

The Legends of Cheyenne Mountain

AT the very doorway to the Rockies, is old Cheyenne. It rears its strange form high above the surrounding plains. Silent, stately. Its base is some 7,000 feet above sea level and its head and shoulders are often crowned with clouds.

Cheyenne mountain is a magnificent gatepost, marking the entrance to the great Front range. Covering its body to the north are the scars of many trails leading far below to the great canons, in whose depths were fought many savage Indian battles, while another trail, more modern,

sleeping lizard, with its nose and head crouched flat to the ground pointing toward the south; its shoulder blades rising to the clouds and its hips thrown up very high by the drawing up of the hind legs, while running far off to the north is the huge tail which winds west into the canon and is lost.

The first legend runs far back to a time when all the country which is today a vast plain, was an inland sea. The great spirits were appealed to by the prayers of the parents of mankind to remove this water. In answer the spirits sent from heaven the Lizard Dragon, "Thirst." He drank and

recently known pestilence, and all diseases were healed. Then these waters subsided and came only from a dozen or more holes, only to the surface. So we have the legend story of the Manitou Springs of today.

The other legend is of a more recent date. Some attribute it to the Utes, the Cheyennes and the Navajoes. It matters not.

It's a good story.

Right in the center of Cheyenne mountain, at a point which outlines the hip joint of the lizard, may be seen two tooth like rocks. In reality their heads rise fully 50 feet above their



CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN FROM COLORADO SPRINGS.

crawls and climbs as it leads up and over its back, then down to the famous gold camp of Cripple Creek.

Two legends are told of this great mountain, which come to us far back from "that mystic race Aztlan, who, ages ago had descended into the valley (of Mexico), like an inundation from the north; the race whose religion was founded upon credulity; the race full of chivalry, but horribly governed by crafty priesthood."

These legends were handed down in turn to a time when the Indians repeated them to the Spanish priests and they reduced them to manuscript form to enrich the archives of Madrid and the capital of Cortez's new Spain.

These legends will always stamp old Cheyenne mountain, even to the educated mind, as something which at one time had life and being, and individualize it from its rugged companions as a mammoth historical monument, whose rocky, horny body, in the minds of one tribe of Indians was to be worshipped as the great Lizard Dragon, "Thirst," and by other tribes of Indians as the grave of the devil.

Against the clear, cloudless sky the form of the mountain is revealed in clear outline. It looks like a great

drank, and the waters disappeared to a great extent—still he drank. Then the children of mankind became greedy for the lands which the great beast had reclaimed and fought among themselves. This angered the great spirits and they ordered the dragon to return to the gates of heaven. It was too late. He was heavy with the waters of the inland seas. The great brute struggled to rise but succeeded in reaching a certain height, only to fall to earth with a broken neck, from which oozed great streams of blood which further enriched an already wonderful soil. The children of mankind still ignoring the gods by their continued battles of greed and murder, were then destroyed in great numbers, by the disease caused from the rotting of the huge dead lizard. Then their wise men prayed long and loud to the great spirits, promising in all ways to be good, honest and just, and the spirits believing, turned the Lizard Dragon to rock and then they told the parents of mankind that if they kept their promises their home at the base of the mountain should be a place of healing for all tribes. As a pledge they caused great springs of water to flow all over the land which had so

base. It appears that the Indians god, Manitou, had one day an altercation with the devil regarding the possession of the vast northern limits of El Dorado, and a violent dispute resulted. Manitou claimed it was God's country, the devil in turn claimed it was his. Words followed words, and at last they were engaged in a great fight, the like of which had never been known. During it, the Indian medicine men sacrificed man and beast and perpetrated the most horrible torture on themselves. At last Manitou overcame the devil and slew him, and carrying his body to the top of Cheyenne mountain, hurled it into one of the deepest canons. There it reposes today, the only visible portion of it being the two horns, which crop out just at the hips of the lizard. They are not rocks, but the horns of the devil, so the Indians will tell you.

So much for legends.

No white man who has heard of them ever looks at old Cheyenne with its never changing shape, its ever changing color, without feeling there is something almost heroically human in that great sleeping hulk.

Henry Russell Wray.

COLO SPRINGS
Gazette
7/31/1904 p. 13
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