wishing to give the Irishman every chance, called him to the bench and told him of his rights and asked if he was represented by council.

"No, your Honor," the Irishman said.

Well, the judge said, the defendant was in luck because most of Arkansas' finest lawyers were present in the courtroom that day and the Irishman could pick any one of them to act in his behalf. The Irishman staggered over to the railing, inspected the lawyers sitting in the front row of the courtroom, and then made his uncertain way back to the bench.

"If you don't mind, your Honor," he whispered to the judge, looking dubiously at the assembled lawyers, "I think I'll defend meself."

To the average defendant facing judgment in an Arkansas court, the Irishman's decision probably made a great deal of sense, for most of the state's lawyers were informally educated and licensed, the judges were poorly trained, and the juries might very well render a verdict based on how well the defendant entertained them and on whether or not he *looked* honest. Under such conditions, justice was a whimsical uncertainty and the search for truth was apt to follow a highly erratic course. Pride was still a justifiable excuse for homicide in a masculine society where tempers flared easily and anything that tended to belittle an arrogant man could trigger violence.

One of Pike's cases has become a classic of frontier jurisprudence, reflecting as it does the ways of law in a society on the verge of being civilized. The case grew out of the problem of wolves in Arkansas. In the deep woods where a man's wealth was measured by the pigs he had turned loose in the forest, a pack of hungry wolves could bankrupt him in a single night. To solve this problem, legislators were constantly bringing up bills in the state legislature to provide a bounty on wolves, and the introduction of any bill of this sort was always a signal for the wits of the frontier congress to go into action and greet it with a host of amendments to pay bounties on every kind of forest predator, including panthers, wildcats, catamounts, oppossums, and even rats.

In 1833 Pike recorded the speech of one frontier legislator, named Amos Kuykendall, who had made a protest over the treatment his wolf bill was receiving. Pike had an ear for dialect and the ability to put it down on paper, preserving the verbal shades of meaning in cold print; and his version of the speech of Amos Kuykendall was widely circulated as an example of frontier humor at its best:

"Mr. President— If I'm in order I want to say this and thus on this here subject. I think it is one of the most glorious, one of the most valuable, frontier works that can be. . . . Now, as to minks, I hadn't no objection. I've seen a mink catch a chicken—I'll catch a chicken too, if my wife tells me to, and treat a gentleman. And as to 'possums, I hadn't no sort of objection. . . . I don't eat 'possum—I eat hogmeat—that's good—that makes sop. I ask for a wolf first—he's a big fellow—he catches a big hog. Let him that wants a 'possum catch him and eat him. All them things catches chickens. I only ask a liberal price. . . . Understand me, my Sons! You all know *Uncle Amos;* some of you twenty-five year. Now don't let him be brutified! Don't treat him with contempt!"

Four years later the same bill came up again, but this time the sound of laughter ringing through the legislative chambers was soon to give way to the silent horror of a real tragedy. In December of 1837, the Senate sent a wolf bill to the House for discussion. Once again, as in the earlier bill, the resolution asked for a bounty on wolf scalps, and once again it aroused a flurry of semihumorous debate. Who could be sure, for instance, if the wolf was really guilty of all the crimes attributed to him? The woods were full of carnivorous creatures, their appetites whetted for the taste of

chicken or hog meat. Too, how could such a law be enforced when the average hunter was so clever at collecting bounty? What would prevent a man with no wolves on his land from crossing into Indian Territory or down into Texas for wolf pelts? The scalp of a Texas wolf was worth just as much as a bona fide pure Arkansas wolf, and no one could tell the difference.

The debate was wonderful fun, and it gave the legislators a chance to indulge in the flights of fancy at which they excelled. There was another angle to be considered, they insisted. Might not this law give rise to a host of counterfeiters who would blend sheep scalps with strips of wolf skin, and, disguising the conglomerate, cash it in as a real 100 per cent wolf scalp?

And then, as often happens when real humor begins to wear thin and a man is straining for something to keep it alive, one man overstepped his bounds. A member of the house from Randolph County named J. J. Anthony offered an amendment, saying that in order to keep the wolf hunters honest the president of the Real Estate Bank should be required to sign every certificate attached to a wolf scalp to certify its authenticity.

Immediately a painful hush fell over the House, because everyone knew exactly what he meant, and everyone knew he had gone too far. The Speaker of the House, John Wilson, was also president of the Real Estate Bank, a new institution that was currently being accused of unethical financial practices, and to bring his name into a discussion of thieving wolf hunters was tantamount to an accusation of downright dishonesty. And now, J. J. Anthony, nervous with the full realization of what he had done, stood looking at the angry, ashen face of the Speaker of the House, who moved from behind his stand and demanded to know if Anthony meant that remark to be personal.

Anthony was momentarily blank. His mind groped for some satisfactory answer; stammering slightly, he said he could explain. He had no chance to say anything more, for Wilson's voice cut him off and told him to sit down. But Anthony could not sit down and leave the explanation hanging. Too, the arbitrary action of Wilson in taking seriously what Anthony had meant to be humorous began to make the latter angry. He could not withdraw and he refused to sit down.

"Sit down or I'll make you!" Wilson yelled, advancing toward

him and drawing a knife out of his coat. Hesitant, nervous, Anthony backed away, licking his lips, looking from Wilson to the tight faces of the other men, and drawing his own knife, more from reflex at the sight of Wilson's weapon than from any desire to fight. Until now the drawing of the knives had been nothing more than a gesture. Perhaps if one of the legislators had grabbed Wilson's arm, or said something to break the tension, the knives would have been sheathed, Anthony would have been allowed to make his explanation, and the insult would have been smoothed over. But no one said anything.

In that moment of tension, with Wilson slowly advancing and Anthony cautiously moving backward, a man standing nearby grabbed a chair and thrust it between the two men, and the sudden burst of movement, meant to put a barrier between Wilson and Anthony, served as a catalyst. As the chair swung up, Anthony panicked and the knife dropped from his hand to clatter to the floor as he made a desperate grab at the chair, as if to use it to protect himself. But at the same instant, Wilson also grabbed the chair, and with both men pulling at it, the chair flew up, and the hand containing the knife arced beneath the chair in one smooth motion, the long sharp blade slicing beneath Anthony's rib cage and driving up into his heart. As Anthony crumpled to the floor, dead, Wilson calmly pulled his blade from the body, cleaning it between thumb and forefinger before he replaced it beneath his coat. He returned to the Speaker's desk and entertained a motion to adjourn. The motion was promptly made, agreement was unanimous, and Wilson stalked out of the hall without a backward glance.

To prosecute this open-and-shut case of murder, State Prosecuting Attorney John Clendenin retained Pike as a special assistant, and they moved for an immediate trial in a Little Rock court. But Wilson was a man of considerable influence, and he retained the very clever attorney, Chester Ashley, to represent him. Ashley was the most highly educated lawyer in the state, and, like Pike, he had migrated to Arkansas from Massachusetts very early in his career. He was the wealthiest man in the state, and his financial standing was a clear indication of his legal prowess. A cunningly shrewd man, Ashley was a formidable opponent in any court of law, and Pike was to face him again and again during his career.

Ashley proved his artfulness now. Public feeling against Wilson

was running so high in Little Rock at the moment that Ashley stalled to let tempers cool down. Against the protests of Pike and Clendenin, he managed a change of venue for Wilson to a court in another county where the defendant stayed at the same boarding-house as the judge who was to hear the case, paying for the judge's meals. The trial itself was a travesty. Wilson's only excuse was that he had been defending his honor, but the jury found it sufficient and returned a verdict of "excusable homicide." When Wilson was acquitted, he asked the sheriff to take the jury to the nearest tavern and buy them all a drink. Following the public oiling, the jury, Wilson's friends, and the august Speaker of the House himself held a celebration in the streets that lasted until dawn.

Pike was bitter over the results of the Wilson case, and he pushed hard for reforms in the legal system of the state until he came to realize that a change in the machinery would be useless until the people experienced a reformation in their concepts of justice. At the moment it was quite apparent that this state of mind was an ideal that could not be reached until the frontier calmed down and the integrity of the courts attained a higher level. At present there was a dual standard of justice, one for the poor man and one for the man with money; and in courts that could be influenced with cash, the latter was consistently more successful than the former. As Pike wrote, with cynical humor:

Do you wish in the courts of the country to sue
For the right or estate that's another man's due?
Your lawyer will surely remember his cue,
When his palm you have crossed with a Dollar, or two,
For a lawyer's convinced with a Dollar, or two;
And a jury set right with a Dollar, or two;
And though justice is blind
Yet a way you may find
To open her eyes with a Dollar, or two.

Perhaps at some time in the future these evils might be corrected, but at the moment, with the details of the Wilson case still fresh in his mind, Pike was not so sure.

2

Having formed a partnership with William Cummings of Little Rock, Pike spent much of his time making the regular tour of the circuit courts twice a year in the company of a band of lawyers who were a special breed of colorful men, often almost illiterate, natively shrewd and, according to Pike's description, "the best off-hand lawyers" in the country. "A lawyer in this country," Pike wrote, "who rides two circuits, travels about 1,200 miles a year. He mounts his horse, puts his saddlebags and blankets under him, and takes to the canebrakes and the winding hill roads."

The lawyers rode the circuit together partly from some feeling that there was safety in numbers, but more because they enjoyed one another's company. Once away from the trammeling restraints of civilization, the lawyers could relax and make their tour one big stag party. They camped out, cooked their meals from the food carried in one saddlebag (their lawbooks occupying the other), drank copious amounts of whisky, and swapped stories so outrageous that no historian will ever be able to separate the truth from the fantasies invented late at night on the trail by as lively a collection of eccentrics as could be found anywhere in the world.

A lawyer in this gregarious group might resort to any strategy on behalf of his client; he might use the circuit courts for electioneering instead of practicing law; or he might get so dead drunk during the session that he was unable to continue—and his colleagues would think nothing of it. The only inexcusable crime in the code of this ambulatory legal body was that of unsociability. The man who held himself aloof was immediately damned by the rest of the lawyers, who made life very uncomfortable for him. Pike has given us the description of one such man.

Written much later in Pike's career, when he felt himself slandered and was compelled to make a written denial of the charges, this defense was occasioned by the writings of an eccentric named Alfred W. Arrington, who lived in northwestern Arkansas and made a literary reputation on novels which, if they used fictional plots, employed thinly disguised characterizations of living people. In a number of these stories, Pike appeared in a battle of wits with another lawyer who was drawn to the dimensions of a man named John Taylor, who happened to be one of the unsociable lawyers on

the circuit. Pike was always the villain and he always lost the case. So great was the popularity of Arrington's writings, and so persuasive was his style, that a number of people came to believe that what he wrote must be true. Finally, galled by the public acceptance of this fiction, Pike responded with a vitriolic attack on John Taylor:

"He was a tall lank man with hair of a dirty red, and repulsive countenance, small and malignant eyes, an unsocial, repellent churl, with not a drop of the milk of human kindness in his whole body, a thoroughly read lawyer, especially in the old books, of which his library chiefly consisted. . . .

"When he first appeared in Little Rock (circa 1836) and took an office in Ashley's brick one-story row, on Markham Street near Pitcher & Walters' corner, we all at different times called up him and tendered him the usual courtesies of the bar to which he was grimly unresponsive, shutting himself up in the shell of his cold exclusiveness.

"He rented a house on the edge of town beyond Judge Fields', where he lived with his wife, having no child (fortunately, as Tristam Burgess said in the Senate to John Randolph, monsters are incapable of propagating their species), in impenetrable seclusion. . . .

"We made but one advance each, toward friendly relations with him: and he never had any with any member of the bar. He would never ride in company with any other person, or converse with anyone except on business; and licking his lips with his tongue as he spoke (reminding me always of a venomous snake), his eyes gleaming with malignity, as he hissed out poisoned sarcasm and vituperation, he seemed to delight in making enemies. . . .

"I should not devote so much space, or indeed any, to this nomad (who always carried into the court-rooms, in the pockets of his long coats, two large pistols, one of which I twice saw fall upon the floor, and who at last claimed that the lawyers of Little Rock had poisoned his well, and thereupon left the State and went to Texas), but for the two romances published by Arrington, one of a trial in Conway County in which he represented himself as figuring; and the other of his volunteering to defend at Clarksville, in Texas, a young woman charged with murder, whom Sargeant S. Prentiss of Mississippi, Chester Ashley and myself had been employed to prosecute there.

"Both stories were pure fictions; I never prosecuted any woman

charged with any offense, anywhere; I never saw Sargeant S. Prentiss in a courtroom; he was never engaged with Chester Ashley anywhere, and was never, I think, nor was Ashley, in Clarksville in his life; I never saw Clarksville until the fall of 1861; and there was never any case on trial anywhere."

Fortunately, few of the circuit-riding lawyers were like Taylor, and Pike remembered them all with amused fondness when he wrote about them. One lawyer, for instance, Pike says, always presented a stuffy appearance on his return to Little Rock because he traveled the circuit without carrying any extra clothes. When, after camping out, his suit became visibly dirty and wrinkled, he bought new clothes and put them over his old ones, and was multilayered by the time he got home. Another man carried a lawbook by Chitty in his saddlebags, and, says Pike, "The book was currently known as the Baconham-Chitty because of the stain contracted on its leather cover by association with the slices of ham which its owner carried to solace his appetite with."

When court convened at some remote outpost, the lawyers bunked wherever they could find enough space to lie down. They rarely lacked diversion, for good whisky was always sold in the courtyard while court was in session; and at one time, when Pike and eighteen other lawyers were boarding in a room in the courthouse building, they had the good fortune to discover a faro game that was operating under the courtroom every night.

The court session itself was often very informal. The English traveler Featherstonhaugh tells of one circuit court he attended in which three murderers and a horse thief were being tried. Court was about to open when the judge discovered that one of the jurors was absent, and since the courthouse was in a remote spot and no one was available to fill the vacancy, the defense attorney made a suggestion to expedite matters. The judge and the prosecuting attorney, wanting to move on, agreed. "So they put one of the murderers into the jury and first tried the horse stealer and acquitted him; then put the horse stealer into the panel and acquitted the murderer. By this sort of admirable contrivance the whole four were honorably acquitted and returned perfectly whitewashed into the bosom of society. The jury and the rest of the court also, having got rid of a tedious and unpleasant business, returned without delay to their respective homes."

Other defendants might not be so lucky. Facing the prospect of a trial on any offense, a backwoodsman might wonder at the competence of the bleary-eyed, wrinkled man defending him, but he was undoubtedly impressed with the barrage of big words that was always laid down at a frontier court.

"There are many," Pike writes, "who make some tremendous displays of eloquence. For example, I once heard one gentleman at the bar talk of 'bullying and predominating over his equals'—and another said that 'the prisoner at the bar had beat the boy and amalgamated his head.'" In another case: "A limb of the law once defended a client for assault and battery before a justice. He opened his case by saying, 'May it please your honor, I appear before you this day, an humble advocate of the peoples' rights, to redress the peoples' wrongs. Justice, may it please your honor, justice is all we ask; and justice is due, from the tallest and highest *archangel* that sits upon the throne of heaven, to the meanest and most insignificant *demon* that broils upon the coals of hell. If my client, may it please your honor, has been guilty of any offense at all, he has been guilty of the *littlest* and *most insignificant offense* which has ever been committed from *the time when the morning stars sung together with joy— Shout heavenly muse.'*"

Occasionally, the appeals to the bench were couched in foreign languages. "When I first began to practice law," Pike writes, "there was a little, dried-up lawyer named Samuel Hall, who knew nothing about Latin, but who was particularly fond of picking up and 'firing' scraps of it at the jury. Once when he was trying a case, with another lawyer named Parrot, he fired off all the Latin phrases he could think of, and when Parrot replied he uttered about a half dozen sentences in Choctaw. Hall objected to the court that Parrot should not use language that no one could understand. Parrot replied that the language he had used was Latin, and that it was not his fault that Hall could not understand it. Hall resented this and proposed to leave it to the court. The Judge decided that to the best of his knowledge Parrot's Latin was as good as Hall's."

Another incident that Pike relates concerns an esteemed colleague noted for his sheer genius at logic in the frontier courts, and describes one of his arguments as follows: ". . . In an action for slander, brought by a female client against one Thomas Williams, who had uttered some injurious emputations against her virgin

purity, he (the lawyer) thus broke forth, 'Who is this Tom Williams, gentlemen of the jury, that comes riding out of the Cherokee nation, on the suburbs of posterity? He knocked at my client's door at the dead hour of night, and she refused to get up and let him in. Wasn't this proof of her virginity?' "

3

As much as Pike enjoyed these legal excursions into the backwoods, it was in the more sophisticated legal battles that his prodigious memory for details and his growing political acumen would enhance his legal reputation, and it was here that he would make his money. As an advocate for the southern planters, he was kept busy, and in the three years from 1837 through 1839 he participated in 23 out of the 71 cases brought before the Arkansas Supreme Court, a ratio that was to improve consistently through the next decade.

Pike was a shrewd lawyer, and at times he had a canny instinct for making a theatrical gesture at the precise moment when it would do the most good. He demonstrated this ability in the famous Real Estate Bank case, a celebrated scandal that began shortly after the Territory won statehood.

Arkansas came into the Union at a bad time, for in the closing months of 1836 the country was rushing pell-mell toward the great financial panic of 1837, a condition brought about, to a large degree, by the overinflation of paper money that was being issued by individual banks throughout the country. In 1836 President Jackson made a desperate attempt to shore up the national economy by introducing a Specie Circular stating that from that time on, when a man bought government land, he would have to pay cold cash for it, specie. The government would accept no more of the almost worthless paper money. The financial situation promised to be very tight indeed for the next few years.

At the same time, Arkansas was promised some $300,000 as her share of the surplus in the national Treasury that was being distributed to the states, and the self-appointed financial experts in the Arkansas legislature decided to use the money to establish two new banks, the Real Estate Bank and the State Bank, institutions that would keep money in circulation and preserve a sound economy, or so they hoped. The new governor, James S. Conway, ap-

proved their idea, and under the new laws the Real Estate Bank was authorized to sell $2,000,000 worth of state bonds at 6 per cent to get started. The windfall from the national government, with an additional capital of $1,000,000 in 5 per cent state bonds would finance the State Bank. All of this money would be secured by land.

Banking experts and men who had some idea of the intricacies of high finance shuddered at this unsound fiscal plan. Building banks on Arkansas real estate would be like erecting a brick mansion on quicksand, they suggested, and the latter would be considerably less risky than the former. It was doubtful, in those hectic days of the mid-thirties, that there was one square foot of land in the state that had a clear title, and to lend money on any of it was about the same as giving cash away in the hope that the borrower would be honest enough to pay it back. In the period between 1830 and 1840, over 60,000 immigrants poured into the state, and a great percentage of them squatted on land to which they had no title. Part of them went so far as to sell the land they did not own, and when government lands were offered for sale to men already living on it, the claims very often overlapped. In addition, there were French and Spanish land grants in litigation. No one knew where it would end.

Even if a piece of land put up as collateral happened to have a clear title, it was doubtful that the banks would ever be able to foreclose on it. The foreclosure laws were cumbersome, unworkable pieces of legislation, and it would take a bank from three to ten years to get possession of a piece of foreclosed property. Nevertheless, the legislature, with the precipitant zeal of self-professed experts, rushed into the banking business, opening branches all over the state, putting up elegant banking houses in wilderness outposts, and, as W. D. Blocher says, erected nine expensive structures when "there was not business sufficient in the whole state to justify even one."

Despite the criticism leveled at them, both banks got off to a flying start. The Real Estate bonds sold quite well in the East, for they paid 6 per cent interest and guaranteed specie for their payments. As the money came in quickly, it went out with a rush. Everybody with any land at all, however worthless it might be, poured into the banks, because they could get an evaluation on the sorriest piece of land at about $48 an acre.

Business boomed. Nevertheless, by the latter part of 1839, it appeared that both banks were beginning to have difficulties. Neither institution had much cash left, and their elaborate vaults contained precious little gold and silver. The largest part of their depleted reserve was in the paper money they had issued. There was a simple explanation for their troubles, a financial policy that encouraged larceny. A man who had borrowed forty dollars on an acre of land worth five was naturally reluctant to repay his loan, preferring to let the banks foreclose on the almost worthless land. These reluctant individuals included a large part of the officers and stockholders of both institutions. Naturally, these officers were anxious to avoid publicity. Because they did not want to cause trouble for anyone, they extended the mortgages and said they would resume specie payments when more money came in. In the meantime, they would continue to do business, with paper money.

Unfortunately, however, as word circulated that there was something highly irregular going on in the banks, the value of the paper money dropped to less than fifty cents on the dollar, and the public murmur of distrust grew to an outraged clamor, culminating in the election of Archibald Yell to the governorship on his promise that he would remedy the situation. In his inauguration speech of 1840, Yell told the legislature in no uncertain terms to investigate the banks. "Let no political or personal consideration," he urged them, "swerve you from a scrutinizing and fearless discharge of your duty to enforce all proper means to bring back your depreciated state paper to a sound specie standard; or lay the axe at the root of the evil."

His instructions were impractical. A great many of the legislators were bound to be swayed by both "political and personal considerations," and to "lay the axe at the root of the evil" would leave most of them with lacerated ankles since they were among the fortunate debtors of the new banks. They had no inclination to instigate an investigation that would result in their having to pay their debts. They decided to ask the bank managers to make a report, and when the bank managers assured them that everything was fine in the world of high finance they accepted this reassurance without question and decided to forget the matter.

If the legislators could forget, the people of the state could not, and Governor Yell, finding himself with a hot political issue, would

not. And so, for two years, the banks were a major topic of discussion throughout the state. In 1842 the elections replaced all but seven of the hesitant legislators, and the governor found himself with a new investigating force.

It was into this atmosphere of tension that Albert Pike, moving a little more slowly now that he had begun to put on weight, came into the picture. He had been retained as attorney for the Real Estate Bank, and in the summer of 1842 he was called in by the equally distraught officers of the State Bank. Both institutions were in very vulnerable positions, and the State Bank had already suffered one unhappy investigation. When the auditors had moved into the Fayetteville branch of the State Bank, the nervous cashier at first had reported that the books were missing and then later produced them, water-logged and mutilated and in such shape that no one could figure out what they contained. Despite this delaying action the auditors continued to probe, and in April discovered that the tidy sum of $46,199.60 was missing. They looked around for the cashier to ask him why. The cashier was not available. He had suddenly decided that he needed a long trip for his health and had made a fast exit across the border into Texas, without leaving a forwarding address.

The Real Estate Bank was in no shape to survive a legislative investigation either, for it was subsequently proved that fifteen of the officials of the bank had borrowed $151,425.32 and had cosigned notes in the amount of $145,227.30, which made them personally responsible for close to $300,000. Too, their books contained some highly irregular entries. Clerks had often been too busy to record transactions at the time when they took place, and occasionally it was years before they remembered to make a note of them. Rather large sums of money had, now and again, been withdrawn for expenses, but someone had been negligent in putting down exactly what the expense money was for. When those responsible were questioned about these expenses, years after the fact, their memories proved conveniently uncertain.

After a conference with Pike, the fifteen officers decided to assign all the assets of the Real Estate Bank to themselves as trustees, a legal maneuver designed to forestall any investigation by the new legislature. Shortly thereafter, the directors of the State Bank followed a similar course, and the cashier of that institution instructed

Pike to draw up the papers and to defend the validity of the action should it be questioned. The moment this move was made public, the storm broke.

An assignment to trustees was a perfectly legal step, and Pike knew it, but to the hundreds of stockholders and depositors of the banks it represented an evasive action and a sure indication that it was going to be a long time before they saw any of their money. Very shortly, an organization of stockholders and depositors, including Pike's former law partner, William Cummings, engaged the very powerful Chester Ashley to find a way to annul the trusteeship, and once again Pike found himself opposing the most renowned lawyer on the frontier.

It was an unfortunate position for Pike to be in. Ashley had the weight of public sentiment on his side, and public opinion could be a powerful weapon in any legal action on the frontier. While the controversy was still raging, Pike went back to New York with the Real Estate Bank cashier, Thomas W. Newton, to "effect a settlement there in regard to the moneys of the bank that had fallen into bad hands." And while he poured through the books of the North American Trust and Banking Company, the concern that had taken a large part of the bonds, Pike discovered a discrepancy of about $25,000 between the amount the Trust Company was supposed to have paid for the bonds and the amount the Real Estate Bank received. It was also apparent that in this unfortunate game of high finance, everyone had violated the rules and that illegality had been piled on illegality until the whole affair was so confused that it was doubtful if anyone would ever be able to straighten it out. The Real Estate Bank had broken the law when it disposed of the bonds at less than par value. The North American Trust and Banking Company had broken the law by selling the bonds (which they had taken as collateral on a loan to the Real Estate Bank) to an English firm for twice what they had paid.

Pike returned to Little Rock for the first steps in a precipitate series of court battles with Chester Ashley in which Ashley made move after move to have the trusteeship set aside, only to find himself frustrated. Since this was an urgent political issue, the courts took little time in handing down their decision. Both the chancery and the state supreme courts ruled against Ashley with singular speed.

Ordinarily, perhaps, the matter would have ended here, but

Ashley felt that he had not been dealt with fairly, for the two courts that had rejected his plea had been presided over by two of Pike's close friends. In chancery court the decision had been handed down by Chancellor John J. Clendenin, the man who had been allied with Pike against Ashley in the Wilson case. One of the justices on the supreme court was Thomas J. Lacey, a man who had helped Pike immensely in establishing himself as a lawyer. Ashley began to suspect that the decision rendered in the case had not been a completely impartial and impersonal one, and his suspicions were echoed by the legislators who had been elected on their pledge to clean out the corruption in the state banks and who were loath to see this hot political issue taken out of their hands.

There was only one course of action left to the legislature and to Ashley, now that the courts had held the trusteeship valid, and that was to attack the integrity of the supreme court itself, to impeach Judge Lacey on a charge of corruption. If it could be proved that Lacey had made his ruling out of friendship for Pike or from financial considerations, the case could be retried with a new and more amenable justice sitting on the bench, and the new supreme court ruling would be predictably different from the current one. Too, acting as a self-contained court, the legislature could determine its own rules of evidence, and, considering the mood they were in, it would take nothing more tangible than rumors to convict Lacey.

When he heard what the legislature was planning, Pike took immediate steps to defend Judge Lacey; and as he told it many years later, his maneuver was a masterful triumph that exonerated Lacey and quieted the legislature in one deft motion. His defense was passive rather than active. His objective was to disarm the legislature and forestall their attack, for he knew that once the impeachment proceedings had begun, nothing less than a conviction would satisfy the vindictive congressmen.

Practically all of the members of the legislature were lawyers. They had been educated to a large extent from two judicial sources, *Commentaries on American Law* by James Kent, Chancellor of the New York Court of Chancery, and by the prodigious legal works of Judge Joseph Story, a Justice on the United States Supreme Court. To fledging lawyers, the judgments of these two experts were represented as absolute and beyond question. Pike sent copies of the trust

papers to both men and asked them to rule on the validity of the move. Both men confirmed Judge Lacey's decision. In their opinion, the trusteeship was perfectly legal. Judge Story charged nothing for his opinion. Chancellor Kent's fee was $50.

Armed with these confirmations, Pike did not approach the legislature directly, for that would have destroyed the impartial effectiveness of his weapon. Instead, he had the two opinions printed, and when the legislators convened for their impeachment session they found copies of the circulars on each desk in the general assembly. As Pike had known it would, these simple, tersely worded statements had a profound dampening effect on the hot-tempered lawmakers. To impeach Lacey now would, in effect, be to question the wisdom of two of the most eminent jurists in the United States, an action the legislators could never justify in the public press. As a consequence, the impeachment proceedings evaporated into thin air. The judgment of the court stood unchallenged. Ashley resigned himself to defeat.

The reprieve for the banks proved to be a temporary one, however. After 1842 they issued no more money, and tried to fade quietly into a financial limbo, but there was little chance of that. For the next forty years the ill-fated banks would be a convenient political scapegoat, a handy issue revived to some degree by every subsequent administration as governor after governor tried to reclaim part of the long-vanished money. Additional investigations uncovered additional chicanery, and multiple lawsuits made laborious journeys through the courts until finally, late in the century, the debts were repudiated altogether.

Condemned for his handling of the case (which many people considered unethical), Pike found himself very much in demand as a lawyer after his brilliant tactical display, for a planter in need of legal counsel was more interested in success than he was in discussing the morality of the means used to obtain it. And when it came to generating success, Albert Pike seemed to have the magic touch.

SIX

PORTRAIT OF A CAPTAIN IN A SWALLOW-TAILED COAT

In the mid 1830's the irrepressible Davy Crockett visited Little Rock and in a moment of exuberance characterized Arkansas as a place "where the men are of the real half-horse, half-alligator breed such as grow nowhere on the face of the universal earth but just around the backbone of America." Being most impressed by Davy, the men of Arkansas did their best to live up to what he had said about them, but by 1840 the description was out of date, particularly in the town of Little Rock. Under the guidance of their women, the men of the town had undertaken a program of drastic self-reform, and there were now laws in force to help their good resolutions by curtailing some of their former pastimes. A man could no longer discharge his rifle in the streets on the Sabbath, for instance, and a man could no longer make a wager with a slave. Caught in the throes of respectability, the men of Little Rock now displayed an avid interest in the artistic refinements of society, commissioning portraits of their womenfolk by traveling painters and supporting a new theater that had recently been established in the town.

In some ways the new veneer of social graciousness was very thin indeed, and while the men drove their wives in fancy carriages to attend a performance of *Bill Screamer, or the Man of the West,* a new drama by an Arkansawyer named John Field, they had to be careful to avoid trampling the herds of pigs that scrounged through the streets to dispose of the garbage. Pike himself made note of the pigs by advertising in the papers that the owner of the animals was going to find himself with some dead hogs if he didn't keep them out of Pike's garden.

Proof of this masculine reformation came in June of 1840 when Van Buren was opposing Harrison for the Presidency in one of the hottest elections in recent years. Ordinarily, a contest of this magni-

tude would be celebrated with wild melees, a rash of fist fights, and a duel or two, but under Pike's leadership this thirst for blood was channeled into less destructive pursuits. The Democrats showed their election fervor in a massive torchlight parade that wound through the streets of Little Rock in behalf of Van Buren. Instead of lurking in the shadows to jump a few of the straggling celebrants, the Whigs planned a rival display to outdo the Democrats, guaranteeing its innocuousness by allowing their women to participate.

Pike set the celebration for the 13th and 14th of July, and it far exceeded even his most hopeful expectations. In the days preceding the event, thousands of Whigs poured into the capital, camping out in tents along the river, lighting bonfires, and assembling for a massive free barbecue where a plentiful supply of hard cider put them in a proper mood for Pike's oration and the parade that followed.

The parade was the most colorful procession Little Rock had ever seen. A delegation of 150 men and women had ridden horseback from Independence County, carrying with them a tremendous canoe (in honor of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too") so large that it had to be transported in sections by wagon from Batesville. It was reassembled in Little Rock and towed through the streets of the city with twenty-six lovely girls (one for each of the twenty-six states) riding in it and throwing kisses to the five thousand people thronged along the parade route. As an added attraction, the canoe had a log cabin mounted at the prow with a live raccoon perched on top of it. The parade was a stirring spectacle according to the newspapers, and for the first time in many years there were no casualties in Little Rock from pre-election festivities. The Whigs were able to boast that they had outdone the Democrats as far as the parade was concerned, even if Harrison and Tyler were doomed to defeat at the local polls.

The penchant for constructive respectability that the people of Little Rock were experiencing was reflected in Pike's public pronouncements of the time. Because Little Rock was now a family town, Pike came out firmly in favor of a free public education for the children. As the merchants in Little Rock invested more and more of their money in fine homes and businesses, their fear of Indian attack (an unlikely possibility) mounted, and Pike included an insistence on an adequate military system in his speeches.

More significant, perhaps, was the new attitude of the people toward the election of their public officials, and voters were beginning to view their responsibilities with a bit more sobriety than they had displayed in the past. Pike outlined this new political posture in an address to the Whigs:

"Every political contest should be a contest of principles and not for the success of political favorites; and the people should always suspect those who avoid and evade a candid and open exposition of those principles, by vapid and empty boastings of patriotism and love for the people—an arrogant and unmeaning parade of high sounding appelations—and an exclusive claim to the titles of democrats and republicans. . . . The science of government is the science of benefitting and blessing the people. To recriminate and revile is the advocation of the demagogue and the incendiary."

Part of Pike's growing conservatism stemmed from the fact that he was also growing quite wealthy. In 1840, at the age of thirty-one, he was finally in a position to build a mansion to rival the elegant houses of Woodruff and Ashley. Buying a large tract of wooded land east of Little Rock, he had all the materials for his mansion brought in by flatboat up the Arkansas River, and, at a cost of $7,000, a staggering sum for the day, Pike had a house constructed that is still one of the showplaces of Little Rock. At the end of a long driveway were the six stately white columns that fronted the mansion and rose to a height of thirty-five feet. There were four large rooms on the lower floor and four spacious bedrooms upstairs, each with its private fireplace. The front door was studded with a massive lock opened and closed by a key eight inches long. The kitchen was set apart from the house not only because of the heat it generated but also as a precaution against fires. An ornamental iron fence was erected around the property, and with four slaves purchased to tend to the house and grounds, Pike and his family moved in.

There were two rooms of the new house to which Pike paid special attention, the small but compact wine cellar (for his palate for fine liquors was developing rapidly) and the west front room which he appropriated as a study. And now, with the ponderous library he had collected over the years shelved on the walls around him, a massive leather chair to accommodate his increasing bulk, a supply of writing materials scattered on the huge table in front of him, he continued his poetic career, inspired by the singing of the

birds in the trees outside his window. He confided to his journal that he could "write better" when he could hear the singing birds, and was "happier for their company."

Unfortunately, the perfect comfort in which he now found himself did not improve his poetry. Abandoning classical themes, he now concentrated on light love lyrics, a romantic vein that would continue to run through his verse to the end of his life. In 1840 he wrote a poem called "To Genevieve," typical of his efforts in this field:

Of all the rivers of the West,
I love the clear Neosho best;
For there was I first truly blest,
There first in my fond arms I pressed
My blushing Genevieve. . . .

Her bosom's snowy paradise,
Forebidden to unhallowed eyes,
Beat with devotion on my breast;
And, clasping fondly her slight waist,
Those rosy, loving lips I kissed,
Chaste as the cold Neosho.

In 1844 the girl was "Annie" and the river was the Ouchita (Washita), but the sentiment was the same:

How fondly did her soft arms twine
Around me on the Ouchita!
Her sweet lips chastely pressed to mine,
Her brown eyes radiant and divine,—
Each brighter than a star.

Although there was a vogue for poems of this type at the time Pike wrote them, the only one that attracted any critical attention was one called "The Widowed Heart." It carried the unwieldy subtitle: "*Lachrymae Pondera Vocis Habent. Tristis Eris, Si Solus Eris: Dominaeque Relictae Ante Oculos Facies Stabit, Ut Ipsa, Tuous.*" It was a melancholy lament with a great many verses amplifying the theme expressed in the first:

Thou art lost to me forever!—I have lost thee, Isadore!
Thy head will never rest upon my loyal bosom more;
Thy tender eyes will never look more fondly into mine,

Nor thine arms around me lovingly and trustingly entwine,—
Thou art lost to me forever, Isadore.

None of the critics ever claimed that the poem had any special merit, but it was published in the *New York Evening Mirror* while Edgar Allen Poe was working there, antedating the publication of his "The Raven" in the same paper. Later in the century, a few critics attempted to show that Poe's poem had been influenced by Pike's, but the only internal evidence they could cite was the similarity of the refrain in "The Raven" ("Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore,' ") to Pike's refrain. It was too tenuous a theory ever to gain a wide acceptance.

As much as he enjoyed it, Pike was able to spend little time in his study composing verse. During the early forties, his practice continued to grow, and his yearly travels expanded to include trips to Washington, D.C., with his admission to practice before the United States Supreme Court in 1842. In addition, he traveled widely as an orator and devoted a large part of his remaining time to civic groups. One of these organizations caused him unexpected grief, a colorful military unit known as "The Little Rock Guards."

2

In 1834 an English artist named Bingham gathered the young boys of Little Rock together and organized a marching society. These boys ranged in age from eight to fourteen, and as Bingham led them through the streets of Little Rock on a Saturday-afternoon hike, or drilled them on a moonlight night, the artist himself was the only one in the group big enough and strong enough to carry the flag.

By 1842 most of these boys had grown to manhood, and it was only natural that they should have become the nucleus of the new home guard organized by the people of Little Rock to make use of the $100,000 arsenal that had been built the year before.

Albert Pike was elected captain of this new organization, and he led the first appearance of what came to be called "Pike's Artillery" on the fourth of July, 1842, in a parade and firing exhibition. Marching through the streets of Little Rock, his men were colorfully attired in white duck trousers, gray blouses trimmed with red,

and marching red fatigue caps. They carried rifles on their shoulders and escorted two brightly polished six-pounder cannons to the park where the artillery pieces were wheeled around and pointed toward the sky. Pike stood back about five paces between the two guns. Drawing his saber, he gave the commands, "Ready. Aim. Fire." The two artillery pieces belched smoke at the sky and made a tremendous amount of noise. The spectators were very impressed.

It was hoped by many that the company would serve as a home guard to defend Little Rock in case that city were ever attacked by Indians, but it was doubtful that this group of men could do any more against the savages than make a favorable sartorial impression. But Pike was reasonably sure his men would never be called on to fight, and he enjoyed the pomp of inaugurations and public ceremonies for which his company served as a color guard.

In the winter Pike's company donned long black swallow-tailed coats with red linings, trousers gleaming with gold braid, and huge black beaver shakos adorned with red pompons. It was in this uniform that Pike's guards gave a reception for the diminutive Scotchman named John Ross, chief of the Cherokees, who was in Little Rock with his two young and beautiful daughters on his way home to the Cherokee Nation after a visit in the East.

The people of Little Rock were particularly Cherokee conscious, for this Indian nation bordered Arkansas on the west, and during the 1830's bands of half-starved, frightened Cherokees had camped near the territorial capital as they made their way west to their new homes. Anxious to impress Ross with the open friendliness of his eastern neighbors, Pike put on a vivid display for the Cherokee chief as the Little Rock Guards marched through the streets of Little Rock to pick up their dates for the ball, drums rattling. As they reached a girl's house, the company came to attention as one man fell out of the ranks and went up to the door to pick up his date for the evening. As the girl fell in step with her escort, the company rattled to the next house and the next until all the boys had their dancing partners for the party. Then they marched to the new Anthony House ballroom where the girls filed to one side of the room and the boys to the other.

Then Pike advanced to the center of the room, flanked on either side by his two lieutenants, to meet Ross and his two daughters. With his jovial face half lighted by the glow from the tiers of sperm

candles stuck in the muzzles of old flintlock muskets set around the room six inches apart, Pike made an eloquent address of welcome. Ross bowed slightly, stiffly. The girls curtsied, took the proferred arms of the two lieutenants, and marched away as the Dutch George band broke into the lively strains of the Virginia Reel.

At midnight the guests filed into the dining room for supper. Because there was a shortage of plates, not everyone could eat at the same time. The ladies ate first with the gentlemen waiting on them; then, after the dishes had been washed, the ladies served the gentlemen. During the evening Pike chatted amicably with the reticent little Scotchman, never realizing that before many years were to pass he would meet Ross again under considerably less amenable circumstances, at a time when the fate of two nations would be in jeopardy.

The dancing lasted until two o'clock. Then, with great ceremony, the soldiers marched the girls back to their homes, and another glittering social event in Little Rock came to a triumphal close.

As the years passed and the Little Rock Guards were called on for nothing more strenuous than a few celebrations and an occasional tribute to a recently departed citizen, the six-pounders exploding in a noisy expression of grief, it did not appear that they would ever be anything more than a civic ornament. And then, almost overnight it seemed to Pike, the storm clouds gathered, and in 1846 the United States resorted to war with Mexico to settle a dispute over the southern boundary of Texas. When the trouble began, Pike had a shudder of premonition. He was now thirty-seven years old, and doing very well in his profession. He had no desire to go to war with anyone, but he was quite sure that the boys in his company would not share his fervent wish for continued peace.

There were few states that Arkansas boys would be willing to fight for. Given a dispute with Canada over the boundary of Maine, the Arkansas boys would undoubtedly shrug and look the other way. But Texas was another matter. It was extremely close to Arkansas, emotionally as well as geographically. After all, Stephen Austin had used Arkansas as a base for his operations in Texas, and the town of Fulton still remembered his trading post and his wagon trains striking out for the virgin territory of a Mexican Texas. Sam Houston had traced a wobbling, alcoholic trail across Arkansas

in 1827, and people were still laughing about the time he stripped off all his clothes and threw them into the fire as a sacrifice to Bacchus. Davy Crockett had made an indelible impression on Little Rock in his free-wheeling visit there. More importantly, perhaps, a great many Arkansawyers had joined Austin's colony, making Texas, in a manner of speaking, an extension of Arkansas Territory. Therefore Pike knew that the men of his company would be not only willing but anxious to take an excursion into Mexico.

Under the command of General Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready," the troops in Indian Territory were ordered south to face the Mexicans, and Governor Thomas S. Drew issued a two-part call to the men of Arkansas. The Secretary of War had set Arkansas' quota as a regiment of cavalry and a battalion of infantry. The cavalry was to go to Mexico and the infantry was to sit out the war at Fort Smith to make sure the Indians did not seize this opportunity to start trouble. Pike took new hope from the nature of the call for volunteers. Because his company was equally at home on horseback or on foot, he immediately dispatched a letter to the government volunteering his command as an infantry company. Headquartered at Fort Smith, he would be able to keep up with his legal practice to some extent while he discharged his military duties.

If Pike preferred Fort Smith, his men were hell-bent for Mexico, and under the more democratic principles observed in the military of Pike's day, the men could vote to determine their own fate. If they pleased, they could go contrary to the desires of their captain. This they did. As Pike argued for Fort Smith, the enlisted men preferred Mexico, and in a meeting on June 7th, so voted. They asked to fight in Mexico as a company of "Flying Artillery," but the governor notified them that they would be taken in as a cavalry unit because there was no need for another company of cannoneers. The men were not too disappointed. After all, the trip to Mexico was the important thing. Faced with this new assignment, they held another election in which Pike was retained as their captain. Pike now had no choice. As a man of honor, he could not resign his commission in the face of battle, so he turned his practice over to a friend of his in Van Buren and, reluctant to the end, rode off to war.

3

The people of Little Rock gave the guards a tearful, joyous send-off, and a lady named Miss Josephine Buckner, in a ceremony at the arsenal, presented Pike with an embroidered banner containing the motto of his company, "Up Guards and at 'Em." So equipped, the cavalry unit clattered out of the capital and down the long dirt road to the town of Washington with three other companies to rendezvous with the rest of the Arkansas regiment.

By the end of the first week in July, the last of the ten companies had reported for duty, and while the enlisted men bivouacked and swapped stories about the romantic proclivities of Mexican women, the officers assembled for the election of the regimental officers. Notable by his absence from the balloting was the most popular man in the regiment, Archibald Yell, former governor, who had resigned his seat in Congress to come home and enlist in Solon Borland's company as a private. Since he was an enlisted man, he was not eligible to vote in the regimental election, but from the very beginning it was almost a foregone conclusion that, as a leading Democrat and a distinguished public servant, he would be elected colonel.

Pike was nominated against Yell to lose on the first ballot, but he was not too disappointed. Very well, he thought, let Yell be colonel. At least Yell had had a taste of military experience in the War of 1812. With Yell as colonel, Pike was sure that he would be elected lieutenant colonel. Again he was disappointed. John S. Roane, square-faced captain of the "Van Buren Avengers," a firm Democrat, without a whit of military experience in his twenty-nine years, was elected to the post. And when Solon Borland, another stanch Democrat, was elected major, Pike turned away in disgust, and a bitter resentment began to rise in him that would last as long as the unfortunate Mexican adventure.

On July 18th the regiment marched south, flags waving, morale high, toward Shreveport and thence across Texas to San Antonio. Plagued by rain, the company was slowed down and the 793 Arkansas volunteers did not join General John E. Wool's army in San Antonio until August 28th. It was here that the Arkansawyers began to realize that a man can be an excellent Democrat without necessarily being a good soldier.

General Wool, occupied with more important matters, anxious to get his expeditionary force in shape for a march into Mexico, did not take time to inspect the Arkansas troops when they first arrived, and assigned them a campground on the river four miles from town. Colonel Yell quickly laid out a camp but forgot about the sanitation measures, which should have been taken on setting up a bivouac. No one reminded him. The weather was miserably hot, and the men much preferred basking in the shade of the trees along the river and taking baths in the slightly tepid water to the onerous duty of digging latrines.

While the other men were doing nothing, Pike had his Little Rock Guards out in the sun, putting them through a close-order drill, a discipline he refused to abandon even when the other officers permitted their men to lie about. Lacking latrines, the Arkansas area took on a certain unmistakable pungency after four days, and when General Wool, a strict disciplinarian, first saw the camp, and smelled it, he was so offended that he immediately ordered the Arkansas volunteers to move to higher ground.

Yell promptly complied with the order, but instead of making provisions for a more comfortable camp by taking his men upriver, he led them out to a ridge a couple of miles from the original campsite where there was neither shade nor water. It was a scorchingly hot day in mid-August, and the men responded to the change by dropping like flies. Hundreds of them went on the sick list and so depopulated the regiment that Pike had only sixteen able men left in his company.

The responsibility for moving the men to the treeless ridge was a subject for much discussion in the Arkansas camp, and the majority of the enlisted men had a tendency to blame General Wool since they hated him anyway, considering him "aristocratic." Pike, still fuming from his shabby treatment in the regimental election, turned his bitterness to an indictment of Archibald Yell. Once, he had written that Yell was a "good, unaffected fellow," but now he described him as "totally incompetent and unable to learn" and "a laughing stock" in a letter he sent back to Arkansas.

While the army of General Wool was encamped at San Antonio, enduring the hot sun and eager to get into action, General Taylor was moving steadily south, fighting his chief battle against inefficiency rather than against the Mexicans. So far, he had led his army

in two successful but inconclusive engagements with the forces of General Mariano Arista, a small skirmish on May 8th and a larger battle the next day in a ravine near Resaca de la Palma. But so far, much of his military effort had been wasted with a lot of purposeless shifting back and forth in search of the enemy. At one time Taylor's army had passed within a few miles of the Mexican army, which was moving in the opposite direction, and so poor was Taylor's intelligence system that he never knew it.

As Taylor pushed south through the stifling heat of a Mexican summer, so many of his men came down with the fever that the tent hospitals were filled with the dying, and his forced march slowed to a crawl. The burial details worked all night to make room for the new lines of sick men who reported to the hospital every morning at sunup. Despite the heavy casualties from the fever, Taylor moved on toward Monterrey and the army of General Pedro de Ampudia.

By the end of September, now that the last unit of General Wool's piecemeal army had arrived, he led his column of two thousand men south and west to join Taylor. By the 12th of October, Wool's army had reached the Rio Grande, which looked like a beautiful stream to the men after the barren country they had passed through. Crossing it, they pushed on to the town of Presidio and had their first look at the inhabitants of this hostile country. They did not think very much of them. As one man in Pike's company wrote, Presidio contained "about three thousand inhabitants, which are very ignorant, and nearly as dark as our northern Indians. . . ." The volunteers had all been prepared to fight their way into Mexico, and now they were disappointed as they marched unopposed into a sleepy, unarmed village where the inhabitants seemed to regard them with a general marked disinterest.

At Presidio, Wool called a halt and the tents blossomed around the town as he waited for word from General Taylor. Very shortly, a messenger rode into camp to inform him that Taylor had taken Monterrey two days before the volunteers had started south from San Antonio and had signed an armistice with the Mexicans. On hearing the news, there was general rejoicing in the camp. The Arkansas soldiers were sure this would mean an immediate discharge. Bored with army routine, worn out after a long march across unintcresting country, frustrated because they had not yet fought a battle, they looked forward to going home. Pike was not

so sure the war was over. As he wrote in a letter home: "At the two battles of the 8th and 9th of May, we were victorious, yes, but our losses were equal, if not superior, to the enemy's; as for the fight at Monterrey, we Americans haven't much to say about that, for it was emphatically a draw, although we did hold the town.

"The war is not, in my opinion, to be ended as quickly as many of us fondly hoped it might be, but at the price of much precious blood and many valuable lives. The Mexicans are far better soldiers than they are commonly thought to be; indeed, we need wish for no better foemen than they."

Subsequent events proved him right. It soon became apparent that Taylor had made a serious military blunder at Monterrey, a mistake that caused wide political repercussions in the States. Taylor was a poor strategist. Instead of capturing General Ampudia and disarming his forces—as Taylor could have done—he had agreed to a temporary cessation of hostilities. General Ampudia had given Taylor physical possession of Monterrey, but in return Ampudia had been allowed to march his Mexican army out into the hills where they regrouped and prepared to fight again.

If President Polk was unhappy over Taylor's dubious handling of the Monterrey episode, the American people were not. Most of the American people had never been excited about the war anyway, and they interpreted Taylor's armistice as a victory that would put a quick end to the whole business. As a consequence, Polk found it increasingly difficult to keep the American people interested in supporting the war effort. Angry, Polk rebuked Taylor for misleading the American people by describing Monterrey as a great victory; Taylor, in turn, became openly hostile toward Polk and the whole administration, and from this point on had a tendency to disregard any instructions sent to him from the War Department.

The administration could not completely relieve him of command—he was too popular for that—but they could subordinate him. They did this by sending General Winfield Scott to invade Mexico by sea through the malaria-ridden port of Vera Cruz. Once Scott had landed, he sent orders to Taylor, telling him to pull back to Monterrey the advance guard he had sent out to take up an untenable position in the Mexican village of Saltillo. But Taylor, bitterly stubborn, fuming at being stripped of his plenary authority, ignored the order and took the opposite course, pushing his army

deeper into Mexico, sending orders to General Wool to bring his army south to unite with the main force.

By this time the Arkansas volunteers had been away from home for about four months, and there is nothing more damaging to the morale of an army than purposeless waiting. Pike's company, disciplined by his incessant drilling, was able to withstand the long, empty days better than the rest of the Arkansas volunteers. They fretted at the regulations imposed on them by the arbitrary General Wool, and, as a result, a number of untoward incidents took place.

"The mounted devils," as Wool described the boys from Arkansas, made life very unpleasant for him. One day, for instance, an Arkansawyer, curious to see how the general lived, poked his head into the general's tent. The general was outraged. He told the soldier to leave immediately; when that failed, Wool commanded his orderly to force him out at gunpoint. At that, the Arkansawyer suddenly leveled his musket at the general, and said, "Old horse, damn your soul, if you give such orders I will shoot you for certain." The general was forced to back down, and the soldier took his time about leaving.

On another occasion an Arkansas volunteer was informed by Wool's orderly that the general thought the Arkansas camp was making too much noise. "Tell Johnny Wool to kiss our ——," the soldier snapped. Another Arkansawyer kept the general standing in the rain one day when Wool forgot the password and the volunteer refused to let him into camp.

Perhaps some of these stories represent the apocrypha of tales that collect after every war, but they reflect quite accurately the general attitude of bored men who had been led to believe that the war was over, only to find themselves ordered to march deeper into Mexico.

Possibly because of the sickness that had reduced the strength of the companies, Pike's group was merged with an Arkansas company led by John Preston. Since Pike was senior captain, he was placed in command of the enlarged group and ordered to escort the army engineers a hundred miles west to Santa Rosa, to lay out the route and campsites for the main army, which would follow shortly. The men of Pike's command rode into Santa Rosa with sabers drawn, expecting to encounter bitter fighting at any moment, only to find the mud village as dreary and as passive as

Presidio. They camped there a week until the main army could catch up with them.

After a brief camp at Santa Rosa, Wool moved his army to Monclova. The soldiers felt certain they would run into Mexican troops on the Monclova road, and they looked forward to a rousing fight. "We had about three thousand troops," one of Pike's men wrote, "and felt able to whip any troops that could be brought against us in this part of the country." Again, there was no opposition. The army rested for a month near Monclova and then new orders came from General Taylor for Wool to move his force to Parras, 120 miles west of Saltillo.

In the next few weeks, the soldiers might very well believe that there was no Mexican army at all and that the whole war was a great fictional conspiracy designed to keep them marching from place to place. They arrived at Parras without finding a trace of the enemy, and then, on December 17th, they marched again as Wool received orders to move to Saltillo to reinforce General William J. Worth in the face of an imminent attack. As Wool moved out of Parras, he sent Pike and his men on a forced march to the village of Agua Nueva, twenty miles south of Saltillo on the San Luis Potosí road, on an intelligence mission. It was rumored that the Mexican army was grouping south of San Luis Potosí and that they would have to follow this road to attack the American armies camped at Saltillo.

Pike learned nothing at all at Agua Nueva, and when he reported to Wool at Saltillo he could only repeat the rumors he had heard. According to these rumors, the Mexican forces were gathering below San Luis Potosí under the personal command of the wily General Antonio López de Santa Anna, the same general who had massacred the Texans at the Alamo and had been defeated at San Jacinto by Sam Houston, only to slip away from exile in Cuba to mass the armies of Mexico against his lifelong enemies, the Americans. After he had reported to Wool, Pike was sent to an outpost in a narrow pass at Las Palomas, a few miles outside Saltillo, where his men relieved a Kentucky cavalry regiment.

In the opening days of 1847, all the Americans, from the generals down to the enlisted men, grew extremely edgy as day after day dragged by with rumors of an impending battle, and still no sign of the enemy. The strain was too much for some of the Arkansas

boys under Colonel Yell who broke away from camp one night and rode into the village of Cantana where they slaughtered several civilians suspected of murdering one of their fellow soldiers. The avenging troopers could not be identified, and General Taylor, taking time out from his preparations for an engagement with the Mexican army, stormed over the murder of the innocents and threatened to discharge the two companies of Arkansas volunteers involved in the episode. Only the fact that he would need every man he could muster to fight Santa Anna made him reconsider. The investigation proved fruitless, and the matter was dropped.

The rumors had caused a different kind of trouble for Major Solon Borland and his men. He had taken a scouting party south of Agua Nueva on the San Luis Potosí road to see if he could find the enemy. Finding no trace of the Mexican army, he had discounted the rumors and made a night camp without flanking his position with pickets. The next morning he awoke to discover that during the night the Mexican army had advanced around him. He was surrounded. There was no opportunity for a fight. With thirty-four of his men, Major Borland was taken captive.

To minimize the unnerving effects of this waiting period, Pike kept his men at Las Palomas busy with a full round of military activities from inspection at reveille to a dress parade at sunset, and when the battle finally started, his men were ready for it.

Although the rumors of Santa Anna's advance circulated constantly during late January and early February, it was February 20th before the Mexican general made his move toward Saltillo. His massed armies moved very slowly up the San Luis Potosí road, preceded by American scouts who galloped back to Agua Nueva, where Taylor had established his headquarters, to inform him of the advance. Taylor had approximately 4,700 men, and from his scouts he learned that Santa Anna's force outnumbered him three to one. (Later, a number of soldiers who fought against the Mexican army estimated it at 21,000 men.) Taylor did nothing when he received these first reports, deciding to wait to see what Santa Anna was going to do. He almost delayed too long, for the next day (February 21st), more scouts rode into Agua Nueva with the news that 2,000 Mexican cavalrymen under General Miñon were riding through the mountains to the east, by-passing Taylor for an attack on his supply base at Saltillo. Taylor knew he could not hold Agua Nueva, for it was in

an exposed position, and now, faced with a hasty strategic retreat up the road into the mountains near Saltillo, he could carry only part of his supplies with him. He ordered the rearguard to burn the rest.

The billows of smoke from these expensive bonfires climbed into the sky behind him as he raced to the north, looking for a place to make a stand. He brought his army to a halt at the hacienda of Buena Vista, a cluster of Mexican ranch buildings on high ground. It afforded (or so he thought at the time) a perfect defensive position, for to the south was a serrated plain flanked by the precipitous walls of two mountain ranges. The plain was one to five miles wide, and the rains from the high slopes of the Sierra Madre Oriental to the east had poured down into it over the centuries to make it look like a giant washboard in which the parallel ridges were separated by deep gullies with perpendicular earthen walls forty feet high. These watercourses ran from east to west and emptied into a river at the extreme western edge of the plain. The river ran the length of the valley in a flat bedded canyon where the San Luis Potosí road ran parallel to the river between the west bank and the canyon wall. It was on this road that Santa Anna would have to come. Taylor could see no other possible route.

Confidently, Taylor gathered the whole of the American army at Buena Vista, covering the canyon road with his artillery, leaving a garrison to protect the supply base at Saltillo, and sending a detachment of cavalry and four companies of infantry to his extreme left, all the way to the base of the distant mountains. Now he was ready. Let Santa Anna march his army up the road; they would never survive the pounding from Captain Washington's artillery.

On February 21st Pike was ordered back to Saltillo to strengthen the garrison against the Mexican cavalry, if indeed General Miñon ever managed to get through the mountains to attack the supply base. A day later, Pike's company was ordered south to join the main force at Buena Vista, but, for some reason, they had ridden only part of the seven-mile journey before they were ordered back again. They returned to Saltillo, tied up their horses, and took positions on the rooftops around the central plaza where they would have a better view of the surrounding country.

The force that General Taylor had deployed to the extreme eastern edge of the plain consisted of the Arkansas volunteers under

Colonel Yell and the Second Indiana Regiment. It was unlikely they would have to do any fighting at all, because they were intended as a deterrent in case General Miñon decided to cut through the mountains and attack the main American army on the flank instead of going on to Saltillo.

On February 22nd, as General Taylor waited for the Mexican armies to appear in the canyon, he suddenly realized that he had made a mistake, an error that became unmistakably clear when an excited scout rode in to report. Taylor had supposed the Mexicans would come up the canyon road because that was the only possible route down a plain blocked by impassable canyons. But at the extreme eastern edge of the plain where the lateral canyons headed, they also became very shallow and flattened out, and it was up this flat strip at the base of the mountains that Santa Anna was pushing his troops. It was late in the day before General Taylor received this information. Scowling at his oversight, he now saw what Santa Anna intended to do. One Mexican force would indeed come up the canyon road, staying just beyond range of the American guns, and serving as a constant threat to keep Taylor from using his artillery elsewhere. The main attack would come from the left side. Like a chess player confronted with a totally unexpected move on the part of his opponent, Taylor now had to alter his defense, and quickly, before the Mexicans swarmed up the east side of the plain and circled behind him to cut him off from his supply base at Saltillo. To block them, Taylor withdrew part of his artillery from the defense of the canyon road and sent the horse-drawn cannons pounding to the east, supported by infantry and cavalry units.

And then, as night fell, Taylor rode back to Saltillo to make sure his supply base was adequately defended. The American defensive movement continued all night as the line between the river and the mountains to the east was strengthened. Shortly before dawn, Lieutenant Colonel Roane and four more companies of Arkansas troops joined the Indiana Regiment in support of Yell's companies at the far end of the line. In the cold high air of the mountain night, the men shivered and waited hopefully for the warm light of dawn. But the experience that awaited them at sunrise was neither warm nor pleasant, for as the first rays of the sun broke through the craggy mountains to the east, these ill-trained, poorly disciplined volunteers from Arkansas found themselves face

to face with the advance guard of the Mexican army. The Mexican artillery, established on the slopes of the mountains, opened a furious barrage, the shells bursting near the American position, sending up great plumes of dirt. And behind the screen of smoke came the first wave of Mexican cavalry, the dread lancers, their bugles blowing in the shrill, wild notes of a charge. Colonel Yell did the only thing he could do at the moment: he ordered his men to fall back beyond range of the Mexican artillery to regroup and make a stand against the Mexican lancers. But once the withdrawal had begun, nothing could stop it, and it became a precipitate retreat. Panicked to wild desperation by the shells and the thundering line of horsemen in the distance, the Arkansas boys refused to stop and make a stand. Yell and Roane, chagrined and furious, fell back with their troops, trying to rally them, but for the Arkansas volunteers the war was over and they wanted no part of it.

General Taylor returned from Saltillo at dawn, just in time to see the entire left side of his line crumble. The Indiana troops, who were willing to fight, were now pressed back toward the hacienda, a great tide of Mexican troops flooding in behind them as they vacated the field. The situation was desperate at this point, for there was nothing to stop Santa Anna from throwing his troops around the hacienda and containing the American army, cutting Taylor off from his supplies, and pounding his forces to pieces with artillery. But as the Mexicans pushed closer to the hacienda and the ranch buildings, Taylor put everything he had against them, including Jefferson Davis' "Mississippi Rifles" and Captain May's American regulars, supported by Pike's company, recently arrived from Saltillo.

In the wild fighting, Pike had a brief meeting with Yell which he described in a letter home: "When Colonel Yell saw us returning from a detail of duty we had been ordered to do in another part of the field, he seemed much elated. Calling to me, he asked if we had come to join him. In reply, I told him that General Wool had placed us under the command of Colonel May. To this, Yell replied: 'I am sorry for it; but if that is the order, it cannot be helped; but I should like to have you with me. . . .'

"As we left them, they, Yell and (Col. Humphrey) Marshall, were forming their men to resist the enemy. As I saw the situation, I had the thought that, not for want of bravery but for lack of dis-

cipline, they would become disorganized, if and when they were attacked by the enemy. I never saw Yell again, for we were just then ordered to the right, where we got in range of heavy firing. There we stayed, until Colonel May ordered us lower down, under the shelter of a hill.

"In time, Colonel Marshall and Colonel Yell, when their position was threatened, judged it best to retire into the plain, and did so in tolerable good order, until they came within 200 yards of the ranch of Buena Vista. Meanwhile, they were followed by several hundred lancers and hussars who came down into the plain after them.

"When the lancers and hussars followed down after Yell's and Marshall's cavalry, Colonel May was ordered to take his command and a piece of artillery and proceed to Buena Vista to protect the wagon trains. As we approached the village, Marshall and Yell were forming their men to receive the enemy. They waited until the Mexicans came within 40 yards, and then each man raised his carbine and fired. The fire of our men did but little harm. The utmost confusion ensued. Colonel Marshall says that his men routed and pursued a part of the enemy. The gallant officer was cool and composed and doubtless his statement is correct."

But as the hordes of Mexicans charged Yell and the men he had left, there was no time for them to draw their sabers, and they "crowded and huddled together." Colonel Yell, opening his mouth to give a command, looked around just in time to see a Mexican lancer charge him. There was no time to escape, and the sharp lance caught him in the mouth and ripped off the side of his face. Captain Andrew D. Porter of Company D, the "Independence County Voluntcers," also died at the hands of the lancers as he fought alongside Colonel Yell, for during the whole battle he was suffering from a severe bout of rheumatism, and his arm was so stiff that he could not draw his saber to defend himself.

Inexplicably, when the rout of Yell's company was complete, the Mexican lancers wheeled in the dust and began to retreat, and as they ran a body of American cavalry took up the pursuit. Passing near the ranch, the Mexicans were greeted with a "warm fire of musketry, which killed many of them and some of our own men in pursuit."

"Just then," Pike continued, "Colonel May's command to which

we were attached, came down the road at a gallop, by fours; formed platoons and halted for a moment to let the dust blow off so that we could see the enemy and not kill our own people. I had only a momentary glimpse of the enemy, who, taken by surprise at our arrival, seemed wild with fear, and, not waiting for our charge, fled precipitately in every direction. We pursued them for some distance and then formed in line and took position on the other side of the ranch. The Mexicans made their way across the ravine to the west, descended into the cultivated plain below, huddled together there for a few minutes, as if undecided what to do, and finally commenced ascending the mountain by a narrow pass."

Having, as they did, a superior force, it was incredible that the Mexicans should have failed to press their advantage to a victory, and American military historians have puzzled over this enigma for a century. Following their rout of the east half of Taylor's line, the Mexicans could have regrouped and overrun the American position; but, inexplicably, they did not. Perhaps Santa Anna lacked a cohesive strategy; perhaps he could not control his men; but for the rest of the day the disposition of the Mexican forces was highly erratic. Instead of making a concerted and decisive attack, various groups of cavalry swept singly from the hills in a series of wild charges, replete with blowing bugles and strident battle cries. One group of horsemen, for no reason at all, charged in a wide circle all the way around the American army to join the Mexican force on the canyon road below Buena Vista.

Another peculiar incident concerned Jefferson Davis and his "Mississippi Rifles." Advancing in a line across the eastern plain, they were suddenly attacked by a detachment of Mexican cavalry that thundered out of the hills toward them. Davis' men stopped dead in their tracks and leveled their rifles at the approaching horsemen, becoming perfectly motionless with the quiet calm of backwoodsmen on a squirrel hunt. The Mexicans, disconcerted by this strange and motionless silence, reined their horses to an abrupt halt, openly confused, highly nervous, not knowing what to expect. For a long moment, as if time had been suspended, the two groups faced each other in perfect silence. Then Davis gave the command to fire, and the line of American rifles exploded, dropping the front rank of Mexican cavalrymen from their saddles, and sent the rest of the lancers scampering for the safety of the hills.

In another unusual incident, a body of Mexican soldiers was cut off from the main army. Facing imminent destruction, they raised a flag of truce. The Americans lowered their rifles and watched the Mexicans make a calm march through the American lines to rejoin their units. No one was ever able to explain what had prompted the Mexicans to raise a truce flag or why the Americans had not shot them down when they realized what they were doing.

The battle continued all through the afternoon of the 23rd, man to man in the beginning and later as an artillery duel. Slowly but steadily, the Mexicans were pushed back. As night came and the moon rode over the hills, the position of the two armies was exactly as it had been the night before. Nothing had changed except that the quiet fields around Buena Vista were now littered with dead men. Medical details carried stretchers through the darkness, tracing the moans of the wounded men who had not been found by day, and exhausted soldiers shivered around their campfires, too tired to talk, too numb to do more than sit and stare into the shadows and try to sleep.

In his tent, Taylor went over his maps and shook his head, worn out, unhappy over the prospect of tomorrow's battle. The Americans would have little chance against the apparently inexhaustible Mexican reserves. They had been able, by an almost superhuman effort and at a great cost, to swing the gate shut against the Mexicans and hold the defensive line. But Taylor knew they would not be able to repeat this miracle again.

But under the same moon, to the south, Santa Anna, his bad leg stretched stiff before him, was holding a conference with his field officers. The day's battle had depleted his forces more than Taylor could realize, and the morale of his men was at a low ebb. His men were tired; their stomach for fighting was gone; and the discipline in the Mexican army was so poor that no general, however popular, could compel his men to fight against their will. That will was now gone. Santa Anna had no choice. He ordered a forced march south, and the cavalry withdrew from the hills and the infantrymen slipped out of the canyon in the darkness for a long march through the chill night to San Luis Potosí.

When morning came, and Taylor discovered that the Mexicans had abandoned the field during the night, he immediately fired off dispatches to Washington proclaiming with triumphant vindictive-

ness the victory he had won against the tremendous odds of a superior Mexican force and in spite of the meddling of the Polk administration. And the soldiers on the field celebrated with the exuberance of men awarded a sudden reprieve from battle and a victory as well. On the march back to Saltillo, the joyous men of Pike's company took great delight in needling the Arkansas volunteers who had run when the going got rough. Tempers flared, and the baiting resulted in a rash of fist fights. At last, to keep the whole army from getting involved and taking sides, General Taylor had Pike's men separated from the rest of the Arkansas volunteers.

Shortly after the battle, Pike wrote two documents that were, in essence, contradictory. The first was poetry, a heroic ballad of sixteen stanzas that described the victory in glowing terms, and ended:

The guns still roared at intervals: but silence fell at last,
And on the dead and dying came the evening shadows fast.
And then above the mountains rose the cold moon's silver shield,
And patiently and pitying she looked upon the field,
While careless of his wounded, and neglectful of his dead,
Despairingly and suddenly by night SANTANA fled.
And thus on BUENA VISTA'S heights a long day's work was done,
And this our brave old General another battle won.
Still, still our glorious banner waves, unstained by flight or shame,
And the Mexicans among their hills still tremble at our name.
SO, HONOR UNTO THOSE THAT STOOD! DISGRACE TO THOSE THAT FLED!
AND EVERLASTING GLORY UNTO BUENA VISTA'S DEAD!

Now that pike had paid his tribute to "those that stood" with his poem, he was free to turn his attention and bring "disgrace to those that fled." This was accomplished with an open letter he sent back to Little Rock to be published in the *Gazette*. It was a damning document, carefully composed, written by a man who felt that the disgraceful episode could have been avoided altogether if the election of regimental officers had not been decided on political popularity. And it was on the officers that he fixed the blame. "It is a sad thing that brave men, for they were brave, should be . . . destroyed for want of discipline." He elaborated this theme and

traced the lack of discipline back to the days in camp at San Antonio. "In the first place, the companies of our regiment . . . had hardly been drilled at all, except what little the company officers had done. The Colonel and the Lieutenant Colonel had never drilled them once since they left San Antonio." Under such lax commanders, it was only logical that the troops should run when they were attacked. "Had they . . . possessed that mobility and facility of changing front which only discipline could give, they could not have been routed as they were." And once the rout started, there was no hope of getting them together again because "the astonishing confusion for want of discipline utterly broke up, dispersed and disorganized their commands, so that they could not be collected together." No, it was not the enlisted men but the officers who should be blamed for this fiasco. Colonel Yell was now beyond censure. "Poor Yell!" Pike wrote. "He atoned for his error with his life. . . ." Since Major Borland had been captured, the process of elimination left only one regimental officer to bear the brunt of the blame, J. S. Roane, who had succeeded Yell as colonel of the regiment.

Soon after he had sent this letter back to Arkansas, Pike and two dozen of his men rode across the desert to the town of Chihuahua to carry a message to Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan. The letter was published in the *Gazette* on April 24, 1847, and by the time Pike rode back to Saltillo in the first week in May, he found the members of the Arkansas regiment seething with resentment at what they felt was an accusation of cowardice. Pike was certain that Colonel Roane had spread the report among the men to stir up resentment against him, and so great was the resultant antagonism and so many were the threats of violence against him that he asked General Wool for a court of inquiry to settle the matter.

The court convened on May 4th in front of all the officers in the regiment, and Pike expressed his opinions again, a little less strongly perhaps than he had done in his letter, but not the least bit hesitant about laying the blame for the rout to a lack of good leadership and firm discipline. He said he had never accused the regiment of cowardice, and softened the charge against Roane somewhat by saying that the fiasco had, in part, stemmed from the "lack of military skill in the commander." Perhaps this singling out of Yell as the man to blame satisfied Roane. In any event, he

announced to the court that he was satisfied with Pike's explanation, and the court expressed the opinion that the whole difficulty had grown out of a misunderstanding that had now been cleared up and amicably resolved.

For the time being, perhaps it had, for the Arkansas regiment was preparing for discharge and there were arrangements to be made to get to the coast to book passage on a ship for New Orleans with connections for a steamboat journey up to Little Rock, and in the excitement of going home it was relatively easy to forget incidents that were already a part of the past. In the early part of June, the boys from Arkansas received their pay and started home.

As the company prepared to leave Mexico, a special detail went to Saltillo to look for Archibald Yell's grave. It was not hard to find because the famous Santa Fe traveler Josiah Gregg had supervised the burial and erected a cross bearing Yell's name. The men dug up the tin coffin and took it by wagon to the port where it was loaded on a ship to be taken back to Little Rock.

The first indication that the dispute was still alive occurred when the steamboat carrying Pike and Roane and a large section of the Arkansas regiment arrived at Little Rock to be met at the wharf by a crowd of cheering people. One of Roane's men, a boy named J. D. Adams, was greeted by his father, who sang out in a loud voice, "I hear you all fought like hell at Buena Vista." J.D. snickered, and shouted back, "We ran like hell at Buena Vista." There was a ripple of appreciative laughter in the crowd. A few people did not laugh at all. Colonel Roane was one of them.

Pike went home to rest. Almost immediately, he discovered that he had not been the only man writing letters home. Colonel Roane and a captain named Edward Hunter, of Company G, had published some very damning letters in the *Banner* discrediting Pike and stating that Pike's squadron had not even taken part in the battle of Buena Vista. Pike was incensed when he read them. And now the bitterness he had felt since the day of the election was renewed within him. Sitting down at his writing desk, he challenged Roane to a duel. Roane promptly accepted. The two men agreed to meet on the morning of July 29th on a sandbar in the Arkansas River across from Fort Smith, an area outside the jurisdiction of the anti-dueling laws of Arkansas.

On the 27th, Roane and his party, which included his seconds,

Henry Rector and Robert W. Johnson, and his surgeon, Dr. Philip Burton, rode into Fort Smith to stay at the house of Major Elias Rector. Roane passed the time practicing with his pistol on the Rector lawn as he waited for the morning of the duel.

On the morning of the 29th, attracted by word of the impending gun fight, a large crowd of spectators, including a group of curious Cherokees, gathered at the sandbar. The seconds had to move them back to make space for the duelists. Pike arrived with his seconds, Luther Chase and John Drennen; his surgeon, Dr. James A. Dibrell, Sr., and three friends, and assumed his position, calmly smoking a cigar. Roane, with two days' practice, was equally unruffled. The call was made, and Pike and Roane stepped forward, facing each other at a distance of ten paces, while the loaded dueling pistols were examined by the seconds and handed to the principals. Pike examined his pistol cursorily. When the word was given, he raised it with a steady hand and pulled the trigger. Both pistols fired; neither man was hurt. The pistols were reloaded while Pike calmly puffed on his cigar. The command was then repeated, and both pistols fired again. There was an audible intake of breath from the crowd, and some of the spectators swore that Roane's bullet had sizzled through Pike's heavy beard.

After the second firing, Pike and Roane retired from their positions while the guns were being loaded again, and Pike sat down on a cottonwood log near the edge of the forest that fringed the sandbar, with his surgeon beside him. But now, Dr. Burton, Roane's surgeon, beckoned Dr. Dibrell to one side for a hurried conference. "Dibrell," he said, "it's a damned shame that these men should stand here and shoot at each other until one or the other is killed or wounded. They have shown themselves to be brave men and would fire all day unless prevented. The seconds on neither side can interfere, because it would be considered a great disparagement for either to make a proposition for cessation of hostilities. So, let us, as surgeons, assume the responsibility and say they shall not fire another time; that unless they do as we desire we will leave the field to them helpless, however cruel it might seem."

Dibrell, although he agreed with Burton, did not know what the dueling code would say. In any event, he could not make such an arbitrary decision without first talking to Pike. Leaving Burton where he was, Dibrell walked over to the log and told Pike what

Burton had said. Pike looked up at him sharply. "I want one more fire at him," he said. "I believe he has tried to kill me; I have not tried to hit him." He paused and flicked the ash off his cigar, apparently reconsidering. What had happened at Buena Vista seemed a long way off, part of a world that had little connection with Fort Smith and a sandbar in the Arkansas River. He looked up at Dibrell. "Do as you think proper," he said. "But do not by anything compromise my honor."

Dibrell relayed the word to Burton, and Burton walked over to Roane. In a few minutes, Roane approached Pike and extended his hand. What had happened at Buena Vista would never be mentioned by either of them again. They went back to Major Elias Rector's house together, where they celebrated the end of the war with a round of drinks and a banquet that lasted far into the night.

SEVEN

PORTRAIT OF A DOMESTIC LEGEND

In the years immediately following the Mexican War, Albert Pike reached the zenith of his popularity as a poet and an orator. His frequent public lectures, his unique and colorful appearance, and his poetry, which gained public favor despite the scorn of the critics, made his actions newsworthy, and a number of writers were obliged to describe this famous man to their readers. One of them wrote: "His broad expansive forehead, his serene countenance, and his powerful frame awoke thoughts in me of some far-off time. The conventional dress of an American citizen did not seem suited to such a splendid personality. The costume of an ancient Greek would have been more in keeping with such a face and figure—such a habit as Plato wore when he discoursed upon divine philosophy to his students among the groves of the Academy at Athens, beneath the brilliant sun of Greece.

Pike's fame prompted a correspondent of the *Magazine of Travel*, Gilbert Hathaway, to visit Pike in the early 1850's and to give his readers an informal portrait of the genius at home, prefaced, of course, by the ebullient flattery required by such a nineteenth century profile.

"Among those distinguished persons," he said, referring to the lawyers of Little Rock, "there is one more distinguished still. I need not say to you that I refer to the poet-soldier and philosopher; for who has not hung with rapture on his measured strains of melody —lines which breathe the true genius of poetry—or listened to the tales of his chivalry while at the head of his brave Arkansaw band, in one of the most sanguinary battles in the war with Mexico; or with grave attention perused those pages, which, amidst his professional engagements he has occasionally thrown off for the benefit of the public."

And once Hathaway had properly greased the skids with flattery, he launched a description of this eccentric which, when reduced to simpler terms, characterized Pike as a rebel against the fashions of the day:

"Maybe you will pardon a personal description. In stature, he is the ordinary height, with firm and elastic tread, broad chest and shoulders, well proportioned, with high and slightly receding forehead, heavy projecting brow, sheltering an eye not remarkable for brilliancy, unless it be lit up in the excitement of debate, but of a soft and pleasing look, a countenance at once expressive of kindness and sympathy.

"He is somewhat eccentric in his dress, eschewing all conventional rules, such as are established by the aristocracy of fashion. In fact, he seems to delight in dressing in opposition to fashion; for in him we see the reverse of the picture usually presented by that fickle goddess. At a time when most men wear the smooth silken hat, he may be seen with *caput* covering after the fashion of our revolutionary sires, only lacking the three cornered form of brim, his coat after the modern style, while his pants are wide and flowing, when 'tights' are the order of the day.

"His beard and moustache are of most huge dimensions, while a heavy suit of hair hangs in clusters in masses on his neck and shoulders."

Having finished his portrait of the man, Hathaway then looked at the Pike house: "His residence is in one of the most pleasant parts of the city, of ample dimensions, with extensive grounds, in a high state of cultivation, shrubbery and exotics of choice varieties are scattered with a profuse hand, adding the charms of blossom and perfume to the agreeable and pleasant scene. Everywhere, almost, the premises are visible evidence of luxury, ease and taste. This is indeed the residence of a poet."

Hathaway's description of the Pike house was not exaggerated, for in this prosperous time Pike had finally achieved the secluded elegance he thought necessary for poetic achievement, only to find that luxury does not guarantee serenity. Outwardly, as evidenced by the Hathaway article, Pike maintained an illusion that all was peaceful in his house, and so buttressed this picture of pastoral serenity through his writings that only a few people realized what was happening in the Pike household as his marriage, stormy from the

beginning, degenerated into a continual friction that left Pike miserable much of the time.

Shortly after the Mexican War, Pike wrote a poem to his wife called "The Invitation," a verse containing these lines:

We have been happy, dear, for more than ten long years:—
How short, as we look backward, that long space of time appears.

In the same poem he revealed that he had named five of the oak trees on his property for his children, and so started a romantic game that would endure as long as the oak trees stood on his lawn, bringing scores of admirers to walk by the mansion to guess which tree was named for which child.

But the ten years of marriage that moved Pike to poetry had not been pleasant ones for his wife, Mary Ann. At the time she married Pike, she was a beautiful, rather willful girl of eighteen who had inherited a great deal of property and was accustomed to the carefree plantation life of Arkansas Post. At times she was moody and withdrawn; at other times she displayed a fiery and unreasonable temper; but her friends could readily interpret these wildly variant attitudes as an aftermath of the tragedy that had upset her life only a few years before. Her father had died when she was a small child, and she could not remember him; but she had been twelve years old, on the verge of womanhood, when her mother and her two older sisters were swept to their deaths in the raging Arkansas River. This experience had so unsettled her that it was to color the rest of her life with a sense of foreboding and disaster.

Her marriage to the impetuous poet began well, and from the auspicious gaiety of the parties that marked their early months together, Mary Ann could look forward to a happy and exciting life as the wife of one of the most famous men in Arkansas. But very shortly she was to learn that, while Pike traveled the circuits as a lawyer and worked in the political arena with his newspaper and participated in every event offering him a chance to exercise his ready oratory, she was expected to conform to the quiet prototype of a southern matron, staying patiently at home and waiting for her husband to return, bearing one child after another and occupying herself with the supervision of the house and the four Negro slaves.

The children came regularly. In 1835 it was Ben Desha; in 1837,

Albert; in 1838, Hamilton; in 1840, Walter Lacy; in 1842, Isadore; in 1843, Lillian; in 1844, Albert Holden; in 1846, Clarence; in 1848, Eustace; and in 1849, Yvon. In all, she had ten children, but only five survived. One by one, she saw the rest struck down by calamities. Ben Desha lived but a year and a half; Albert died two days after he was born. The second Albert duplicated the tragic accident that had killed his grandmother—he drowned in the muddy waters of the Arkansas. Walter was murdered by bandits during the Civil War. And the fifth, her lovely, gentle daughter, Isadore, opened a vial of chloroform in Memphis and died by her own hand.

There is a legend that one of her children fell into a pile of burning leaves on the lawn and died in the flames, and it may very well be true, for Mary Ann was an ill-fated woman. Over the years, growing more harried, more bitter with each passing month, she developed a wild, ungovernable temper, and the story is told that once, when a slave girl was combing Mary Ann's hair, she became so suddenly and uncontrollably angry, and so raged at the girl, that the maid fell through an upstairs window and plunged to the veranda below, breaking her leg.

"Her temper was not only terrible," Pike confided in a letter to a relative, "but she was captious, unreasonable and not truthful, often saying that the children had done this or that, without any foundation for it."

As a consequence, Pike spent more and more of his time away from home, occupying himself by becoming a champion for lost causes, returning with greater infrequency to the mansion in Little Rock to visit his wife and children.

2

On one of his speaking tours, Pike was observed by a correspondent who devoted more space to a description of Pike's manner than he did to reporting Pike's remarks. "Keen-eyed; unobtrusive," the correspondent wrote. "Sits for hours with a downward look, abstracted, slightly scornful. Rises slowly, and catches the presiding officer's attention with difficulty. A sort of man whom 'when found, you make a note on.' Conceals his hands in his pockets, throws back a ponderous head and shoulders, and begins.

"His sentences are long, well-constructed, neatly-fashioned and

call forth a responsive 'just so!' from the hearer. Voice not overmusical, manner not so fervid as might be expected from the crack lawyer of Arkansas—in fact, rather sluggish.

"The man evidently believes what he says. . . . He speaks too seldom; dresses, walks and talks with perfect nonchalance, and acts in all things with perfect independence."

The large audiences Pike drew to his speeches were proof of his immense personal popularity. Given more tact, he would have made an excellent politician; given less egoism, more selflessness, he would have made one of the country's great humorists; given more good judgment, he might have influenced the great issues of his time. But lacking these qualities, lacking the innate sense of timing that all great men have, he fell short, and dissipated his energies on lost causes, on political parties with no chance of enduring success, and on visionary projects so many years ahead of the time in which he lived and so thoroughly enmeshed in the politics of the period that they were doomed from the beginning.

One of these projects was a railroad that would link the eastern half of the United States with the west coast and California. Pike did not originate the idea, for in this mid-century America (which seemed to be full of political visionaries) the dream of iron rails linking the coasts was often discussed and often proposed. There were a number of different plans under discussion in the North, but the one that drew the most attention called for three lines, a northern, a central, and a southern, joining just west of Missouri and Arkansas and then running in a single line to the Pacific. Unfortunately, this would have been prohibitively expensive because of the three separate systems to be built east of the junction. No, the North and the South would have to agree on a single line if they hoped to see a railroad built, and even the most hopeful analyst could see that such agreement was impossible.

The North was never going to support any railroad running through the slave states. "Nor would the South vote for any road running exclusively from the free States through free Territory," Pike said in a speech in Memphis. "I would cut off my right arm before I would do so, not because I am wanting in patriotism or national feeling, but because I believe that the greatest injury, beyond all comparison, which could be done to the country, would

be to place such a road so as to confer its benefits exclusively on one or the other sections of the country."

From the beginning, Pike could see that the railroad was destined to become a political issue. The railroad "will eventually become a sectional question. It is useless, worse than absurd, for men to prate about patriotism and national feeling, in connection with it."

In 1847 Pike raised the cry for a distinctively southern railroad, to be financed by the South and built by southern funds to link the southern states with California. The idea was impractical, of course, for as yet there was no single source of government in the South from which such an expensive project might hope to obtain funds, and there was little possibility that the southern states, enmeshed in financial difficulties of their own, would contribute funds to a scheme that many financiers considered impractical.

Although he was a persuasive orator with the ability to generate enthusiasm, Pike knew nothing about railroads, about the economics of laying tracks or building a line through the wilderness, or about the right-of-way difficulties such a railroad would encounter, or even the eventual profits that might be anticipated from such a line. He made no study to see if the volume of freight or passengers would be sufficient to sustain it; all he had was the great, hopeful vision of the South proving to the North that she could stand on her own.

He threw himself into the project with frenetic energy. He persuaded the Arkansas legislature to call a commercial railroad convention at Memphis and to invite the rest of the southern states to participate. This convention was held in 1849, and the participants were so enthusiastic in their vocal support of the project that a string of subsequent conventions was scheduled and Pike spoke at all of them, at New Orleans in 1852, at Charleston in 1854, at New Orleans again in 1855, at Savannah in 1856.

But with each subsequent convention, there was less and less talk about the railroad itself and more and more discussion of the political issues dividing the North and the South. The greatest cheers came during those speeches that roasted the politicians of the North or proclaimed the glories of the South. The transcript of Pike's speech at the Charleston convention is studded with such indicative audience reactions.

"The Southern States should confederate together," Pike declaimed, "not by any unlawful confederation, but in legal union, for the purpose of building with their own hands this great Southern highway to the Pacific [*rapturous applause*]. . . . When would there in all the annals of time be a more glorious confederation? [*Cheers*] It would not be a confederation to carry on war, but to turn the commerce of the world across that portion of the world which we inherit. . . . I want it to be a sort of declaration of independence on the part of the South."

Only once in all the long years of campaigning for a Southern Pacific railroad did Pike see a concrete result. In 1855 he delivered a bombastic and fiery speech to the Louisiana House of Representatives in Baton Rouge. "Shame on us," Pike cried, "if the old kings of Egypt could build up the useless pyramids, with incalculable expenditure of treasure, labor and life, to perpetuate the remembrance of their folly to all future ages, and we cannot connect ourselves with our sister state [California], stretching out her hands to us from the shores of the Pacific!"

The Louisiana legislature was so moved by the oration that they promptly passed a charter for a Pacific railroad, with termini on the Pacific at San Francisco and Guaymas. And perhaps it was this specific act, this first tangible progress toward the realization of his dream, that disillusioned Pike, for the railroad never went any further than the charter. The enthusiasm Pike had created was for southern independence more than it was for tracks across the desert. No money was raised, no spikes were driven, no schedules were set, no engines steamed. At later conventions the subject of the railroad gave way to bitter debates and resolutions favoring a renewal of the slave trade. Finally, Pike refused to attend any meeting where this issue was to be discussed. Embittered by the failure of his dream, Pike watched the railroad issue slide into political oblivion.

A great many people were not sorry to see the issue die. As an Ohio citizen said, in a nonpolitical statement reflecting the opinion of a large number of Americans on the subject of railroads: "If God had ever intended His children to fly over the face of the country at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour, He would have foretold it clearly through His Holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lure immortal souls to hell."

3

It was largely through circumstance that Albert Pike found himself heading a second lost cause. He had become a Whig more through accident than conviction, and when Crittenden died and Pike took control of the *Advocate,* the leadership of the Whig party in Arkansas went with it. Unfortunately, the Arkansas Whigs were a party in name only (they never succeeded in electing a single candidate in the state), and in the early 1850's Pike could see that the national Whig party was heading for a similar impotence. Squeezed between the Democratic party and the hard core of radicals who were bringing the Republicans to power in the North, the Whigs found no room to make a stand on the slavery question without siding with the Democrats or the Republicans. So they made the fatal mistake of refusing to make a stand at all, and tried to persuade the American people that the question of slavery had been settled once for all by the compromises of 1850 and was therefore no longer an issue. It was political suicide, and when the Republicans rose to strength in 1854 the Whig party promptly expired.

Many of the Whig leaders, Pike among them, now had to look around for a new political affiliation. They refused to consider for a moment that they join their bitter enemies the Democrats, and they could not tolerate the radical Republicans. Consequently, many of them drifted into an organization called the "Order of United Americans." The members of this order soon became known as Know-Nothings because of their persistent refusal to discuss the secret rituals of the group.

The Know-Nothing movement was founded on a deep-seated fear, which was nation-wide, that the immigrants flooding into the country at an alarming rate would soon become strong enough to seize control of the government through the ballot box. On paper, there was some justification for this scare. In the 1850's immigrants poured into the United States at the rate of about a quarter-million a year. The Swedes engulfed Minnesota; there was a steady tide of Germans moving westward into the Plains; a half-million recent arrivals from Ireland had remained in New York City, causing political analysts to shudder at the prospects of an "Irish bloc."

Connected with this political threat was a religious hysteria that was especially strong in a persistently Protestant South where

Catholics were viewed with suspicion. (As late as 1960, there was a fringe belief in the South that if the country ever put a Catholic President in office, the "Pope of Rome" would move his headquarters to Washington, D.C.) This widespread fear of Roman Catholicism sent people flocking to join the Order of United Americans, which required every member to uphold the credo "Americans Must Rule America," and to take an oath against the Roman Catholic Church. The Order held closed meetings in the greatest secrecy and had an elaborate ritual replete with mystic handshakes and passwords.

It was not long before the astute politicians, recognizing the political value of the movement, took the oath and became Know-Nothings in order to obtain the support of the society. This support was considerable. In a short time the Know-Nothings rose to power in the North. In Massachusetts the governor, all of the state senators, and most of the members of the House were Know-Nothings, and the voters elected a Know-Nothing candidate to the United States Senate. In the New York legislature the majority of the lawmakers still called themselves Whigs, but they let it be known that they had signed the Know-Nothing oath.

Albert Pike became the chief organizer for the Order of United Americans in Arkansas, devoting much of his time to secret meetings throughout the state as he rallied people together in the cause of nativism. When the Know-Nothings discarded their strictly fraternal status and emerged into the political arena as a national party, Pike was one of its southern leaders, believing it would outstrip both the Democrat and Republican parties. From the beginning, however, the Know-Nothing movement had little chance of permanence, for it depended on fear and ignorance to unite the people against an artificial, if logical, threat. Once this threat evaporated, the Know-Nothings would collapse.

Pike took this threat seriously, and built a persuasive argument for the Know-Nothings in his writings. Immigration was dangerous, Pike believed. By lowering the bars, the government had permitted so many foreigners to come into the United States that they now outnumbered native-born people in all the large cities of the North. These large northern cities (for all practical purposes) controlled the course of national legislation, foreign and domestic. Now, if and when these immigrants became citizens, and if and when they

united, they would gain the balance of power in the large cities, and so control the country.

There was much naïveté in this syllogism, and more than a little ignorance. To suppose that German artisans would get together with Swedish farmers to seize control of a legislative machine they knew nothing about was preposterous. To compound this by lumping the Italian and Irish Catholics together as a menace to the freedom of American Protestants was sheer foolishness. But separated from the cities of the East by poor and infrequent communications, the southern backwoodsman could very well believe the picture that had been painted for him: the portrait of a starved and radical Catholic from the Old World landing on the shores of the New with only one objective in mind, the seizing of power, the grasping of political control.

Pike distributed pamphlets throughout the state that were eagerly read and discussed as a possible answer to this crisis. One was entitled "Objects and Principles of the Democratic American Party" (the organization had taken on a new name), and in its twelve detailed "objects" and fifteen articles of "declaration" it outlined the methods by which the party hoped to contain and control the immigrants. It began with an emotional appeal: ". . . none can love our country as well as they who are born upon its soil; and none others [are] qualified to share in its government." Then, once the generalizations had been dispensed with, the pamphlet made specific recommendations: The period of years necessary for naturalization should be extended. An "unnaturalized foreigner" should be denied the vote. The government should not let foreigners settle on lands in the public domain or have any voice in the politics of the Territories. "All offices, civil and military, should be given to native-born Americans, in preference to foreign born."

With a platform like this, the success of the Know-Nothings in the South was phenomenal. They obtained a majority status in Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and a near majority status in the rest of the southern states. Pike was delighted to announce to his old foes the Democrats that "even in Arkansas, where no one imagined the order would gain a foothold, where our political differences have been so bitter, party allegiance so staunch and true, and party prejudice so strong, even here, in seven months we have seen our Councils swell to more

than six in number, and our members to between eight and ten thousand."

By 1854 the Know-Nothing sentiment had become so strong in Arkansas that most of the legislative officials, Democrats to the core, also signed the Know-Nothing oath just to be on the safe side. Pike promptly proclaimed a great victory for the American party, convinced that nothing could stop the grand sweep of the Know-Nothings to power. The next step was a Know-Nothing President of the United States. Nothing, Pike reasoned, could deter the inevitable, and when the Know-Nothing delegates converged on Philadelphia for a national convention to nominate a candidate in February, 1856, Pike was among them. Unfortunately, however, if the delegates could agree on the validity of the oath and be unanimous about the handshakes and the passwords, they could agree on little else. From the moment they began to discuss platform, they found themselves embroiled in sectional controversies, and the new party promptly came apart at the seams.

At the June convention of the party, held the year before, the Know-Nothings had taken a stand on slavery in the twelfth article of their platform, which said, "The existing laws on the subject of slavery ought to be abided by and maintained . . . and there ought to be no further legislation by Congress on the subject." The article reflected the cautious thinking of the Whigs who had joined the party, and was an attempt to disassociate the new party from a controversy that was fractionating other political parties. But this twelfth article was totally unacceptable to the northern delegates. A large number withdrew immediately; many more threatened to leave if this abominable article remained in the platform.

Now, in 1856, the National Council of the party was faced with a dilemma. If they did not remove the article, they would lose the remainder of the northern delegates; if they so much as touched the twelfth article they could expect a revolt of the southern delegates. As a compromise, they decided to modify it, hoping to gain sufficient support from both sides to hold the party together.

When Pike got wind of the proposed change, he called a meeting of the southern delegates in Philadelphia, on the night of February 20th, to plan a course of strategy in case the National Council should tamper with Article 12. "It was with great unanimity resolved," Pike wrote, "(and the result hailed with nine cheers), that,

in case the National Council should strike out or materially modify the twelfth article, the Southern delegates would at once retire in a body from the hall, and proceeding to the Ninth Ward Council Room, would there, with such other members as might unite with them, continue the session of the *true* National American Council." The italics are mine, not Pike's.

The next day, of course, the inevitable happened. Ready for battle, the northern delegates showed enough strength to strike out Article 12 altogether, and with a great display of truculence Pike's delegation retired from the convention hall. The National Council went on to choose Millard Fillmore as their candidate for President and Andrew Jackson Donelson for Vice President, courting disaster in an attempt to do the impossible, trying to heal the breach by running candidates unacceptable to the North on a platform unacceptable to the South.

The new Republican party flexed its muscles and took a stand against Mormon polygamy and southern slavery, nominating a popular hero, John C. Frémont, for the Presidency at their June convention in Philadelphia. The Democratic party, taking a strong and unmistakably pro-southern position on the principle of noninterference by Congress in the slavery issue, chose James Buchanan for President and a Kentuckian named John C. Breckinridge for Vice President.

In the resultant split of the votes in the general election, the Democrats won, and in Arkansas the victorious Democrats issued a scathing indictment against Pike and the Know-Nothings in a resolution:

"*Resolved,* That the open discussion of public affairs is the foundation of all true republican government and the safeguard of freedom; that the American or Know-Nothing Party, by its secret meetings, its ceremonials, its oaths and mummeries, has tended to demoralize public sentiment; while by embracing, as it now does, a great sectional issue, and adopting, as it has done in its very inception, religious intolerance and political and civil incapacity because of the accident of birth, as primary principles of political action, violates the spirit of both the state and Federal constitutions and aims a deadly blow at the highest and most sacred rights of man."

The Know-Nothings lost the election in Arkansas by a very large margin, but Pike was less disturbed by the defeat and the public censure than he was by the rapid growth of the Republican party in the North. "The slavery question shatters all parties in turn," he wrote, with more apprehension than bitterness. "And each, as it dissolves, swells the ranks of the Republican Party with new recruits, while its leaders daily increase in boldness, more industriously throw up the earthworks and plant their batteries against the ramparts of the Union."

4

Undoubtedly, Pike was attracted to the Order of United Americans as much by its secret rituals and its fraternal trappings as he was by its political aims. During this period of his life, as his marriage degenerated and his career suffered, he used mysticism as a retreat, a shelter against a world where his grand plans ended in disappointment and most of his relationships ended in bitterness and confusion. He could find serenity and meaning in an organization where everything was defined by ritual, where there was a sense of logical progression and a man was rewarded by advancement according to his efforts, and where there was a sense of unshakable tradition that was not subject to the whim of politics.

So it was that he became a Mason. In 1850 he was initiated, passed and raised in the Western Star Lodge No. 2 in Little Rock, and committed himself to a course of study that would offer him a relief from his personal problems and that, in his later years, when the world threatened to destroy him, would save him as well. Masonry satisfied his hunger for order and meaning. "It began to shape itself to my intellectual vision into something imposing and majestic, solemnly mysterious and grand. It seemed to me like the pyramids in their grandeur and loneliness, in whose yet undiscovered chambers may be hidden, for the enlightenment of the coming generations, the sacred books of the Egyptians, so long lost to the world; like the Sphinx, half buried in the sands. In its symbolism, which and its spirit of brotherhood, are its essence, Freemasonry is more than any of the world's living religions. So I came at last to see that symbolism is its soul."

In the decade between 1850 and 1860, Pike rose rapidly in the ranks of the Masonic order. In 1854 he became Worshipful Master of the Magnolia Lodge No. 60, in Little Rock. In 1853 he received

the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, from the 4th to the 32nd, inclusive, at Charleston, South Carolina, and the 33rd degree in Arkansas four years later. In 1857 he was coroneted Honorary Inspector-General, and the following year he became an active member of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction. In 1859 he was elected to the high office of M.P. Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

His rise in the Masonic movement came at a time when the brotherhood was just emerging from one of the most hectic times in its frequently stormy history, a period when it had become a political issue. In the 1830's America was swept by a wave of religious hysteria centering in the spontaneous brush-arbor revivals being held in every part of the country. These revivals had become a popular pastime, especially in rural areas, where they would sometimes continue for days, ending only when the participants were too exhausted to continue. In those days a revival needed more than a purely religious catharsis to be successful, more than an active campaign against whisky or tobacco or the indulgences of the flesh. To draw crowds, a revivalist needed topical issues and currently active bugaboos, and in the 1830's he had two: Catholicism and Masonry. Catholicism was an old story, but the Masonic threat was something relatively fresh, a secret society having as its members many of the top governmental officials on a national, territorial, and state level. Andrew Jackson was a Mason; most of his Cabinet members were Masons; practically every top Democrat was a Mason; the leaders of the new Republic of Texas were all Masons. This could be interpreted as a Masonic conspiracy to take over the government, and so it was in religious meetings everywhere.

Public sentiment against the Masons was aroused, and led to the formation of an Antimason political party, a fringe group never powerful enough to elect any candidates on its own, but strong enough to provoke a good deal of debate. It sparked John Quincy Adams into a vituperative attack on Masonry and rallied Andrew Jackson into a stanch defense of the brotherhood, an act that brought all of the Masons in America to his side.

By mid-century, the political horse of Masonry had been ridden to death, and the effect of Masonry on the government so thoroughly discussed, explored, renounced, and defended that no one

could contribute anything fresh on the subject. As a result, the Antimason controversy was lost in the turbulence of more important issues. But in the rural areas of America, where prejudices and bitternesses are a long time dying, the Masonic order was still suspect. A large number of people were sure that any society that kept its rituals so darkly secret must be doing so in order to hide something evil. Since the Masons were accused of being anti-Christian, it was only logical that some extremists would go one step further to accuse the Masons of being devil worshipers, associating their rites with the black mass and other satanic activities.

It was this reservoir of distorted beliefs about the Masons that provided the materials for one rural portrait of Pike, a dark caricature of a sensual monster with supernatural powers. It was told that on certain nights when the moon was full, Albert Pike would go into the woods to hold an orgy with the devil as participant, evoking the powers of darkness and using them to do his bidding. In 1926 the charge of devil worship was made against Pike in a book called *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* by an English clergyman named Montague Summers.

"In the nineteenth century," he wrote, "both Albert Pike and his successor Adriano Lemmi have been identified upon abundant authority as being Grand Masters of societies practicing Satanism, and performing the hierarchal functions of 'the Devil' at the modern Sabbat." He amplifies this charge in another book, *Witchcraft and Black Magic,* published in 1945, in which he called Albert Pike "the Viceregent of Lucifer . . . a Grand Master of the Witches."

Undoubtedly, part of this attack stems from Pike's close association with Masonry, but it is possible that Summers came across some of the stories still told about Pike in the southern backwoods. A number of these tales have been collected by the eminent American folklorist Vance Randolph. They are too obscene to be repeated here in detail, but they reflect the awful terror of the backwoods people for a very real hell and a very live devil. They depict Pike mounting an obscene throne deep in the woods and invoking Satan to show himself while troops of nude and comely witches dance around him. An animal is sacrificed in a travesty of the crucifixion, and there is a ritual in which hosts of women approach Pike to pay tribute to the unusual aspects of his generative member.

It is not unbelievable that such stories are still being told about

Albert Pike. He had a profound effect on the public imagination of his time, for he was a man of prodigious excesses, and it is from such characters that legends spring. Many of these stories center upon his tremendous appetite, for Pike found solace in gluttony, in the consumption of immense quantities of food at a single and prolonged sitting. This is not to say, however, that he was promiscuous in his eating habits. He had the reputation of a gourmet, and it became the fashion when he appeared in a New Orleans restaurant for other diners to summon their waiters and ask that Pike's dinner be duplicated.

Occasionally, during the fatigue that overcame him near the end of a particularly tedious or troublesome case, Pike would starve himself for days. Then, once the case had been resolved, he would load a wagon with food and leave Little Rock for the woods with a cook and a few servants. Finding a secluded campsite, he would gorge himself for days, eating around the clock, washing down the turkeys and the hams and the beef with great draughts of liquor until at last he fell insensible to the ground. He was a compulsive eater; that much is certain. As the years passed, his tendency toward corpulence (revealed in the earliest pictures of him) became more pronounced, until at last he was a huge man, weighing between 275 and 300 pounds.

His penchant for excess led to many stories about him that are variations on a theme. It was said, for instance, that when he abandoned his horse in favor of a buggy for his circuit riding, that he hired a brass band to follow him and serenade him in the evenings when court was recessed and there was nothing else to do.

Every year, when he lived in Little Rock, Pike took a few weeks from his law practice to go hunting on the prairie, and this custom gave rise to another group of stories. It was told that one of these vacations took Pike to Fort Smith to hunt wild geese in the open prairies along the river. One night, after a moderately unsuccessful day, he borrowed a cannon from the fort and had it hauled out to Muzzard Prairie, a favorite feeding ground for wild geese. He loaded it himself, ramming the powder and the wadding down into the barrel and filling it with goose shot. Then he settled down to wait.

At dawn, a great cloud of geese appeared, honking in the sky, and casting unsuspicious eyes on the man and his cannon below

before they swooped in ever diminishing circles to light on the meadow. Pike waited, gauging the range with a critical eye, inspecting the quality and quantity of the birds within range, and then, when he was satisfied, discharged his shotgun. With a great flurry of beating wings, the birds took off. When they reached the proper position, Pike touched off the cannon. With a roar, the cannon belched gooseshot into the flock, and the sky rained geese.

5

If Pike had his detractors, he also had his supporters, and the eccentricities that prompted stories about him in the backwoods gave him added luster as a dinner guest in the social circles of the nation's Capital. It must be remembered that it was only at those times when he was attacked or slighted that he fell into an abusive rage and, like Sampson, tried to pull the world down around him. In congenial company there was no man more charming than Albert Pike, and his personal popularity was immense. In Washington, he was a living contradiction, a backwoods *bon vivant* who could discuss obscure philosophies or tell a frontier joke in dialect with equal ease.

The scope of his popularity is revealed in a small, privately printed book, *The Amusing Wake at Washington City of the Fine Arkansas Gentleman Who Died Before His Time*, which was printed in Washington in 1859 and circulated to the men who participated in this unusual event. The "wake" itself was the result of a chain of misunderstandings. In January, 1859, a Colonel Albert Pickett died somewhere in the South. By mistake, a traveler coming into Washington spread the word that Albert Pike had died. Immediately, the journalists prepared flowery eulogies, and an Irishman named Johnny Coyle, a friend of Pike's who ran a watering house for prominent public officials, planned an elaborate wake in his honor.

When Pike showed up in Washington after the preparations for the wake were well advanced, his friends were so delighted to see him that Johnny Coyle decided to have the wake anyway, with Pike as guest of honor. Nothing earth-shaking happened at the party, but it was typical of the social events in Washington in the prewar days.

The wake began with a banquet at Johnny Coyle's place, with Pike waiting in an adjoining room while the dozen dinner guests toasted his memory, and a diner named John Anthony told a few

jokes and appropriate stories and sang "Good Saint Anthony" and put his own words to "Vive la Compagnie," making up verses to fit the guests assembled at the table, a diversion that seems to have been a refined social accomplishment at the time.

When the guests were properly primed, the parlor door opened, and, as a Philadelphia paper described it, "a stalwart figure, large and lofty, with keen eyes, a nose reminding one of an eagle's beak, a noble head firmly placed between a pair of massive shoulders, and flowing locks nearly halfway down his back, entered the apartment, looking as like a living man as anything I had ever seen. But the company, who did not appear to be frightened in the least at this apparition, one and all, assured me that he was dead—*that he had been killed in the newspapers*—that he was wandering about, wishing someone to say, 'Rest, perturbed spirit!"

Pike was persuaded to have a shot of rye before dinner. Once the meal was finished, Johnny Coyle stood up to sing a long parody of "The Fine Arkansas Gentleman," telling of Pike's adventures with the Plains Indians:

They welcomed him with all the sports well known on the frontier,
He hunted buffalo and elk, and lived on grouse and deer;
And having brought his stores along, he entertained each chief,
With best Otard and whisky, smoking and chewing tobacco,
not forgetting cards, with instructions in seven-up, brag, bluff and euchre, till they drank themselves dumb and blind, having first war-whooped whoo-ooo-oooped till he was deaf,
This fine Arkansas gentleman, etc.

After this rendition, the newspaper account says, "the Defunct politely informed him (Coyle) that he had better make himself more fully master of the words which he (the Defunct) had an interest in."

Moved by the spirit of the evening, another guest named M. McMahon was prompted to create a poem about Pike's entrance into heaven:

When Pike appeared at heaven's gate,
And rang with hearty pull the bell,
Saint Peter turned his hoary pate,

And gruffly answered, "go to hell!"
"And if I do," says Pike, "then I'll be damned,
For every corner there is crammed."

Pike had a wonderful time. "He conversed freely upon the published incidents of his death, and was indignant only upon one point—*the newspapers, he said, had libelled him by declaring that he died rich!* For, he was, in life, a sort of humanized Cerberus—three single gentlemen rolled into one, as Mrs. Malaprop has it—Poet, Soldier and Lawyer. In the first two capacities no man gets wealthy (save in fame) and our friend was a trifle too honest, too freehanded, to become rich in the third."

A hundred and fifty guests attended the wake following the banquet, and gallons of liquor were consumed and many songs were sung and stories told. As the party was just about to break up, shortly before dawn, Pike was called on to make a speech. It was a long talk, witty in parts, openly sentimental in others, Pike at his mellowest. He told the story of a man who had been declared dead prematurely. When he reappeared, his estate was already in probate and when he went before the judge to try to regain his property, the probate had gone so far that the judge didn't want to see it halted. Finally, after due consideration and much thought, the judge solved the problem by declaring him to be his own heir so he could inherit his own property.

Part of his speech was ironic. "Life in my eyes has assumed a new value," he said, "and the world is brighter to me than it seemed before; for I am wiser than before, and know men better. I know them better, and therefore love them more, and would fain do the world and my fellows some service before I die. All the discontents and enmities that lingered in my bosom, and they were not many, have disappeared.

"In this, at least, my imaginary demise shall be real. In the grave that was supposed to hold my mortal body, shall remain forever buried all my piques, my animosities, my longings for revenge for wrongs, fancied or real."

These remarks were made in 1859. Within four years they would be meaningless, and he would become a man consumed by bitterness.

EIGHT

PORTRAIT OF AN INDIAN LAWYER

In 1852 Albert Pike took on another cause which looked every bit as hopeless as the ill-fated railroad plan, but by this point his fortune was on the wane and he was willing to examine any case that might offer an eventual hope of profit. For the past few years, he had been having miserable luck as the planters (on whom he depended for the major part of his fees) suffered an unprecedented period of natural calamities. In 1848 there was a drought, and in the following year the rains came with such a vengeance that most of the cotton was washed out and what was left was consumed by insects. In 1850 a damp winter hung on and refused to give way to spring; a cold drizzle continued to fall from the pall of low clouds hanging over the plantations, the cotton was late in the planting, and another crop was lost.

If the planters were hurt by three years of failure, Albert Pike was almost ruined. He had managed to accumulate some money in the prosperous years before the Mexican War, but during his military absence and the subsequent years of blight his expenses continued even when his income dwindled to nothing. With a large family to support and the prohibitive cost of his unslackening indulgences, his cash reserve was soon depleted. He continued to play cards with the planters and take a few minor cases, waiting for his luck to change.

So it was that he was willing to listen to a rather farfetched proposal made to him by a soft-spoken visitor in the summer of 1852. The visitor was Philip H. Raiford, an Alabaman who was currently serving as Indian Agent for the Creeks, and he stopped in Little Rock to talk to Pike about the claims the Creeks were pressing against the United States Government. Pike was familiar with the

background of these claims because he had made many friends in the Creek and Choctaw tribes during his annual hunting trips onto the Plains. In his circuit travels in the western part of the Territory, he had often been called on to defend an Indian in the Arkansas courts, and he prided himself on a knowledge of the Indian character and language. He was so well liked by the Indians that one of the tribes made him an honorary chief.

The Creek claim against the government had come about because of two unhappy circumstances. The first was a matter of geography. In the early part of the century, the Creeks had been located on some of the most fertile land in Alabama and Georgia, land that was coveted by white settlers pushing inland from the eastern coast. In the eyes of these settlers the Creeks were savages, and this view was reflected in the official policy of the United States. The Creeks were proud and sensitive people. They had a highly developed government comparable to any state legislature, with a House of Kings and a House of Warriors, and, if comparisons must be made, the Indian government was considerably more refined than that of the white settlers who were trying to force them to move.

The second unhappy circumstance was a military one. Pressured by the Americans, the Creeks were catered to by the British and therefore joined them against the Americans in the War of 1812, only to be crushed by General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. As a result, the Creeks had been forced to cede 9,000,000 acres of good land to the United States Government in 1814. Since that time the Creeks had been leading a marginal life on the inferior western lands to which they had been removed. Now, almost forty years after the battle and the resultant treaty (two tragic events remembered only by the older members of the tribe), the Creeks had decided to press a claim for compensation against the United States Government.

Pike listened to Raiford and took the case, although it was doubtful that Congress, a political body with multiple and widely divergent viewpoints on the Indian question, would take any action at all on the matter. However, there was one factor in Pike's favor. The head of the Committee on Indian Affairs was Robert W. Johnson, an Arkansas congressman and Pike's close personal friend. Perhaps he would use his influence in behalf of the legislation. It was worth a gamble. So Pike wrote a lengthy history and memorial of the Creek

claim, published it in Little Rock, and sent copies to Johnson in Washington.

In 1852 Pike's memorial and the Creek petition were introduced in the House of Representatives and assigned to Johnson's Indian Affairs Committee. After some adroit legislative maneuvering (which took the greater part of a year), the committee reported in favor of the Creek claim with the recommendation that they be paid for 8,849,940 acres of land. They did not set a price. The report set off a vituperative argument in the House. Although supporters of the bill managed to get an evaluation of thirty cents an acre set on the land, the whole resolution was smothered by the opposition, and defeated.

But the claim had come close enough to success to excite a score of adroit Washington lawyers who looked on the Indian claims as a possible windfall of enormous proportions, and very shortly Pike found himself involved with all sorts of attorneys who either volunteered their invaluable aid for a cut of the fee, or who insinuated themselves into the case by proving that they had been retained by the Indians to push the claim that was now under Pike's supervision. Too, once Pike had gone to work for the Creeks, he was approached by the Choctaws and Chickasaws, who felt that they had as much chance of collecting on an earlier treaty as the Creeks did. The Choctaws wanted payment for nearly 10,000,000 acres of land that had been pried from their possession in the Treaty of Doak's Stand and the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed in 1830.

Representing the three tribes, Pike could count on enormous rewards if he succeeded, but at the end of his first year's work in behalf of the Indians he could see that his fee was going to be a long time coming and that he would have to find some other source of income until that day arrived.

2

Coincident with his financial difficulty was his domestic problem. His wife grew more querulous month by month; their quarrels became more frequent, and his resolve to leave her mounted apace. Pike was determined to keep his marital squabbles confined within the walls of his mansion, and maintained sufficient detachment to create an idealistic picture of marriage in a speech made in 1852

before a commencement convocation of the young ladies of the Tulip Female Seminary and the Cadets of the Arkansas Military Institute, in Little Rock. Unconsciously, perhaps, this oration reveals the source of the conflict in Pike's own marriage.

The picture of the perfect gentleman, drawn for the graduating cadets, was a portrait of Pike as he saw himself. His definition of a gentleman: "In the councils of his country, a statesman; in war, an accomplished soldier; at the law, not unworthy to have his name associated with Story and Kent; as a writer, fit to be read with pleasure and profit by men of learning and ability; and as a speaker, to be heard with respect by the intellectual and refined."

To the girls of the Tulip Female Seminary, Pike was specific in his definition of a lady fit for union with such a gentleman as he described, and the attributes Pike lists are those that Mary Ann lacked. A maiden should "be taught to bend her bright eyes on her books, and pale her rosy cheeks with study, that she may be entitled to wear the graceful appellation of lady, which, if rudely ignorant, she cannot do; to appear well in company, and to be able to converse intelligently, to win the affection and esteem of an intellectual man, which all young ladies, I hope, desire to do; to make her own future fireside and domestic home cheerful and pleasant; or to win fame and distinction, as dear to them as to us of the ruder sex."

If the cadets and maidens could remember Pike's advice, they would undoubtedly have trouble following it, for there was a basic hidden conflict in the merger of these two ideals. Pike's own marriage was proof of that. It sounded very fine indeed, but what if, in the union of the well-educated gentleman and the rosy-cheeked maiden, things should go awry? What if, during the long hours a man decided to devote to self-education, the house should be filled with shouting children and distracting noises? What if the maiden, wanting to "bend her bright eyes on her books," should begin to worry about the lack of money coming in and cast an eye on her husband's prodigality with a view to saving a dollar here and a dollar there? And what if, while the husband pursued fame in literature and the military (both poorly paid if highly honored avocations), the wife was left at home in a large and drafty house with half a dozen children, and after a great many lonely nights decided to ask her husband to restrict his pursuit of glory and to spend more of his time at home?

Pike's marital difficulty was not uncommon, for the conflict lay in the basic code of gentility in the South, especially in the strata of middle-class society where a man lacked the fiscal reserve of the established aristocracy and the freedom it guaranteed. There were only two acceptable courses a man might take to escape his marital unhappiness. He might strike up an alliance with another woman separate from his house, to leave the virtue of his marriage unsullied, or, if that were impractical, absent himself from his home for long periods, following the pursuit of the one acceptable excuse for everything, business.

The former method has been hinted at in some of the legends of Pike's pastoral retreats; the second way is well documented in the list of his extensive travels. But Pike also developed a third refuge from unhappiness, a work in which he could so absorb himself that he could forget the world. Early in the 1850's, he plunged into the compilation and writing of a work he called his *Magnum Opus,* a revision of the work and rituals of the first thirty Masonic degrees under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council of the Masonic order.

At the time, the Masonic rituals depended to a large extent on the English symbolism of knighthood and the legends of the crusades, and Pike decided to give these rituals new depth and meaning. He was a great bibliophile, and his library was his most valued possession. (Once he had put an advertisement in the *Gazette* as a subtle reminder to friends who had borrowed books from him to return them, for eighteen of his precious volumes were missing.) To work on the rituals, Pike began to assemble a large collection of books in a score of languages on the ancient mysteries that so fascinated him. Spreading the books out on the wide desk before him, with the huge house asleep around him and his supply of quill pens in a container in front of him, he plunged into the philosophies of the Gnostics, the Hebrews, the Alexandrians, the Druids, and the Essenes, studying the ancient mysteries of Egypt, Persia, Greece, and India, writing rapidly in his tight little scrawl on the papers sprawled in front of him, taking time from his research to learn a new language when he was confronted by a document for which there was no adequate translation, working until early in the morning before he fell into bed for four hours' sleep before he heard the house come awake around him and went down to a large breakfast.

He would maintain his feverish study for seven years, spending

night after night at it, going to New Orleans for books, poring over hundreds of volumes, distilling them and incorporating them into his work. When he was through with this project, he would have it printed at a cost of $1,200 and confide to a friend that he had spent $500 for books he could ill afford. The greatest heartbreak would come when he would submit this work to the Supreme Council, only to have it rejected.

Even the escape accorded by this work was not sufficient to offset the continual friction of his marriage. In 1855, to get away from his wife and to attempt to increase his law practice, Pike moved to New Orleans, and his visits with Mary Ann were very infrequent after that. In 1857 he drew up papers giving her all the lands and furniture and the four household slaves, keeping only his books and a few personal possessions. From that time on, although Mary Ann still bore his name and occupied the mansion in Little Rock, her position as his wife was purely titular.

3

Moving his law practice to Louisiana was not a simple matter. The courts of Louisiana were considerably more refined than the courts of Arkansas, and Pike was sure he would not be admitted to practice there on the whim of a judge with a sense of humor, like the judge who had licensed him to practice in Arkansas. Pike knew he would be examined by a committee and then in open court before he could hope to be admitted to practice before the Louisiana Supreme Court. He would be required to have an intimate knowledge of both Latin and French and, as he admits in his autobiography, "I had become unable to read either." Ordering copies of the Pandects and other books on civil law, he proceeded to go through them one by one and, as he studied, his command of the two languages came back to him. After about a year, he felt he was ready to be examined.

The examinations were not so rigorous as he had anticipated. His reputation as a lawyer had preceded him, and the committee examination consisted of a single question put to him by a venerable old French jurist: "What works have you read on the Roman law?"

"I answered: 'I have read the Pandects and made a translation into English in writing of the first book.' He was perfectly satisfied with this, and it was true. I had also read the twenty-two volumes

of Duranton, several volumes of Rothier, the five volumes of Marcade (the highest authority of them all—higher than all the courts of France, and, out of sight, the most admirable of all writers on the law), and other works."

Pike did not have to take an examination in open court. It was waived, and Chief Justice Slidell commented, "The court is well advised in regard to the legal examination of Mr. Pike, and knows it to be unnecessary to examine him."

Unfortunately, Pike gained nothing by his move to New Orleans. In the years between 1852 and 1859, Pike was compelled to go to Washington every winter, not only to court the favor of the congressmen who would decide the fate of the Indian claims but also to try to bring some harmony into the confused mass of fee seekers who had now attached themselves to the claims and who could ruin the chances of success if they were not quieted. Since these trips had to be made at the same time the Louisiana Supreme Court was in session, Pike could not be present to argue his cases in Louisiana. In 1857 he moved his office back to Little Rock.

Pike's hopes for the success of the Indian claims soared and plummeted a dozen times in the 1850's. In 1853 success seemed certain as Robert M. Johnson was elected to the United States Senate and proceeded to introduce a bill asking for $1,769,880 to be awarded to the Creeks. Despite the considerable support he had recruited for the bill, it took a fearful drubbing as the figure was whittled down until the land evaluation was cut from 30¢ to 6¼¢ an acre and the total compensation reduced to about a half-million dollars. But even that figure was considered exorbitant by many senators. As a result, the bill was assigned to a variety of committees for further study, and promptly lost.

In the next three years the bill came up again and again to suffer a similar fate, but in 1856 the Senate awarded $800,000 to the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and Pike saw his first hard cash from the venture, $10,000 received as a partial fee. The next year Congress approved a payment of $800,000 to the Creeks. But because it was apparent that little of this money would ever reach the Creeks if all of the lawyers who had claims against it were paid, Congress attached a stipulation to the bill that none of the treaty money should be paid by the Indians to "any agent, attorney, or other persons, for any service or pretended service in negotiating such treaty."

With the inclusion of this phrase, Pike stood to lose everything, for it left the payment of his considerable fee to the discretion of the individual Indians in the tribe. The $10,000 he had received so far was scarcely enough to cover his expenses in Washington for the six years he had been pushing the Indian claims. His only hope lay in the honesty of the Indians he had been dealing with, and the chance that they would appreciate his efforts enough to honor an obligation that had been canceled by the United States Government.

In the summer of 1857, he went to the North Fork Village in the Creek Nation to await the assembling of the Creeks for the disbursement of the money. It was a hot summer and the Indians were slow to gather, and for three months Pike occupied himself with hunting and fishing and jotting down phrases in a journal as he compiled a Creek vocabulary. At last the chiefs assembled, and Pike was rewarded for his patience. He received $120,000 in gold.

He was forced to repeat the waiting process in the summer of 1858 when he went to North Fork Village to collect his fee on an additional $200,000 awarded to the Creeks. He was not hopeful of getting a share of the money, for many Creeks felt that the gold given him the year before was more than enough. The patriarch of the tribe was an old man named Opothleyehola, and Pike kept an anxious eye on him as the Indian agent set up the disbursement table and prepared to count out the money. The procedure was simple. The head of each family would step to the table to receive his money. If he wished to give Pike a share, he would push the money back to the agent who would count out Pike's fee. If he did not wish to give Pike a share, he could pick up his money and leave without saying a word. Opothleyehola would set the pattern, and what he did at the table would be emulated by the rest of the subchiefs and the family heads in the tribe. As Pike watched him, looking for some sign of his intent, the old man's face was stolid and expressionless, and Pike had no idea what he was going to do.

The Indian agent placed the first money bag on the table and called the old man's name. Opothleyehola stepped forward to the table, looking very solemn as he took the money as if to pick it up and walk away. Then, after a deliberate pause, the old chief looked in Pike's direction and grinned as he pushed the money back to the agent for Pike's share to be withheld. It was the only time Pike had

ever seen the old man make a joke, and he was delighted—naturally. His share of this payment amounted to $10,000 in gold. The next year he received another fee of $50,000.

His efforts in behalf of the Choctaws and Chickasaws did not fare so well. In 1859 it appeared fairly certain that Pike was going to obtain an award for them in the amount of $2,981,247.30 in addition to the $800,000 they had already been paid, but he ran into the stone-wall opposition of a close Masonic friend named Robert Toombs. Toombs was rabidly anti-Indian, and he used his fiery oratory and his considerable influence in the Senate to delay and trim the appropriation so that when it was finally made in 1861, it was only a sixth of the original figure.

4

One of the still unsolved mysteries in the life of Albert Pike concerns the disposition of this total of $190,000 received from the Indian claims. For the times, this was a staggering fortune, and there is no record that Pike invested it or paid off debts with it. Yet the fact remains that by 1865 he would have so little money that he would not be able to scrape together $300 to redeem his confiscated possessions. If the fortune was lost in a bank failure or confiscated by the United States Government, Pike never made mention of it, and he was not the kind of man to take such a loss in silence.

One story has it that Pike entrusted the money to a messenger who was so overcome by the physical possession of so grand a fortune that he promptly absconded to Europe and was never heard from again. This too is a doubtful possibility, for Pike would have left a scathing indictment of such a thief somewhere in the bulk of his writings, and there is no such record.

The story that seems most logical, and might be somewhere closer to the truth, is that after the Indian claims were settled, and once the years of comparative famine had ended, Pike celebrated in a prodigal manner, giving huge entertainments for his friends, chartering a steamboat for one occasion, loading it with food and whisky for a grand excursion downriver to New Orleans, and entertaining all the people the decks would hold until the money was gone.

NINE

PORTRAIT OF A MAN ON THE FENCE

When the delegates to the National Democratic Convention swept into Charleston, South Carolina, for their 1860 convention, Pike wished them well. As much as he disliked the Democrats, he feared the Republicans and knew that only a strong Democratic party could keep the radicals from coming to power. Unfortunately, the same issue that had destroyed the Know-Nothings now pulverized the Democrats, and what began as a rally against the Republicans soon degenerated into a brawl between northern and southern Democrats. The delegates from the South, unable to get the party to agree on a platform calling for the extension of slavery, walked out of the convention to form their own party and nominate their own candidate for President.

In the fall election, there was a four-way contest for power as the Republicans, the Democrats, the Southern Democrats and the Constitutional Union Party (which had gobbled up the remnants of the now defunct Know-Nothings) campaigned across the country. So fractionated, the Democrats lost everything and the Republicans put Lincoln in the White House. To many political observers in the South, the ascendancy of the Republicans left only two courses open to the slave states, secession and peaceful coexistence or war.

As alarmed as Pike was over Lincoln's election, he could not believe that the country would fight over the issue of slavery. Since 1836, when he led the compromise movement at the meeting of the Arkansas Constitutional Convention and offered a plan to conciliate the deadlocked hillmen from the north and the planters from the south, he had felt that people should be free to support or reject slavery as they pleased but that they should not be permitted to force their personal preference on their neighbors.

During the two decades before the Civil War, Pike's pamphlets and his articles on slavery were all amplifications of this basic theme. In his *Letters to the Northern States,* he tried to persuade the North to accept the point of view of the southern slaveholders, that slavery was not a moral issue and should not be debated as such.

Slavery was a "disease," slavery was an "evil," Pike admitted, going on to say that undoubtedly many of the charges made by northern abolitionists were true. Slavery was often cruel and families were often torn asunder and husband separated from wife and "here and there, [slavery] prevents the development of a mind and intellect." But, Pike said, as if to soften these admissions, slavery was not the only evil in the world. Great cities were an evil, and the oppression of labor by the capitalists was an evil, and even the army and navy were evil in that they effected "the utter annihilation of free-will and individuality." Everything in the world was a mixture of good and evil, he maintained, and this mixture, by its very presence in the universe, was of God's making. "Such is the rule of God's providence and the mode by which He has chosen to arrange the affairs of the world." Therefore the problem of slavery was one that should be discussed in an entirely different frame of reference, apart from the moral issues involved.

First, Pike insisted, before anyone made his mind up that slavery must be abolished instantly, he should look at it for what it was, not a temporary social custom, not something the South invented, but a "system interwoven with every fibre of the body-politic of the South." He claimed that slavery in the cotton country was more than just a labor force; it was an established political institution.

Would anyone benefit if all the slaves were emancipated in one fell stroke? No, Pike said, no one would benefit, and the slaves themselves would be the first victims. The slaveholders would suffer only temporarily, for they would soon find another work force and recover. "We would supply ourselves with other laborers, with Lascars, Chinese, Peons from Mexico." And what would become of this vast body of freed slaves? "The large body of our negroes would become drones and paupers. . . ." No longer would the South be responsible for "the sick, the feeble, the old and the disabled. Three millions of human beings would be left without protectors.

Pike admitted that someday, perhaps, the slaves might be ready for freedom, and he implied that the slaveholders of the South had

already given it considerable thought and decided against it for the time being. The tragedy of immediate emancipation would be too great.

There was another facet to the problem that Pike did not discuss in his *Letters to the Northern States*. The slaveholders were not so concerned about the welfare of their freed blacks as Pike's pamphlets implied. Instead, they were afraid of the disruptive influence that such a large mass of discontented unemployed would have, basing their fears on the serious problem created by the comparatively small number of freed slaves living in Arkansas.

In 1858 Pike was one of a committee of twelve prominent Little Rock citizens who issued a circular calling for the legislature to pass a law expelling the free Negroes from the state, referring to the problem as a "serious evil . . . the presence among us of a class of free colored persons." It seems strange perhaps that Pike, having expressed sympathy and understanding for the Negroes, should have contributed to a circular that talked of "the laziness and bestiality of a degraded race" and contained such descriptive phrases as "immorality, filth and laziness" and "so worthless and depraved an animal" in reference to the Negro. The circular demanded that all candidates for the legislature take a pledge "that they will help to enact a law that shall remove beyond the borders of Arkansas *every* free negro and mulatto within its limits, and forbid them in the future to enter into or to remain in the state."

By signing such a vituperative document, all Pike's pleas for rational consideration of the problem were nullified, and he proceeded to alienate most of the people in the North who had admired him as a poet. At the moment, however, in the fall of 1860, Pike was more concerned with the local political scene in Arkansas than he was with national events.

2

On November 15, 1860, early in the morning, the usual inauguration procession formed in front of the Anthony House in Little Rock, and with a tinny band and military escort preceding him, Henry Massie Rector rode down the dirt street to the Capitol building to be sworn in as the sixth governor of the state.

His message to the legislature, delivered that same day, was not a routine discussion of state affairs. Instead, Rector dealt with the

hottest political topic of the day, leaving no doubt at all about where he stood. "The fanaticism of the North has well nigh reached its culminating point," he declared, "and the states stand tremblingly on the verge of dissolution. The issue made up by the North, and which we of the South will not be permitted to decline, is, the Union without slavery, or slavery without the Union.

"Eleven of the northern states have . . . trampled upon the Federal Constitution . . . and have prohibited their officials and citizens from aiding in the execution of the 'fugitive slave law.' . . . They have revolutionized the government and have left every other state absolved from its Federal allegiance, and free, as an independent and sovereign government, to seek its own destiny." But Rector advised no course of action, leaving it to the people to decide what they wanted to do after a period of sober consideration. "I cannot counsel precipitate or hasty action, having for its object a final separation of the states and the breaking up of the Union."

As a consequence, the legislature authorized a convention to consider the matter to be held the following February. Public debate began immediately. There were hotheads who insisted on immediate secession and war if necessary; there were cautious, conservative voices spelling out the bankruptcy that would ruin Arkansas if she decided to leave the Union. With the raucousness of an old-time political campaign, feeling began to run high in the backwoods, generating an explosive atmosphere that required only a spark to set it off. And the spark was already present in Little Rock in the person of Captain James Totten, in the sixty uniformed soldiers of the United States Army under his command.

A few days before the November elections, the people of Little Rock had been startled as Captain Totten's troops marched into town, drawing the usual clamor of barking dogs and curious children, and scattering the herds of pigs in the streets as the soldiers moved into the old arsenal building, a structure rarely used any more. Little Rock was a small town, and it was brought to the edge of panic by the arrival of the soldiers. Rumors passed over the village: War was close; the troops were here to prevent any demonstration against Lincoln's election; the troops were here to prevent any possible secession movement.

The election came and went. Governor Rector was inaugurated. Taking their courage in their hands, speakers stood up in Little

Rock to advocate secession. The soldiers did nothing to stop them. Captain Totten occasionally drilled his men outside the arsenal, but there was no sign of a threat, no hint of belligerence. Gradually, the presence of the troops was accepted, and Captain Totten was welcomed into Little Rock society. He was a gentle, soft-spoken man, and he circulated freely around town, dining at the Anthony House and letting it be known that his men were here on a routine assignment, nothing more.

If Little Rock could accept the presence of the federal soldiers, the outlying districts could not. As the date for the convention drew nearer, the oratory grew more heated and tempers grew shorter, and the fact that there were Union soldiers in Little Rock grew more and more unbearable. This sentiment was strongest in the town of Helena on the Mississippi, a shipping center for cotton planters and one of the strongholds of the secessionists. Early in 1861, the secessionists held a mass meeting there in which orators whipped the assembled crowds into such a fevered pitch that they formed a small army of five hundred men and sent a resolution to the governor offering to help him throw the federal troops out of the arsenal.

Rector was a cool-headed gentleman who had served on the Arkansas Supreme Court and had survived a bitter election in which he had run as an independent Democrat and thoroughly trounced the party's candidate. He was not easily moved, either by the threat of violence or by the possibility of an incident. He explained to the people of Helena that he had looked into the matter. There was nothing to worry about. Captain Totten and his men were behaving very well, and Captain Totten had assured him that when his men did leave Little Rock, none of the arms and ammunition stored in the arsenal would be removed.

Rector made one concession to the angry tempers of Helena. He said he would never permit the arsenal to be reinforced by any additional federal troops. He could be fairly safe in making such a guarantee, because Arkansas was among the more moderate states and it was logical to assume that the government would have more use for its troops elsewhere.

But the situation was much too tense for logic and reason to do any good. On the first day of February, a rumor flew over Little Rock. The steamboat *S. H. Tucker* was churning up the muddy Arkansas, loaded to the boiler decks with federal troops, three or

four hundred of them, coming to join Totten at the arsenal. As the rumor spread, mobs of men began to pour into the streets of the capital, armed with squirrel guns and ancient rifles and any weapons they could find. In the next four days, hundreds of men arrived from Helena, and by February 6th there were eight hundred armed men prowling the streets, shouting for the surrender of the arsenal, gathering at the dock to fight off the invaders. The citizens of Little Rock panicked and went indoors. The City Council went into emergency session and emerged with a weak resolution declaring that this mob was "disrespectful," urging that they should disband and leave the problem of the arsenal to state authorities.

But the mob could not be dissuaded. In a mass meeting they voted to lay siege to the arsenal, and only the personal intervention of the governor prevented a premature beginning of hostilities. Rector could do nothing against the hotheads. He could not outtalk them and there was no way he could prove there was not a gunboat steaming up the Arkansas. Therefore he called on Captain Totten to surrender the arsenal and leave Little Rock with his men.

Totten, however, was not the kind of man who could be pushed into retreat by the threat of force, even by the presence of an armed mob outnumbering his artillerymen by thirteen to one. After all, he held the arsenal and the cannons, and his disciplined regulars were strong enough to withstand any assault. Rector modified his request. He was not demanding that Totten leave; he was simply asking; for more armed men were pouring into Little Rock by the hour, and he was afraid there would be useless bloodshed. Totten finally agreed, on two conditions. First, he wanted unmolested passage across the state. Second, his men would be allowed to take with them the weapons they had brought to Little Rock. They would not touch the arms and ammunition stored in the arsenal. Rector agreed to the terms.

The announcement that Totten was leaving was greeted with mixed emotions in Little Rock. To the sullen men who had stormed into the capital, the news was disappointing, for the boys from Helena were sure they could lick the feds, and wanted the opportunity to try. To some of the citizens of Little Rock, Captain Totten's departure was a sad moment, for he was generally well liked. As a token of their esteem, they presented him with a sword and called on a local citizen, good with words, to compose an

"eloquent and classical letter" to express their feelings. And so, on February 8th, Totten marched out with his men to board a boat that would take them to a less controversial assignment.

Totten's departure had little effect on the mobs that had come to Little Rock, nor did the news that the gunboat full of Union troops coming up the Arkansas was just a rumor. They had come ready to see Arkansas secede, and many of them decided to wait around for the convention to celebrate the day that saw Arkansas leave the Union.

3

With the continual state of crisis in Arkansas, Pike was beginning to get uneasy. It now appeared almost certain that Arkansas was going to secede, and when that happened Pike would have to make an irrevocable choice. He was in Washington during the winter of 1860–1861, at the height of his career as a lawyer, a wealthy man with every prospect of continuing success. For the past ten years he had accumulated influential friends in the Capital, and to ally himself with the Arkansas secessionists would alienate them. On the other hand, his property and his children were in Arkansas, and there was no telling what would happen to them should he come out against the tide of popular opinion in his home state. He would certainly lose his property, and, considering the possible wrath of an angry populace, he might lose his life as well.

In a conversation with a stanch Union friend, B. B. French, Pike expressed the opinion that he was unalterably opposed to secession, and in an attempt to prevent it, issued a joint telegram with Senator Johnson to the people of Arkansas urging caution "for God's sake," stating that the conditions which had justified secession in other states did not exist in Arkansas.

By the time the convention met, seven states had already seceded: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Of the seven, three bordered Arkansas, and these three sent representatives to Little Rock to try to persuade the convention delegates to put Arkansas in their ranks. There was little doubt that Arkansas would secede; public opinion seemed to support the move. But a strange thing happened. Once the delegates assembled to begin discussion, they found the convention dominated by David Walker, a stanch antisecessionist from the hilly northwestern part

of the state where there were no slaves. Inexplicably, the tide of public opinion changed. Time after time the resolutions to take Arkansas out of the Union were brought up, only to suffer defeat.

Pike hurried back from Washington and arrived in Little Rock just as the convention was about to adjourn, taking the floor to deliver a ringing speech in a complete reversal of his previous stand. "Things have gone so far," he declared, "that you have only one choice in the matter. You must go out voluntarily, or be kicked out or dragged out. South Carolina is going to drag you out, or the government will kick you out by calling on you for troops. . . . I am in favor of going out decently of our own account." Later, Pike would confide to his friend B. B. French that he had reversed his position out of fear; but, regardless of his motives, his words had little effect on the delegates. They would not make a commitment one way or the other, and called a special election to be held in August to allow the people of Arkansas to decide their own fate.

The election was never held. On April 14th Fort Sumter was surrendered to the rabid South Carolinians, and Lincoln issued a call for troops. A thousand federal soldiers were ordered to Fort Smith to secure the western border for the Union, and Governor Rector immediately dispatched Colonel Solon Borland to capture Fort Smith and forestall this government maneuver. Colonel Borland did so. There was no resistance.

On the 6th of May, the convention assembled in Little Rock again. There was no debate. They did what was necessary, drafting an "Ordinance of Secession," and Arkansas withdrew from the Union.

TEN

PORTRAIT OF A VOLUNTEER

As a brash youngster of twenty-three, Pike had been frustrated in his attempts to volunteer his services to accompany Sam Houston on a treaty-making trek to the Comanches. Now, considerably older, considerably wiser in the ways of both the Indians and politics, he volunteered his services to the Confederacy. This time, however, the offer was made indirectly so that he would suffer no loss of prestige if the Confederacy turned him down. In a letter to Robert Johnson (now representing Arkansas in the Confederate legislature) Pike outlined the steps he thought should be taken to secure the cooperation and allegiance of the Indian tribes to the west. Several regiments of Indian troops from these tribes, in cooperation with Texas and Arkansas regiments, would ensure the safety of the western border. And, the letter implied, there was no man better equipped to implement this bold plan than its originator, Albert Pike.

Apparently, the Confederate government agreed with Pike's opinion. On March 4th chin-whiskered Robert Toombs (formerly Pike's chief opponent on the Indian appropriations bills in the United States Senate and now Secretary of State in the Confederate Cabinet) proposed a resolution, which was immediately passed, authorizing President Jefferson Davis to send a special agent to the tribes. Davis wasted no time. The day after the resolution was passed, Pike was appointed to this new position.

Ten days later, the Confederate government created a Bureau of Indian Affairs, giving Albert Pike a title as Commissioner of Indian Affairs and appointing a clerk to help him in his duties. Pike was instructed to make new treaties with the tribes west of Arkansas and to facilitate the raising of Indian battalions and regi-

ments. But his primary mission was not to make soldiers out of the Indians but to try to find a way to keep them neutral and to make them friendly toward the new Confederacy.

Pike was disappointed by his instructions. He had hoped to be given military command of the Indian Territory with the authority to enlist and train troops and lead them into battle. Instead, he had been made a civil commissioner, and the plenary powers he was given on one hand were taken away from him on the other. He could promise the Indians anything he wanted to, but any negotiations he made would still have to be studied and amended and ratified by the Confederate Congress. He was further handicapped by the lack of money. Though $100,000 had been appropriated, the cash was not forthcoming and he would have to finance his expedition with credit and promises.

Late in May, Pike went to Fort Smith to confer with General Benjamin McCulloch over the problems involved in the new assignment. McCulloch was a bushy-bearded Texan who had distinguished himself many times in battle, both in the Mexican War and in the Texas Revolution, and early in May he had received a brigadier general's commission in the Provisional Army of the Confederate States and a command including all of the Indian Territory south of Kansas and west of Arkansas. To mobilize and secure this sprawling area (which included everything from brush mountains on the east to arid prairies on the west, and an assortment of Indians ranging from the civilized Cherokees to the savage Comanches), he was given three regiments of white soldiers, one each from the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, with headquarters at Fort Smith. If McCulloch was an expert military commander, he knew very little about the vagaries of the Indian mind, and he welcomed the conference with Pike.

With a map of the Indian Territory spread in front of them, they planned their strategy. In the northeastern corner of the Territory, bordered by Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas, lived the remnants of the Quapaw, the Seneca and the Seneca-Shawnee tribes. They sat on poor land, apathetic, impoverished. They could be taken for granted, for there were too few of them to do any damage and they would have to take whatever was offered them.

Another area where Pike anticipated little difficulty was the large block of land occupied by the conservative Choctaw and

Chickasaw nations. The Choctaw Nation lay just north of the Red River, adjacent to Arkansas on the west, and the Chickasaw Nation sat just west of the Choctaw country. Under the Southern Superintendency, the Choctaws and Chickasaws were slaveholding tribes, and their leaders had already expressed a willingness to join the Confederacy. It would take nothing more than a personal visit from Pike to conclude a treaty with them.

The rest of the tribes presented a variety of vastly different problems. West of the Chickasaw Nation and the cross-timbers lay the dry, hot buffalo country, an area of rolling plains occasionally broken by low, precipitous granite mountains. This country (formerly a part of "the great American desert") was now the Leased District, a hunting ground for scattered groups of Wichitas and occasional bands of Comanches, Tonkawas, Shawnees, Delawares, and other tribes. Pike had no illusions about the validity of any promise he might be able to exact from these Indians. They were aborigines, illiterate savages who would never be able to understand the abstract ideas of patriotism and sectional liberty that might be used to persuade a more educated people. No, Pike could only hope to buy their neutrality with a continuing supply of cloth and beads and beeves, to persuade them to stop their raids on the settlements and isolated ranches along the Texas border. If Pike could succeed in this, the troops normally needed for defense against these tribes could be shifted elsewhere.

More serious was the problem of the three remaining tribes, all of them in the civilized category, the Seminoles, the Creeks, and the Cherokees. These tribes occupied the central and northern parts of the Indian Territory, and from all reports Pike knew they might go either way. The governments of all three tribes were highly unstable, plagued by continual and often bloody skirmishes between hotheaded radicals, anxious to tear away from the old customs, and the stanch conservatives, the blanket Indians who spoke English grudgingly if they spoke it at all, preferring the ancient tribal language and the old ways of life. It would be impossible to get both factions of any of these tribes to support the Confederacy, and if Pike gained the favor of one he was certain to incur the undying animosity of the other.

There was, however, a way that Pike could simplify the problem of these three tribes. The Cherokee Nation extended in a long,

unbroken line adjacent to Kansas and dog-legged south along the Arkansas line, effectively sealing off the Creeks and Seminoles in a pocket in the center of the Indian Territory, with the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations serving as a buffer zone to the south. If Pike could conclude a treaty with the Cherokees, the Creeks and Seminoles would be bottled up.

Although the Cherokee treaty promised to be a difficult one, Pike had a distinct psychological advantage at the moment, for the Indians had no contact with the Washington government. With the formation of the Confederacy, Elias Rector, head of the Southern Superintendency for the Union, had resigned his post, taking with him all of the Indian agents serving under him. Now these agents were working for the Confederacy. If Washington had assigned any new agents to replace these defectors, Pike did not know about it.

Too, the Union troops had abandoned the garrisons at Fort Washita, Fort Arbuckle, and Fort Cobb as they were recalled to fight in the East, leaving the whole Indian Territory with no federal garrison at all, since Fort Gibson had been evacuated in 1857. As interpreted by the Indians, this was an unmistakable sign of weakness. Confirming this weakness was the failure of the United States Government to deliver the overdue annuities promised by the treaties. This money was not forthcoming because Union officials were sure that any large shipments of money to Indian Territory would fall into the hands of the Confederates, but there was no glib Union agent on hand to explain this fact to the Indians. Without this reassurance, the Indians were inclined to believe that the Confederacy was stronger than the Union.

While Pike and McCulloch were conferring, a delegation of Cherokee men drifted into Fort Smith to talk to Pike. They represented the opposition faction in the Cherokee Nation, and were followers of Stand Watie. They were here, not to make commitments, but to put out vague feelers to determine Pike's position. They wanted to know what would happen if they organized and took up arms for the South. Could Pike guarantee them protection against the Union faction in the tribe? Pike gave them his word. The Confederacy would protect its allies.

With the assurance of the delegation that he would be welcomed in the Cherokee Nation, Pike wasted no more time in planning sessions, and set about making preparations for his journey. Fretting

over the failure of the Confederate government to provide him with funds, Pike signed drafts for the wagons and horses necessary to transport his retinue. His staff included his son, Walter Lacy Pike, and assorted agents who would assist in negotiating the Cherokee treaty.

Before Pike left Fort Smith, he wrote to Matthew Leeper, the Confederate agent for the Plains tribes, asking him to send out a call to the chiefs of the scattered bands under his jurisdiction, asking them to assemble at Fort Wichita for a conference. Once the message was on its way to Leeper, Pike climbed into his buggy and started north along the Old Line Road, accompanied by a fully uniformed military escort and a long line of supply wagons.

Pike had hoped to make a triumphal entry into the Cherokee capital, fully realizing the value of such a visual display of pomp and power on the impressionable Indians. But the procession had moved no more than a few miles out of Fort Smith when a bank of gray clouds rolled in from the south and the rains began. The downpour continued for days; the dirt roads became quagmires and the creeks swelled into rivers and the mud-spattered horses strained to inch the heavy wagons through the mire. Throngs of Cherokees came out of the woods to stand along the road and watch the procession creep past, standing mutely in the drizzle to watch Albert Pike as he headed toward a stalemate with one of the most controversial and stubborn men in the history of the Cherokees, John Ross, the chief of the tribe.

2

By this time, John Ross was an old man of seventy-two. According to his detractors, he could not properly call himself a Cherokee at all, since the only trace of Indian blood flowing through his veins came from the union of his Scotch father with a quarter-blood Cherokee woman. Ross was a small man, extremely shrewd, an expert politician, and he seemed to go to great lengths to live down his Indian heritage. At Park Hill, four miles from the Cherokee capitol at Tahlequah, he had built a mansion to which he gave the modestly inappropriate name of "Rose Cottage." His "cottage" was a massive house with a pillared portico and room enough to accommodate forty guests in its battery of bedrooms. A wide, sweeping driveway stretched away from the house for half a mile with a

tall border of roses flanking it. From his master bedroom, Ross could look out over his vast fields and his empire of a hundred slaves, or he could relax in the overstuffed furniture shipped from the East at a cost of ten thousand dollars.

He had been chief of the Cherokees since 1828, and his fortune was all the more remarkable in that it had been accumulated during the turbulent years of Indian removal, in a time when most Cherokees found it difficult to stay alive. He had been tempered by so many intertribal battles that he was fearless, sheltered from a possible assassin by a large number of personal troops. He had acquired his political acumen in long years of negotiations with the federal government and had learned the useful political trick of so tying up a negotiation with a vast exchange of letters, so occupying his opponent with veritable reams of correspondence that John Ross was given time to think and plan his strategy.

Now, with Pike approaching the capital, obviously seeking an alliance, Ross decided on a course of action from which he would not be swerved. The Cherokees were an independent nation, and there was no reason why they should not remain that way. Under treaty obligations, the United States still owed the Cherokees five million dollars. If Ross allowed his people to be swayed by Pike to the point of joining the Confederacy, this considerable sum would be forfeited. Because the average Indian knew nothing about finance or the delicate art of neutrality, Ross was aware that he would have to stand firm against his own followers as well as against his opponents. But he was a hard man and he was chief of the Cherokees and he would not yield. The Cherokees would remain neutral.

Pike's only hope, as his mud-splattered procession wound through the hills toward Tahlequah, was to use the anti-Ross faction of the tribe to apply enough pressure on the old chief to bring him around. If Pike could gain enough popular support for the Confederacy from the Cherokee people, Ross would be forced to listen, for the threat of revolution was ever present in the Cherokee Nation. Any further outside pressures were useless. Though Ross had been bombarded by letters and personal appeals delivered by prominent southerners, including the governor of Arkansas and General McCulloch himself, he had not wavered in his position.

Dealing with a very old man like Ross was complicated by the

fact of age itself. At seventy-two, Ross had achieved his personal ambitions; he had gone as far as he could go. He was the head of his tribe; his fortune was such that he could not be tempted by money. He wanted nothing more than a preservation of the status quo.

But Stand Watie, leader of the anti-Ross faction, was the old man's antithesis, a younger man with a burning ambition and a strong desire to unseat Ross as head of the tribe. He had been born Stand Oowatie, but on reaching maturity he had dropped the double-o from his family name. This was the only concession he had made to the Anglicized world. In rebellion against everything the dapper, cultivated Ross stood for, Stand Watie had gone to the other extreme, cultivating his Indian appearance, letting his hair grow long to accentuate his Indian features, the broad face and flat nose and wide mouth. So that the white man would be encouraged to think of him as an Indian, Stand Watie gave his daughter a name easily identifiable with all things Indian in the white man's mind, calling her Minnehaha after the heroine of Longfellow's poem.

Pike was not deceived by the calculated masquerade. Stand Watie might look like a primitive, but behind the mask he had a sharp political mind to rival that of any eastern politician. From his talks with the Cherokee delegation in Fort Smith, Pike assumed he could count on Stand Watie's support. But at the moment, Stand Watie's following numbered only six or seven thousand, considerably less than the eleven thousand followers of Ross.

As Pike's party clattered into the streets of Tahlequah, it was given an enthusiastic reception by the Indians who lined the streets to get a glimpse of the famous man they had heard so much about. But Pike's official reception was considerably more restrained. Ross was hospitable, recalling the pleasant party Pike had arranged for his daughters in Little Rock many years before, but his geniality was strictly social. When it came time for the treaty talks to begin, Pike was loquacious, persuasive, eloquent in his arguments for the alliance. General McCulloch sat back suspiciously, convinced from the beginning that the meeting was a waste of time. John Ross listened in polite silence, but was stonily unresponsive to anything Pike said. He would agree to nothing. The Cherokees had plenty of time and would not rush into any treaty. They would wait to see how the Confederacy fared against the Union. By the time the conference

was over, nothing had changed. Ross was still adamant in his determination to keep the Cherokees neutral.

Angry at Ross, McCulloch returned to Fort Smith and considered sending his troops into the Cherokee Nation to make sure the old man remained neutral, for he was convinced that Ross was stalling and that he had already made up his mind to make a military alliance with the Union and was only waiting for a more propitious time to announce his decision. But McCulloch could not afford to take the chance. In a letter to the Confederate Secretary of War, written on June 12th, he announced his decision to place his troops in strategic positions along the Cherokee border, ready for an immediate invasion should the occasion arise. He could not go further than this at the moment, for any threat against Ross would precipitate the Cherokee Nation into the Union camp immediately, and there was the possibility that McCulloch had been mistaken in his estimate of Ross' intentions.

Sending his military escort back to Fort Smith, Pike moved out of Tahlequah on June 6th, accompanied by a force of Cherokee guards, fuming at the stubbornness of the old chief. The decision of the Cherokees to remain neutral would undoubtedly influence the impending talks with the Creeks and the Seminoles, thus making Pike's job even more difficult.

The weather was miserably hot as Pike's retinue followed the military road west to Fort Gibson, fording the Arkansas below the mouth of the Grand River, then turning west again along the south bank to move toward North Fork Village and a meeting with the Creeks. There was no relief from the heat, even at night, and during the days Pike choked on a fine red dust kicked up by the horses. Too, the column was plagued by swarms of biting flies that kept the men irritated and drew blood from the horses. Pike was in a peevish mood by the time he rode into the Creek village.

A delegation of Choctaws and Chickasaws was waiting for him, so anxious to display their zeal toward the Confederacy that they had come here to intercept him rather than wait until he came to them. But Pike could give them little time at the moment, for in his first conference with the Creeks he ran into a dangerous complication he had not foreseen. The log council house was only half filled, and the only Creeks present were the followers of Principal Chief Moty Kinnard, who represented the Lower Creeks, and Icho

Hacho, First Chief of the Upper Creeks. The news they had for Pike was all bad.

A short time before Pike reached the village, a Cherokee rider had stormed into the settlement, carrying an urgent message from John Ross to Opothleyehola, urging the eighty-year-old Creek patriarch to remain neutral and advising him of the Cherokee decision. But this was not the worst of it. Even now a delegation of Creeks and Cherokees was riding westward to meet the Plains tribes near the Antelope Hills in an attempt to secure their neutrality.

Once again, Pike jumped to the wrong conclusion. It is probable that Ross was trying to protect his own position of neutrality, for if the rest of the tribes decided to ally themselves with the Confederacy, the neutral Cherokees would be surrounded by a sea of hostile pressures. But Pike did not perceive this strategy, and instead leaped to the conclusion that Ross was trying to take advantage of the War Between the States to form a "great independent Indian Confederation" to rival both the North and the South, a powerful political group which Ross himself would head. Reporting this development to Richmond, Pike accelerated his schedule, determined to conclude his treaties before Ross could organize the tribes.

Insisting that there was no time to waste, Pike decided to conclude a treaty with the members of the Creek Council who were present. Kinnard and Hacho were reluctant. They had no power to speak for the whole tribe and they would prefer to wait until the Creeks came back from the Antelope Hills before they signed anything; but Pike's arguments were buttressed by the support of an influential Creek named Chilly McIntosh, and at last the chiefs capitulated. A treaty was drawn up and signed. There was no haggling over terms. The Creeks were guaranteed that all monies owed them by the United States would be paid by the Confederacy. The Confederacy would defend the Creeks in case of attack.

Only when the Creek treaty was concluded did Pike turn to the patient Choctaws and Chickasaws, who needed no coaxing. Anticipating the treaty, they had already issued a draft call for all able-bodied men to report for military training. Even though the Choctaws and Chickasaws were quite willing to sign, it was the middle of July before Pike was ready to move on to the Seminoles. As his wagons were being loaded, the Cherokee warriors who had

come this far with him announced that they were going home, afraid that any further association with Pike would lead to trouble with John Ross. To replace them, Moty Kinnard and Chilly McIntosh volunteered to lead a mounted escort of Creeks to help persuade the Seminoles.

Moving at a feverish pace now, Pike followed the Military Road to Fort Washita and then angled along the Washita River Road to Fort Arbuckle, where he turned north to make his way into the Seminole Nation. Ross' messenger had been there before him, and the town chiefs were already arguing the issue. Because Pike could see that any unanimous agreement among them was impossible, he entered into a treaty with the southern sympathizers in the Seminole Tribe. About a dozen town chiefs, including Billy Bowlegs and Alligator, refused to have anything to do with Pike, insisting that the Seminoles were not going to join either side in the present controversy.

The leader of the southern sympathizers was an influential chief named John Jumper, a full blood who was so impressed with southern gentlemen that he tried to live like one, even in the primitive conditions prevailing in the Seminole country. He assured Pike that the treaty would be binding, and to show how cooperative his people were he recruited a band of horsemen to join Pike in his trek to the Plains tribes.

Once again the Confederate procession moved on, traversing the northern edges of the country Pike had explored on foot thirty years earlier, emerging from the ragged belt of cross timbers into the sweltering prairie country where the grass was parched and yellowed by the heat of the burning sun. The treaty party was considerably larger now than it had been on its departure from Fort Smith. Pike had three Confederate aides (not including his son Walter), Faulkner, Johnson, and Quesenbury and a bevy of men experienced in Indian affairs: Superintendent Rector, Samuel M. Rutherford, a Seminole agent; an Indian merchant named Charles Johnson, an experienced interpreter from the Creeks named James M. C. Smith. Jesse Chisholm, a trader and interpreter known to all the Plains tribes, joined the force later. John Jumper and Chilly McIntosh were in personal command of the mounted escort.

Pike proceeded to the Wichita Agency, a desolate collection of wooden buildings and brush huts just south of the barren granite

range known as the Wichita Mountains and sixty miles west of Fort Arbuckle. An arbor had been erected for the ceremonies, a framework of trees with leafy branches thrown over the top to provide shelter from a relentless sun. As Pike's party arrived and dismounted, the Indians came out of the brush, walking single file and forming a semicircle as Pike and his men approached. The informal tone of the conferences to follow was set by this first encounter as Pike's men shook hands with the Indians and then were invited to exchange bear hugs.

As Pike describes it: "The Superintendent (after exchanging bear hugs with a chief) said afterwards it was like being squeezed in a cotton press. Then the fellow challenged me, and I found the Major's simile just; but being myself pretty strong, and heavier than the jester, I returned his hug with interest, which avenged the Major by forcing the Indian to explode with a vehement grunt, welcomed by the universal laughter and jeers of his fellows."

It was apparent from the beginning that any agreement with these wild aborigines could be nothing more than tentative, effective only as long as payments and gifts were forthcoming, but even a partial relief from the raids on the Texas border would be better than nothing. He phrased his speech to the Indians in simple terms, and as he talked a half-dozen interpreters made a simultaneous translation of his words, but it is doubtful that any of the Indians listened to anything he said. As soon as Pike started talking, one old chief promptly fell asleep, leaving his bare and callused feet exposed in front of him. Shortly, another Indian began tickling the old man's feet and jabbing at them with a long, spiny thorn. The rest of the Indians, highly amused, turned away from Pike to this more interesting spectacle, laughing uproariously, prompting Pike to write: "They are merry fellows enough, among themselves, and fond of rough practical jokes."

The speech was followed by a feast, and Pike gave beeves to the Indians which they roasted over open fires and ate half raw. Pike himself enjoyed a more sophisticated fare from a stock of groceries which included canned corn, green peaches, asparagus, salmon, oysters, pineapple, sardines and lobster, a half-dozen bottles of Schnapps, a couple of bottles of Worcestershire sauce, and, in case this diet proved too rich at times, a plentiful supply of castor oil.

Following the feast, the prepared treatics were read and the Indians adjourned to discuss them.

The discussion did not take long, and once the councils were over, the chiefs marched forward to touch the pen and make their marks on a treaty paper. The social events continued as the Indians sat around swapping stories. Later, Pike recalled a vivid picture of a Comanche chief, naked except for a single dirty blanket, squatting on a buffalo robe and listening to a Creek chief tell a long story. There was only one brief fight, an altercation which occurred when the Seminoles discovered that the Comanches had ridden to this peace meeting on horses they had stolen from the Seminoles two years earlier. Pike broke up the argument before it reached the point of bloodshed, used the occasion to deliver a brief lecture on the evils of stealing, and invoked the power of the Confederacy to resolve the dispute. The horses were returned to the Seminoles, and Pike promised the unhappy Comanches that the Confederacy would reimburse them for the loss of the purloined livestock.

By the time Pike had concluded the treaty with the Plains Indians, he was exhausted, and anxious to get back to Arkansas. Before he could start, however, he was stricken with cramps from drinking gyp water, a sickness so severe that he had to be transported back to the Wichita Agency. Despite the pain and an overwhelming desire for rest, Pike still had one thing to do. Each time he concluded a treaty, he wrote a letter to John Ross informing him of the fact. And now he would not let the sickness cheat him of the most triumphant communication of all, the announcement that the Plains tribes were now allied with the Confederacy. He summoned an aide and dictated a letter, and it was only when he saw the dispatch rider on his way to the Cherokee Nation that he was content to rest.

3

Pike's letters were having their effect on John Ross, for the old chief could see his position becoming more untenable by the moment. As he followed the progress of the Civil War in the East, Ross could see little hope for a Union victory, for all of the news was bad in the summer of 1861. In July the Rebels overran the Yankees at Bull Run, a decisive victory according to all reports.

Closer home, the Union army had been beaten in the battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri and the federal troops were retreating north as fast as their weary horses could carry them.

With the Yankee defeats being acclaimed by the southern sympathizers among the Cherokees, Ross could see that it was only a matter of time before the ground swell would become strong enough to wrench the leadership of the nation from his grasp. Stand Watie had already had the effrontery to organize a battalion of Cherokee troops under the Confederate banner, and there was nothing Ross could do to stop him.

If the South defeated the North, the Cherokee Nation would be forced to sign a treaty with the Confederacy on any terms the Confederacy wished to dictate. The five million dollars owed the Cherokees by the Union would be lost in any event, unless John Ross could make a hasty reversal in his position and conclude a treaty with the South before he lost his bargaining power. Accordingly, he summoned the Cherokee Executive Committee and called for a mass meeting to be held in Tahlequah on August 21st, a date that was to prove ironic, for it was on the same day that Ross' delayed mission to the Plains tribes finally met with them in the Antelope Hills.

At the mass meeting, Ross delivered a speech delineating his new position. "Since the last meeting of the Cherokee Council," he said, "events have occurred that will occupy a prominent place in the history of the world. The United States have been dissolved and two governments now exist. Twelve of the states composing the late Union have erected themselves into a government under the style of the Confederate States of America, and, as you know, are now engaged in a war for their independence. The contest this far has been attended with success almost uninterrupted on their side and marked by brilliant victories. Of its final result there seems to be no grounds for reasonable doubt."

Once his mind was made up, Ross wasted no time. He drafted a letter to Pike, written in the name of the Cherokee Council, asking Pike in formally phrased language to "repair" to the Cherokee Nation for a treaty conference. Then he sent the letter with a messenger, instructing him to find Pike and deliver the invitation as soon as possible.

At the moment, a vitiated Pike was slowly making his way toward

Fort Arbuckle, having been nursed back to health by Jesse Chisholm and a Comanche chief named Tosawi. When the messenger from Ross rode up, Pike called a halt to the column while he read the letter. Elated, he dictated a reply in equally formal language, setting a date for the meeting in the first week in October and asking Ross to advise the Osages, Quapaws, Senecas, and confederated Senecas and Shawnees to come to Tahlequah at the same time. The letter was given to the messenger, who rode back to Ross without delay while Pike changed his course to ride toward the Cherokee Nation.

His exuberance was boundless by the time he reached Fort Gibson and watched the eight companies of Cherokee troops under Colonel John Drew fall into line as a military escort to accompany him to Tahlequah. Never one to overlook an opportunity for display, Pike pitched his tent camp within sight of Ross' mansion and ran up a Confederate flag dotted with a red star for each of the treaties he had concluded so far, a vivid reminder to the little Scotsman that the Cherokee Nation was about to be isolated by its neighbors.

The negotiations took place in one of the log council houses on the Tahlequah square, with Pike warming himself at the oversized brick fireplace while he went through the formalities of the treaties with the Osages, the Quapaws, the Senecas, and the Shawnees, watching the chiefs come to the table one by one to make their marks on the paper. The treaty with the Cherokees was delayed to the end of the week, for Ross was proving to be a shrewd and stubborn negotiator, refusing to be pressured, going over each of the fifty-five articles of the treaty to give the Cherokees every possible advantage. There was no argument. Anxious to complete his business and get back to Arkansas, Pike granted any demand that Ross made. On October 7th Ross finally picked up the pen and affixed his signature to the treaty, and the Cherokee Nation officially allied itself with the Confederacy.

The preamble to the treaty is interesting because it outlines, in general terms, the basis for all the Indian treaties negotiated by Pike:

"The Congress of the Confederate States of America having, by an 'Act for the protection of certain Indian tribes,' approved the 21st day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight

hundred and sixty-one, offered to assume and accept the protectorate of the several nations and tribes of Indians occupying the country west of Arkansas and Missouri, and to recognize them as their wards, subject to all the rights, privileges, immunities, titles and guarantees with each of the said nations under treaties made with them by the United States of America; and the Cherokee Nation of Indians having assented thereto upon certain terms and conditions; Now, therefore, the said Confederate States of America, by Albert Pike, their commissioner, constituted by the President, under authority of the act of Congress in that behalf, with plenary powers for these purposes, and the Cherokee Nation by the principal chief, executive council, and commissioners aforesaid, have agreed to the following articles . . ."

From Ross' point of view, the treaty was an excellent one, and he defended it vigorously against the attacks made by members of the Union faction of the tribe who felt that he had sold out to the Confederacy. It was a far better treaty than any of the pacts signed with the United States, Ross declared, for the Confederacy had made concessions which the Union agents had continually refused to discuss.

For instance, the Confederacy had agreed never to enter into any compact, treaty, or agreement with the Cherokees except with the constitutional authority of the nation. No longer could one rebellious subchief be bribed into betraying the rest of the tribe. The Cherokees now had the right to approve the Indian agents assigned to them. A Cherokee could now own land in any state of the Confederacy, a token concession perhaps, but a psychological comfort to a people who had been driven out of the South thirty years earlier. The Cherokees would have a delegate in the Confederate Congress. A general amnesty was declared for all citizens of the Cherokee Nation accused of crimes in the southern states.

What was more important, the new alliance would cost the Cherokees nothing. Their men would not be called on to fight unless they were invaded, and in this event the Confederate armies would be there to help them. No Confederate troops would be stationed on Cherokee soil except for a few white officers to command the garrisons and supervise the training programs.

Ross defended the treaty with such zeal and campaigned with

such fervor on behalf of the South that Pike was convinced that Ross had been converted. Pike wrote to the War Department that Ross was now "sincerely devoted to the cause of the Confederacy."

It seemed that this was true. At a public ceremony, in front of the assembled troops of Stand Watie's battalion and Colonel John Drew's regiment, Ross handed Pike a Cherokee flag, and Pike, in return, presented him with a Confederate banner. Then Ross, with great dignity, shook hands with Stand Watie to dramatize the settlement of the difficulties between them. Then, trying to counteract the trouble he had caused for Pike while treaty negotiations were in progress with the other tribes, Ross sent an assistant chief of the Cherokees to talk to Opothleyehola, hoping to persuade the ancient Creek to support the Confederacy. Pike added an extra incentive, promising to make the old Indian a colonel if the Creeks followed the Cherokee precedent. But Opothleyehola refused to meet with the Cherokee messenger, and turned away with bitter eyes.

Despite the fervor that Ross now displayed for the southern cause, his heart was not in it. In later years, after Ross had moved east to spend the few remaining years of his life, a friend would ask him if he had really meant to make a permanent alliance with the Confederacy. And, taking a moment to collect his thoughts, Ross would answer with a parable. "We are in the position of a man standing alone upon a low, naked spot of ground," he would say, "with the water rising rapidly around him. He sees the danger and knows not what to do. If he remains where he is, his only alternative is to be swept away and perish. The tide carries by him, in its mad course, a drifting log; it, perchance, comes within reach of him. By refusing it he is a doomed man. By seizing hold of it he has a chance for life. He can but perish in the effort, and may be able to keep his head above water until rescued, or drift where he can help himself."

But in the fall of 1861, Ross was quite confident of an ultimate victory for the Confederacy, so much so that he allowed himself to be persuaded to sign an incredible document contradicting many of the provisions of the treaty he had just concluded. This paper was a "Declaration of Independence," drafted by Pike in the three weeks after the official treaty conference ended.

It begins with a paraphrase of the American Declaration of Independence: "When circumstance beyond their control compel one

people to sever the ties which have long existed . . ." Once the formal language and a brief history of relations between the Cherokees and the Union are concluded, the invective begins. The Union is accused of "violating the constitution" and disregarding "all rules of civilized warfare. . . . Foreign mercenaries and the scum of cities and the inmates of prison were enlisted and organized into brigades and sent into the Southern States to aid in subjugating a people struggling for freedom, to burn, to plunder, and to commit the basest of outrages on the women. . . . The war now waging is a war of Northern cupidity and fanaticism against the institution of African servitude . . . against the commercial freedom of the South." This unusual document ends by declaring the Cherokees "a free people, independent of the Northern States of America, and at war with them by their own act."

On October 28th the Cherokee National Committee adopted the declaration. Pike was exhausted, but he could not afford to relax for there was too much to be done and his personal responsibility was now too great. On October 14th Pike was given his reward when he was handed a commission making him a Brigadier General in the Provisional Army of the Confederate States. On November 22, 1861, he was given his command:

"SPECIAL ORDERS
"No. 234

ADJT. AND INSP. GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Richmond, Va., November 22, 1861

. . . . . .

"7. The Indian country west of Arkansas and north of Texas is constituted the Department of Indian Territory, and Brig. Gen. Albert Pike, Provisional Army, is assigned to the command of the same. The troops of this department will consist of the several Indian regiments raised or yet to be raised within the limits of the department.

. . . . . .

"JNO. WITHERS
"Assistant Adjutant-General"

ELEVEN

PORTRAIT OF A RELUCTANT GENERAL

In later years, Pike would rail bitterly against the day he had accepted command of Indian Territory. "I only consented to take the damned command," he would write, "because I had made the treaties, felt personally responsible for the security of the country here, and knew it was supposed I could manage better with the Indians than anyone else. . . ."

From the very beginning, things went wrong, and Pike soon found that his major battles would not be fought against the Union armies in the field but against the often confused and always slow workings of the Confederate government in Richmond. Rushing to Fort Smith after the Cherokee conferences, Pike found that only part of the money the Confederate government promised him had arrived and he was forced to make excuses to the sixty-four men he had hired to accompany him on the journey. They would be paid later, as would the majority of the merchants who had supplied his trek on credit.

Money was not the only thing Pike had to worry about. The Creek Nation was about to explode into civil war with the widening of the conflict between the recalcitrant old Opothleyehola and Pike's friend D. N. McIntosh. Unable to take time to go back to the Creek Nation, Pike sent Douglas H. Cooper, former agent for the Choctaws and Chickasaws and now a colonel in charge of mobilization for these tribes, to see if he could settle the dispute peacefully.

From Fort Smith, Pike paused in Little Rock for a brief visit with his family and then dashed on to Richmond to push for the ratification of the treaties he had made with the Indians and to organize the military structure of his new command. If he was to prove a

poor general in the field, he was a masterful administrator; at a time when generals were fuming over the lack of arms and provisions in the Confederacy, Pike displayed an uncanny ability to get what he wanted.

At first, he asked only for an extension of his command, amplifying his request in a letter to Secretary of War J. P. Benjamin on November 27, 1861: "I wish to organize a force in the Indian country that may constitute a respectable command," he declares after stating that he can put 7,500 Indian troops in the field. "I am not desirous to be merely a general of Indians, because a force of 3,000 or 4,000 irregular mounted troops is only of value when sustained by infantry and artillery. Moreover, to hold the Indian country against the force that will be thrown into it in the spring, if it do not come there to winter, two or three important points must be strengthened by the field works, only to be constructed by infantry, but which the Indian rifles will efficiently aid in defending. It is important that our Indians should have our troops by their side, that they may not conclude that they are fighting for us only and not equally for themselves.

"Provisions are cheap in the Indian country and forage and fuel are cheap. It is highly desirable to organize there such a force as may not only suffice to defend the country on its western and northern frontiers, but as may be able and ready to render efficient aid to the officer to whom the conduct of the operation in Missouri may be instrusted. To do this, I request authority to receive into the service an additional force of Indians, if they offer themselves with arms, or as soon as I may have arms for them, not to exceed, with those already in service, 7,500 men. A part of this force I propose to place at the posts near Red River, and at new posts to be selected on the western and northern Indian frontier, and to require the utmost economy on the part of their quartermaster and commissaries."

Pike continued by asking that one of the Arkansas regiments already in service be assigned to his command and that another Arkansas regiment be authorized to supplement it. Pike also asked authority to receive two companies of artillery, and stated that he already had guns to furnish them. And now, to conclude his letter, Pike made a statement that would haunt him later: "United with infantry and artillery the Indians will prove valuable auxilliaries.

A force in the Indian country, little encumbered with wagons and always ready to move, will be as available for offensive or defensive operations in Kansas or Missouri as if stationed in Northwestern Arkansas or wintering in the valley of the Arkansas River."

Benjamin answered his letter on December 2nd, heartily approving all of Pike's plans with but one qualification, that Pike must provide all of his new troops with arms, for the Confederacy had none available.

Pike immediately sent men to begin construction of Cantonment Davis, a crude stockade on the south side of the Arkansas River opposite the mouth of the Grand, a central location he intended to use as a headquarters. Too, he hoped to conclude his business in Richmond momentarily so he could get back to the Indian Territory to negotiate with Kiowas and a band of Comanches he had missed on his earlier trip, but so great was the press of business that he found it impossible. In the first place, the Confederate Congress was still haggling over some of the terms Pike had included in the treaties, attaching to them certain amendments that would require the ratification of the Indian tribes before Pike could pay out the monies due them. This complication prompted John Ross to begin a customary barrage of complaining letters pressing for immediate payment of the Cherokee treaty money, especially that part of it authorized to redeem the scrip Ross held in such quantity. Irritated by Ross' stream of letters, Pike was also angered by the inefficiency of the Confederate quartermaster in Fort Smith and was sidetracked from more important business to attack the exorbitant meat contracts, which paid 6½¢ a pound for beef on the hoof and 15¢ a pound for bacon.

Too, while Pike was fighting a hundred minor battles in Richmond, fretting at the interminable delays that kept him from the field, the dispute in the Creek Nation threatened to grow into a holocaust that would consume the whole of Indian Territory.

2

Colonel Douglas H. Cooper was a conscientious man with considerable experience in resolving disputes between opposing factions of a tribe. But as he rode into the Creek Nation to mediate between D. N. McIntosh and Opothleyehola, he soon discovered that any

conciliation was impossible. The dispute had grown beyond the bounds of a personal disagreement, and the old chief had become the nucleus of a new and potentially dangerous force.

At best, the Indian mobilization for the Confederacy was never very successful. Of all the regiments recruited from the Indian nations, only the Cherokees under Stand Watie measured up to any military standard as disciplined soldiers. Colonel John Drew's home guards had been absorbed by the two regiments in the Cherokee Nation raised by General McCulloch, but these men were to prove better at display than at fighting. The rest of the recruiting efforts in the Indian country turned up only a ragged, ill-trained, bobtailed handful of troops who were unused to discipline, openly rebellious much of the time, and convinced that their own irregular tactics were superior to those of any organized army.

Recruiting efforts were further hampered by the strong Union sentiment still existing among the Creeks, the Seminoles, and the Cherokees. Through the fall of 1861, a large number of these loyalists packed all their belongings and fled toward Kansas, where they hoped to get help from the Union armies there.

An even greater number of Indians, still loyal to the Union, confused by the rapid succession of events, not knowing where to go or what to do, followed the ancient tribal instinct of seeking a leader to deliver them. They streamed into the Creek Nation to camp near the aged Opothleyehola's house and wait for him to decide what was best for them. They came by the hundreds, packing their goods in oxcarts, their babies on their backs, driving their livestock ahead of them, pitching their tents, waiting patiently for someone to tell them what to do. At night the campfires flickered in the fields and the men danced and chanted stories of ancient heroism while new bands of Seminole refugees, led by Billy Bowlegs and Alligator, arrived to pitch their tents and join the dancing.

Looking at the Indian camps, Colonel Cooper became uneasy. At the moment these refugees seemed content to wait, but the grass for their livestock was rapidly being exhausted, the people were already hungry, and the time was not far off when this band of discontents would become a potentially dangerous mob. Colonel D. N. McIntosh's newly organized Creek regiment would not be strong enough to hold them. It was possible that Opothleyehola might have enough force concentrated here to overthrow the Confederate

sympathizers in the Creek Nation. It was equally possible that the infectious rebellion would spread to the neighboring nations, and perhaps the whole of the Indian country would be lost to the South.

Faced with all these possibilities, Colonel Cooper decided to act. He did not clear this decision with Pike, for Pike was unavailable (although later Pike would assume responsibility for Cooper's actions and imply that he had authorized him to move against the Indians). He decided to attack. "Having exhausted every means in my power to procure an interview with Hopoeithleyohola," he wrote to the Secretary of War, "for the purpose of effecting a peaceful settlement of the difficulties existing between his party and the constituted authorities of the Creek Nation, finding that my written overtures, made through several of the leading captains, were treated with silence, if not contempt, by him, and having received positive evidence that he had been for a considerable length of time in correspondence, if not alliance, with the Federal authorities in Kansas, I resolved to advance upon him with the forces under my command, and either compel submission to the authorities of the nation or drive him and his party from the country."

Cooper, estimating that Opothleyehola had a fighting force of "800 to 1,200 Creeks and Seminoles and 200 to 300 negroes" with him, hesitated to move immediately, preferring to wait until he could have a superiority of numbers to throw against the loyalists. It was the 15th of November before he was ready to move and the last of his units had joined his force. In all, he now had about 1,400 men with him, consisting of six companies of the First Regiment, Choctaw and Chickasaw Mounted Rifles; a detachment of the Ninth Regiment, Texas Cavalry, under Lieutenant Colonel Quayle; the Creek Regiment, under Colonel D. N. McIntosh; and the Creek and Seminole Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Chilly McIntosh and Major John Jumper.

When Cooper made his first attack on Opothleyehola's camp in the Deep Fork of the Canadian River, his troops charged into an empty field, for the mere threat of a battle had been enough to send Opothleyehola and his refugees streaming toward Kansas. At this point Cooper could have scored a psychological victory for the Confederacy by letting this flood of destitute people descend on Union officials in Kansas, who would not be prepared to take care of

them. But Cooper could not have known of this possibility. He had set out to destroy Opothleyehola, and he would pursue this course with dogged and relentless determination.

Opothleyehola's force, slowed down by heavily laden oxcarts and herds of livestock driven by the fleeing families, moved very slowly and Cooper had no trouble tracking him, skirmishing with his rear guard and capturing prisoners from the refugees who had fallen behind. From these captives, Cooper gleaned enough information to convince him that the old man had a prearranged plan to his flight: to follow the Red Fork of the Arkansas on Walnut Creek to a place where a fort was being built to shelter him until Union reinforcements could arrive from Kansas. If the old man did have such an eventual destination, he did not show it. He seemed to be wandering rather aimlessly, moving toward the Big Bend of the Arkansas toward the northeast, prompted to change his course by a vague offer of hospitality made by a Cherokee who lived in that region.

The first battle took place on the night of November 19th, on the Red Fork of the Arkansas. At the cost of a very few casualties, Cooper routed the old man's forces in a brief and savage fight, killing and wounding 110 of the enemy (according to Cooper's estimate) before he pulled back to resume the battle at dawn. The next morning Cooper found Opothleyehola's position deserted. The old chief had fled under cover of darkness, leaving behind a large part of the supplies he so desperately needed: "12 wagons, flour, sugar, coffee, salt &c., besides many cattle and ponies."

Following this battle, Cooper was taken off Opothleyehola's trail for a while and directed by General McCulloch to move his forces to the Arkansas line, anticipating a move to the south by the Union army in Missouri. This attack did not materialize, and Cooper was back in the field against the old chief by November 29th, stirred up by rumors that Opothleyehola now had a force of 2,000 men and was preparing for an offensive. Reinforced with Colonel Drew's regiment of Cherokees, Cooper tracked the loyalist force to the brushy hills around Bird's Creek and sent Colonel Drew and his men to propose a conference with Opothleyehola for the next day.

There are two versions of what happened next, but the end result is the same in both and only the interpretation of the motives involved differs. In Cooper's official report of the incident, he explains

it this way: "Major Pegg, of the Cherokee regiment, was sent [to request a conference with Opothleyehola] and I proceeded to camp about 2 miles below Colonel Drew, on the same creek. Much to my surprise, about 7 o'clock at night several members of Colonel Drew's regiment came to my camp with the information that Major Pegg had returned without being able to reach Hopoeithleyohola, who was surrounded by his warriors, several thousand in number, all painted for the fight, and that an attack would be made upon me that night; that the Cherokee regiment, panic-stricken, had dispersed, leaving their tents standing, and in many instances, even their horses and guns."

Other sources draw a different picture of the Cherokee defection, stating that most of Drew's men were secretly loyal to the Union and that the sight of the ragged refugees aroused such sympathy in them that they deserted in a mass and fled to Kansas. This latter account is not likely. The Cherokees would not have left their horses and weapons behind on such a flight to Kansas. Too, the pattern of this panic of unseasoned Indian troops under fire would be duplicated again later when Albert Pike led them against the Union armies in northwestern Arkansas.

When Cooper got word that the Cherokees had deserted, he ordered the rest of his men to dig in, expecting an immediate attack from Opothleyehola. All night the forward pickets waited watchfully, ready to sound the alarm. As dawn came and no attack materialized, Cooper roused his troops and sent them into the hills to flush the enemy and force a fight. The skirmishes lasted all day; the hand-to-hand fighting was savage and once again Opothleyehola's men broke and ran. Only the coming of darkness saved them from complete annihilation.

During December the weather turned icy; the water in the creeks crusted over and then froze solid and a cold wind whistled down from the north, glazing the barren hills with sleet. Cooper was anxious to continue the pursuit and finish the rout he had started, but once again he was called off the scent as General McCulloch reorganized his forces in the Indian Territory. As Cooper dropped back, Stand Watie and his Cherokee regiment took up the chase, anxious to prove that all Cherokees were not cowards. Relentlessly, Stand Watie and his men pursued Opothleyehola's ragged army like wolves after a deer. Unable to catch the main force (which was

fleeing in complete disorder now), Stand Watie contented himself with the stragglers, a wagon too slow to escape, a group of frightened people hiding in the trees, too exhausted to run any farther. Practically all of the prisoners taken were women and children, who were rooted out and sent back south. The fighting was infrequent, occurring only when Stand Watie's men ran across straggling warriors who preferred to fight and die rather than be captured.

Many of Opothleyehola's band escaped Stand Watie only to be defeated by a much more relentless adversary, the bleak cold of a midwestern winter. When their supplies were exhausted and the last ounce of food eaten, they killed and ate their bony horses. Dozens froze to death during the night camps; even more awoke to find their hands and feet frozen. In the agony of despair from which there could be no relief, many of the women killed their children rather than see them freeze to death.

Some of the refugees reached Kansas to suffer the cruelest fate of all. The United States Commissioner, E. H. Carruth, had sent letters to all the tribes, asking for delegates to confer with Union officials in Kansas, promising: "I am authorized to inform you that the President will not forget you." But Carruth had expected only a man or two from each tribe, and now he received a flood of starving, frozen Indians who camped near the Union forces in Kansas and asked for relief when there was no relief to be had. The soldiers themselves had few blankets and were subsisting on short rations; nothing could be spared for the Indians. Scores of refugees froze to death, huddled in crude shelters made from tree branches. The Union army surgeon was kept busy amputating frozen feet and hands. (Later he estimated that he had removed more than a hundred limbs). There was no forage for the Indian ponies brought to Kansas, and they starved to death. Their carcasses dotted the prairie and lay like dams across the frozen creeks.

The scores of dying Indians around the army camps constituted the worst possible kind of propaganda, and the Union army tried to get supplies for the refugees, sending urgent appeals to Washington. The government in Washington sympathized with the plight of the Indians and did its best to remedy the situation, but government action, no matter how well intentioned, has never been immediate. The decision to aid the Indians could not be made by a single

individual; the project had to be discussed by committees and ratified by various officials, and when the relief supplies were finally authorized there were transportation difficulties to be solved. It was spring before the Union got around to doing anything to alleviate the suffering.

There was considerable bitterness among the refugees, and as the story of their plight circulated through the Indian nations further loyalist defections came to a virtual standstill. The secret loyalists might pray for a Union victory, but now they knew they could expect no material aid from an army so ill equipped that it allowed its allies to freeze to death.

3

On Christmas Day, Pike was still in Richmond, growing more and more frustrated as day after day passed with no appreciable change in the political situation in the Confederate Capital. Pike had hoped to be back in Indian Territory by now to take personal command of the Indian forces and to keep them from falling apart. The desertion of Drew's men had left him apprehensive; it could be a prelude to a more widespread defection. To expedite matters, he wrote another long letter to Secretary of War Benjamin, vastly different in tone from the confident letter he had written late in November, complaining about the inefficiency on the part of his superiors that had plagued his efforts from the beginning.

Pike had authorized the enlistment of Creek and Choctaw regiments in August and another Cherokee regiment in October, but, lacking the cooperation of the Fort Smith quartermaster, these troops were almost useless: ". . . it was a long time before Colonel Cooper's regiment was even partially armed. No arms were furnished the others; no pay was provided for any of them, and with the exception of a partial supply for the Choctaw regiment, no tents, clothing, or camp and garrison equippage was furnished to any of them."

Pike implied that the trouble with Opothleyehola could have been avoided, for Pike had raised a company of Creeks at North Fork Village to keep an eye on the old man and had authorized the Seminoles to raise a battalion to keep down the discontents in that nation. Once this was done he had notified the Fort Smith quartermaster and sent a letter to the War Department concerning these

new troops, "but no steps were ever taken to muster them into the service or to pay them." The sixty-four men Pike had hired to accompany him on his western trip had been discharged in late September, and now, almost three months later, he said, "They still continue unpaid, Treasury notes having been sent out to pay them within the last two weeks." All of these incidents had had a very unfavorable effect on the Indians.

"I do not mention these circumstances by way of complaint or fault-finding, but that the Secretary of War may comprehend the reasons that have gone so far to produce not only discontent, but suspicion and mistrust, among the Indians. Added to the unavoidable delay in completing the treaties and the additional delays in procuring their ratification and the transmission of the moneys due under the treaties, the circumstances that I have mentioned have not unnaturally produced the impression that what I have done amounts to nothing; that the Government does not sanction what I have done, and that it has not the men or the means to hold the Indian country."

The situation was made more critical by the constant pressures the Union was exerting on the Indians, Pike said. Even now the Union was sowing discontent and saying "that the Confederate States cannot maintain themselves, protect the Indians, nor secure them their moneys. . . . The Congress has now ratified the treaties, with amendments, and has appropriated the moneys to be paid under them. I have procured the moneys for the payment of the troops and other expenses of the Quartermaster's Department, and $25,000 for the purchase of arms; and as soon as the moneys under the treaties are ready to send out to the superintendent I wish to proceed to the Indian country. It will be of no use for me to go there without the money. It should be there, ready to be paid over the moment each treaty is ratified. This, I think, will go a great way to settle the existing discontent, remove suspicion, and keep the Indians in our service."

Even more crucial, in Pike's mind, was the scarcity of troops under his command and the fact that General McCulloch had been taking into his army some of the men who properly belonged to Pike. Pike estimated the strength of his personal command at "three Indian regiments, averaging, perhaps, 700 men each, and only partially and indifferently armed." And since McCulloch had taken

Stand Watie and his troops away from Pike, this "leaves me two weak regiments only, badly armed and poorly supplied with ammunition." Too, while Pike was occupied in Richmond, McCulloch took a regiment of Arkansas boys that Pike had anticipated for his army. Now Pike wanted it back. "A regiment of infantry lately added to General McCulloch's command, and for which I applied while it was raising, may very well be spared by him and transferred to my command." The authorization Pike had been granted to recruit two regiments of infantry and two companies of artillery was utterly useless, Pike said, unless these men could be armed, and at the moment that prospect seemed dim. "The Chief of Ordnance has directed two batteries to be furnished me at Memphis, and I have made a requisition for them; but I imagine it is quite uncertain whether I shall get them or the eight fortification guns for which I have also asked."

It was imperative that these weapons be supplied immediately. "If it be possible 2,000 stand of good arms should be immediately placed at my disposal to arm two additional regiments of infantry." In addition, "the two batteries of field artillery and eight fortification guns, 24-pounders and 3-inch howitzers, for which I have asked, ought to be furnished at once, so I can immediately raise the companies to receive them."

Above all, Pike urged that all the business at hand be expedited so he could get away from Richmond and back to the Indian Territory where he belonged as commander of the Indian forces. "The moneys, $445,000, placed in my hands for the brigade-quartermaster, will be almost wholly in large notes, 50s and 100s. I am compelled to go by way of New Orleans, and suggest to the Secretary whether, upon a request from him, I may not be able to change part of this money in New Orleans for bank notes of small denominations, say 20s, 10s, 5s, 3s, 2s and 1s. Without a supply of these I do not see how the Indian troops are to be paid off at all. I also specially request that the moneys appropriated under the treaties may be immediately procured from the Treasury and sent out to the superintendent. The specie to be provided can, I suppose, be had in New Orleans, and as I am going by that city I can, if the Secretary pleases, take charge of it and the other moneys, and convey all to the superintendent at Fort Smith. I have ambulances at Napoleon that can convey the specie.

"Supplies of shoes, clothing and blankets, as far as they can be had, ought to be furnished the Indian troops. If the Government has any in Richmond I hope to be able to obtain them. I also respectfully request that my recommendations for appointment may be speedily disposed of, and especially that I may be furnished with the engineers asked for. If all I need can be effected within the remaining three days of this week I hope to leave the city on Monday next. I am most anxious to do so."

The Secretary of War added his endorsement to Pike's request, and Pike breathed a sigh of relief and immediately sent letters to all the Indian chiefs. If they would meet him at Cantonment Davis on the February 1st and ratify the amendments, he would see that they got their money. Anticipating a trip with few complications, Pike had allowed himself a month to make the journey, but he had not counted on the rampant confusion in the Confederate capital.

On January 1, 1862, Pike was notified by the Confederate Treasurer, Edward C. Elmore, that the Treasury notes were ready. When he went to pick them up, he found that someone had made a mistake. He was given the Treasury notes, all right, but was told that he would have to go to Columbia, South Carolina, to take delivery of the $95,000 in gold he had been promised. Taking time to express the Treasury notes to the Planters Bank in Memphis, Pike left for Columbia the next day, still confident that he could be at Cantonment Davis by February 1st, despite this unscheduled sidetrip. On his arrival at Columbia, however, he was greeted by an apologetic official who said he would have to go to Charleston for the money. Harried now, Pike went to Charleston only to find that while he was making the trip, the money had been sent to Columbia. He hurried back to Columbia, fuming now, and finally got his hands on the gold. He shipped it by Southern Express to New Orleans and rushed there himself to pick up the rest of the specie. At New Orleans he shipped all of the specie north to Memphis, where it was boxed and waiting for him by the time he arrived there.

By the time Pike reached Memphis, it was January 18th. Almost three weeks had been consumed by his scurrying from one place to another and he had less than two weeks to reach Cantonment Davis. Wasting no time at all, assigning an armed guard to protect the crates of money, Pike took the first available steamboat to Napoleon, Arkansas, then switched boats to take him to Duvall's Bluff on the

White River where he loaded the money into a baggage car for the inaugural run of a new railroad for the final leg of his journey into Little Rock.

In Little Rock, Pike paused long enough to appoint his son, Walter, as his aide-de-camp, and then, resenting the time it took, paid an official call on the new commander of the recently created Trans-Mississippi District of Department No. 2, a gallant, smooth Mississippian named Earl Van Dorn, a graduate of West Point, and a man whom Pike thoroughly detested.

4

Van Dorn had been given command of the new department as a part of Jefferson Davis' attempt to conciliate the opposing factions that threatened the Confederate war effort along the western border. From the day Arkansas went out of the Union, the trouble had begun as political groups in the state fought for the honor of running the war in Arkansas. The convention that had voted for secession did not disband once its work was finished. Instead, it converted itself into a military committee to take command of the troops in Arkansas. Since the committee was full of men who had opposed Governor Rector in the last election, the governor regarded their move as a political one, and promptly announced that *he* was the commanding officer of the Arkansas militia by authority of the state Constitution and that he would fight any attempt to rob him of this power. The committee promptly suspended any part of the constitution that might interfere with what it wanted to do. Shortly, everyone seemed to be appointing generals; the air was full of charges and countercharges; and the military effort in Arkansas bogged down completely.

It was at this point that General McCulloch, who had been feuding with Rector over the governor's persistent refusal to transfer troops to the Confederate army, stepped in to take advantage of the fight between Rector and the committee. Resorting to an unusual stratagem, McCulloch ran advertisements in all the Arkansas papers, trying to persuade Arkansas boys to enlist directly into the Confederate army instead of signing with the Arkansas militia. In this way, neither Rector nor the committee would have anything to say about the matter.

Already rankled by the committee, Rector exploded at this latest act of interference and sent a heated letter to the Confederate government. Since the Confederate government was raiding Arkansas of troops needed for her defense, Arkansas would not prove so cooperative in the future. Henceforth, if the Confederacy wanted anything from Arkansas, requests would have to be made through official channels, a procedure that succeeded in slowing down the military effort even more.

As the high-level arguments raged over who should command the Arkansas troops, the recruits themselves were pretty well ignored. Hundreds of them enlisted in the summer of 1861, fired with zeal, ready to march off and fight the Yankees, only to find that they had signed up to do nothing at all. They sat around in temporary camps, constantly besieged by rumors of impending action that proved to be false. The food was inadequate; the pay and the bonuses they had been promised were long in coming. Scores of men had enlisted barefoot; they were not issued shoes. Not a single rifle was issued, and the men had nothing to fight with except the shotguns and smoothbores they had been requested to bring with them. By the end of summer, their morale was low. Their fervor had evaporated and they wanted nothing more than to receive their pay and go home.

More serious was the split between General McCulloch and Major General Sterling Price of the Missouri State Guard, for the defense of the entire western border rested in the hands of these two men. Price and McCulloch were destined to argue from the first time they met, for Price was McCulloch's antithesis, a natural-born fighter who cared little for drilling and discipline, a brawler who fought better with a few drinks in him, a sentimental democrat who would go hungry rather than eat when his men could not. The troops under him held him in such high affection that they called him "Old Pap," and Price liked the name. Price had 6,500 of these devoted men, many of whom were barefoot and armed only with antiquated rifles. So great was their devotion to him that during the battle of Wilson's Creek, 2,000 of them followed him into the fray unarmed in the hope that they could pick up something to fight with on the battlefield. So efficient was their zeal that in a battle at Carthage, Missouri, fought on July 5, 1861, Price's irregulars had thoroughly trounced the well-drilled German troops commanded by Union General Franz Sigel.

During the summer of 1861, McCulloch came north with his Texas and Louisiana troops, supported by General N. B. Pearce and his Arkansas brigades to join Price in a campaign against the Union army in Missouri, only to get into an immediate argument over who should command this joint force. McCulloch was a brigadier general in the Confederate army and, technically speaking, as a major general in the Missouri State Guard Price outranked him. As they reached Cassville, Missouri, on July 29, 1861, it became apparent that a major battle with the Union army was imminent, and General Pearce began to get uneasy. He finally called for a showdown, demanding to know which general was going to command in the upcoming fight. Price did not want to quibble about it. Making a gesture of compliment toward the Confederacy, he agreed to let McCulloch lead for the time being. Under McCulloch, the army marched into the bloody battle of Wilson's Creek and forced the Union army to withdraw, at a cost of 1,200 casualties.

Once the fight with the Union army was finished, the battle between McCulloch and Price began again. Price made it clear that he had surrendered command for this one engagement only. Now, to capitalize on the Union defeat, he wanted to chase the federals all the way to St. Louis. McCulloch refused to follow him on the grounds that he had been ordered to defend Arkansas and not to engage in a major campaign against the Union army in Missouri. Angrily, Price stormed off on his own in pursuit of the retreating Union force, and McCulloch withdrew into Arkansas, taking General Pearce with him.

It is probable that Price could have taken St. Louis, because there was no organized Union force strong enough to stop him, but his offensive stalled at Lexington when he ran out of supplies. Immediately he sent word to McCulloch to expedite matters and to keep the supplies moving, only to receive word that there would be no more supplies. McCulloch personally had stopped all supply wagons destined for Price and his men, giving the feeble excuse that he feared they would be captured by the enemy.

With Price stalled at Lexington and McCulloch adamant in Arkansas, there was only one way to resolve the dispute, and President Davis was besieged by letters in Richmond, angry letters supporting both sides and denouncing the opposition. The uproar was so continual that Davis himself became angered, and on

January 10, 1862, reorganized the military department and subordinated both of the quarreling generals to a new commander, Major General Earl Van Dorn.

Van Dorn reported first to General A. S. Johnston in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and then went to Little Rock, where he issued General Order No. 1, on January 29th: "The undersigned, by order of the President, assumes command of the Trans-Mississippi District, which comprises the States of Missouri and Arkansas, except that portion of them lying between the Saint Francis and Mississippi Rivers, as far north as Scott County, Missouri; the State of Louisiana, as far south as Red River and the Indian Territory west of Arkansas. Headquarters, until otherwise directed, at Pocahontas, Arkansas."

5

Pike did not like Van Dorn at all. His dislike stemmed from an incident that had taken place in 1858. In October of that year, Van Dorn had been a captain in the United States Cavalry stationed on the Texas frontier. Smarting from the continual raids made on Texas by Indians from the Leased District, Van Dorn had led his detachment across the border in bloody retaliation against a defenseless Comanche village. The attack was even more heinous because the Comanches were under a flag of truce at the time, conferring with the Wichitas, not expecting a fight and not prepared for it. Some sixty-odd men, women, and children had been slaughtered in that attack, and Pike was so incensed by it that he had written a damning letter about Van Dorn to the War Department in Washington, apprising the government officials of the massacre and asking them to take punitive action against this bloodthirsty captain. Nothing ever came of the letter.

If Van Dorn remembered the incident, he gave no indication of it when Pike came to pay his respects in Little Rock, concerning himself solely with current military matters. Apparently, Pike warmed toward him somewhat during this interview, or perhaps he was stimulated by Van Dorn's effusive confidence. In any event, when Van Dorn asked him about the strength of the troops under his command, Pike did not use the figure he had quoted to Secretary of War Benjamin less than a month before, but instead quoted the optimistic figures from his letter of November 27th. If Van Dorn

would authorize him to put out a call for troops in Arkansas, Pike could guarantee him a force of 7,500 men. Van Dorn was pleased with the estimate, and assured Pike that he would have full and complete personal command in Indian Territory, a guarantee that made Pike very happy.

The interview was a short one, for time was running out and Pike still had a long way to go to meet the Indian chiefs at Cantonment Davis. Loading the crates of money into a wagon, he clattered up the military road toward Fort Smith with his armed guard. Before he had gone more than a few miles, the road became impassable and Pike was forced to move to the river to hail a passing boat. After everything had been transferred to the boat and they had proceeded upstream for a while, the boat ran into difficulty and could go no farther. Pike was forced to move the money back to a wagon and take his chances on the rutted trail. It was the middle of February before he reached Fort Smith.

He found Fort Smith in the throes of a minor boom. The streets were filled with gamblers, promoters, and sharpers who had heard about the large shipment of money destined for the Indians and were waiting to follow it into Indian Territory. Angrily, Pike issued orders to Colonel Cooper. From now on, any white man going into Indian Territory would be required to have a passport.

Once this problem was solved, Pike looked for Superintendent Rector, anxious to complete the last leg of his journey to Cantonment Davis, only to find that Rector, afraid the Indians would not stay at Davis much past the day when they were supposed to meet with Pike, had gone ahead without him. Instead of simplifying Pike's task, Rector's zeal had complicated it even more, for in his haste to get to Davis he had left behind all of the supplies that had been gathered for the Indians. This meant that Pike would have to find enough wagons to transport them. Muttering to himself, Pike began to comb the countryside, convinced that the whole world was conspiring against him to keep him from Cantonment Davis.

Now he received pressure from a different direction. The Union armies under General Samuel Curtis were pushing down toward Arkansas in a drive that would see them in Fayetteville by February 23rd. Van Dorn ordered McCulloch to move against them, assembling two regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and one battery of artillery at Pocahontas, where he would await further

orders. When the orders reached McCulloch at Fort Smith, he requested Pike to join him to bring his fighting force to full strength. Harried, Pike refused. He was having trouble finding enough wagons and he was anxious to get rid of the half-million dollars in his possession, since Fort Smith was full of brigands anxious to get their hands on it. But Pike ordered his Cherokee regiments, under Colonels Watie and Drew (who had reorganized his command), and the Creeks under Colonel D. N. McIntosh to move toward Fayetteville and to be assigned, for the moment, to General McCulloch. Once this was done, Pike thought he would be free to carry out his mission to the Indians.

But while Pike was worrying with his transport problem, General Van Dorn was making plans to include him in a bold scheme to flank the Union armies and go to the aid of the Confederate troops holding the line in Kentucky. In the early months of 1862, the grand Confederate strategy was going awry and the line established by General Albert Sidney Johnston, that great impervious wall of southern defense that stretched between the Cumberland Mountains and the western border, was already beginning to crumble. Behind it, the Union armies were piling up in a massive wave that would eventually overrun the Confederate line at many points.

Johnston's chief adversary was the irascible Ulysses S. Grant, who, with an army of 16,000, was poised in western Kentucky, ready to begin his push to the south. Johnston was shaky; it was doubtful if he could hold against the assault. But, Van Dorn considered, instead of massing armies in front of Grant for a head-on clash, what if a great army of Confederate troops could sweep through Missouri to take St. Louis? The Union supply lines would be severed and Grant's offensive would shrivel. If everything worked right, Grant would find himself trapped in the jaws of a huge pincer movement.

It was an ambitious plan, founded upon variables, dependent to a large extent on sheer luck, but Van Dorn was inclined to give it a try. As early as February 7th he had written to General Price in Springfield to get his reaction. "I will try to raise an army here [Jacksonport]," he wrote. "McCulloch and McIntosh I will move to Pittman's Ferry and Poplar Bluff. I hope you will be able to increase your command to 13,000 or 15,000 by the 20th of March, when I desire to open the campaign, and earnestly hope that I can. I have called on Arkansas for 10,000 men, say I get 5,000. I have

called on Louisiana for several regiments, say I get three (2,500). I have called on Texas; several fine regiments there already organized, armed, equipped, and disciplined. One on Red River of 1,100 men *en route* to join me; say from Texas 2,000 men by the 20th. McCulloch's will have 10,000. This will give me here 5,000 + 2,500 + 2,000 + 10,000 = 19,500. Artillery added, say 20,000. You will have, I hope, 15,000; Pike, 10,000. With these, can we not hope to take St. Louis by rapid marches and assault?"

In the same letter he advised Price that Pike will be sent to support him: "I shall order General Pike to take position in Lawrence County near you, say Mount Vernon, with instructions to co-operate with you in any emergency. He has, as he told me, about 8,000 or 9,000 men and three batteries of artillery. Three of his regiments are, I believe, whites. The others half-breed Indians, &c. All true men, he says."

A week later Van Dorn wrote to Price again, this time from Pocahontas. The order had already gone out to Pike to move with 7,000 men to support Price, and Van Dorn is even more confident than he was in his last letter about the success of his grand plan. He added a cautioning word about the use of Pike's Indians; they were "intended for defense only or as a corps of observation on the Kansas border." Apparently this decision was not based on the limitation of Indian troops contained in the treaties but on the necessity of leaving a force behind to secure the Kansas border. Van Dorn approved Price's plan for a raid on Rolla, Missouri, and said: "Pike can aid you in this, but he should not go too far, as he would leave Western Arkansas, the Indian Territory, and the counties west of you exposed too much to the half savage enemy in Kansas."

In this letter Van Dorn gave Price a complete picture of his over-all objective: "I design attempting St. Louis. As soon as I can get my wing ready to march from Pittman's Ferry I intend putting your column in motion toward Salem, in Dent County, covering your object by moving your advance towards Rolla. I will move so as to join you between Salem and Potosi, leaving Ironton to my right. These movements will be made secretly and rapidly, without tents or baggage, except for the sick. From the point of junction of the two columns I will push on by rapid marches to St. Louis, and attempt it at once by assault. As we advance, the bridges on the

railroads from Sedalia, Rolla, and Ironton will be destroyed, thus throwing the enemy upon the wagon roads, and preventing him from re-inforcing the city soon enough to oppose us there.

"This seems to me the movement best calculated to win us Missouri and relieve General Johnston, who is heavily threatened in Kentucky. Once in the city of St. Louis, the railroads leading to it from the east should be at once destroyed by our cavalry as far as practicable; also the road to Cairo. We should fortify opposite, on the Illinois side. The city once ours the State is ours, and the armies of the enemy on her soil and in Kansas would supply us with arms for her people, who would gather to our standard from the west and north."

Ambitious as it was, the plan was impractical because it assumed too much. It assumed that each of the states would supply the number of troops Van Dorn had asked, which they would not; it assumed that the enemy would remain static, which they would not; it assumed that Van Dorn would be able to shift forces from one place to another on the strength of a simple order, which he could not. In the comparative anarchy that prevailed in the Confederate military, an order was more of a request than a command, something to be obeyed if practical.

This was demonstrated in Pike's reaction when he received the order to reinforce Price. In the first place, Pike did not have 7,000 men. In the second, he was not about to abandon the project that had consumed him for the past month. He sent word back to Van Dorn that he would move to Mount Vernon *after* he had disposed of the moneys and *when* he had a chance to consolidate his scattered troops.

On February 21st Pike had finally gathered enough wagons and mules to start for Davis, only to run into more difficulties. A few miles out of Fort Smith he discovered that the mules were too weak to pull the heavily laden wagons and that the wagons were in no condition for a cross-country trek. The mules broke down; the wagons collapsed. Pike repaired the wagons, rested the mules, and started out again. Progress was slow and the train seemed to creep along, with Pike growing more desperate by the moment. On the Canadian River, forty miles from the Arkansas line, Pike's train was met by Colonel Cooper, who rode up with the First Regiment of the

Choctaw and Chickasaw Mounted Rifles and the 1st Choctaw Battalion under command of Major Samson Folsom.

Pike decided to let Rector pay the Indians. He sent a rider to fetch Rector from Cantonment Davis, telling him to meet Pike at Spaniard's Creek, twenty miles south of Fort Gibson, on February 24th. Reports of the Union advance on northwestern Arkansas had reached Pike, and he knew the situation was critical. It was imperative that he take his troops to reinforce General Price immediately.

Pike met with Rector at midnight in a clearing near Spaniard's Creek and told him to take the money and negotiate with the Indians for the ratification of the treaty. Rector refused. He too had heard of the federal advance, and he was convinced they would sweep through Arkansas to strike at Fort Smith. Rector's family was in Fort Smith, and he was determined to see to their safety despite Pike's blustering threats. There was nothing Pike could do to stop him, and as Rector mounted his horse and rode off to the south Pike was left to make the decision by himself. If he went to help Price, he would have to send the money back to Fort Smith and run the risk of losing it. If the Indians were not paid, it was almost certain they would not fight. On the other hand, a delay in helping Price might lose the western border for the Confederacy.

Although Pike did not know it, Price had already been scourged from Missouri and at the moment was camped at Cross Hollow, Arkansas, resting his exhausted men and writing a complaining letter to C. F. Jackson, Governor of Missouri. Price had been enthusiastic over Van Dorn's plan to take St. Louis, and even when his scouts reported the build-up of a massive Union army at Rolla, he was not too worried, expecting reinforcements from Van Dorn at any moment. As a consequence, he had almost delayed too long and his ragged army was nearly trapped by a Union army numbering 16,000 men under the command of Brigadier General Samuel Curtis. Price escaped by the skin of his teeth and lost no more than twenty-five men in the series of skirmishes that dogged his retreat.

In Jacksonport, though General Van Dorn was greatly concerned over Price's retreat, the Mississippian did not for a moment abandon his plan to take St. Louis. The flanking movement was more important now that it had been a month ago, for Grant's forces had already broken through in western Kentucky and Johnston was fight-

ing for his life. Shortly, Van Dorn would be ordered east to help Johnston, but not yet, not until he would have the chance to attack Curtis. In many ways, Van Dorn thought, Curtis had lost the advantage. With his Union army camped in Arkansas, he was dependent on a long and tenuous supply line reaching across Missouri from St. Louis. If he could be cut off and destroyed, the Confederate army would have no opposition on a quick march into St. Louis.

On February 24th Van Dorn issued an open circular to the people of Arkansas in an attempt to spur the lagging enlistments. "All who claim manhood should now attack this insolent invader or forever renounce the respect of men and the love of women." The next day, he sent an order to Pike, ordering him to move immediately to Bentonville, to rendezvous with McCulloch and Price for what promised to be a decisive battle. Then he wrote to Assistant Adjutant General Colonel W. W. Mackall; "Price and McCulloch are concentrated at Cross Hollow, 12 miles from enemy's advance, on Sugar Creek, near Missouri line. Whole force of enemy from 35,000 to 40,000; ours about 20,000. Should Pike be able to join, our force will be about 26,000. I leave this evening to go to the army, and will give battle; of course, if it does not take place before I arrive. If I succeed, I shall push on."

On February 25th, as Van Dorn was making his plans, Pike had already come to a decision and had moved to Cantonment Davis, where the impatient delegations from the Osages, Comanches, and Reserve tribes were still waiting for him, anxious to be paid. Hurriedly, Pike set up the tables, explained the changes in the treaties and started paying out the money. Unfortunately, this payment took three days, and during that time the Choctaws and the Chickasaws and the recently arrived Creeks (under Colonel D. N. McIntosh) had nothing else to do, so they stood around and watched. Pike's supply of money appeared to be inexhaustible. When he had finished paying the Plains tribes, he still had cash left over. The soldiers from the three civilized tribes approached Pike with an ultimatum. They had not been paid, and they refused to march one step farther until they were. Patiently, Pike tried to explain to them that this money was treaty money and could not be used for an army pay roll. The Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks nodded and began to pack their gear for the long trip home. Pike had no choice. The payment of the troops took three more days.

He did not pay them all. Fearing that the Creeks would decide to go home anyway, once they had the money in their hands, he stalled them with the promise they would be paid once the procession reached the Illinois River. Leaving the Chickasaws and Choctaws behind to act as a rear guard, Pike took the Creeks and two hundred Texas cavalrymen (attached to the Chickasaw-Choctaw force) to Park Hill, where he paid off the Cherokees.

Now Pike could breathe easier, having disposed of the last of the impediments blocking his march to Arkansas. He remained at Park Hill an extra day, waiting for the Choctaws and Chickasaws to catch up with him. Incredibly, they did not arrive. Having been paid, they were not disposed to hurry, and Pike sent a rider to them with the urgent message to catch up quickly; he could wait no longer. On March 3rd Pike reached Evansville and the next day moved to Cincinnati, on the Cherokee line, where he was joined by Colonel Stand Watie's regiment of Cherokees.

By March 3rd Price and McCulloch had been pushed back into the Boston Mountains south of Fayetteville where Van Dorn had joined them, and now Van Dorn was ready to take the offensive. Pike was sent new orders from Assistant Adjutant General D. H. Maury: "I am instructed by Major-General Van Dorn to inform you that he will move from here to-morrow morning with the combined forces of Generals Price and McCulloch in the direction of Fayetteville. He wishes you, therefore, to press on with your whole force along the Cane Hill Road, so as to fall in rear of our army.

"You will please, during your march, keep out your scouts, especially toward your left. Your troops will march light and be ready for immediate action. Your baggage train will follow your column slowly, making marches of not more than 5 or 6 miles per day. Should you have passed Evansville before this dispatch reaches you, please change directions at once and get into the Cane Hill Road. It is expected that you will make such efforts as will insure your being in position, and send two couriers per day to keep the general commanding informed of your position and progress."

The same afternoon, another dispatch was sent to Pike modifying the first and telling him to change his route "so that your command will be near Elm Springs (marching by the shortest route) day after to-morrow afternoon (March 5)." Pike changed his route of march, heading now toward Elm Springs on the Bentonville Road

ten miles north of Fayetteville, accelerating his pace in an attempt to arrive on schedule. He would be a day late. On Thursday afternoon, he overtook Colonel Drew's regiment of Cherokees at Smith's Mill. Then, in the face of a blizzard, Pike finally led his troops into the bivouac area to the rear of McCulloch's army and left them to make camp and kindle their night fires while he reported his arrival.

6

There was an air of desperation about General Van Dorn on the late evening of March 6th, for the first gambit of his battle strategy had failed miserably. He had managed to march north from the Boston Mountains unobserved, sending Price toward Bentonville in an attempt to catch General Franz Sigel napping and obliterate his two divisions before he had the chance to scurry east to join the main Union army. But the rebel army, exhausted by the forced march from the south in the snow, was too slow, and Sigel saw them coming and sent out a rear guard to delay them while he moved his troops east in complete safety.

So now, in the late evening, with the sun already shrouded in the bank of heavy clouds to the west and the temperature plummeting toward zero, Van Dorn was planning a new strategy to regain the advantage he had lost through the futile attack on Bentonville. His armies were encamped south of Sugar Creek, an intermittent waterway that wound through the rugged, irregular hills and valleys from west to east. North of the creek, in the shelter of the high prominence known as Pea Ridge, was the unknown quantity of the Union army. Now, as his scouts returned, Van Dorn corrected his earlier estimate of the Union strength and figured the Union army at about 10,000 or 11,000 men. (Later, he would double this estimate in a report to General Johnston, after his men had fought the enemy.)

Even with the numerical superiority he thought he had, Van Dorn could not be sure of the outcome of the battle. Enervated by the rigorous forced march through the snow, his troops had consumed the last of the food and now they were ravenously hungry as they crouched close to their flickering fires. A great many of them were coughing; a few had dysentery. Some of the Arkansas boys were recuperating from a recent attack of measles, a vicious epidemic

that had killed many of their messmates. Now, exposed to the cold, many of them would relapse and die within a few days.

And what of General McCulloch's men, the brave 10,000 on whom Van Dorn had relied so heavily in his ambitious dreams of a death blow at the heart of the Union? As of March 2nd McCulloch was able to muster only 8,384 men, divided between Hebert's infantry brigade and Greer's cavalry, and this force had been shot through by a smallpox epidemic which had raged through the army camps on the western border. These men with hollow coughs and empty bellies could not be expected to stand the rigors of a prolonged battle. And what of Pike's men, the 6,000 to 8,000 "all true" men Van Dorn had been promised? Pike had come into camp with less than a thousand men, and the Choctaw and Chickasaw regiments had still not arrived. No, Van Dorn could be sure of nothing.

The Union armies had picked the logical place to make a stand, camping around Pea Ridge. Approaching from the south, Pea Ridge rose in front of the Confederate army like a low blue wall in the distance above the convolutions of timber-covered hills, a precipitous granite cliff, at places sloping, at other points sheer, with the top ridge a tangle of trees and underbrush, almost as if a giant hand had cleaved one of the low mountains in half, leaving the northern side intact and scraping the area south of the cleavage line into a rolling area of open fields. Immediately south of the ridge were a few scattered farms and a two-story frame house called Elkhorn Tavern that served as an inn for travelers. West and south of the tavern were the small rural community of Leestown and a network of roads that would facilitate the maneuvering of troops. It was in this area that General Curtis was camped, with his back to the wall, facing south and waiting for the Confederate attack.

Van Dorn realized it would be suicidal to mount the frontal attack that Curtis anticipated. But suppose, mused Van Dorn, suppose the attack came from the north, from the heights of Pea Ridge itself, with the Confederates securing the ridge to fire down on the exposed Union positions? Then all of Curtis' defenses would be facing the wrong way.

The key to Curtis' position was the Telegraph Road, which passed by the tavern and offered a direct route to Springfield, Missouri. There was a telegraph line along this road; the road itself was the main supply line for the Union army in Arkansas. Consequently,

Van Dorn reasoned, Curtis would have the route heavily guarded. But three miles west of the Telegraph Road was the Bentonville Road, a dirt trail that skirted to the west of Pea Ridge and, bypassing the rugged country, connected with the Telegraph Road farther north. If the Confederates could move up the Bentonville Road unobserved, they could get behind Curtis, take the ridge, and cut the Union army to pieces. Capturing the Union supply trains, they could fill their bellies and rest and move on to St. Louis with no major force to oppose them. The success of such a move would depend on complete secrecy. It was highly risky. If the Confederate troops were discovered en route, they could be trapped. Conferring with McCulloch and Price, Van Dorn decided to take the chance.

The sun went down, and with the coming of night there was great misery in the Confederate camps, for there were not enough blankets or tents and a man could freeze to death unless he stayed close to the fires. Van Dorn sent out the order: Build plenty of fires, deceive the watchful Union pickets on the other side of Sugar Creek, and make them think the Confederate army was bedding down for the night. The men tore down fences and stacked the rails and set them afire. General McCulloch stood by one of the fires, having one of his customary quiet talks with his troops on the eve of battle. "I tell you, men," he said, "the army that is defeated in this fight will get a hell of a whipping."

After dark, the march orders went out. Price was to lead the column up the Bentonville Road with his division, accompanied by Van Dorn and his staff. McCulloch's infantry would go next, followed by Pike and his mounted brigades. Unfortunately, the plans went awry from the very beginning. At the time he issued his march orders, Van Dorn was already on the north side of Sugar Creek at a point near the Bentonville Road. General Price's men had crossed the creek earlier in the evening. In his haste to get things moving, Van Dorn had forgotten the creek altogether and the fact that the bulk of the army would have to cross it at night.

Pike was supposed to move at 8:00 P.M., but the orders did not reach him until 9:30 P.M. He immediately dispatched a man to General McCulloch to ask what time the road would be clear. McCulloch set the hour at midnight, not reckoning on the trouble the creek would cause him. In the dark, the precipitous banks of Little

Sugar were dangerous and the water was icy, and to men who were exhausted and half sick the creek presented an almost insurmountable obstacle. As McCulloch's infantry approached it, a number of soldiers fell down the banks and got soaked and there was a good deal of cursing as the officers sent parties for poles to be used as a bridge. When Pike arrived with his mounted brigades at midnight, the infantry was still straggling across the creek, and Pike was forced to wait. The night was almost gone before Pike finally had access to the crude bridge.

About the same time that Pike approached the bridge, Van Dorn and Price, probing north in the darkness on Bentonville Road, stumbled into a barrier of trees felled across the road by the Union troops to impede any such advance. Much valuable time was lost as the men strained against the timbers in the cold, bruising their hands and scraping their fingers raw as they shoved the trees to one side to make room for the artillery caissons to roll through. Though the delay made Van Dorn uneasy, he was still confident he could be in position before dawn. The second roadblock killed his hopes. Desperately, the men worked to clear the road, racing against time, against the lightening sky in the east.

The sun came up slowly across the frozen hollows of Pea Ridge, catching Van Dorn as he reached the junction with the Telegraph Road, and wheeled south. He was too late; the rifles had already begun to pop in the timbered hills ahead of him as Price's men met the fire of the Union outposts, and a runner had already been sent to General Curtis with news of the Confederate move. "I therefore immediately called my commanders of divisions together at General Asboth's tent," Curtis writes in his report, "and directed a change of front to the rear, so as to face the road upon which the enemy was still moving. At the same time I directed the organization of a detachment of cavalry and light artillery, supported by infantry, to open the battle by an attack from my new center on the probable center of the enemy before he could form."

As Van Dorn surveyed the situation, there was only one thing to be done. Price was already in trouble as he pushed south on the Telegraph Road. His men would not be able to hold against the concentrated attack of the Union army. So Van Dorn sent a courier running down the road to intercept General McCulloch, telling him

to move his force against the Union army from the west, hoping that as Curtis shifted his defense to meet McCulloch's attack the center would be weakened enough so that Price could smash through.

Pike knew nothing of the change in plans until he saw Colonel Sims' Texas regiment clatter past him on the Bentonville Road, going in the opposite direction. Confused, Pike asked what was going on, and an officer yelled at him that he was to countermarch and follow the other troops. Pike yelled out the orders; the Indians turned around and fell in behind the Texas regiment as it moved off the road and through the woods toward Leestown. Pike was still trying to find out what was happening when Captain Lomax, from McCulloch's staff, rode up with new orders for him. McCulloch was marching to attack Leestown. Pike was to form in line in the rear of General McIntosh's brigade, which would itself be in the rear of a line of infantry. When the firing commenced, all of the men would dismount and charge together.

There was little order in the Confederate ranks. Pike still had no idea why Van Dorn's first plan had been changed, but he did as he was told, leading his Indians along a narrow road to the southeast. At a place where the road was bounded by dense woods on the left and an open field on the right, the advance guard yelled out that the enemy had been sighted and Pike rode to the front of the column to see for himself. As near as he could tell, since the enemy force was concealed in the thickets, there was a battery of Union artillery, three guns, about three hundred yards away, protected by five companies of cavalry. Pike gave his orders; his men dismounted and took cover behind a heavy rail fence that ran east and west through the woods. Placing Captain Welch and his Texans to the left of Colonel Sims' regiment, he used the regiments of Colonels Watie and Drew to complete the line. Then he waited.

In a few minutes General McIntosh and his cavalry clattered by into an open field to Pike's left, opening the attack, with the infantrymen running behind the horses, waving their rifles as they charged toward the foot of the ridge, six hundred yards away. Pike's view was obscured by the brush, and he caught only an occasional glimpse of the men as they ran toward the ridge. He did not have time to watch for long. The moment McIntosh charged across the field, the Union cavalry guarding the artillery batteries began to fire their rifles into the woods. And suddenly, as Pike

watched dumfounded, his Indians threw down the fence and charged the enemy with a mixture of rebel yells and Indian war whoops, sabers waving, rifles banging, with Drew's cavalry and Quayle's Texans leading the attack, followed on foot by Stand Watie's Cherokees.

The Union cavalry detachment was under the command of a bearded German officer, Colonel Peter J. Osterhaus. Ordinarily, they were well disciplined troops, not easily frightened, but they had never faced a charge like this. After they had fired a couple of rounds at the advancing Indians, they panicked, turned, and fled, leaving the artillery battery unprotected.

Once the Indians reached the cannons, their value as a military unit disappeared. Instead of continuing the charge, the Indians climbed off their horses to inspect the captured guns, dancing around them, chattering back and forth with happy curiosity, and the warriors who remained in the saddle rode around the area, whooping at their victory. As Pike approached, he saw one Cherokee gallop past a wounded Union soldier, shooting him at close range. The smoke was too thick in the clearing for Pike to recognize the man who had committed this atrocity. He stumbled across the clearing to the cannons and looked around for the artillery horses, but only four remained on the field; the rest had clattered off with the caissons during the wild attack. Pike was able to persuade some of the Cherokees to pull one of the cannons into the woods, but he was unable to move the other two.

For twenty minutes Pike tried to restore order among the Indians. He had no idea where McIntosh was or where McCulloch was fighting, but the enemy force that had been scattered by the Indians was sure to regroup. With the Indians whooping around in complete disorder, they would be sitting ducks to the next charge. But the Indians seemed oblivious to Pike's commands. In the aftermath of the triumph, they had become savages again. When Pike saw that he could not control them, he sent for Captain Roswell W. Lee, a man who had trained Indians in the military arts for many months now, and commanded him to have the guns wheeled around to face the front so that they could be used against the Union troops when they charged again. Roswell tried to subdue the Indians, but his shouted orders were in vain. None of the warriors paid the slightest attention to him.

The charge had been made exactly at noon. Twenty minutes later, Osterhaus had managed to regroup and calm his men enough for a counterattack. The first Pike knew of the attack was the loud *whoosh* of a shell as it hurtled through the trees and exploded in the open field near the Indians, showering them with dirt and sending them into uncontrollable panic. In one swift moment their excitement and their triumph vanished, the victors became the vanquished, and the Indians ran. Pike tried to rally them. Finding this impossible, he ordered them to do what they were doing anyway. Leading their horses, the Indians ran pell-mell into the woods from which they had advanced. Here Pike managed to stop some of them; the rest kept on running until they were far from the battlefield. For the next two hours Pike's men huddled in the trees while Osterhaus' artillery continued to pound them, the shells ripping through the woods. As if to give some value to the hours spent in the woods, Pike would write in his report: "The [Union] battery . . . was thus, with its supporting force, by the presence of the Indians, rendered useless to the enemy during the action."

During the early part of the afternoon, Pike waited for someone to tell him what to do, for a courier from Van Dorn to inform him of the battle's progress, for McCulloch or McIntosh to return and take charge, but his wait was in vain. McIntosh and McCulloch were both dead by now, killed in a charge against Osterhaus to Pike's left. McCulloch, dressed in a black velvet suit with long stockings rolled over his patent-leather high-top boots, had paused to look toward the enemy lines through a telescope, and a bullet from a sniper of the Thirty-sixth Illinois Volunteers had toppled him from his horse. With McCulloch and McIntosh dead and with Colonel Hebert a prisoner, the whole right wing of Van Dorn's army milled around in the utmost confusion, waiting, like Pike, for someone to take charge.

About one-thirty Pike could stand the waiting no longer, and left the Indians to go into the open field to the left where he had last seen McIntosh. He arrived in time to witness the tag end of a skirmish as two regiments of Confederate cavalry rode down the field and formed a line in front of the woods. He had no idea what the cavalry was doing, and it was too far away to be questioned. As Pike stood there, Colonel Drew rode up with five hundred of his men, and Pike ordered him to take his troops in support of the

cavalry regiments across the field. Remembering how the Indians had panicked earlier, Pike told Drew to "let them join the fight in their own fashion."

No better informed now than he had been before, Pike returned to the woods, and found the Indians considerably calmer than he had left them. The Union batteries, having centered on the woods, continued to send shell after shell into the same spot, and the Indians simply moved away from the dangerous position. To keep the Indians busy, Pike ordered Sergeant Major West of Watie's regiment to take some Cherokees and drag the two abandoned Union cannons into the woods. The Cherokees scurried into the field toward the cannons and dragged them into the woods without incident.

As the Cherokees reached the shelter of the trees once again, Pike saw the Confederate cavalry regiments come across the field to his left. Apparently the Union gunners saw them too, for they began to lob shells in their direction, and very shortly the cavalrymen rode into the woods to join the Indians in the comparative safety of the trees. Though Pike talked with some of the men, he learned nothing. Leaderless, the cavalrymen had been riding around, waiting for orders.

Once again Pike was unable to bear the suspense of waiting, and he left the woods in search of information, riding along the fenced field until he found a body of infantrymen resting on the road. The men were tired, bloody, dirty, half frozen, survivors of the battle that had seen McCulloch and McIntosh killed. Pike asked for the officer in charge, and a tired major named Whitefield approached him. Both generals were dead, Whitefield said, and somewhere in the shrouded fields and woods to the left, at this very moment, 7,000 federal troops were advancing to mop up what was left of the Confederate right wing. Pike asked him if he was sure. Whitefield nodded. He himself had seen one part of this force, at least 3,000 men.

And now, at last, the command of the right wing of the Confederate army descended on Pike under the worst possible conditions. He was now in command of widely scattered troops which, even if he could consolidate them, were in no condition to fight. "Totally ignorant of the country and the roads," he writes in his report, "not knowing the number of the enemy, nor whether the

whole or what portion of General McCulloch's command had been detached from the main body for this action, I assumed command and prepared to repel the supposed movement of the enemy."

Whether through oversight or design, Van Dorn had included only Generals McCulloch, McIntosh, and Price in his briefing sessions, and Pike was only vaguely aware of the over-all master plan. Pike had been involved in one wild charge in the battle of Buena Vista and he had drilled the men of the Little Rock Guards; this was the sum of his active military experience. It can be presumed that he had read a small military manual by Hardee (required reading for most of the officers in the Trans-Mississippi), but beyond this he had had no training in the deployment of troops. Now, threatened by a numerically superior Union force, having no intelligence concerning their movements except the visible shellbursts hanging a pall of blue smoke to his left, Pike would have to rely on common sense to remove his troops from danger.

"To our left, beyond the field where our infantry had first been seen by me in the forenoon, was a wooded ridge of no great height, with a fence running along the foot of it on the west and northwest; between it and the Bentonville Road was open and level ground." This was the western spur of Pea Ridge, and it was here that Pike decided to make his stand. Thus he made his first mistake, establishing a defensive line before he scouted the position to see if he could hold it. Marching his infantry, Welch's squadron, and Watie's regiment across the field, Pike dismounted his troops and told them to take cover behind the fences. Once his men were set, Pike summoned Major Boudinot of Watie's regiment and sent him to tell Van Dorn that Pike would attempt to hold this position. As Boudinot spurred his horse through the frozen woods, Pike decided to have a look around. Riding up the ridge for a better view, he suddenly came across a road that traversed the ridge some distance from his position. With a startled grimace of alarm he realized that the enemy troops could use this road to pour across the ridge and get in back of his men.

At that moment Pike saw a Confederate cavalry detachment crossing the field below him, and rode down to meet them. He reached the field just as the heavy caissons of an artillery battery rumbled by, pulled by exhausted horses, and he hailed the officer in charge, a Captain Good. One look at the hopeless face of the officer and the

exhausted stance of the men convinced Pike that this detachment would do no more fighting. In a tired voice, Good confirmed Pike's conclusion. Hungry, exhausted, cold, these men had been beaten. They needed rest and food before they could fight again. As far as Good knew, there were no more Confederate troops left in the area. Pike could only assume that the rest of the troops had retreated, falling back to safety beyond Sugar Creek.

There was no time to be lost now. Fearing that the enemy would seize the unprotected supply train, Pike sent Colonel B. W. Stone and the remnants of the Sixth Texas Cavalry down the Bentonville Road to secure the train and to serve as a rear guard. Then he sent a courier to tell Colonel Drew to bring up his regiment. Through some accident, the message would never be delivered. Drew would wait in the woods until it was almost dark, and then he would retreat and take his men back to the supply train.

Once his men were ready to move, Pike moved north on the Bentonville Road as quickly as he could, sending Captain Welch's squadron out to point the column, following him with the infantry and placing the guns of Good's battery at the rear, where they would be protected. The Cherokees were sent out on either side of the road to serve as flank guards.

Darkness was approaching as Pike's column reached the junction with the Telegraph Road, and Pike called a halt while he tried to decide what to do. Unfamiliar with the terrain, Pike looked at the road leading into the hills to his right. If he followed it, he knew it would take him back to the ridge and the battlefield. Even now he could hear the cannonade and the sounds of a raging battle from that direction. Van Dorn was down there somewhere, but so were the Union armies. In the darkness Pike might miss Van Dorn altogether and march his men straight into the middle of the federal camps.

While Pike was trying to make a decision, Colonel Churchill rode up to plead with him. His infantrymen had marched sixty miles in the past three days; they had been on their feet all the preceding night; none of them had touched a drop of water since daybreak. Scouts had discovered a running stream a mile and a half to the north, Churchill said, and there was little likelihood they would find water to the south. Since all the food had long since been exhausted, the men at least deserved a chance to quench their thirsts.

He begged Pike to let them rest. Pike thought it over and then gave his assent. To march south in the darkness would be foolhardy. He would wait to join Van Dorn in the morning.

Scarcely had the men reached the running stream to water their horses and drink, belly down on the cold ground, when a rider whipped into camp, looking for Pike. He came from Van Dorn and he carried orders, the first such orders Pike had received all day. They were explicit. Pike and his men were to join Van Dorn immediately. Regretfully, Pike summoned his aides and passed the command. Slowly, like men moving in a trance, the troops left the stream and followed Pike down the winding road through the woods toward Elkhorn Tavern and Van Dorn's headquarters.

7

On the night of March 7th, with the thermometer again dropping, Van Dorn tramped through the night camps of his army, past the flickering fires where the exhausted men slept as best they could, rifles across their laps, waiting for dawn. Most of them had not eaten since the morning of the sixth; water was so scarce that each man was allowed only one drink to make up for a whole day of fighting with no water at all. Van Dorn sent his ordnance officer on a desperate mission to find the supply trains containing the rations and ammunition Van Dorn so sorely needed. Later, the man reported back, shivering from the cold. The supply trains had been taken to Bentonville to keep them from the hands of the enemy. There would be no relief.

Van Dorn sent out his aides for an inventory of the ammunition. The word came back almost immediately. "Almost exhausted," Van Dorn wrote in his report; only a few rounds left for any of the batteries, only a few rounds left for the rifles. In a way, it didn't make much difference. The horses were too beaten to pull the caissons and the troops were too worn out to do much fighting.

Van Dorn was in an untenable position and he knew it. During the day his attack on the Union right and center had withered, and now he held only the area around the two-story Elkhorn Tavern, with the brushy defiles of very rough country to his rear. Van Dorn was pinned down. Despite the savage, heroic effort that Price's

Missouri troops had expended to push back the Union forces during the day, any further offense was impossible.

In the darkness Van Dorn could hear some of his boys singing in their night camps, unable to sleep because of the hunger and the cold. He could see the medical details moving in the shadows, patching the wounded as best they could, stacking the bodies of those beyond help on the porch of the tavern, like cordwood, to await burial. "It was therefore," Van Dorn wrote, "with no little anxiety that I awaited the dawn of day."

8

In the Union camp General Curtis was breathing a sigh of relief. Fortunately, the Confederate attack had ceased just at sundown. Had it continued, he would have been in serious trouble, for the men on the front lines had completely exhausted their ammunition. ". . . I could not find another cartridge to give them another round; even the little howitzers responded, 'No cartridges.'" The moment the enemy stopped firing, Curtis sent men after the caissons which had been inaccessible during the heat of battle. Then he bivouacked his infantry in the edge of the timber across the field from the Elkhorn Tavern, sending out details to bring food and water to his exhausted troops.

The night was dark, and Curtis had little trouble pinpointing the main concentration of the enemy forces, for the fires were not deceptive tonight, and there were no secret flanking movements; Curtis was certain the Confederate troops were as tired as his own men. His prospects for tomorrow were good, he thought, much better than Van Dorn's. For the day had seen the Confederate attack fall to pieces at the west end of Pea Ridge. It was only on the Union right, in the area around the tavern, that Curtis had suffered heavy losses, where Colonel Eugene A. Carr and a single division, the Fourth, had held against the weight of a full attack. The important thing was not that Carr had lost a considerable number of men but that he had held at all. Now that there was no attack on the west side of the line or the center, he could be reinforced.

Curtis summoned Colonel Jefferson C. Davis, commander of the Third Division, and told him to move his men to Carr's immediate

left. Then Curtis arranged for General Sigel's First and Second divisions to move to Carr's right early in the morning. Once the men had begun to shift in the darkness to take their new positions, Curtis could lie down in his tent for a brief nap. "The arrangements thus completed," he wrote in his report, "to bring all four of my divisions to face a position which had been held in check all the previous day by one, I rested, certain of final success on the coming day."

9

Dawn, Saturday morning, March 8, 1862, and the cannonade began, the troops on both sides being roused from their sleep to fall into line and renew the battle. Under orders from Van Dorn, Pike posted Stand Watie's Cherokees on ridges to either side of the tavern, to scout the enemy and send word the moment the Union forces tried to flank Van Dorn's defenses on the left. Since Pike did not need Welch for this observation mission, he gave him permission to attach his men to any Texas regiment he chose. Welch saluted, and marched his men off to join Colonel Greer. Pike climbed the ridge on his right, breathing heavily as he pulled himself up the precipitate slope, pausing for a moment before he descended to the foot of the ridge on the other side where the view was unobscured by trees. Here he remained for two hours, out of sight of the main battle as Curtis attacked head on, pounding Curtis and Price with the full fire of his collected batteries, sending his infantry forward in waves in a wild charge to push the rebels back.

Van Dorn made no effort to hold. "Finding that my right wing was much disorganized, and that the batteries were one after the other retiring from the field with every shot expended, I resolved to withdraw the army, and at once placed the ambulances, with all the wounded they could bear, upon the Huntsville Road, and a portion of McCulloch's division, which had joined me in the night, in position to follow, while I so disposed of my remaining forces as best to deceive the enemy as to my intention, and to hold him in check while executing it."

As Van Dorn retreated, he made no effort to inform Pike of his move. Consequently, Pike continued his vigil at the foot of the ridge until it was obvious that the Union army did not intend to

try a flanking movement; then he recrossed the ridge and went to look for Van Dorn. Everything was in great confusion in the hollow, and men were dashing about aimlessly. Pike grabbed one of them and was told that Van Dorn and Price were fighting somewhere to the left of the tavern. Pike paused by a battery posted on the road and asked the men what they were doing here. The cannon had nothing to fire, the men replied. They had been sent to the rear to wait for ammunition.

A rider galloped up, shouting that the army had been ordered to fall back to a new position. A captain came down the road with another gun battery, approaching Pike to ask for orders. Pike told him to place his battery beside the other one to cover the road for the time being while Pike sent two men to ask Van Dorn for instructions.

While Pike was waiting, he heard triumphant cheering from somewhere in the woods toward the tavern, and to his right he saw Confederate soldiers streaming down the ridge through the trees. He supposed that the cheering he heard came from the Confederate troops in the front and that Van Dorn had won the victory. But two officers came riding down the slope, highly agitated. The field was occupied by federal troops, they said. No one had seen Van Dorn or Price for some time. They were either dead or captured by now. "You are not safe here," one of the officers told Pike, "for the enemy's cavalry are within 150 yards of you."

By now the troops Pike had observed streaming down the ridge had reached the Telegraph Road and were retreating as fast as they could move. Afraid that Stand Watie would be trapped behind the hill, Pike sent a messenger to him, telling him to bring his men to the Telegraph Road. The message was never delivered, and Stand Watie had to retreat as best he could.

In the meantime Pike tried desperately to bring some sort of discipline to the troops on the road. Just after Pike had sent the messenger to Stand Watie, "the two batteries close to me commenced to wheel and hurried down the hill into the road. I do not know that anyone gave them the order to fall back. The captain of one battery said that someone ordered it, but I think that the information of the capture of our generals was overheard and that no order was given. No one was there to give an order. The

batteries rattled down the steep hill and along the Telegraph Road, and as I rode by the side of them, I heard an officer cry out, 'Close up, close up, or you will all be cut to pieces.'

"On reaching the road I rode past the batteries to reach a point at which to make a stand, for, having passed the road but once, and then in the night, it was all unknown land to me. When we reached the first open level ground, I halted the leading gun, directed the captain of the company in front to come into battery, facing to the rear, on the right of the plain going northward. The battery in the rear I knew had no ammunition. Saw the first gun so placed in position, rode back to the second battery and directed the only officer I could find to do the same on the left of the plain, and when I turned around to go to the front found that the gun faced to the rear had been again turned into the road, and that the whole concern was again going up the road northward. I rode again to the front and halted the leading battery at the foot of the next level, ordered it into line, facing to the rear, gave the necessary commands myself, and had three guns brought into position. Two regiments of infantry were standing there in lines ranging up and down the valley, the flank of each to the enemy. I directed them to form in the rear of the batteries; but at this moment a shell was sent up by the enemy up the road from the point of the hill around which we had just passed. The cry of 'The cavalry are coming' was raised and everything became confusion.

"It was impossible to bring the other guns into battery. Those already faced turned again into the road; and supposing that of course they would take the Bentonville road, which, at leaving the other, ascends a steep hill, and thinking I would certainly halt them, after a slow ascent, on its summit, I galloped through the bottom and up the ravine at the left of the hill, dismounted, and climbed the hill on foot, remounted at the summit, rode to the brow of the hill, looked down into the road, and found that our retreating troops, batteries and all, had passed by on the Telegraph road, the enemy's calvalry pursuing, *en route* for Springfield, Missouri."

Pike had guessed wrong, and now he could do nothing about it. As far as he could see, the battle had ended in a complete rout. He sat there a long moment, looking first to his son Walter, and then to Captain Fayette Hewitt, the only other member of his staff left with him, as if waiting for them to express an opinion. They

said nothing. At that moment Pike's course was decided for him as an enemy battery opened up about a hundred yards away, sending a shell screaming into the valley. Another enemy battery opened up across the valley, the shells bursting on the road below. It would be suicide to go after the retreating soldiers. Pike reined his horse around and galloped up the Bentonville Road, followed by Walter and Hewitt.

After they had ridden about a mile, Pike happened to look back to find that a detachment of Union cavalry was hot on his trail. He spurred his horse and outran the cavalry and then plunged into the woods on his right and started back toward Bentonville. He had intended to ride south to find his supply train, but after seeing a few Confederate horsemen riding pell-mell to the west under fire from a pursuing force of infantry, Pike concluded that the supply train was certainly lost. Sigel must have anticipated the retreat of Van Dorn's army, moving his troops between the fleeing Confederates and their supplies, trying to destroy as many rebel troops as he could.

As Pike moved west, he found the dirt roads clogged with retreating men, the weary survivors of a disastrous battle, the well among them carrying the sick and wounded, all of them wanting nothing more than to get as far away from Pea Ridge as quickly as they could. The Union troops had abandoned their pursuit at Bentonville, and now the beaten Confederate boys moved slowly. Even so, Pike's horse was so starved, so exhausted, that Pike was unable to gain the front of the retreating troops until he reached Elm Springs.

At Elm Springs he received his first news of the Indians. They had moved through here recently on their way to Cincinnati. Wearily, Pike pushed on to the small settlement on the border where he found the Indians camped with the battalion of Chickasaws and Choctaws under Colonel Cooper. Cooper was sorry he had missed the battle, but by the time he reached Pea Ridge the Confederates were already retreating, so he had joined Colonel Drew to escort some of the supply wagons back to Cincinnati.

Talking with some of the officers who had gained Cincinnati before him, Pike learned that Generals Van Dorn and Price had not been captured at all. At the moment they were marching from Huntsville to Van Buren. The order had gone out to burn all the

wagons on the Cove Creek Road that were unable to make the rugged trip across the Boston Mountains. There was only one possible conclusion Pike could draw from this. Van Dorn did not intend to regroup and fight again; instead he was withdrawing deep into Arkansas. The defeat at Pea Ridge had been total, conclusive.

He communicated this sense of defeat to Colonel Rector, who came out of the hills to ask Pike's advice. Rector had about five hundred exhausted men with him, weak from lack of food, in such poor condition they could march no more than six or eight miles a day. There was no way Rector could keep them together now, for he had no way to feed them. He wanted to march them into the mountains where they could hide their arms in a secure place, and then he wanted to dismiss them and let them go home. Pike took a long time answering. To let the men go now would mean that they could never be mustered into a fighting force again. On the other hand, they would have a better chance of survival on their own, as there was no possible way to feed as many as a dozen men in a group. Finally he nodded and told Rector he thought "the course he proposed was the wisest one under the circumstances." Rector dismissed his men.

Pike was embittered by his experience at Pea Ridge. Later, this bitterness would goad him into rashness, but now it was little more than an unhappy conviction that the battle had been fought in vain. He was convinced that Curtis had purposely set a trap at Pea Ridge, sending out Sigel's division to serve as bait and lure the Confederate armies to their doom. Van Dorn had allowed himself to be fooled and the inevitable had happened. And now Pike would be hard put to weld his Indians into a force strong enough to protect against the invasion that was sure to come.

10

The battle of Pea Ridge was over, and the verbal aftermath began as both sides claimed the victory. "I was not defeated," Van Dorn would say, "but only foiled in my intentions." But his grand plan to flank the Union force on the western border was dead and his defeat was obvious. He had been maneuvered into an impossible position and then had been run off the field with heavy losses. That Curtis'

army did not capitalize on his victory was due more to Union caution than it was to the crippling effects of the battle.

For one man, however, the battle was not over. Albert Pike would be defending himself for the rest of his life against charges stemming from his three days at Pea Ridge. In a way, he had been responsible for bringing the charges on himself, acting under the code of the southern gentleman.

Sometime late in the second day of the battle, Pike heard that the Cherokees had done more to celebrate their victory than dance around the captured Union cannons; they had taken a few grisly trophies to prove their triumph once they returned home. Pike was horrified. ". . . Immediately I heard it, I called on Surgeon Edward L. Massie, medical director, who was over the whole ground soon after the charge, and attended to the wounded, for information on the subject; and he reported that they found one body which had been scalped; that it had probably been done after life was extinct, probably late in the afternoon.

"Angry and disgusted, I at once issued a general order, stating the killing of the wounded man which I had seen, and the fact that scalping had been done, characterizing both as inhuman and barbarous, and prohibiting them. A copy of this order I sent by flag of truce to General Curtis, who acknowledged its receipt.

"Soon after, I learned that a white man, bugler of the 1st Choctaw and Chickasaw regiment, had killed a prisoner or wounded man, and I ordered him arrested and tried. The offence was not proven, and he escaped. . . ."

Perhaps the atrocities would have gone unnoticed if Pike had not felt honor bound to apologize for them. In any event, the information provided Curtis with ammunition for a series of letters he exchanged with Van Dorn after the battle. On March 9th Van Dorn sent the following note to Curtis, asking for permission to bury his dead, a military courtesy extended by both sides:

> "Sir: In accordance with the usages of war I have the honor to request that you will permit the burial party whom I send from this army with a flag of truce to attend to the duty of collecting and interring the bodies of the officers and men who fell during the engagements of the 7th and 8th instant."

Curtis snapped back an immediate reply, and used this opportunity to reprimand Van Dorn:

"SIR: The general commanding is in receipt of yours of the 9th, saying that in accordance with the usages of war you send a party to collect and bury the dead. I am directed to say all possible facilities will be given for burying the dead, many of which have already been interred. Quite a number of your surgeons have fallen into our hands and are permitted to act under parole, and under a general order from Major-General Halleck further liberty will be allowed them in such accommodations as be reciprocated by you. The general regrets that we find on the battlefield, contrary to civilized warfare, many of the Federal dead who were tomahawked, scalped, and their bodies shamefully mangled, and expresses a hope that this important struggle may not degenerate to a savage warfare."

On March 14th Van Dorn responded in kind, through his adjutant:

"GENERAL: I am instructed by Major-General Van Dorn, commanding this district, to express to you his thanks and gratification on account of the courtesy extended by yourself and the officers under your command to the burial party sent by him to your camp on the 9th instant.

"He is pained to learn by your letter brought to him by the commanding officer of the party that the remains of some of your soldiers have been reported to you to have been scalped, tomahawked, and otherwise mutilated.

"He hopes you have been misinformed with regard to this matter, the Indians who formed part of his forces having for many years been regarded as civilized people. He will, however, most cordially unite with you in repressing the horrors of this unnatural war, and that you may co-operate with him to this end more effectually he desires me to inform you that many of our men who surrendered themselves prisoners of war were reported to him as having been murdered in cold blood by their captors, who were alleged to be Germans.

"The general commanding feels sure that you will do your part, as he will, in preventing such atrocities in future, and that the

perpetrators of them will be brought to justice, whether German or Choctaw."

Ordinarily, perhaps, this exchange of politely acid letters would have ended the matter, but on March 13th Curtis wrote a routine report of a visit to Bentonville and sent it to Captain J. C. Kelton, Assistant Adjutant General. The letter was inconsequential, noting that the previous estimate of 1,000 Union casualties would have to be revised upwards. In passing, he added: "General Pike commanded the Indian forces. They shot arrows as well as rifles, and tomahawked and scalped prisoners."

This mention was enough to get the story started. The Union government, anxious to exploit any material that could be used as propaganda, began an immediate probe into the incident. A joint congressional committee operating under the title of "Committee on Conduct of the Present War" sent a letter to General Curtis "to inquire into the fact whether Indian savages have been employed by the rebels in their military service, and how such warfare has been conducted by such savages against the Government of the United States." The letter was sent to Curtis by the chairman of the committee, B. F. Wade, on April 2nd, but it was more than a month before Curtis could collect all the data to send back to the congressional committee.

On May 21st Curtis wrote from Batesville: "I have the honor to now lay before the committee the statements and affidavits inclosed, from which it will appear that large forces of Indian savages were engaged against this army at the battle of Pea Ridge, and that the warfare was conducted by said savages with all the barbarity their merciless and cowardly natures are capable of."

Two of the dispositions were mild, made by an orderly-sergeant of Company A, Third Iowa Cavalry, and a private from Company D of the same unit, both testifying to the fact that the Indians were indeed present on the battlefield. The sergeant estimated their number at 3,000, but the more conservative private cut that number by a third. The real indictments were contained in the sworn statements of two officers, John W. Noble, Adjutant of the Third Iowa Cavalry, and Colonel Cyrus Bussey, in command of that unit. Noble wrote "that from personal inspection of the bodies of the men of the Third Iowa Cavalry, who fell upon that part of the field, I

discovered that 8 of the men of the regiment had been scalped. I also saw bodies of the same men which had been wounded in parts not vital by bullets, and also pierced through the heart and neck with knives, fully satisfying me that the men had first fallen from the gunshot wounds received and afterwards brutally murdered."

The colonel, with a more practiced eye, estimated that there were a thousand Indians on the field, then concurs with his adjutant concerning the scalped men: "After the battle I attended in person to the burial of the dead of my command. Of 25 men killed on the field of my regiment, 8 were scalped and the bodies of others were horribly mutilated, being fired into with musket balls and pierced through the body and neck with long knives. These atrocities I believe to have been committed by Indians belonging to the rebel army."

The atrocity stories were given heavy play in the northern press because it is easier for the general public to understand a complicated battle when the issues are simplified and a gallant hero fights and conquers a black-souled villain. If General Curtis was the hero of this engagement, then General Pike was a perfect villain, and the northern writers had a field day. One pamphlet stated that Pike gathered the Indians before the battle and "maddened them with liquor to fire their savage natures, and, with gaudy dress and a large plume on his head, disregarding all the usages of civilized warfare, led them in a carnage of savagery, scalping wounded and helpless soldiers, and committing other atrocities too horrible to mention."

The *Chicago Tribune* upped the number of scalped men to one hundred and demoted Pike: "Col. Albert Pike . . . deserves and will undoubtedly receive eternal infamy." The *New York Tribune* called Pike "a ferocious fish," and accused him of fleeing to the West after cruelly beating and starving a boy in his family. The cruelest blow of all came from Boston, a city Pike revered as his home town. On March 15, 1862, the *Boston Evening Transcript* published its estimate of this native son: "The meanest, the most rascally, the most malevolent of the rebels who are at war with the United States Government, are said to be recreant Yankees. Albert Pike is one of these." And later, ". . . renegades are always loathsome creatures, and it is not to be presumed that a more venemous reptile than

Albert Pike ever crawled on the face of the earth." Even contemporary historians were influenced by these accounts, and one book written in 1862 estimates Pike's Indian force at "several thousands" and accuses him of "renewing in those wild western solitudes at the present day the primeval scenes of sanguinary slaughter . . ."

In contrast to these indictments, there was a body of pro-Pike stories making the rounds, designed to characterize him as a soft-hearted and sympathetic man, but these stories were circulated orally and did little to counteract the torrent of printed abuse. In one story, Pike reviewed the case of a Union soldier captured as a spy and rescued him from the gallows on a legal technicality. In another, Pike freed a slave named Brutus after the Negro proved his loyalty to Pike by protecting $63,000 in gold during the battle of Pea Ridge. But Brutus tearfully begged to be allowed to remain with Pike, and the general, in his wisdom, allowed Brutus to stay, but only as a free man.

11

If Pike could tolerate the abuse from the northern press, he was ill prepared for the different kind of abuse he would receive from General Van Dorn. By March 18th Van Dorn had by-passed the Union army by way of a settlement with the quaint name of Hog Eye and had set up his camp at Van Buren, where he wrote to Secretary of War J. P. Benjamin at some length concerning his plans for the future. In this letter he said he intended to take his army to Pocahontas in the next few days and that he would make another try for St. Louis, this time by attacking in the vicinity of New Madrid or Cape Girardeau in eastern Missouri and following the Mississippi north. First, however, he said he intended to send several thousand cavalry to burn the enemy supply depots in Springfield and "to destroy his immense trains, which go to and fro nearly unguarded. They will then join me at Pocahontas.

"I shall order Pike to operate in the Indian country west of this [Missouri] to cut off trains, annoy the enemy in his marches, and to prevent him, as far as possible, from supplying his troops from Missouri and Kansas. He cannot supply them there. I have debated this movement in my own mind and think it is the best I can make."

Now Van Dorn explained why he did not win, and indirectly placed the blame on Pike. "The death of McCulloch and McIntosh

and the capture of Hebert left me without an officer to command the right wing, which was thrown into utter confusion, and the strong position of the enemy the second day left me no alternative but to retire from the contest." By itself, perhaps, this capsule report is not conclusive regarding Pike, but reviewed in the light of the full report of the battle that Van Dorn sent to General Braxton Bragg on March 27th, its implication is unmistakable. Pike was almost completely ignored, mentioned only once near the beginning of the report when Van Dorn wrote: "Accordingly I sent for General Pike to join me near Elm Creek with the forces under his command. . . ." And in the account of the battle and its aftermath, Pike's name is conspicuous by its absence.

At the end of his report, Van Dorn followed the custom of the time and singled out the names of men under his command for praise; the list was a long and almost all-inclusive one. He described McCulloch as "sagacious, prudent"; McIntosh as "alert, daring and devoted"; General Slack as "distinguished"; Clark as "noble"; Rives as "energetic." The list is a long one: Little, Burbidge, Rosser, Gates, Lawther, Wade, MacDonald, Schraumberg, Hebert, McRae, Montgomery, Bradfute, Lomax, Kimmel, Dillon, Armstrong, Shands, Barrett, Price, Lewis, Maury, and Sulivane. Van Dorn runs the roster of colonels, majors, and captains and even sends another dispatch to include the name of L. C. Leftwich, a lieutenant inadvertently omitted from the first report. The only glaring omission from this recital of bravery is Brigadier General Albert Pike, who, if Van Dorn's account were the sole available record of the battle, would not be shown to have been on the field of conflict at all.

To Pike, the absence of his name from Van Dorn's reports was a serious matter. Besieged by the damning indictments in the northern press, Pike had looked to Van Dorn for a defense, for a word of explanation or a bit of praise. The continuing northern criticism was having an adverse effect on Pike's contemporaries in the South to whom honor was as important as victory. Van Dorn could have silenced this suspicion with a word, but the word was held back.

In his mind, Pike translated Van Dorn's silence as an attempt to cover up the truth about the battle of Pea Ridge. Van Dorn had lost through his own incompetence, through a series of mistakes and miscalculations. If Pike had failed to hold the right wing of the Confederate army together, it was Van Dorn's fault. Pike had never

been included in the briefings; he had never been shown a map; he had never been told what units would fight on the right wing and had no idea of their strength or numbers; he had but the vaguest idea what Van Dorn was attempting to do. Van Dorn should have considered the possibility of losing the two generals on the right wing who knew his plans. Pike held himself blameless. He had waited in the woods simply because he did not know what to do otherwise. He had led his troops back to Van Dorn because it seemed the only feasible move at the time. The disaster was Van Dorn's fault, and now that Van Dorn was trying to lay the blame at Pike's feet bitterness rose in him, and an obstinacy no subsequent apology could check. From now on, he would become a prodigious foe of the command under which he served.

TWELVE

PORTRAIT OF A FRUSTRATED GENERAL

The trouble was to begin with the first orders sent to Pike from Van Dorn after the battle. On the 21st of March, Van Dorn's adjutant, D. H. Maury, forwarded instructions to Pike at Cantonment Davis where Pike had gone to continue the payment of the Indian moneys. These orders were specific. Maury informed Pike that the supplies for him were being sent from Fort Smith to North Fork and that he had been assigned Woodruff's light artillery battery which would report to him at North Fork Village. In addition, Pike was authorized to retain two of the regiments marching from Texas to join Van Dorn, if he needed them:

"The general commanding has decided to march with his army against the enemy in the northeastern part of the State. Upon you, therefore, will devolve the necessity of impeding his advance into this region. It is not expected that you will give battle to a large force, but by felling trees, burning bridges, removing supplies of forage and subsistence, attacking his trains, stampeding his animals, cutting off his detachments, and other similar means, you will be able materially to harass his army and protect this region of country. You must endeavor by every means to maintain yourself in the Territory independent of this army. *In case only of absolute necessity you may move southward.* If the enemy threatens to march through the Indian Territory or descend the Arkansas River you may call on troops from Southwestern Arkansas and Texas to rally to your aid. You may reward your Indian troops by giving them such stores as you may think proper when they make captures from the enemy, *but you will please endeavor to restrain them from committing any barbarities upon the wounded, prisoners or dead who may fall into their hands.* You may purchase your supplies of subsistence from

where you can most advantageously do so. You will draw your ammunition from Little Rock or from New Orleans via Red River. Please communicate with the general commanding when practicable." (The italics are mine.)

Enraged by the reference to the Indian atrocities, Pike promptly disobeyed the order. As soon as he had finished paying the Indians, he marched his troops south, abandoning the northern part of Indian Territory. He went all the way to Red River where, on the top of a treeless hill, he set about erecting a new fort with the Texas troops recently attached to his command. On April 1st he wrote a letter to Stand Watie to explain his move:

"COLONEL:

I think it due to you, in view of your loyalty to the cause in which we are engaged and in which all we have or are is at stake, that I should acquaint you with my intentions in regard to the defence of the Indian country.

"If the forces of General Van Dorn and Price had held the western part of Arkansas and controlled the roads running westward from Fort Smith, I would have placed myself on the south side of the Canadian River and invited an attack there, because I would then have had in front of me all the roads by which the enemy could safely advance. Fort Gibson and Fort Davis became equally intenable, when our forces abandoned the position north of Boston Mountain; both, because an enemy marching from the North can turn either position, by crossing the Arkansas above or below, and Gibson, because in addition receiving an attack there, we should fight with a river on our left and one behind us, defeat would be ruin and retreat impossible.

"As long as our forces held the position North of Boston Mountain no enemy could safely march from Kansas or Missouri to Fort Gibson without first defeating those forces, because if he pass southward they could cut his line of communication and leave him without a base of operations, the result of which would be his utter destruction.

"When those positions were abandoned, the positions at Gibson and Davis became worthless. The Canadian became the next line, behind which to draw out supplies. I meant then to fortify and hold the position at Scalesville south of the Canadian.

"Unexpectedly, all western Arkansas is abandoned. Fort Smith invites its occupation by the enemy and the roads in rear of the line of the Canadian are proferred to him. It is certain that he will accept the offer, occupy Fort Smith, and have it in his power to cut off from Red River and all supplies, any force on the Canadian. Hunter and Opothla Yahola may also be expected to cross the Arkansas and Canadian higher up, reach Fort Cobb or Arbuckle, and then marching eastward to interpose between us and the Red River. That or a movement from Fort Smith westward toward Boggy Depot, would involve the destruction or surrender of any force on or near the Canadian. At Starr's settlement we should be like a rat in a trap.

"I will therefore, placing my supplies in my rear, take position beyond the point of junction of the roads from this place and Fort Smith to Boggy Depot. There I will concentrate all the troops coming to me from Texas and Arkansas, throw up field works in front and rear and invite attack from the East, North or West. In front I will control the two only roads. In the rear I will have three lines of defence, the three Boggy's. Texas will be my base of operations and I will have an uninterrupted line of communication Southward and easy access to supplies.

"I will keep your regiment and Colonel Drew's in your own Country. You will give information of the approach of the enemy, harass his flanks and rear, stampede his animals, destroy his small foraging parties, and at last if he still advances, gaining his front join me within my line and aid in utterly defeating him there. I beg your men to bury all old animosities and remember only that all are now fighting for the honour, independence and safety of the Confederate States and the Cherokee people.

"The Creek and Seminole troops I will keep in their own country, to render similar services. The Choctaw and Chickasaw troops I will have near me to aid or as occasion may offer.

"I will not abandon your country. You will be my advanced guard. I shall have four regiments of well mounted Texas Cavalry. I will send them alternately into your country to aid in harassing any invading force. Listen to no report that I mean to abandon your country. If our forces had remained at Boston Mountain, as McCulloch always advised, the Northern Armies would have been compelled to make an inglorious retreat or incurred certain defeat by an attack on our position. I will not let the enemy gain my rear

and compel our destruction or surrender. I go to that point where calling to me the Indian troops from all quarters, I urgently hope and plan destruction to any force that may dare to attack our works."

If Pike had hoped the Cherokees would be reassured by this plan, he was doomed to disappointment. No words could be strong enough to counteract the despair the removal of his troops had created in the Cherokee Nation. In effect, the Cherokees were being told to defend themselves as best they could. In the event of an overwhelming attack, Stand Watie was being advised to fall back, to desert the Cherokee Nation to the looters and the loyal Indians, anxious to wreak vengeance. Pike's withdrawal had left the Cherokee Nation open to invasion, protected only by a weak and unreliable force, and the Cherokees now shared the panic that had settled over all of western Arkansas as the area awaited the imminent arrival of the Union army.

Only a tangled political situation in Kansas and an overwhelming caution on the part of General Curtis prevented the invasion. At the end of March, Curtis was still holding back, harassed by rumors of another Confederate attack. Every fresh rumor prompted him to send an urgent request for reinforcements. He sent out spies, fought a few minor skirmishes, and spent most of his time arranging for supplies and putting mills into operation to grind flour for his men. He was tempted to march to the south, aware that western Arkansas was ripe for the picking. On March 31st he wrote: "It is said Fort Smith is evacuated and guns carried down the river; and that they are pulling down telegraph wires from Fayetteville to Van Buren." But Curtis was plagued with indecision. His spies brought back the information that the rebels expected Price to move toward Rolla and that Van Dorn was moving his armies east toward Forsyth or Jacksonport or Pocahontas. Finally, contenting himself with a defensive move, Curtis pulled his army back into Missouri and moved it east, keeping pace with the movement of Van Dorn's army. He wrote to his superiors that he intended no further offensive "till Price and Van Dorn are better known or disposed of."

2

As Pike started building his new post on Red River, he decided to name it Fort McCulloch in honor of the dead general. Pike had hoped to use his new post as an unassailable refuge, only to find

that he was faced with another series of skirmishes, this time with the men under his command. He was using Texas troops to build the fort, men who had enlisted to fight, not to break their backs hoisting heavy timbers to the top of a hill. They grumbled all the time; they threatened open rebellion; they dawdled and shirked, and the progress on the construction was slow indeed. "They provoke me beyond endurance," Pike wrote. Too, the men complained about the slowness of their pay, and kept demanding their enlistment bounties, so plaguing Pike that he threatened to "open on them with his artillery and drive them across Red River" if they continued to give him trouble.

Pike spent much of his time at Fort McCulloch doing nothing. He read history books, wrote letters, and sat staring into space with the bit of his omnipresent meerschaum pipe clenched firmly in his teeth. Occasionally he was visited by the Reserve and Comanche chiefs who drifted into McCulloch for food and tobacco. "It was a wonderful thing to see them," Woodruff records, "as they sat in a semi-circle in front of General Pike's large office all day long, gazing at his striking and majestic person, as he sat writing, or reading and smoking. They seemed to reverence him as a God."

If the Indians reverenced Pike, his contemporaries did not. While he sat sulking at Fort McCulloch the attacks on him continued, and no sooner did he extricate himself from one predicament than another arose to plague him. Pike had just finished putting down the rebellion in his ranks when he was charged with mishandling the Indian moneys entrusted to him.

The charge had been instigated by Superintendent Rector, who was still unhappy over the heated argument in his midnight interview with Pike which had ended as Rector hurried back to Fort Smith to see to the safety of his family. Smarting under Pike's stinging remarks, Rector had fired a letter to Richmond accusing Pike of mismanagement, and the Secretary of War immediately sent a chilly letter to Pike, asking him to answer the charges. "None of this money was to be paid out . . . until the ratification on the part of the several tribes concerned in the treaties as amended by Congress except that appropriated to purchase uniforms, &c., for the Principal Chief of the Creeks and to meet certain current and contingent expenses. . . ." In other words, Pike had not been authorized to use this money to pay troops.

Pike answered these charges with his customary vigor, outlining the circumstances that had compelled the unauthorized use of the money, describing Rector's part in the affair with such vitriol that Rector was forced to resign his post, and Pike was vindicated.

The next predicament stemmed from an ironic twist of fate. In the reorganization of the military forces in Arkansas, Van Dorn paused long enough on his march to the east to turn the defense of the state over to General J. S. Roane, the man who had faced Pike in a duel on a sandbar in the Arkansas River after the war with Mexico.

Roane was faced with a desperate situation. All of central Arkansas was in panic as the legislature moved to the small town of Washington, Arkansas. The roads south of Little Rock were clogged with people fleeing the rumored advance of the Union armies. As Van Dorn marched his troops out of the state, Roane looked around for men to fill the gap. He sent to Pike, asking him all the troops he could spare, excluding the Indians, to aid in the defense of Arkansas.

Once again Pike was faced with a dilemma. To refuse to send troops to Roane would revive the old controversy with his antagonist from the days of the Mexican War. People would accuse him of putting personal animosities above the welfare of his state. But, zealous of his command, afraid of setting a precedent that would eventually strip him of all his forces, Pike refused. Roane could do nothing about it, and indeed did not try, for very shortly Roane found himself involved in a personal battle which made his skirmish with Pike seem very small in comparison.

3

The panic in Arkansas was a serious threat to the safety of the Confederacy, and the War Department realized it could not leave the problem of defense in the hands of amateurs, no matter how well intentioned they happened to be. So a new general was sent into Arkansas, a man who would become thoroughly hated in the next six months by the very people he came to save. His name was Thomas C. Hindman, a major general. He was a wry little man, only an inch over five feet tall, and such a martinet that a comparison with Napoleon was inevitable. An early accident had left him with one leg shorter than the other; he wore specially made

boots to compensate. He made his associates nervous; he was a tightly wound steel spring, and no man could tell when he was going to lash out. He was impatient with politics, implacable in his zeal for the Confederacy, harsh in his methods, and no better man could have been chosen to defend the west flank of the Confederacy.

His orders were specific and simple. He had been told to keep General Curtis from crossing Arkansas into Mississippi at all costs, and this he intended to do. He said he would stop Curtis even if it meant burning Arkansas to the bare ground and ripping open the carcasses of cattle to pollute the streams and rivers. He would turn Arkansas into one great armed camp with every man a soldier, every woman and child a guerrilla. No Yankee would be safe once he set foot in the state. It was a harsh but effective plan, and perhaps he would have succeeded in it had he been more a diplomat, less a soldier, taking into account the inflated egos and the sensitive natures of the men with whom he was forced to deal. But Hindman had little tolerance for the traditional southern gentleman and the code of genteel politeness that prescribed a specific method for persuading them. Faced with a job to be done, Hindman set about doing it through the most expedient means.

The moment Hindman stormed into Little Rock, he made his first enemy when he took all of the Arkansas troops away from General Roane and attached them to his command. Governor Rector had fought this battle many times before, and now he would fight it again. The Arkansas troops were to be used for the defense of the state; they were not at the disposal of the Confederacy. This was the law of the state. Damn the state law, Hindman said. This was war, and everything else was secondary to the fight against the Union.

Once he had made enemies of the politicians, Hindman proceeded to alienate the most powerful group in Arkansas, the planters. The planters had stored bales of cotton wherever they could find warehouse space, waiting for the military situation to ease so that they could ship the cotton downriver and sell it. Most of them had fortunes tied up in the cotton reserve, but some of it was stored where it might fall into the hands of the enemy, should the enemy decide to advance. Hindman ordered it burned. As the planters saw their cotton going up in smoke, they joined Roane and Rector as relentless foes of the cocky little intruder.

It was inevitable, of course, that Pike would clash with Hindman, for as Hindman looked around for troops to throw into the breach against Curtis, he could not help turning a covetous eye toward Fort McCulloch where Pike sat with his considerable force, doing absolutely nothing. Hindman had no respect for Pike, and felt that Pike was committing an unpardonable sin by relaxing in the safety of his Red River fort when he should have made his headquarters at Fort Gibson where he could defend the Cherokee capital at Tahlequah and be within hailing distance of Fort Smith.

Hindman sent a curt note to Pike, ordering the immediate dispatch of Pike's two Arkansas regiments and Major W. E. Woodruff's six-gun artillery battery to Arkansas. Pike could scarcely refuse to obey this order, so he complied with part of it, sending one regiment of Arkansas infantry and Woodruff's artillery back to Little Rock. At the same time he opened what was to become a salvo of letters to Richmond, complaining bitterly, taking issue with the way he was being treated.

As the battle was beginning between Pike and Hindman, a dangerous situation was developing in the north, along the Kansas border. With the coming of spring and the alleviation of the suffering that had plagued them all winter, the displaced Indians grew restless. Reinforced now by a flood of refugees spilling across the border into Union Territory, the Indians clamored for the chance to recapture the nations to the south and to wreak vengeance on the men who had forced them out. There were enough warriors by the first of June to equip two full regiments, a mixed force of Cherokees, Creeks, and Seminoles with a scattering of Kickapoos, Delawares, Quapaws, and Osages thrown in. To supplement this Indian army, the United States War Department added two regiments of Union troops and assigned command of the expedition to Colonel William Weer.

All through the late spring and early summer, Stand Watie's scouts reported the build-up of the army across the Kansas line. From Park Hill, John Ross began a series of appeals to the Confederate government, complaining that Pike, sitting over two hundred miles to the south, would be no help at all against the impending invasion. As the situation grew more critical, Ross wrote to General Hindman with a bitter indictment of the Confederacy in general and Pike in particular. He begged for help. The Cherokee troops had not been

paid since their enlistment; the arms promised by the treaty had never arrived; only Stand Watie and John Drew were left to defend the Cherokee Nation with their ragged troops.

Hindman sent another letter to Pike, a fiery demand that Pike move his troops to Fort Gibson. The letter reprimanded Pike and implied incompetence, saying that Pike had been given the task of defending Fort Smith and that this could not be done from a remote post on Red River. Once again, Pike balked. According to the letters which this latest demand provoked Pike to write, his refusal to move came from anger, because his ability as a military man had been questioned. In turn, Pike now challenged the validity of Hindman's appointment and protested his highhandedness.

It is more probable, however, that Pike's refusal to move came because he was in no position to comply with Hindman's orders. His Texas troops, continually fractious over everything from discipline to the slowness of their pay, had once again got out of hand. It was harvest time in Texas, and many of them abandoned their military duty to go home and help out. Pike had to wait until they returned before he could weld them into a fighting force again.

The seriousness of the situation in the north was revealed to Pike when Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Ross rode down from the Cherokee Nation to make a personal appeal. Pike mollified him by sending Colonel Cooper with a force to Fort Gibson and then used Ross' report as ammunition against Hindman in a new series of letters to Richmond. If there was a crisis in the Cherokee Nation, Pike said, it was Hindman's fault. Pike had sent special emissaries to Richmond to make sure that aid to the Cherokees was not cut off. If the supplies had not reached the Indians, then Hindman must have intercepted them and diverted them to his own uses.

Hindman ignored the charges for the moment. His first concern was the defense of the Cherokee Nation. Not knowing that Pike had dispatched Colonel Cooper to take charge, Hindman had sent Colonel J. J. Clarkson north to take command of all the forces in the Cherokee Nation, with the provision that Clarkson would take orders from Pike if the reluctant general deigned to come north. But Pike, still fretting, still holding to his original military concept for the defense of Indian Territory, remained at Fort McCulloch.

Neither Cooper nor Clarkson could be of much help to the Cherokees now. Late in June the invasion began, and the motley

army of Indians and federal troops streamed across the border under Colonel Weer, with Colonel Frederick Salomon second in command. Nothing could stop them. They pushed toward Tahlequah, scattering Stand Watie's troops who ventured too far from their supply base and found themselves cut off. They swallowed up Colonel Clarkson and his men at Locust Grove. And as Colonel Drew rallied his men for a last stand against the Union army, he suffered the same fate that had befallen him before as his vacillating troops, deciding that they were Union men after all, promptly deserted his command.

In July, in the midst of a scorching drought that seared the grass yellow on John Ross' spacious lawns and killed trees by the hundreds in the blackjack hills, the Union army captured the last force standing between them and the old chief, Ross' personal guard of two or three hundred men. John Ross surrendered. He had no choice. Resigned, bitter against the circumstances that had brought him to this unhappy point, Ross left Park Hill for the last time. With his family and his possessions transported in a procession of carriages, Ross went east where, in the few remaining years before his death, he would become an apologist for his nation and try to salvage something for his people from the wreckage of war.

With the fall of the Cherokee capital, Hindman grew desperate. He was convinced the Union army would now sweep south to take Fort Smith and invade Arkansas. Only a miracle would prevent it, but Hindman got his miracle in one of those frequent instances during the Civil War when personality clashes had more far-reaching effects than the battles. Quite abruptly, there was a mutiny in the invading army. Colonel Salomon overthrew Colonel Weer and had him arrested, accusing him of vacillation, inactivity, indecision, refusal to heed the advice of the military council, and explosive fits of rage that the other officers could not tolerate.

Had the Union column moved south, Fort Smith would have fallen, for there was no Confederate force in the field to impede its advance. As it was, the Union army withdrew into Kansas for an investigation of the mutiny. As a result of the military inquiry, neither man was upheld, neither man was censured. The Union was having a hard-enough time finding officers without discarding trained regulars. In the end, both men were given equal rank and the command was divided between them.

4

The mutiny in the Union ranks was incredible, but even more incredible was the fact that, during the time when the danger from the invading Union army was at its peak, Pike and Hindman continued their personal battle unabated. Trying to lay the blame on Hindman for the miserable state of affairs in the Cherokee Nation, Pike had accused Hindman of diverting Indian supplies to his own uses. There was no way Pike could have known this to be true, and he advanced no evidence to support his claim because he had none; strangely enough, however, this random shot hit the mark. Hindman had indeed been diverting goods intended for the Indians. He felt justified in doing so, and bitter that Pike, through his tremendous influence in Richmond, should be able to procure supplies and money for his Indians when other officers, much more deserving in Hindman's eyes, had trouble procuring shoes for their barefooted troops.

Having no ready defense against the charge, Hindman tried to create one in a hurry. He assigned a Major N. B. Pearce to duty as commissary, acting quartermaster, and acting ordnance officer at Fort Smith to investigate the whole supply situation on the frontier. Pearce immediately came to the conclusion Hindman had hoped he would reach, that giving supplies to the Indians was a colossal waste of goods which could better be used elsewhere. "Arms, and plenty of ammunition, are uselessly had and destroyed by these no-account Indian commands," he wrote. "Stand Watie's is the only one worth a cent, and they are mostly white men." Yes, agreed the major, it had been a mistake to promise these goods to the Indians in the first place. "I tell you, general, this dog-on Indian business is enough to break up any government in the world."

Fuming, Pike continued his campaign of abusive propaganda. On July 3rd he published an open card denouncing Hindman's high-handedness in an obvious attempt to rally support from Hindman's enemies in Arkansas. "Like a triple-headed Deity," Pike wrote, "[Hindman] wears the robe of Senator and the ermine of the judge and wields the bloody fasces of the lictor, at once." At the same time, Pike gave Major Pearce short shrift, refusing to recognize him as the duly constituted quartermaster and threatening to arrest him if he ever set foot in Indian Territory.

The battle reached a climax on July 8th when Hindman, boiling

mad, refusing to tolerate Pike's stalling any longer, ordered him to move to Fort Smith. Pike received this order on July 11th. This time, because there was no way he could side-step, no way he could justify a refusal, he resigned his command. His letter of resignation was abrupt, outraged. If he did not receive confirmation of his resignation within two weeks, he would turn his command over to Colonel Cooper. There was no ultimatum contained in this letter; it was not a plea for support. He had decided to leave the military once for all.

On July 28th Hindman ordered him to Little Rock. Pike refused. He was no longer in the army, he said, no longer subject to orders. If Pike had gone back to Little Rock at this point, it is probable that he would have been allowed to retire, but Pike was not yet through with Hindman. On July 31, he published a remarkable circular:

"To the chiefs and people of the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Chickasaws and Choctaws:

"I have resigned the command of the Indian Territory, and am relieved of that command. I have done this because I received on the 11th of this month, an order to go out of your country to Fort Smith and Northwestern Arkansas, there to remain and organize troops and defend the country; a duty which would have kept me out of the country for months.

"When I made treaties with you, I promised you protection by a sufficient force of white troops, and I consented to take command here to give you that protection. The President gave me all I asked. I procured infantry soldiers, enough arms, ammunition, clothing, shoes, cannon and everything necessary to my troops.

"General Van Dorn, in March, took from me, at Fort Smith and Little Rock, two regiments of my infantry, six of my cannon, all of my cannon powder and many rifles, and let his soldiers take nearly all the coats, pantaloons, shirts, socks and shoes I had procured for you. By other orders, all the rest of my infantry, and all the artillery except one company with six guns have been taken away, and that company with its six guns has been ordered to Fort Smith, with the last armed man from Arkansas. . . . I tried in vain to get men enough from Arkansas and Texas to prevent an invasion of the Cherokee country. You can now see at Cantonment Davis all the

white troops I was allowed to have. You will plainly see that with them, if they had been in the Cherokee country, 2000 or 3000 of the enemy could have driven them away, and while they are there, if I could have kept them there, what would have kept the northern troops and hostile Creeks and other Indians from coming down to the Deep Fork and North Fork of the Canadian and driving out our friends from the Creek and Seminole Country? . . . The President and government are not to blame for this; nor am I; nor am I to blame because your troops have not been paid. Moneys have been sent to us long ago, and stopped on the way, just as your clothing has and the arms and ammunition I provided for you. By and by these things will all be remedied. To make it certain that this shall be done, and that you shall have justice done you, and your rights preserved, I have resigned, in order to go to Richmond and make known to the President the manner in which you have been treated. As far as in my power, every dollar due your troops and to the people shall be paid. . . .

"Remain true, I earnestly advise you, to the Confederate States and yourselves. Do not listen to any men who tell you that the Southern States will abandon you. They will not do it."

A damning document it was, to Hindman as well as to the Confederate government. On the surface, it was an appeal to the Indians to remain loyal, but the contents clearly contradicted this purpose. It was a confession of Confederate weakness, a blow to the pride of the Indians who had allied themselves with the South. Pike had tremendous influence in the tribes, and now he was telling them that they had been cheated and abandoned. Compounding his brashness, Pike did not content himself with this circular but addressed another one to President Davis, outlining the Indian grievances and calling for the correction of abuses.

Pike's circulars brought forth a wave of angry indignation at his presumption, a state of mind reflected in Colonel Cooper's remark when he said that such an incredible document as the Indian circular was the work of someone who was either "insane or a traitor." He called for Pike's arrest under the act forbidding the furnishing of information to the enemy.

Hindman agreed with Cooper's sentiments completely, but there was one thing that prevented immediate action: Pike's resignation.

If the War Department accepted it, Pike would be removed from Hindman's jurisdiction. Hindman sent an immediate letter to Richmond endorsing Cooper's comments and asking that Pike's resignation be disapproved so that he could be court-martialed on "charges of falsehood, cowardice and treason."

5

The dispute between Pike and Hindman did not come to the immediate attention of Jefferson Davis. The early summer months of 1862 were trying ones for the Confederate president, and he had more important things to occupy his thoughts. Just to the north, on the peninsula, the armies of Robert E. Lee were deadlocked with the troops of George McClellan, and it was too early as yet to tell if Lee could hold. Davis, the prototype of a southern gentleman, was highly nervous and suffering from dyspepsia, and at first his Secretary of War, George W. Randolph, handled this personal skirmish to take some of the load off the president.

But Davis could not remain aloof from the situation for very long. Thin-skinned to personal criticism, he was outraged when he heard about the circular Pike had addressed to him. Consequently, he sent an angry, curt note to Pike, denouncing him for using a public circular to address the president of the Confederacy. Under the regulations of the Confederate army, Pike's offense came very close to treason.

He might have taken action against Pike, but hot on the heels of the circular came a delegation of Arkansas congressmen, storming into Davis' office, demanding that something be done about Hindman. Hindman's plan to stop the Union troops by making a hell out of Arkansas had been successful, but the flames of this improvised inferno were now getting much too warm for the residents of Arkansas. They were beginning to wonder if defeat at the hands of the Union would be any worse than the means Hindman was using to prevent it.

Lately, Hindman's extreme methods had been driving more and more Arkansawyers toward the Union camp. In the northern part of the state, where there was a strong sympathy toward the Union, towns were cooperating with federal troops in open defiance of Hindman's orders. Even the southern planters, outraged by Hind-

man's scorched-earth policy, had been selling bales of cotton to the Union forces rather than wait for Hindman to burn them.

These acts of defiance had so agitated Hindman that he had clamped the whole state under martial law at the end of June, determined to keep Arkansas 100 per cent loyal to the Confederacy if he had to use bayonets to do it. Hindman's harshness was made self-evident in the reports he had turned in. Hindman wrote that martial law had "exorcised the devil of extortion that was torturing the soldiers into desertion" and "broke up trading with the enemy and destroyed or removed out of his reach thousands of bales of cotton, that selfish and venal planters were ready to sell for Federal gold" and "insured the exclusion of spies, the arrest of traitors, stragglers and deserters, and the enforcement of conscription." These were not the words of a military leader, the Arkansas congressmen declared; this was the language of a despot. They followed the line of Pike's attack on Hindman verbatim, demanding that he be ousted on the grounds that he had been assigned his command through a personal order by General P. G. T. Beauregard instead of through the authorized channels of the War Department.

The weary Davis, rather than occupy himself in a long and tedious investigation, solved the problem by the same method he had used to halt the quarrel between Generals Price and McCulloch —compromise. He would not demote Hindman. He would not accept Pike's resignation. Instead, he would appoint another commander of the Trans-Mississippi to supervise both Hindman and Pike and to bring a new military regime to Arkansas. For this command he chose a slightly stooped, almost totally deaf, former classmate of his from West Point, a doddering general named Theophilus Hunter Holmes. Very shortly the people of Arkansas began to feel that instead of removing one scoundrel, Davis had given them two.

General Holmes was never popular in Arkansas. If he had an outstanding trait, it was caution, a deliberate slowness so extreme that it was difficult at times to detect any movement at all. In the war in Virginia, when placed against a cautious general like McClellan (who drove Lincoln to fits of despair over his aimless fiddling around in the field), Holmes distinguished himself by being even more cautious than McClellan. Some people excused this by saying that Holmes was so deaf he couldn't hear the guns that announced the beginning of the battle.

This do-nothing attitude was to be the rule for Holmes' command from the moment he arrived in Little Rock on a steamy day in the middle of August to establish his headquarters. He made absolutely no changes at all. He allowed Hindman to continue his regime unchecked, and promised to back him up.

Pike knew nothing of this until he stormed into Little Rock to talk with the new commanding officer, only to find himself in the middle of an angry argument in which he had to shout to make himself heard and in which Holmes made his sentiments quite clear. Holmes had no tolerance for Pike's complaints; he announced his intentions to support Hindman all the way. Once again, Pike demanded that his resignation be accepted, and this was the only point on which Holmes would yield. He granted Pike an official leave of absence until Richmond announced its decision on the resignation.

After this interview, Pike broadened his target to include Holmes as well as Hindman, and unleashed another series of accusatory letters. First, he preferred formal charges against General Holmes for military insubordination and for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. Then, on August 23rd, he brought formal charges against Hindman. All of these charges were simply ignored by the Secretary of War. Pike wrote to President Davis again on a now familiar subject, Hindman, accusing him of being "an Arkansas politician looking for future civil honors as the reward of a successful defense of his State, and his sole object is to effect her deliverance and safety. The Indian country to him is nothing except so far as it affects the safety of Arkansas." To make sure Holmes knew exactly how Pike felt about him, Pike sent him a wildly abusive letter and then loaded his books into a wagon and crossed the line into Grayson County, Texas, to spend his time reading while he awaited the acceptance of his resignation.

Once again Pike found himself in exactly the wrong place at precisely the wrong time. Both Grayson and Fannin counties were currently seething in the turbulence of a local battle between southern settlers and a hard core of Union sympathizers. As one refugee from Louisiana wrote of the area: "It is a place where people are just learning that there is a war going on, where Union feeling is rife, and where the principal amusement of local citizens is hanging suspected Jayhawkers."

No sooner had Pike arrived in Texas than he became embroiled in a secret organization of Union sympathizers arming themselves for an uprising against the Confederacy, a movement which culminated in a mass hanging for forty-six of the conspirators. Undoubtedly, Pike would have faced the rope himself had not he moved across the border into Indian Territory with the greatest possible dispatch. His only comment on the affair came later, when he was applying for a federal pardon: "Relieved of command in July, I had lived in private in Texas, where I aided in preventing the execution of a Union man sentenced by a committee in Fannin county, and was consequently charged with belonging to a secret society of Union men—a charge which was transmitted to Richmond."

His sojourn in Texas had lasted through September and October. When he crossed the Red River to Fort Washita on October 22nd he did the unexpected, announcing his intention to take command of the Indian Territory once again. It is likely his decision was made partly out of spite against Hindman, partly because the organization of the Indian Territory was falling to pieces, and partly because of a technicality that threatened his personal safety. His resignation, even after all these months, was still hanging fire in Richmond, and the leave of absence granted by General Holmes had expired. Unless Pike returned to his post, he could be arrested under a charge of desertion. In the current political climate, such a move against him would have been likely.

Pike was not welcomed back with open arms. His return was just another unhappy incident in the succession of trouble that had plagued Hindman and Holmes in the Indian Territory for the past few months. First, there was the matter of Major Pearce, the officer Hindman had assigned to Fort Smith to investigate Pike. Evidently Pearce had been hoodwinked or had fallen prey to temptation, for as acting quartermaster he had come up with a shortage of an even $1,000,000. General J. S. Rains, a distinguished soldier who had fought at Wilson's Creek and effectively harassed the Union forces on the western border, had to be arrested for drunkenness. Even the loyal Cooper, who had recently been promoted to brigadier general for his services to Hindman, was affected by the rapid disintegration of morale in Arkansas. Holmes had already submitted Cooper's name for the post of Superintendent of Indian Affairs when Cooper was involved in a drunken escapade and Holmes was forced

to send an urgent letter to Richmond to withdraw the recommendation. Holmes now requested that a replacement for Cooper be supplied from somewhere east of the Mississippi, hoping to get a man who had no connection with and no preconceived ideas about the mess in Indian Territory. On November 3rd Holmes issued orders to Hindman to arrest Cooper as soon as Hindman could find him. Until a replacement could be found, Holmes appointed General Roane, Commander of the Department of Arkansas, to serve as acting superintendent.

Added to these troubles, the fact of Pike's return to power was intolerable. The moment he heard that Pike was back, Hindman decided to court-martial him, only to be thwarted when Richmond suddenly announced the acceptance of Pike's resignation. Now Hindman displayed a remarkable adaptibility to changed circumstances. If he could not arrest Pike for military insubordination, he would arrest him for operating in Indian Territory without authority.

On November 3rd he issued orders to General Roane to "detach from Marmaduke's Missouri cavalry a bold, firm and discreet officer, well-armed and well-mounted men, with instructions to go rapidly in quest of Brig. Gen. Albert Pike at Fort McCulloch, Fort Washita, or wherever else he might be, whether in Indian Territory, Texas, Louisiana, or Arkansas, to take Brigadier-General Pike into personal custody. . . ." Pike was to be offered every possible courtesy, but should courtesy fail, the order still was to be executed, "even to the extent to taking life, should resistance be offered." The officer in charge was authorized to take fifty men with him.

Evidently, as he thought about it during the night, Hindman was not satisfied this force would be strong enough. The next day he issued a new order countermanding the first. After all, Pike had considerable support among the Indians. If he decided to resist, the fight would be a bloody one. The new order called for "200 select men, well-armed and well-mounted," under the command of a reliable field officer.

The arresting force galloped to Fort McCulloch, prepared for the worst, but Pike was not there. In the company of Indian Commissioner S. S. Scott, Pike had ridden west to investigate the killing of Matthew Leeper, the Wichita agent, who had been jumped and cruelly murdered by the Indians. It was only after the investigation was complete that Pike rode back toward Tishimingo. A cold wind

was blowing across the plains as Pike rode through the timber into the Choctaw capital, to be confronted by the detachment sent to arrest him. Pike made no resistance. He listened patiently to the charges made against him, and then, glancing with contempt at the small army that had been sent for him, allowed himself to be taken into custody.

6

Nothing ever came of Pike's arrest. He was allowed to return to his home in Arkansas under close surveillance. Evidently, Holmes was satisfied to have Pike out of the way. The charges were not prosecuted.

If Holmes was satisfied with the status quo, Pike was not. As he had been called a "barbarian" by the North, he had now been labeled a "traitor" by the South, and he could not rest until he was vindicated. So, in another attempt to defend himself, he wrote an open letter to General Holmes that was published in the *Arkansas Patriot* late in December.

There is really nothing new in the letter, but it was published in a month when Holmes and Hindman were suffering serious military reverses in northwestern Arkansas and it seriously undermined the popular support Holmes and Hindman needed so desperately. This letter marked the peak of Pike's hysteria. Rehashing his past grievances, Pike recalled a loan of $50,000 made to Hindman from the Indian quartermaster fund at Holmes' request, money that was never repaid. "Was this violation of your promise the act of the government?" Pike demanded. He then went back to the days of Pea Ridge, repeating a charge that most of the Confederate officials could now quote by heart. Holmes had stolen Indian goods; Holmes was a "highwayman."

As a tangent to the main theme of thievery, he charged both Holmes and Hindman with incompetence. "I never asked either of you for anything," Pike snorted. "I could procure for my command all I wanted. You and he were Major-Generals; I only a Brigadier, and *Brigadiers are as plentiful as blackberries in their season.* It is to be supposed that if I could procure money, clothing and supplies for the Indians, you could do the same for white troops. Both of you come blundering out to Arkansas with nothing, and supply yourselves with what I procure. Some officers would be ashamed so

to supply deficiencies caused by their own want of foresight, energy or sense."

If anyone was to blame for the loss of the Indians, Pike charged, it was Holmes and Hindman, who had made it a policy to "rob, to disappoint, to outrage and exasperate" the red men. "If any human action can deserve it," he thundered, "the hounds of hell ought to hunt your soul and Hindman's for it, through all eternity."

Then Pike contrasted his own position with that of Holmes: "You dare to pretend, sir, that I might be disloyal, or, even in thought, couple the word treason with my name! What particular merit is it in you to serve on, once in this war? You were bred a soldier and your only chance in distinction lay in obtaining promotion, in the army, and in the Confederacy. You were a Major or something of the sort, in the old army, and you are a Lieutenant-General. Your reward, I think for what you have done is sufficient.

"I was a private citizen, over fifty years of age, and neither needing nor desiring military rank or civil honors. I accepted the office of Commissioner at the President's solicitation. I took that of Brigadier-General, with all the odium that I knew would follow it, and fall upon me as leader of the Indians, knowing there would be little glory to be reaped, and wanting no promotion. . . .

"All my efforts have been rendered nugatory, and my attempts even to collect and form an army, frustrated by the continual plundering of my supplies and means by other Generals, as your and their deliberate efforts to disgust and alienate the Indians. You all disobey the President's orders, and treat me as a criminal for endeavoring to have them carried out. The whole country swarms with slanders against me, and at last, because I felt constrained reluctantly to assume command, after learning that the President would not accept my resignation, I am ordered to be taken from Tishimingo to Washington, Arkansas, a prisoner, under guard, it having been deemed necessary, to effect the same, to send 250 armed men into the Indian country to arrest me.

". . . You may rest assured, that whether I live or die, you shall not escape one jot or tittle of the deep damnation to which you are entitled for causing a loss so irretrievable, so astounding, so unnecessary and so fatal.

"It is *your* day *now*. You sit above the laws and domineer over

the constitution. 'Order reigns in Warsaw.' But bye and bye, there will be a *just* jury empannelled [*sic*], who will hear *all* the testimony and decide impartially—no less a jury than the people of the Confederate States, and for their verdict as to myself, I and my children will be content to wait; as also for the sure and stern sentence and universal malediction, that will fall like a great wave of God's just anger on you and the murderous miscreant by whose malign promptings you are making yourself accursed.

"*Whether I am respectfully yours*, you will be able to determine from the contents.

"ALBERT PIKE, *Citizen* of Arkansas"

This letter was the last public blast in Pike's battle against Holmes and Hindman, and it fell on deaf ears. The charge was too familiar; it had been belabored again and again in the past few months, and it no longer stirred people to indignant action. The stories circulating about Pike were impossible to stop, and people had a tendency to believe them and to discount much of the truth of Pike's attack as his attempt to vindicate himself. No, Pike would find no solace in Arkansas.

In the early months of 1863, he made a final attempt to destroy Hindman and Holmes when he went to Richmond to press charges against them personally. He accomplished nothing. Doors once open to him were closed tight now. No one could afford the time to be sympathetic with him or to run the risk of being connected with his views. Finally, miserable in his frustration, Pike gave up. "I have done all that, as one of her citizens, it was my duty to do," he wrote, and then dropped out of sight.

THIRTEEN

PORTRAIT OF A RECLUSE

The one thing that stands out in the defeat of the Confederacy on the western border is not the superiority of the enemy but the internal friction within the southern armies. The Confederacy was not defeated so much by external strength as it was by internal weakness, by the continual quarrels and bickering fights among its officers, by the rank disobedience that so vitiated the southern armies that even when a victory was won it could not be pursued to advantage. This internal friction was most conspicuous perhaps on the western border, but it extended into the highest echelon of the Confederate government.

During the hot summer of 1862 in Richmond, a split was developing in the Confederate Cabinet that was destined to have its effect on the western armies. George Randolph, who had succeeded Benjamin as Secretary of War, was an able military man who had won the respect of the generals in the field. He had expected, as Secretary of War, to take command of the Confederate forces, only to find that his position was an honorary one. President Davis made all the military decisions, often without even consulting him. On more than one occasion, Randolph first learned of important operations through the newspapers.

If Randolph was able to tolerate Davis' attitude during the summer, by fall he found it insufferable as the exultant president, more confident than ever now that the Union armies had been pushed back from Richmond and the fall offensive had got under way, consulted him less and less. In November, Randolph rebelled and for the first time issued an order on his own, without clearing it through the president's office first. Lieutenant General J. C. Pemberton had taken command of the defenses at Vicksburg and was

facing a two-pronged attack as Grant moved south along the Mississippi and Major General Banks advanced north from New Orleans to converge on Vicksburg. Pemberton sent an urgent appeal to General Joseph E. Johnston for reinforcements. Johnston had no troops to spare, but he could see an army doing nothing in Arkansas under General Holmes, and he recommended to Randolph that these troops be shifted east to help Pemberton.

Randolph agreed. Orders were sent to Holmes, asking ten thousand men to be moved to Vicksburg immediately. When President Davis heard about the order, he was incensed, and to show Randolph who was running things he reprimanded him and ordered him to rescind the command. Randolph resigned his post in a fit of pique.

Meanwhile, in Little Rock, the skirmishes in Richmond left General Holmes highly nervous. He had been ordered to march to Vicksburg; the order had been countermanded. Now he didn't know what to do. He finally decided to keep his troops ready to march east, just in case. If the situation in Richmond confused Holmes, it fretted Hindman. He could see the political implications such a march to Vicksburg would entail. It would strip him of his command in Arkansas, and he was determined not to let that happen. But, if he could persuade Holmes to let him take the offensive, the troops would not be available when the call to Vicksburg finally came.

Toward the end of the year, there were two Union armies in the area, one under General Francis J. Herron, camped at Fayetteville, and another just across the line under General James G. Blunt. Anxious to occupy his Arkansas troops in an entangling campaign, Hindman began to argue for an immediate attack against these Union armies. At first, Holmes refused to consider it. The situation at Vicksburg was growing more critical with each passing day, and sooner or later the Richmond dispute would be resolved and the call for reinforcements would come again.

But Holmes was an impressionable man, Hindman kept up a fierce insistence, and the old general weakened under the unrelenting resolve of the younger officer. He gave his permission to move against Blunt and Herron. There was one stipulation: The moment the order came through to move the Arkansas troops to Vicksburg, Hindman would turn back. Hindman gave his word.

In an icy-cold December, Hindman marched off to attack Herron at Fayetteville. At some point in the progress of the army through the bleak winter hills, a courier galloped up with word from Holmes. Davis had accepted Randolph's resignation and had filled the post with a more submissive individual, James A. Seddon. Now that the insurgent Randolph was gone, Davis was free to make the decision to reinforce Vicksburg. The orders were specific. Hindman was to turn around at once and march east.

Desperate, Hindman ignored the order (later he would deny receiving it) and moved on north to fight the combined armies of Blunt and Herron at Prairie Grove near Fayetteville. Ill prepared for such a battle, Hindman suffered a disaster and the problem of the reinforcements for Vicksburg was settled. Now there were no troops to send.

When Hindman returned to Little Rock, it was to report to a man who had been broken and embittered by his actions. Holmes never trusted Hindman again, and in the next few months the animosity between them grew to the point that Jefferson Davis was once again called on to referee a fight between his generals. Hindman was transferred east at his own request. For the aging and ailing Holmes, burdened with the blame for the calamity at Prairie Grove, there was demotion. He was allowed to stay in Arkansas, however, under a new commander of the Trans-Mississippi, General E. Kirby Smith.

But Holmes had not yet suffered his final degredation. He was in titular command of the Arkansas troops, yet when General Sterling Price returned to Arkansas he was promptly assigned to defend Little Rock. All of the power had been taken from the old man's hands, but by now it was comparatively unimportant, for nothing could stop the advance of the federal troops. On July 4, 1863, Vicksburg fell, and the entire length of the Mississippi was now under Union control. A Union army under General Frederick Steele was marching on Little Rock, and the fall of the Arkansas capital was imminent. There was still time, however, for one more ironic display of the individualism that had undermined the Confederate effort on the western border.

As Steele approached Little Rock, Price realized to his horror that he had made a mistake. All of his fortifications faced in the wrong direction, and Steele could easily march around them. Frantically trying to cover his vulnerable flank, Price sent two of

his officers, L. M. Walker of Tennessee and J. S. Marmaduke of Missouri, downriver with a detachment of troops to delay the Union army until Price could rearrange his defenses. As the Union army hurried toward this exposed flank, Walker and Marmaduke began to quarrel. As southern gentlemen there was only one honorable way to resolve their dispute. The mission they had been sent to accomplish could wait. On the morning of September 3rd both men rose before dawn and went to the riverbank where the ritual of the duel was performed. The men paced the required distance, turned to face each other, and fired. Marmaduke killed Walker with his first shot. Only as Walker's body was being hauled away did Marmaduke get back to the business at hand, his honor satisfied.

The time taken for the duel made little difference anyway, for there was nothing Marmaduke, with a handful of men, could do against the full strength of an advancing army. No shots were fired. Marmaduke took one look at the advancing federals, and retreated. General Price followed the same course. General Steele decided to save his ammunition and let the Confederate forces retire. His artillery lobbed a few shells at the arsenal, and the Confederate rear guard set fire to the cotton warehouses along the river. Amid the billowing columns of smoke, the Union cavalry clattered through the dusty streets of Little Rock.

There was no fighting, no final outburst of Confederate heroism, very little emotion at all. The day was scorching hot and the village was almost deserted as the last of the refugees fled south toward the town of Washington. The federal troops moved into the finest residences in the city, and General Steele selected Pike's house for his headquarters. It was gracious, it was cool against the midsummer heat, and there was still wine to be found in the cellars.

2

During the final months of the war in Arkansas, Pike moved about restlessly and spasmodically, fearing capture, seeking seclusion and a place where his massive body and his mane of hair, now turning white, would not identify him. "I went down into Arkansas and remained there during the war," he wrote later, "camping out in different places, but most of the time on Red River. Part of the time I was in Arkansas, and part of the time in Texas."

He wanted nothing more than to be left alone. He was reunited with his family for a while—the final separation from his wife would not come until 1866—and he used yokes of oxen to pull his wagonload of books to Washington, Arkansas, and a frame house he had rented. But his sojourn with his family was a brief one. Seeking seclusion, in 1864 he took his books into an almost inaccessible part of the mountains to a community known as Greasy Cove where his privacy would be protected by the precipitous hollows cut by the South Fork Creek and the Little Missouri River. He had a log house built for him, paid for it in gold, and then moved into it.

Because he could not keep his identity a secret for long, he soon became a legend in a backwoods community that had never had such a distinguished visitor before. Some of the Masons in the community paid calls on him, and one settler was so impressed he named his son after Pike. But Pike had little time and less inclination to waste his time in conversation. As the days passed, he spent longer hours locked in his house, the mass of books sprawled out on a table before him, losing himself once again in ancient mysteries that had no connection with the hostile outside world. And here, it is said, he produced his greatest work.

3

There is a question about when and where Pike wrote his famous *Morals and Dogma.* Some students of Pike insist he must have written it later with the aid of a large reference library. But Pike had the nucleus of such a library with him, and with the cooperation of his prodigious memory he had the material he needed for his work. The unlikely thing is not that such a book as this could have been written in a remote valley but that such a book could have been written at all. It has been said that *Morals and Dogma* is either the work of a genius or a madman, and it has elements of both within the 861 pages of the published version.

It began as a Masonic textbook. In the foreword, Pike announced his plan to "make, from all accessible sources, a Compendium of the Morals and Dogma of the Rite (the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry), to re-mould sentences, change and add to words and phrases, combine them with his own, and use them as if

they *were* his own, to be dealt with at his pleasure and so availed of as to make the whole most valuable for the purposes intended."

Though this was his plan, Pike went far beyond it. Before he was through, he would digress to express his opinions on philosophy and politics and religion and love and history and economics, on life and death and the beneficial aspects of numerology and astrology. He would resort to flights of poetic prose and lyrical verse and bitter rhetoric. He would contradict himself many times within the sprawling work. He would offend many, and would praise and delight an equal number.

It is doubtful that many men have read the whole book, or having done so, have understood even a part of it. To give a fair and accurate appraisal of its contents, a man would have to be a classicist, a linguist with a knowledge of a dozen obscure languages, and a scholar with the patience of Job to unravel the abstruse, highly complex sections in which Pike expounds on the ancient mysteries.

Wading through the often laborious prose, we can only hope to glean from the book something of the way Pike's mind worked, to interpret some of the passages that explain Pike as he was and as he saw himself. This is not difficult to do, for Pike was burning with bitterness and indignation, and what began as a philosophical treatise ended as a personal defense.

Do not be fooled, Pike wrote, into a belief that the masses of the common man have any great wisdom or that the truly brilliant man will always be rewarded. "Do not forget, either, that . . . the showy, superficial, imprudent and self-conceited will always be preferred, even in the utmost stress of danger and calamity of the State, to the man of solid learning, large intellect, and catholic sympathies. . . . There have always been men too great for their time or their people. Every people makes *such* men only its idols, as it is capable of understanding."

Because the people of the world, the masses, neither understand nor appreciate true intellect, they do everything they can to overthrow it, and, having overthrown it, to guard against its resurgence. In this process, they become barbaric animals. "Man is by nature cruel," Pike writes, "like the tigers."

Very well, Pike continued, let these barbarians have their day and revel in their current victories, but "posterity is the Grand Inquest that passes judgment on them," and sooner or later the intellectual

man will be realized for his true value. One of the crucibles that reveal this value is war. In war, these little men, these barbarians are shown up for what they really are and, in this sense, war is not totally bad. "War is not a demon, without remorse or reward. . . . It is the hurricane that brings the elemental equilibrium, the Concord of Power and Wisdom."

War itself was not evil, Pike wrote; the motives behind any war were what should be judged, but sometimes they were obscured and a man must seek them out. In the present war, for instance, slavery was being presented as the issue, but this was not the real reason that the South was fighting the North. For all men, in one way or another, are slaves, and to deny this is to deny one of the basic facts of life. Let the North use slavery as their grand cause; they will fool no one. "Everywhere in the world labor is, in some shape, the slave of capital; generally, a slave to be fed only so long as he can work; or, rather, only so long as his work is profitable to the owner of the human chattel. There are famines in Ireland, strikes and starvation in England, pauperism and tenement-dens in New York, misery, squalor, ignorance, destitution, the brutality of vice and the insensibility to shame, of despairing beggary, in all the human cesspools and sewers."

To say that the current war was being fought over slavery was foolish, for sooner or later all slavery dies of natural causes as soon as it is no longer needed, and fighting neither hastens nor deters its end. No, the true motive in the war was oppression. Oppression always breeds war, as when kings get together to force the people to receive a dynasty, "or States deny States the right to dissolve an irksome union and create for themselves a separate government." The oppressed cannot be blamed for defending himself, even though nature may lead him to enjoy the battle. Unhappily, man was still more closely akin to the tiger than to God.

"Man is a free agent, though Omnipotence is above and all around him. To be free to do good, he must be free to do evil. The Light necessitates the Shadow. A State is free like an individual in any government worthy of the name. . . . So, in a union of States, the freedom of the States is consistent with the supremacy of the nation. When either obtains the permanent mastery of the other, they cease to be *in equilibro,* the encroachment continues with a velocity that is accelerated like that of a falling body, until the feebler is annihi-

lated, and then, there being no resistant to support the stronger, it rushes into ruin."

Neither a man nor a nation could expect to have a peaceful life, Pike continued, or an existence free from dissension. The world is in a continual struggle, just as man himself is, and there is always the battle between antipodes as one nation seeks to dominate another or one emotion in a man seeks to shut out the rest, and the end result in either case is continual strife. There is no way to escape this dissension; it is God's plan. " '*Whomsoever God loveth, him He chasteneth,*' is an expression that formulates a whole dogma. The trials of life are the blessings of life, to the individual or the Nation, if either has a soul that is truly worthy of salvation. '*Light and darkness,*' said ZORASTER, '*are the world's eternal ways.*' "

And so, Pike said, man must correct his thinking to accept suffering, to realize that agony is not necessarily bad, just as prosperity is not necessarily good. For suffering can be purifying, and prosperity can be punishment in disguise. "It is with prosperity that God afflicts humanity."

In a roundabout way, Pike encompassed Christianity. In a search through the ancient mysteries that might explain his own misfortune, he returned to the simple puritan concepts of his mother, elaborated the basic Christian virtues, and examined at length the ennobling benefits of suffering and sacrifice out of which would come peace of mind and godliness. "The agonies of the garden of Gethsemane and those of the Cross on Calvary preceded the Resurrection and were the means of Redemption."

Although the book is still read to some degree by Masons, its impact has been dulled by the passing years, which have rendered its topical passages obsolete; the remainder of the book is still as obscure as when it was published. It was written fitfully; it attempted too much: discussions of transmigration, long discourses on sacred numbers, a strained philosophical interpretation of geometry, studies in comparative linguistics, and essays on mythology, all so interwoven and blended that the end result is less a textbook than it is a monument to the complex mind of an unorthodox scholar. There is no cohesion to the book—it is a conglomerate in which a single vein of thought must be traced through the outcroppings of a dozen unrelated ideas.

The book was Pike's self-assessment, a cry to the future to vindicate him, to realize that as an intellectual he was discriminated against by people too unintelligent to appreciate him. At the same time, he rationalized a reward for himself, believing that from all his suffering would come a blessing far greater than the temporal rewards of the men who vanquished him. And in this one regard, perhaps, the book was important. It preached the message of endurance to southern men, a virtue to be prized above all others during the onerous years of Reconstruction. The impact of Pike's message was greater because it was embodied in a mystical book that most of the leaders of the South, being Masons, would read and study and have a tendency to believe.

Pike's tenure in the log house at Greasy Cove came to an untimely end. The fall of the Confederacy in Arkansas set loose upon the land a wave of terrorists, guerrillas operating under the Union flag or the Confederate banner or under no colors at all. They raided and looted in comparative safety, since there were more serious matters to occupy the authorities. Drawn by Pike's rumored wealth, they invaded Greasy Cove, and Pike fled by night, swimming the river, salvaging only his bulky manuscript and a few personal possessions. The guerrillas stormed into Pike's house and tore it apart in the search for gold, dumping the books onto the lawn, and flinging them into the river in frustration when they found nothing. For many weeks thereafter, the settlers around Greasy Cove came across fragments of Pike's library where the wind had blown loose pages or where the river had deposited a soggy lump of a book on a rocky shoal.

The attack on Pike at Greasy Cove led him to move back to Washington, Arkansas, where he would be better protected. As a man condemned by both the North and South, he was fair game for any band of cutthroats who wanted to rob him under the guise of patriotism. When he returned to the relocated capital, he learned that his son Walter was dead. Walter had remained in the army after his father resigned, only to be murdered and robbed after an engagement with the Union cavalry in April, 1864.

Pike still had a few friends in the Arkansas government, and for a time he served as Associate Justice on the makeshift Arkansas Supreme Court, but conditions were not pleasant in Washington.

With so much of the state occupied by federal troops, food became scarce. Finally, Pike moved his family into a shack in the settlement of Rondo in Fayette County to wait for the end of the war.

4

On May 26, 1865, a weary General E. Kirby Smith surrendered his troops to General E. R. S. Canby at New Orleans, six weeks after Appomattox, and the war was over. Now, in the country west of the Mississippi, the planters and the hillmen came home to salvage what they could and begin again. A great weariness had fallen over Arkansas, a tiredness reflected in the faces of victor and vanquished alike, a depletion of the spirit to match the depletion of the land itself, abused, laid waste by the shuffling feet of foraging armies. The Confederate veterans stood in line to sign the oath of allegiance to the Union, to repudiate their sins, to be reinstated as citizens of the United States.

The Union officers were sympathetic, anxious to be done with the business at hand so that they could go home themselves. Any spirit of vengeance was dead; God knows the Arkansas rebs would suffer enough in a bankrupt state with an empty Treasury and everything confiscated that wasn't nailed down.

The worst victims of all were the slaves, the now freed Negroes who sat on street corners or in front of their shacks, waiting for the promises of glory to be kept. The Freedman's Bureau had said it would take care of them, but the food allotments doled out by the bureau were woefully inadequate, and there was no work for wages to be had. Little by little, they drifted back to their former masters and entered a different kind of slavery, working the land for a share of the crops. But there was no crop in 1865, and it would be a hungry winter for whites and blacks alike until the land could be made to yield again.

The consideration the Confederate soldiers received at the hands of their Union victors surprised Pike. He had expected a wave of retribution to follow the war, and, anticipating this, had fled to Boston, Texas, on his way to Mexico. He could not expect to be treated like an ordinary soldier; his vilification in the northern press had been too severe for that. But because he was tired of running,

and could not look forward to a self-imposed exile in Mexico, he decided to take his chances with the Union.

Since the early part of the year, Pike's friends in Washington had begun to petition Attorney General James Speed to have Pike pardoned. The first of these petitions came from B. B. French, a prominent Mason and a man of some influence. It was dated January 5, 1865, and it set the pattern for subsequent petitions and letters and testimonials. French did not try to exculpate Pike, but to show the forces that compelled Pike's defection. He recalled two discussions with Pike on the subject of secession, one before Arkansas left the Union and the other after. In the first conversation, Pike had been unalterably opposed to secession. In the second conversation, after Pike's ringing speech on the floor of the convention, French had asked him why he decided to change his mind. Pike told him that his views had not changed "but that, as a citizen of Arkansas with his home and property there, when South Carolina seceded, he had either to flee his home and leave everything, be murdered, or join his neighbors." Pike had chosen the latter course.

The communications in Pike's behalf continued all spring, and when Lincoln was shot to death and Andrew Johnson succeeded him, the pace of the appeals accelerated. It is not known if Pike persuaded his friends to intercede in his behalf, but he certainly knew about the petitions, and was unhappy when they invoked no response from the federal government. With the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi, Pike decided to press his suit in person.

"As soon as the war ended," Pike wrote, "I went down to Shreveport and saw General Herron. . . . I told him I had gone into the war with my eyes open; that I was in a slave state for one thing. I was not going to leave the country and go to Mexico. I told him I wanted to go north, and asked him if I needed passports or anything of that sort. He said, 'No, go anywhere you like.' So I took the steamboat to New Orleans. I was there a short time, and afterwards took the steamboat up the river to Cairo. I did intend to stop at Memphis, but a Confederate officer came on board and told me that if I stopped at Memphis they would not allow me to go any farther."

He hoped he could travel incognito; three years had passed since Pea Ridge, and the Indian atrocity stories had long since been crowded out of the newspapers. This hope was killed when he ar-

rived in New York, where his presence aroused all the old bitternesses and prompted a popular movement to have him arrested and tried as leader of the savages. He paused in New York only long enough to find a notary public and swear an oath of allegiance to the United States before he fled to Canada, afraid his enemies would crucify him before he had the chance to vindicate himself. He stayed in Ottawa during the months of summer and early fall, his money running out while the efforts to be pardoned continued unabated.

The letters were addressed to President Johnson, asking for executive clemency. Pike wrote many of them himself, and they are repentant torrents of self-explanation. His defense is tenuous: He did not know what he was getting himself into, and when he realized how wrong he was, he promptly got out.

On July 1st: "I can advance no special claim to clemency, than this (if it be one) common to many—that after long contending against the spirit of dis-union, and being wholly without ambition, I yielded reluctantly to an inexorable necessity, obeying my sincere conviction of right and duty, and not regarding the movement as treason or rebellion, but as the exercise of a lawful right; that rather than assist usurpation, I retired to private life; and that I always condemned all irregular warfare, violences in individuals, inhumanities, persecutions and spoliations, and all other acts contrary to the rules of war between civilized nations. Thinking it an unworthy part to attempt to escape, I have voluntarily come from beyond the Mississippi, to submit to what you may determine."

In another letter, he uses to advantage the southern charges against him: "After my resignation was accepted, I lived in retirement until June, 1864, *suspected as disloyal to the South*, because of my known opposition to martial law and military usurpation, and of my Northern birth."

On August 4th he refutes the atrocity charges made against him: "In the border warfare kept up in the Chickasaw country, inhumanities may have been committed. If they were, they never came to my knowledge, and would surely have been condemned by me if they had. To no man on earth are such deeds more abhorrent; and it was therefore that I was at all times opposed to irregular, lawless or guerrilla warfare. Cruelty and the barbarities that add so much to the horrors of war are equally contrary to my nature and forbidden by my solemn vows. . . . If any inhumanity was ever practiced

upon prisoners in the Indian country, while I was in command, it was wholly unknown to me. I never heard anything of the kind."

Finally, under pressure by Masonic officials in the government, President Johnson yielded slightly and issued a document that was not at all what Pike wanted:

> Executive Mansion
> Washington, D.C., Aug. 30, 1865
>
> Albert Pike, of Arkansas, is hereby permitted to return to his home, upon condition that he take the oath of allegiance, and gives his parole of honor to conduct himself as a loyal citizen of the United States; and while so conducting himself he will not be molested or interfered with by the civil or military authorities.
>
> ANDREW JOHNSON,
> President, U.S.

Pike did not want a pass. That was like throwing a bucket of water on a burning house. Only a full pardon would help him now, for he was in desperate straits, with his money almost gone and the Arkansas courts considering a suit to confiscate all his Little Rock property. He waited for the pardon as long as he could. Then, when he saw it was not forthcoming, he hurried back to Little Rock to defend his property, arriving in time to be harassed by another charge. His enemies in Arkansas had sworn an indictment against him in the Circuit Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas, resurrecting an old statute which read: "Every person who sends any talk, message or letter to any Indian nation, tribe, chief or individual, with an intent to produce a contravention or infraction of any treaty or law of the United States, or to disturb the peace or tranquillity of the United States is liable to a penalty of $2,000."

Pike was aghast at the charge. It could not possibly be valid. At the time he had negotiated with the Indians, the South had already seceded to form a separate republic. As a representative of that republic, he was outside the jurisdiction of the United States.

As abortive as this charge proved to be, it reflected the general sentiment against Pike, and showed him how difficult the reclamation of his property was going to be. A large part of his holdings had already been sold for $20,000. Barring a miracle, he would soon lose the rest of it. "If I am not pardoned soon," he wrote to French, "I shall have nothing left. I have not troubled or inopportuned the

President; and I think my friends can now again, with propriety, urge him to reinstate me in all except political rights."

He wrote to President Johnson: "Proceedings have been instituted to confiscate part of my landed estate. I am willing to lose that. Nothing will be left me but my books. These, particularly dear to me, I pray the President to exempt from confiscation. I need not tell him *how* dear the books of a scholar are to him, nor why." He executed another oath of allegiance before a district judge in Little Rock. He was allowed to retain most of his books. They would bring little money on the open market.

Finally, Pike was given his pardon. In April, 1866, Pike was summoned to the White House where, in an impressive ceremony, attended by the high-ranking officials of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction, Andrew Johnson handed him a pardon for his part in the war and restored all his civil rights. But, in another of the ironies that punctuated Pike's life, the pardon had come too late. Everything was gone; because he did not have the $300 required to pay the cost of the suit that had confiscated his property, a condition of the pardon, he was unable to accept it.

FOURTEEN

PORTRAIT OF A COMPULSIVE SCHOLAR

In December, 1865, Albert Pike returned to the law, going to Memphis and a partnership with Charles Adams in an attempt to recoup his vanished fortune. It was the wrong time and the wrong place for a lawyer to make money. Despite the crowded court dockets and the immense amount of litigation passing through the southern courts, few southerners had money to pay for lawyers, and Pike could barely manage to make ends meet.

From Memphis he tried to keep a watchful eye on the political scene in Little Rock, 150 miles to the west, and in 1867 and 1868 served as editor of the Memphis *Appeal,* a position enabling him to fire an occasional scathing blast at the Reconstruction policies that were plaguing his adopted state. At times he was nostalgic for the old days when he had traveled the circuit and the lawyers had collected in his home in Little Rock and living was good and simple and joyous; but most of his friends from those days were dead now or scattered, and he could not go back.

For a time, during his stay in Memphis, a rumor spread to involve him with the Ku Klux Klan, the nightriders now spreading their terrible vengeance throughout the south, burning and killing, an outlet for southern hotbloods who could tolerate the oppressive Reconstruction policies no longer. It was rumored that Pike collaborated with the Grand Wizard of the K.K.K., Nathan Bedford Forrest, in the formation of the Klan ritual; this may be true, for Pike was always interested in secret rites; and there were many, in the beginning, who looked to the Klan for the redemption of the South.

John Gould Fletcher thinks it possible that Pike himself might have written the most famous of all the Klan poems, a verse which begins:

The wolf is on the desert,
And the panther in the brake.
The fox is on his rambles,
And the owl is wide awake;
For now 'tis noon of darkness,
And the world is all asleep;
And some shall wake to glory,
And some shall wake to weep.
Ku Klux

Whether Pike played any part in the formation of the Klan will probably never be known. But even if he could have sympathized with the policy of passive resistance characterizing the organization in the beginning, he could never have countenanced the resultant terror and bloodshed that became the heritage of the Klan.

During his years in Memphis, he made many trips to Washington, D.C., on behalf of his clients. He was no longer universally popular in the Capital; the old days of the drinking parties and the aura of prankish nonsense prevailing there in the fifties had now disappeared, and he records, with good-natured acceptance, that when he walked the streets of postwar Washington he heard someone say, "There goes that damned old rebel."

It was an inaccurate description. He was a rebel no longer; the great bitterness that had plagued him all his life had now burned out, and he wanted no fight with anyone. He would make one more excursion into politics, editing a paper called the *Patriot*, but this would not last long and his writing would lack the bite of his younger days.

Late in 1868, unable to make a living in Memphis, Pike moved to Washington, D.C., to go into partnership with his old friend Robert W. Johnson, and later with Pike's son, Luther. Part of this move was prompted by a desire to be closer to his work as Grand Commander of the Southern Masons, a position that was to occupy more and more of his time as the years passed. But his move was prompted by more than financial or scholarly interests. For Pike had, late in life, fallen hopelessly in love.

2

Her name was Vinnie Ream, and in 1866, when Pike first met her in Washington, D.C., she was but nineteen years old. He was im-

mediately captivated by her, and he was not alone in his affections. A brilliant sculptress, she had taken the national Capital by storm with her inspired bust of Lincoln, and now she was besieged with commissions. She was unusually pretty, openly flirtatious, outrageously witty, and she sparkled like new wine. A rebel against the cloying conventions of her time, she encouraged Pike's interest.

Born in Wisconsin, she had moved with her parents to Little Rock at an early age, and it is possible that Pike had known her there and was merely renewing an old acquaintance when he saw her in 1866. There had been little joy in Pike's life since the beginning of the war, and Pike was enraptured by her. The effect she had on him is demonstrated in the renewed gush of romantic poetry he produced in Memphis while he was separated from her, an effusive outburst of love verses that were just as bad and just as ebullient as his earlier romantic writings.

When he moved to the Capital, she decided to sculpt him, attempting to capture in bronze what one contemporary describes as "a face and head massive and leonine, recalling in every feature some sculptor's dream of a Grecian god." To complete this work, it was her custom to come to him once a week for a visit. For these occasions, he wrote essays to read to her which they would afterward discuss. In all, he wrote five manuscript volumes of his "Essays to Vinnie," and these books contain some of his best prose; for he was writing, not to impress the critics, but to entertain the woman he loved, and as a result there is a simplicity, a charm in these essays that his earlier writings lack. He wrote of his youth, his adventures with the Indians, and his impressions on any subject he thought would interest her, and he poured into these essays all the nostalgia of his lost youth, knowing he could not hold her for long.

Her weekly visits caused tongues to wag in Washington, for this was considered indecorous behavior. A maiden did not visit a man in his rooms without an escort. Stung by the scandalous rumors, Pike issued a defensive statement: "No lie is on my lips when I aver that all the endearments, caresses and kisses of the one who has so long been dear to me never inspired in me a thought or emotion of desire. If every man has at some time worshipped Anteros, he is to be pitied who has never worshipped Eros alone."

Pike knew his relationship with Vinnie Ream could not last, for

she was coming into the ascendancy of her popularity when he was long past his, and as she approached maturity he was well into senescence. Nevertheless, when she married Richard Leveridge Harris of the Army Engineers, Pike went through a deep and melancholy depression. He approved of the young man she married, however, and once he had adjusted himself to the inevitable, he resumed a friendship with her that would last for many years.

As time passed, Pike's interest in his law practice waned, and at last he abandoned it altogether, giving every cent of his money and every moment of his time into his Masonic work, traveling extensively in behalf of the brotherhood, and refusing to take a penny from the Supreme Council for his needs. In the mid-seventies, however, the country was seized in the grip of financial panic, and Pike found himself in desperate straits. Unable to afford the expenses of a house any longer, he took up residence in the House of the Temple and borrowed money to feed himself and his daughter Lillian, who lived with him.

With fierce pride, Pike refused any financial aid until 1879, when he was at last destitute. The Supreme Council tried to award him $1,800 a year, but he would not accept it outright. Let no man say he was taking charity. Because he would accept the money only as a loan, he went through the formality of willing his library to the Supreme Council to guarantee repayment and to assuage his pride.

During these years as Grand Commander, he was finally able to devote much of his time to the unraveling of the mysteries that so fascinated him. In his large office, illuminated by an intricate gas chandelier hanging over the massive cluttered desk on which he worked, Pike spent long days with the opened volumes from his library spread around him, checking his references, puzzling over an obscure word, his quill pen pausing in midair before it swooped to the paper again to scribble another sentence. His desk was placed at right angles to the marble fireplace, and on cold days a fire was kindled in the cast-iron grate and the heavy drapes were drawn over the doors to prevent a draft. On his mantel was a row of pictures of his family, a portrait of the tortured Mary Ann who died on April 14, 1876, her mind gone, and likenesses of his children, of whom only three were still alive.

And in this room, the silence broken only by the ticking of the clock on the marble mantel, Albert Pike produced an amazing num-

ber of manuscripts on diverse and obscure subjects, with the pages numbering into the thousands, illuminated by sketches made by Pike himself, and destined to be bound in morocco and stored on shelves where few men would ever read them. For fourteen years he studied the *Rig-Veda,* and when he had completed his *Translations of the Rig-Veda, the Maruts,* it ran to four volumes and 2,641 pages. His *Irano-Aryan Theosophy and Doctrine, as Contained in the Zend-Avesta,* eventually published in a private and limited edition, was 2,344 pages long, and his *Lectures on the Arya* added another eight volumes and 1,499 pages to his shelf. His *Translations of the Rig-Veda, Friends of Indra: Svadha: the Purusha Sukta: Savitri: Names of Rishis,* ran 562 pages; his *Vocabularies of Sanskrit Languages,* 79 pages; his further *Translations of the Rig-Veda,* 6,939 pages; his *Translations of the Rig Veda—The Devas Generally and of Passages Which Mention the Arya and Dasyu,* 632 pages; and his *Vocabularies of the Indian Languages,* 199 pages.

Despite the continual stream of visitors who came to Washington to see him, he grew unbearably lonely. The list of honors conferred on him by other Masonic organizations (never equaled since by any other man) did little to solace him, for as a very old man outlives his enemies he also outlives his friends. In 1879 he wrote to a surviving friend: "I am awfully lonely, and can sum up my life in a few words: Day in and day out, I sit still and work. If I could only see some dear face that I could love and have loving eyes to look into. I am sad, very sad. . . . So the old friends go one by one, and those who remain are not near me. We become like stranded barques that no one cares for, as we grow old." And to another friend: "I should like to have the companionship of one whom I could love, and who gave me a little love in return. . . . No woman ever gave me even a little affection that I was not proud of it." And, on the subject of death: "When a silk worm has spun itself out and finished its cocoon it quietly dies, having fulfilled its mission. Why cannot man do the same? It is astonishing how many of them live when they have done spinning, and the world has no more use for them. When one of these human caterpillars whose cocoon is worthless dies at last, how he is exalted and praised! I am not done spinning yet, tho' my spinning may not be worth much. It contents me to spin. What does the silk-worm care for the cocoon when she has come out of it to a new life, leaving it behind?"

3

By 1887 Albert Pike had become a recluse. The confines of his world had so narrowed that he never left the House of the Temple by day and rarely by night. He went from his quarters to his office and back to his quarters, day after day, never without the meerschaum pipe in his mouth. He slept little, and that fitfully. In the small hours of the night, when sleep would not come, he wrote letters and read and smoked his pipe and waited for dawn.

In the fall of 1889, his health began to break, and a host of illnesses and infirmities seemed to converge on him at once. He was continually wracked by headaches and fevers, gout, boils, rheumatism, neuralgia, and dyspepsia. His whole body was in torment. Only with the most extreme agony could his stiff fingers hold a pen to write.

The attacks continued through the spring and summer of 1890. When he made a rare appearance to address the Supreme Council in October, his colleagues were shocked at what they saw and heard. There was a deathly pallor to his skin; his voice was so hoarse they could not understand a word he said. After the meeting, Pike took to his bed, and from that time never left it again. A continual stream of doctors came to examine him and palliate his ailments. Finally, the attacks became so severe and so frequent that his daughter Lillian was forced to have a doctor or nurse with him around the clock.

By the first of the year, Pike could take only liquids. The doctors agreed on their diagnosis. Pike was suffering from a stricture of the esophagus. If they widened the opening, Pike would once again be able to eat. Pike refused to permit them to perform the operation.

By February, Pike knew he was going to die. Hoarsely, he called for writing materials. Then, his fingers clenched in pain around the pencil, he wrote out orders for the disposition of his body:

> Orient of Washington, District of Columbia
> The 28th Day of February, 1891, C.E.
>
> These are my wishes and directions in regard to the disposition of my body after death:
>
> I forbid any autopsy or dissection of my body to gratify curiosity, or for the benefit of science, or for any other reason.
>
> If I die in or near Washington, let my body be placed in no casket, but in a plain coffin, covered with black cloth, and taken in

the evening of the day, to the Cathedral-room of the Scottish Rite, or a church, without any procession, parade or music. At midnight, let the funeral offices of the Kadosh be performed there over my body and none other either then or afterwards; and, on the next morning early, let it be taken by nine or twelve brethren of the Scottish Rite to Baltimore or Philadelphia, and cremated without any ceremony other than the word "Good-bye!" Let my ashes be put around the roots of the two acacia trees in front of the home of the Supreme Council.

I desire that no Lodge of Sorrow be holden for me; eulogies of the dead are too indiscriminate to be of great value. If the works prepared by me for the Scottish Rite shall be valued and used after I am dead, *ad perpetuitem ritus*, I do not desire and shall not need any other eulogy; and if they shall not, I shall need no other. If I were to be buried (of which and its "worms and rottenness and cold discomfort" I have a horror) I should desire to have put on my gravestone only my name, the dates of my birth and death, and these words:

Laborum Ejus Superstites Sunt Fructus Vixit.

ALBERT PIKE.

Once this order had been written, he weakened perceptibly. Late in March, he again felt death was near, and beckoned his daughter to his bedside to whisper instructions regarding some personal effects he wanted distributed to his friends. When his voice failed, he gestured toward a sheet of paper and a pencil, and when it was handed to him he wrote three words and then sank back on the bed.

Weakened by further attacks of gout, fever, and rheumatism, Pike's throat finally closed altogether. He was too weak by now, too tired, too old to withstand an operation. Five times the doctors tried to probe an opening in his throat; five times they failed. There was nothing more that could be done for him. And in the greatest irony of them all, this epicure whose gastronomic legends still circulated in the West, was doomed to starve to death.

On the evening of April 2nd, the end was near, and Pike's children, Hamilton, Lillian, and Yvon, were in the room where he lay on the bed, breathing with great difficulty, the air rasping through his throat. Some Masonic friends had come in at the last moment, and Pike's servant, Edward Kenny, was there. At six o'clock Pike went into a coma. At eight o'clock he died. The men checked their watches to be certain of the exact time.

"He had suffered greatly for many months," his daughter Lillian

wrote later, "and was almost reduced to a shadow; but his mind remained clear, and he was occupied with thoughts of those he loved up to the very last day of his life. His death was perfectly peaceful: the sufferings which had so distressed his children and his friends had ceased; and from moment to moment the change was so slight, the extinction of the vital flame so gradual, that it was scarcely perceptible when the last breath was drawn and his great spirit returned to God."

On the piece of paper he had requested a few days before his death, Pike had written, "Shalom, Shalom, Shalom," which is Hebrew for "Peace, Peace, Peace." And now he had it.

4

As Pike had encountered difficulty in getting people to follow his orders when alive, the same trouble still plagued him in death. Laboriously, painfully, he had written specific instructions for the disposition of his body. Now, no one paid the slightest attention to them. Pike's body lay in state at the Cathedral of the Scottish Rite in Washington as thousands of people filed through the building.

Then the body was moved to the Congregational Church for the mysterious funeral services of the Kadosh, held at midnight in a room lighted by candles, with the walls draped in black; in the center of the room, the casket containing Pike's body sat on a catafalque draped in black. ". . . A fitting setting for a poet," mused Henry R. Evans who participated in the service and later recorded his impressions. "Arranged in triangles about the east, west and south of the catafalque were burning tapers in tall candlesticks of silver. A huge iron cross was set at the edge of the catafalque. Near by stood a table covered with black velvet, upon which there were seven candlesticks, but without lights; a silver cup filled with salt, and a skull crowned with a laurel wreath. The lights of the wax tapers illumined the face of the dead man, as well as the mocking skull wreathed with laurel, and brought into relief the iron cross. At the last stroke of the bell, an organ softly played the *Miserere* and there marched into the room from out of the Egyptian darkness, a long file of Knights, in somber uniforms, bearing lighted candles in their hands. They took their places about the catafalque, the Venerable Master at the head, near the passion cross. A trumpet

sounded in the distance, and the service began. The Venerable Master struck with a sledge three times upon the iron cross, and challenged any one present to charge against the dead man. There was no response, and the trial ended with the declaration that not man but God only is capable of judging the dead.

"Upon the remains were a chaplet of laurel, vines and berries, representing living joy; a glittering cross, representing glory and splendor; and a bunch of violets, as a token of grief. All but the violets were removed, as it was declared that the dead Knight had passed beyond and above earthly pleasures and vain glory.

"The cords about the hands of the adept were untied, and those about the feet. After a number of significant offices were performed, the Knights all knelt; the Venerable Master invoked the blessing upon the dead. The lights were extinguished one by one, as the Knights withdrew silently from the apartment."

The next day, a second funeral service was held in the Church of the Ascension according to the rites of the Episcopal Church, and on April 10th Pike was buried in Washington's Oak Hill Cemetery.

In 1899 a large bronze statue of Pike, designed by the Italian sculptor Trentanove, was erected in Washington by the Supreme Council, but the grave itself remained unmarked for eighteen years, causing considerable consternation to the pilgrims who came to visit Pike's resting place and were unable to find it. It was only in 1917 that one of Pike's last requests was honored and a small white marble stone was placed on his grave containing the simple legend:

ALBERT PIKE
Born: December 29, 1809
Died: April 2, 1891
Vixit
Laborum Ejus Superstites Sunt Fructus

ON THE TRAIL OF A CONTROVERSY

My quest after Albert Pike has been a long and sometimes devious one, though it promised to be simple, in the beginning. He was a huge man, and such were his physical characteristics, his appetites, his excesses, that he left a clear trail wherever he went and so impressed his contemporaries with his presence that they recorded their thoughts. He was not a man to be ignored; he had neither the ability nor the desire to move without being seen and heard. I charted his movements; I followed him through Little Rock and Fort Smith and into Oklahoma; I retraced his steps on the battlefield at Pea Ridge (an undeveloped area that has changed little in the past century); I followed the trail of his retreating Indians to observe the country he passed through and to match my impressions with his.

I tracked him through time to map the trajectory of his career, and listed all the dates and places, all the significant events, the milestones of his life, to connect him with the time in which he lived. Once this was finished, I tried to chart his mind and its growth from cocky youth to frustrated middle age and lonely senescence. Here the going was not so easy; the path was vague, ill marked at times, ambiguous at others. Sometimes, after wading for hours and days and weeks through contemporary accounts, descriptions, bombast and rhetoric, arguments, reports, and letters, I would think that I was about to solve the riddle of Pike, to distill the essence of the man, to discover the force that motivated his life and prompted his actions. But then, always, he would elude me. He would do or say the unpredictable; he would shatter the character I had created for him; he would reverse or contradict himself in a moment. More than one story about him that seemed to be per-

fectly true proved to be legend. Finally, regretfully, I had to concede the point. He was first of all a human being, a man full of vitality and inconsistencies, a man like all other men who try to make the best of things, who stumble and grope and make blind mistakes and reap blind luck. He was heroic, cowardly, noble, base, tolerant, bigoted. He ate and slept and begat children and survived his times and grew old and died. He sought his own view of immortality and he feared the grave.

I could find no tidy moral to be drawn from his life; no convenient summing up was possible. So, in the end, I could do nothing more than record and reconstruct and let him enact the episodes of his life all over again, trying to interpret his occasional irrationalities and those incidents that have been clouded by time and legend. I take full responsibility for these personal interpretations and any resultant errors.

I have had considerable help in the writing of this book. I owe much to the knowing and indefatigable ladies who conduct the North Arkansas Regional Library at Harrison, Arkansas, Mrs. Ruth Cunningham and Mrs. Evelyn Griffith, who often went out of their way to help me by tracking down obscure volumes for my use. Otto Ernest Rayburn, one of the outstanding collectors of Arkansas material, permitted me the use of his extensive private library, and Vance Randolph, the folklorist, gave me much time in his Eureka Springs home and contributed some hitherto unpublished material on Pike. Frank Baker, of Quapaw, Oklahoma, gave me much helpful material on Pike from his Masonic library. Mrs. Jeanne Cook and Mrs. Helen Gorman were helpful in guiding me through the vast amounts of source material in the Oklahoma Historical Society. I am greatly indebted to William F. McLaughlin of Fayetteville, Arkansas, for aiding me in a search for Pike references in connection with the Civil War. Without his astute knowledge of the western border battles and his library of rare volumes, my task would have been much more complicated. Too, I am indebted to the understanding librarians at the University of Arkansas Library in Fayetteville and the Arkansas History Commission in Little Rock for their help. More than any other, I am indebted to my wife, Wanda, who has been forced to listen, to read, to study, and to forbear for the long months this book has been in the making.

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The primary sources for this book have been the writings of Pike himself, the prolific outpouring of his pen on every subject imaginable, his fragmentary autobiographies, his essays, his descriptive works and, to some extent, his poems. Fragments of his manuscript "Autobiography" have appeared in *The New Age*, and he also contributed another brief biography to John Hallum for his *Biographical and Pictorial History of Arkansas*. He contributed a number of personal anecdotes to Porter's *Anecdotes of the Arkansas Bar . . .*, and to a large degree the essays he wrote to read to Vinnie Ream are autobiographical. A large amount of autobiographical material is contained in his letters. These were always quite lengthy, especially those in which he felt compelled to defend himself. Fortunately, there are a great many of them.

There is one extant biography of Pike in print, written by Frederick William Allsopp and published in Little Rock in 1928. I have drawn on it only for anecdotes about Pike that reveal his character and that are not recorded elsewhere. Allsopp was a great admirer of Pike, and collaborated with his daughter, Lillian Pike Roome, to publish a volume of Pike's poetry. Allsopp's biography is neither objective nor definitive; he does not pretend that it is. His book was written to laud Pike as a Mason, as a humanitarian, as a statesman, and as a writer. Consequently, Allsopp is not critical. But his work is important in that it reflects a prevalent attitude toward Pike in the Masonic world, and records many of the beneficent legends about him.

Two manuscript biographies of Pike, both dissertations written toward a Ph.D. degree, have been considerably more helpful in that they have enabled me to pinpoint the landmarks in Pike's life. The first of these is by Susan Riley, written in her graduate work at Peabody College in Nashville, but it carries Pike only as far as 1860. The second is by Dr. Walter Lee Brown, one of the more proficient of the Arkansas historians, who completed his work on Pike at the University of Texas in 1955. Brown's dissertation is by far the most definitive work ever done on Pike, and it has been especially helpful in clearing up some of those areas in which the facts have been obscured by the legends.

CHAPTER NOTES

AN OUTING IN AUTUMNAL WOODS: A FOREWORD

The story of Pike's outing near Fort Smith was told by Colonel Marcellus L. Davis and quoted in Allsopp's FORA, I, 346. The clergyman who calls Pike "the Viceregent of Lucifer" is Montague Summers. The charge is made in his WABM, 199.

ONE . . . PORTRAIT OF AN IMPROPER BOSTONIAN

The facts concerning Pike's childhood come from his writings and from Allsopp, Brown, and Riley. I have relied on Allsopp's account of Pike's uncle. Allsopp has it that Pike spurned Harvard's proffered degree; although this is in keeping with Pike's character and is based on Pike's diatribe against Harvard in the *Memphis Appeal* in 1867, Brown has proof that Pike did indeed accept the honorary degree.

TWO . . . PORTRAIT OF A POETIC PRAIRIE TRAVELER

This entire chapter comes from two of Pike's descriptive accounts, from his PSAPWITWC and his NOAJITP. I checked Pike's New Mexican adventures against various writers who visited Santa Fe during the same period, and have used supplementary material from Webb's *Adventures.* For the background of Bill Williams, see Wells' TSOOBW. It is little more than a pamphlet, but it has some interesting material in it.

THREE . . . PORTRAIT OF A FRONTIER SCHOOLMASTER

Pike described his arrival in Fort Smith in his "Autobiography" written for inclusion in Hallum's work. The background for the Fort Smith area comes from Foreman's IAP. John Rogers is discussed and characterized in Vaught's CJRFOFS. The social stratification of Fort Smith and the colorful stories about Elias Rector are recorded in many places, but John Gould Fletcher's *Arkansas* is the most complete. Pike's experience in the flood and his description of frontier conditions are contained in his LIA and his LFA, No. 1, although the conclusion regarding his sentiments is my own. The two legends, the romantic triangle and the dash to Fort Towson, are from Allsopp's AP. The Sam Houston episode is based on Pike's letter in the Western Superintendency Files, Retired Classified, 1833. The otter-skin incident comes from Pike's refutation of the charges in the *Advocate,* March 7, April 4 and 11, 1834. Pike's encounter with the old fiddler and the shooting match come from Pike's LFA, No. II.

The analysis of Pike's poems is my own, although I have been influenced in my judgment by John Gould Fletcher, who demolishes Pike's poetry with exceptional skill and great relish in his *Arkansas.* The poems come from issues of the *Advocate* in April, May, and June of 1835; from

Roome's APP; "Los Tiempos" is from Riley, LWAP, 185. Allsopp also uses some of Pike's poems for his chapter headings, and certain of these I have not seen printed elsewhere.

The first version of the "Intercepted Letters" story is from Allsopp; the second, and correct, version is from Brown, published in his APAE and APFEIA in the AHQ, Spring and Winter, 1951. The Crittenden ham story is from Herndon, AOA.

FOUR . . . PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN ON HIS WAY UP

Newspaper quotes are from the *Advocate* for October 16, 30; November 6, 13, 20, 27; December 18, 1833; and from the *Arkansas Gazettes* of the same period. Whether Pike actually planned a strategy against Woodruff or whether he was merely goaded into spontaneous attacks is, of course, open to question. I personally believe it was all calculated, that Pike balanced the weakness of the opposition before he opened his attack. A full account of this battle is contained in Pope's EDIA.

Two subjective views of Little Rock in the mid 1830's are given by the German Gerstäcker in his WS . . . and by the Englishman Featherstonehaugh in his ETTSS, published in 1844. Pike's musical and social accomplishments are from Allsopp. His orations are dealt with in Baker's APCSOA, and the fourth of July festivities are reported in the *Advocate*, July 18, 1834. Pike's study of law is covered in his "Autobiography," and the advertisement for the opening of his Little Rock law office appears in the *Advocate*, August 22, 1834.

Pike's poem "To Mary" is from Roome, APP, 223. I have drawn on Fletcher's characterization of Mary Ann Hamilton because it adequately explains the mental illness she suffered in later years. At one time Fletcher owned and lived in the Pike mansion in Little Rock and was an assiduous collector of Pike data. The interpretation of Pike's motives in this romance is, once again, my own.

The battle with the critics is from Hallum's BPHA where all the correspondence involved is quoted extensively. There are a number of versions of "The Fine Arkansas Gentleman," but the variations are only minor ones, consisting, in some cases, of deletions of topical matter that might be obscure to a later reader. This version is from Roome, APP, 331–337.

The statehood fight comes from documents reprinted in AOA, from Pope's EDIA, and from Jesse Turner's "The Constitution of 1836."

FIVE . . . PORTRAIT OF A ROUGH-AND-READY JUSTICE

The anecdote of the disreputable lawyers is from Featherstonehaugh, ETTSS. The complete text of Amos Kuykendall's speech is from Brown, AP. The version of the wolf-bill fight is a combination of accounts contained in Pope's EDIA and in AOA. Pike's anecdotes are from his writings for Porter's TBBOA and Hallum's BAPHOA. Material on Chester Ashley is from Rose's

"Chester Ashley" in POAHA. The two Arrington works mentioned by Pike are *Illustrated Lives and Adventures of the Desperadoes of the New World; Containing an Account of the Different Modes of Lynching . . . etc. etc.* and *The Lives and Adventures of the Desperadoes of the Southwest: Containing an Account of the Duelist and Dueling.* They were both written under the pseudonym Charles Summerfield. Additional material on Pike and the law is from Hallum's TDOAOLOSBTC and his BABOA. The Real Estate Bank case is from AOA and Brown, AP.

SIX . . . PORTRAIT OF A CAPTAIN IN A SWALLOW-TAILED COAT

The torchlight parade account is from Pope, EDIA and AOA. The discussion of Pike's influence on Poe is based on William O'Donnell's "Did Pike Influence Poe?" in the *Book News Monthly* quoted in Allsopp, AP, 141. My version of Pike's Little Rock military experiences is from EDIA and AOA, and the uniform descriptions are from Fletcher's *Arkansas.* For a different version of Pike and his Little Rock Guards, see Brown, AP. The firing of the cannon and the military ball in John Ross' honor come from a firsthand account by Charles E. Nash in his "Southern Stories," quoted in COA.

March routes for the Arkansas volunteers are from AOA, and much of the material after San Antonio is from Gregg's WTAV. . . . Official reports of the expedition are in SED, 32, 31st Cong., 1 Sess., 558, and HORED, 60, 30th Cong., 520. The episode of the soldier and the general's tent is from McKnight's LIA. I have not run across it elsewhere. The battle strategy at Buena Vista is from SED, 1, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., 503; from Carleton's BOBV; from Stephenson's TATMW; from R. S. Henry's TSOTMW and W. S. Henry's CSOTWWM. Pike's poem "The Battle of Buena Vista" is from Roome, APP, 177–183.

According to Allsopp, Pike met Robert E. Lee at Buena Vista and corresponded with him after the war, but I have been unable to find any trace of this exchange of letters or any reference by Pike or Lee to such a meeting. Allsopp also reports that Pike's granddaughter, Mrs. Roscoe M. Packard, heard that R. E. Lee told Yvon Pike that Pike had graciously offered his horse to Lee when Lee's mount was shot out from under him. I have been unable to find any other reference to this incident. It is probably a legend.

Pike's duel with Roane comes from the eyewitness account of surgeon James A. Dibrell, which was written for the *Arkansas Gazette* and reprinted in Pope, EDIA, 281–283. For a more popular version of the duel, see Davis' TA.

SEVEN . . . PORTRAIT OF A DOMESTIC LEGEND

Hathaway's description is from "Travels in the Southwest" in the *Magazine of Travel,* 1857, quoted in COA. The contemporary quote is from Miller, TACN, 148. The poem "Invitation" is from Roome, APP, 231–235.

The legends concerning this poem and Pike's wife are told by Fletcher, who heard them when he was a small child. The "keen-eyed" description was made by a correspondent in Hartford, Connecticut, and quoted by Lobingier, APTCL. Pike's Memphis speech is from the *Gazette*, December 13, 1949; his remarks at the Little Rock convention appeared in the *Gazette* on July 30, 1852; his Baton Rouge address was published in pamphlet form in 1855. The national background of the Know-Nothings is from Randall, TCWAR; the Know-Nothing movement in Arkansas is from AOA with Pike's "Credo" reprinted on page 157.

Pike's Masonic career has been well documented by a number of writers. Sources used here include Allsopp's AP, De Menil's AP, Lobingier's "The Supreme Council . . . ," Pouler's "Albert Pike 33°" and White's "Albert Pike 33°." The last four are articles from *The New Age*. A specialized background of American Masonry is provided by "Monroe, Buchanan, Clay, Masons All," Mueller's "Early American Freemasonry," Bissonett's "Origin of Freemasonry," and Harris' "Andrew Jackson." These too are articles from *The New Age*. The "anti-Mason movement" is discussed at length in Bowers' TPBOTJP. The devil-worship stories about Pike are from Randolph's UOFB. The brass band and cannon legends are from Allsopp's FORA.

EIGHT . . . PORTRAIT OF AN INDIAN LAWYER

Pike's "Tulip Female Seminary Address" was published as a pamphlet in Little Rock in 1852. The missing-book advertisement is from Fletcher who quotes the original newspaper source. Much of the material on this phase of Pike's legal career is taken from the three Lobingier articles. Lobingier was a practicing attorney at the time he made his study, and he is the outstanding authority on this era of Pike's life. Other data are from Brown, AP. Allsopp includes a lengthy discussion of the legends concerning the disappearance of the money.

NINE . . . PORTRAIT OF A MAN ON THE FENCE

Rector's speech is quoted in AOA. Background for this period of Arkansas history comes from a number of sources, notably Thomas' AIWAR. Pike's views on slavery are from his LTTPOTNS, SOPBOF, TEATR and TOCPQBALO. The circular on free slaves which Pike signed is contained in Taylor, NSIA.

TEN . . . PORTRAIT OF A VOLUNTEER

Pike's orders are contained in Wor, Series I, Vol. III. Pike's attitude toward his appointment as commissioner is a matter of personal interpretation. The situation confronting him is discussed in Dale and Wardell, HOA, Gittinger, TFOTSOO, and Dale and Litton, CC. Pike's journey to Park Hill and the attitude of the Indians along the way are from Eaton's JRATCI, which also contains excellent source material on Ross. The Cherokee situation is from Royce, TCNOI. McCulloch's participation

in the affair is covered in his reports to the Confederate Secretary of War, and discussed by Bullock in his TCSOGBM. Pike's journey is covered in his report printed in MOTP. The incident of the wrestling match is from "Essays to Vinnie" quoted by Brown. Monaghan's CWOTWB includes Pike's bill of fare. Cooper's move against the loyalist Indians is taken from his report in WOR, Series I, Vol. VIII. Pike's message to Opothleyehola is from TOHL . . . 7 Oct., 1861.

ELEVEN . . . PORTRAIT OF A RELUCTANT GENERAL

Such was the nature of the Civil War and the disposition of the men who fought it that there is a wealth of documentary material on every phase of the battle at Pea Ridge. The Confederate correspondence and official reports of the battle are almost complete in WOR, VIII. All reports quoted are from that remarkable collection. Particularly helpful are the battle reports filed by Van Dorn, Pike, Curtis, and Sigel. The conditions in Arkansas preceding the battle are from Thomas, AIWAR. The letters to Davis and his reply in the McCulloch-Price controversy are in WOR, VIII, and supplementary material is provided by one of the participants, Gen. N. B. Pearce, in his "Price's Campaign of 1861," PAHA. Snead also gives a firsthand account in his "First Year of the War in Missouri" in BALOTCW and his TFFM. Additional details on Pea Ridge have come from many of the sources listed in the bibliography, the most helpful of which have been the diaries and reports of Major John Henry Brown in Lempke's "The Paths of Glory—" in AHQ; Maury's "Recollections of the Elkhorn Campaign" in SHSP; Moody's BOPROET; Tunnard's ASR . . . ; Gammage's TCTBATBF; and Van Dorn's reminiscences, ASH. . . . The atrocity quotes are from Brown and Allsopp.

TWELVE . . . PORTRAIT OF A FRUSTRATED GENERAL and THIRTEEN . . . PORTRAIT OF A RECLUSE

The quote on conditions in northern Texas is from Stone's *Brokenburn*, 223. Pike's daughter Lillian, in the preface to her APP, tells of her father's bitterness toward the intellectual inferiors commanding him. Life at Fort McCulloch is depicted in Woodruff, WTLG. The Union invasion of Indian Territory is from Abel, TAIAPITCW, and Britton's TUIBITCW. The Greasy Cove episode is from material supplied by Otto Ernest Rayburn of Eureka Springs, Arkansas, who once lived in the Greasy Cove area and taught school there. Pike's efforts toward reinstatement come from the collection of letters and documents reprinted in Allsopp, AP.

FOURTEEN . . . PORTRAIT OF A COMPULSIVE SCHOLAR

The legend of Pike and the Ku Klux Klan is from Fletcher's *Arkansas*. Pike's later years are from his autobiography and from letters collected by Allsopp for inclusion in his AP. Some of the Vinnie Ream material was collected in an interview with Mrs. Vinnie Ream Freeman of Eureka

Springs, Arkansas. Brown explores the Vinnie Ream relationship thoroughly in his AP. Allsopp omits this part of Pike's life but does include some letters which must have been written to or about Vinnie Ream. The bust of Pike which Vinnie Ream sculptured can be seen in the Confederate Memorial Room of the Oklahoma Historical Society. I have used Boyden's bibliography of Pike's writings to detail the scope of his scholarship during his latter years.

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