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Cape Girardeau Oct 26th

[28]

My Dear Brother, I arrived at this place about ten days since but until today I have not been able to write you. I have had an attack of "Cough and Aque" but am now something better. I found here one letter from you and one from Sister Dehorne and have had one from you since. I would gladly furnish you for your end, but my "even-croaking" misapprehension, my manner of writing, and am now in a most proper and convenient situation for so doing. But I intend if possible to refrain out of compassion to myself. I would however have you understand that your letter drove me into my first Ague fit from the consequences of which I am not likely soon to recover. You will probably expect in this letter some account of my adventures since I wrote you which I will give as well as I can though it is with regret and reluctance that I think of any of the transactions in which I have been engaged during the summer past. I am full of complaining and bit twigs against Mr. Long on account of the manner in which he has conducted the Expedition and I cannot rail against him, I can say nothing. We have travelled near 2000 miles through an unexplored and highly interesting country and have returned almost as much strangers to it as before. I have been allowed neither time to examine and collect, or means to transport ~~any~~ plants or minerals. We have been hurried through the country as if our sole object had been, as it was expressed in the orders which we received at starting "to bring the Expedition to as speedy a termination as possible." After stating this you can judge how tickled I am with the thoughts of the little I have done and the nothing which I have to say for myself. I have however seen many strange things. I have moreover seen the Rocky Mountains and observed among their eternal snows in the middle of July which every man has not done. I have also lived many weeks without bread or salt, gone hungry for a long time, eaten tainted horse flesh, owls, hawks, prairie dog and many other uncleanly things, the like of

Cape Girardeau
Oct 29
1820
Dr. John James
Albany N.Y.



Cape Girardeau
Oct 26
No 16

to do, and to record for the amusement of the publick seemed to be the sole ambition of our scientific Commanders. I gave you before I left the Council Bluffs some account of our intended route which we have in part accomplished here. We found the distance up the Platte to the mountains about 600 miles the course due west. The country passed in this journey which occupied about four weeks is an unvaried woodless plain with a poor soil but covered with grass and fuel by count up millions of buffalo. We were often unable to procure wood enough to cook our provisions, using buffalo dung (which is precisely similar to that of the domestic ox) as a substitute. For this it answers well in dry weather. About the beginning of July we arrived in sight of the rocky mountains. All of our party except myself mistook things during the first half days ride in which they were in sight for banks of clouds. They rise abruptly from the naked ^{plateau} country to an immense elevation. Our party avoided them as if they had been abodes of infection and death, the gates of destruction. Our scientific and enthusiastic commanders encamped on a plain of sand at the distance of 24 miles from the base of the mountains and informed me that he allowed me three days to make what examination I wished among them. I remonstrated, requesting a longer time but no more could be allowed me. Not one of the party would accompany me, according by with two exceptions. I left the camp before light on the 3rd of July with an infinitude of exertion and toil I arrived the next day a little before night at the summit of what has been considered the highest Peak in this part of the range. The snow extended according to my estimate 1,600 feet down from the summit. This peak had among the french hunters, some of whom we had along as interpreters and among the Indians the reputation of being inaccessible. My ascent of it was accordingly thought an exploit by our party. My want of time deprived me of much ^{pleasure} which I should otherwise have found in this task.

50
I had a few other opportunities of making short excursions into the mountains during which I gained some information. We were in sight of the mountains, travelling south along their ^{mountain} base, during all which time the anxiety or other motive, never induced our Commander to step his foot within their stupendous openings. After descending the Arkansas a small distance, Maj. Long with Mr. Deale and myself separated from the rest of the party and accompanied by seven men went still further on to the south in search of red river. After a week's travel we fell upon a small stream running to the S.E. and as we had no time nor wish to make the examination necessary to furnish us with a knowledge of the country and its streams, we called it the head of red river. After travelling down it near 1000 miles, we found that it was a branch of Arkansas. Thus to my no small mortification we found we had been toiling near one half the summer in the attainment of a miserable blunder. — But to my present situation and prospects. Our Boat is at this place waiting a rise of water which we hope will enable us to take her up the Ohio to some more interesting place. The Gentlemen of the Expedition except myself have received a small part of their pay and are going to Philadelphia to winter. Maj. Long has left me with 28 dollars ragged and destitute to winter as I care in the western country. At present I think it doubtful whether I shall be actively employed during the next summer. I have given up as far as I can perceive entire satisfaction in the discharge of my duties and feel confident of being retained in my present situation as long as I choose it or until the Expedition is disbanded. My pay is now to come at last and then I can write you a more pleasant letter than is in my power at present. I cannot now tell you where to direct to me during the winter. As soon as I am settled I shall let you know and beg you to write me often. My love to all — Yours &c E. James