

**LEGENDS OF THE PIKE'S
PEAK
REGION: THE SACRED
MYTHS OF THE MANITOU**

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Legends of the Pike's Peak Region: The Sacred Myths of the Manitou by Ernest Whitney & William S. Alexander & Thomas C. Parrish

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ERNEST WHITNEY & WILLIAM S. ALEXANDER & THOMAS C. PARRISH

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The Sacred Myths of the Manitou

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HOWEVER uncouth they may be, the myths and legends of early nations, like the poetry of later, give the highest and truest exponents of their characters, and preserve with a singular fidelity the very essence of their daily lives, their fears and hopes, their assumptions and intuitions. It is proverbial

that the songs of a people are stronger than their laws; and the myths and traditions embodying the sentiments upon which national character, national religion, are founded, are more powerful than the songs, which they inspire. A ballad of the people, a bit of folk lore, may teach us more than whole chapters of history; we can hardly understand history without such lights.

A century ago Scotland was to England what Bœotia was to cultured Athens, proverbially the land of the uninteresting, the kingdom of dullness and prose; yet every lake and stream, every glen and rock wore the halo of poetry, the glamour of romance; and when the Wizard of the North drew aside the veil of prejudice, the eyes of all England were opened as to visions, and the "land of the mountain and the flood" became as familiar and dear as the favored haunts of home. Scott had discovered a new world, new even to the dwellers in it. Gathering the tangled, distorted fragments of tradition floating about his native hills and dales, traditions full of romance, yet despised or belittled as trifles

even by those from whom he learned them, he gave to the world such pleasures of entertainment as it had seldom known before. And he gave to his country fame, and the intellectual stimulus which led to its prosperity. Thenceforth Scotland was one of the beloved spots of the earth. Our historian, Prescott, states that after the publication of "The Lady of the Lake" the post-horse duty rose to an extraordinary degree in Scotland from the eagerness of travelers to visit the localities of the poem." Another has said that indeed the race of tourists was called into existence by the pen of Scott.

What those neglected legends were to Scotland, Colorado's are to her. We scan the glories of her scenery, surpassing the marvels of the Alps, the beauties of the Rhine, and lament the absence of tradition to give them the charm of Old World scenes. The tourist notes this seeming sterility with a touch of prejudice. "But where are your traditions?" is the final question; and the answer is, "We have none; our history is too recent." Yet the romantic Rhine cliffs, or even

the land of sphinx and pyramid, did not rise above the ocean until its waves had beaten for ages at the base of Rocky Mountain peaks. This is the Old World, Europe and India are of the New. And if nature in fantastic play has made this the world's wonderland, much more has man through centuries written and rewritten its fading pages with the mysteries of immemorial myths, legends, and traditions. From Pike's Peak to Popocatepetl the land is a palimpsest, dotted with ruins of remotest antiquity, the relics of a people whose records are replete with poetry and strange romance. Their manuscripts enrich the archives of Mexico and Madrid, and yet we learn but little of them. They moulder in the missions of the suspicious Spanish priests, or among the mystic treasures of the Pueblos, and are decaying unread. When we come northward to the paths of later pioneers, to lands of less civilized races, where history lives by oral transmission only, hardly a legend but has lapsed into oblivion. Those only can live which are united to something concrete and enduring, or which are so vitally interwoven that the life of