

One of the first to revive these tramontane expeditions was General Ashley, of Missouri, a man whose courage and achievements in the prosecution of his enterprises have rendered him famous in the Far West. In conjunction with Mr. Henry, already mentioned, he established a post on the banks of the Yellowstone River, in 1822, and in the following year pushed a resolute band of trappers across the mountains to the banks of the Green River or Colorado of the West, often known by the Indian name of the Seeds-ke-dee Agie.\* This attempt was followed up and sustained by others, until in 1825 a footing was secured, and a complete system of trapping organized beyond the mountains.

It is difficult to do justice to the courage, fortitude, and perseverance of the pioneers of the fur trade, who conducted these early expeditions, and first broke their way through a wilderness where everything was calculated to deter and dismay them. They had to traverse the most dreary and desolate mountains, and barren and trackless wastes, uninhabited by man, or occasionally infested by predatory and cruel savages. They knew nothing of the country beyond the verge of their horizon, and had to gather information as they wandered. They beheld volcanic plains stretching around them, and ranges of mountains piled up to the clouds and glistening with eternal frost; but knew nothing of their defiles, nor how they were to be penetrated or traversed. They launched themselves in frail canoes on rivers, without knowing whither their swift currents would carry them, or what rocks, and shoals, and rapids, they might encounter in their course. They had to be continually on the alert, too, against the mountain tribes, who beset every defile, laid ambuscades in their path, or attacked them in their night encampments; so that, of the hardy bands of trappers that first entered into these regions, three-fifths are said to have fallen by the hands of savage foes.

In this wild and warlike school a number of leaders have

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\* *i.e.*, The Prairie Hen River. Agie in the Crow language signifies river.