

HIGHEST POINTS ON EARTH

By
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THE NAPES NEEDLE

GEOGRAPHIC exploration has proved fascinating during the last half century.

Lofty mountains in the various quarters of our globe present a great field. Modern mountaineering dates from the first ascent of Mont Blanc, in 1786—and for more than half a century ascents of importance were confined almost exclusively to the Alps. Another epoch-making date was 1857, in which year was founded the English Alpine club, destined to become the prototype of more than eight score similar organizations, represented in nearly every civilized land, societies whose leaders generally turned to "the playground of Europe" for the enjoyment of their chosen recreation. Hence it is not strange that in the next quarter of a century Switzerland and Tyrol had become hackneyed, with scarcely an important peak left unclimbed.

In 1868 Messrs. Freshfield, Tucker and Moore, of the English Alpine club, visited the Caucasus and made the first ascent of Elbruz (18,447) at the westerly end of Kasbek (16,546) at the easterly end of the great central chain. They may perhaps be regarded as the pioneers of a different type of mountain exploration and certainly as the revealers, if not discoverers, of a new "playground" on the confines of Europe and Asia, destined to witness in the last two decades of the century the coming of experts of different nationalities, who soon would leave, as in the Alps, no remote valley unvisited and no proud summit unvanquished.

A glance at the map of the world shows upon the several continents vast systems of mountain ranges or striking instances of isolated peaks. To note only the principal ones, we have here upon our western hemisphere that belt of varying width which, rising to markedly different altitudes, extends from the Arctic ocean to Cape Horn—a distance of hardly less than 10,000 miles. In Alaska it attains 18,100 feet in Mount St. Elias, about 19,000 in Mount Logan, a comparatively near neighbor, and over 20,000 in Mount McKinley, some degrees nearer the Arctic circle. In South America, from the equator southward, it soars yet higher in such giants as Chimborazo, Huascarán, Sorata and Aconcagua. It is here that the western continent reaches its culminating altitudes.

In Asia a similarly irregular and much interrupted chain runs in a general southeasterly direction from near the black sea. Beginning with the Caucasus and passing by way of the Elburz mountains, several minor ranges and the Hindu Kush to the mighty Himalayas, which for a distance of over 1,200 miles form the frontier of India, it extends to the sources of the Brahmaputra and the Irawadi; great spurs like the Kuen Lun mountains and the trans-Himalayan range, lately explored by Sven Hedin, strike eastward from it. This system has a reach of perhaps 4,000 miles and in it (as it in Mount Everest, 29,002 feet, or some loftier peak, possibly caught sight of once or twice by men of the occident?) we have the crown of the world. Yet farther north, in central Asia, another notable range, very recently explored, must also be mentioned, for in it rise peaks of truly Himalayan proportions—the Tian-Shan mountains, with Khan Tengri, some 23,500 feet in altitude.

Compared with these great systems such limited regions as the European Alps sink into insignificance, and yet for inspiring grandeur and variety and beauty of form, also as a school for the art of climbing on crag and snow, these readily accessible peaks will always retain their prestige.

The vast continent of Africa presents no corresponding mountain system. The Atlas range in the north is of minor importance; for, while its summits surpass 13,000 feet, they are devoid of alpine features. Yet almost upon the equator, east of the median line of the continent and in the neighborhood of the great lakes at the sources of the Nile, a complex of snowy peaks, Ruwenzori, and yet farther east and south isolated giants like Kenia and Kilimanjaro rise to altitudes far surpassing Europe's long-boasted "monarch of mountains." Mount Blanc measures 15,781 feet above the sea. Kenia is 18,620 feet; Kilimanjaro 19,680, while nine of the chief summits of Ruwenzori measure between 15,800 and 16,815 feet.

The isles of the sea are not without their claimants for honor. If, in our extreme deference for crowns of snow, we pass by the Hawaiian volcano Mauna Kea (13,953), prima of the peaks of the Pacific, and Fuji-San (12,365), the sacred mountain of Japan, and its compeers, we shall find on the southern island of New Zealand, at a latitude of its hemisphere about that of our White Moun-



CREST OF SINIOLCHUM IN THE HIMALAYAS 23,000 Ft.

tains of New England, a splendid range of glacier-bearing peaks, the Southern Alps, culminating in Mount Cook or Aorangi (12,349), a mighty pinnacle of rock and ice. On the island of New Guinea also there are mountains of even greater height, a peak of the Charles Louis range, in the Dutch dominions, being credited with an elevation of 16,730 feet. In the Atlantic the Pico de Teyde, on the island of Tenerife, lifts the summit of its graceful volcanic cone 12,182 feet. Spitsbergen, in the Arctic, with its peaks rising 3,000 to 4,000 feet, one of which was climbed by Scoresby in 1818, has invited several able climbers since 1896.

But most recent geographical news presents the polar regions themselves as a field for alpinism. Peary, in his last expedition (1905), ascended a low peak (2,050) and now among the interesting details of Lieut. Shackleton's remarkable explorations in the Antarctic we hear of the discovery, in near proximity to the pole, of a lofty plateau upon which his party attained an altitude of 10,500 and inferred that the southern end of the axis of our planet is in this table land.

To the average reader, unfamiliar with the climber's craft, mere altitude is likely to be the impressive fact in a comparative appreciation of the difficulty and danger of mountain ascents; yet a table of heights by no means conveys adequate information upon these points. Aside from the serious hardship occasioned to nearly all persons at great altitudes, apparently by the diminished quantity of oxygen, even the loftiest summits might prove of comparatively easy access, once the base were reached. Judging from his outline and snows, as shown in Signor Sella's telephotographic view of the peak from the Chunjerma pass, Mount Everest itself would be set down as an easy mountain; that is, as offering no serious technical difficulties to the skilled climber. Mont Blanc was first climbed by an untrained Chamonix peasant, alone, in a two days' trip. For difficulty and danger, this monarch of the Alps is far surpassed by many lesser peaks—many, by several of the "aiguilles" (needles) of its own neighborhood—the Blaitiere, Grands Charnoz, Dra, Grepon and Dames Anglaises; yet these crags are only from 11,300 to 12,300 feet high, with their bases high up on the outreaching spurs of the great white mountain.

It was as late as 1901, seven years after his remarkable campaign in which he had accomplished in one month eight of the most difficult climbing feats of the Alps, four years after his conquest of Mount St. Elias, and the year following his notable success in securing the "farthest north" for his polar expedition, that Prince Luigi di Savoia made the first ascent of the second in height of the Dames Anglaises and christened it "Yolanda Peak." Later he made the first ascent of the Aiguille Sans Nom. It was with climbs of this type in mind that the historiographer of the Alaskan expedition could say concerning this ascent of Mount St. Elias, whose conquest required nearly 40 days' journey over glaciers and neve nearly the entire distance from the shore of an inhospitable sea to the altitude of 18,100 feet, that "if the winning of St. Elias only meant the ascent of the terminal cone . . . it might be compared with many of the easier climbs in our own Alps."

In determining, then, from a consideration of the hardship and sacrifice, what compara-

ble credit shall be accorded to those who bring to us the knowledge of the world's mysterious heights, we must consider not only the inherent difficulties offered by the type of mountain ascended, but its remoteness from civilization, the character of the country to be traversed in reaching its base, the height of snow line, the climate, whether temperate or affording such contrasts as those report-

last bygone of their lost associates. Wooley succeeded in scaling the fateful summit. It was in 1859 and 1860 that Signor Sella made his visits, combining, like Dechy, photography with exploration, yet ascending more peaks and securing that superb collection of views later used in collaboration with Mr. Freshfield.

Doubtless the most impressive of all the Caucasian giants in its aspiring grandeur is the double-towered Ushba, so stationed on the watershed of two continents that one of its peaks is in Europe and the other in Asia. The former was climbed in 1888 by Mr. Cockin (A. C.), who that same year vanquished Shkara and Janga, and later, in 1890, Adai Khokh and two other high peaks, in 1893 yet others, but in 1895 was foiled in his attempt



Mt. ASSINIBOINE

on the southern tower of Ushba. This was secured in 1903, after a repulse that nearly cost him his life, by Herr A. Schulze with others.

Germany was also represented as early as 1891 by Herren Purtscheller and Merzbacher, of whom the former had climbed Kilimanjaro in 1887 and the latter was to distinguish himself as a pioneer in the Tian-Shan mountains.

If the keen interest that had attended the continued revelations from this semi-adjacent region to the Caucasus was beginning to wane at the end of the eighties, new matter came pouring in from various quarters to whet the appetite for alpine grandeur. The Rev. W. S. Green (A. C.) had visited New Zealand in 1882 and ascended Mount Cook (Aorangi), which attains an altitude of 12,349 feet. A pioneer there at the antipodes, stimulating the ambition of the young men of that new country and exciting other emulation nearer home, he shortly directed his steps to the freshly opened mountain region of British Columbia and here, too, became the forerunner of a new generation of alpinists, bringing out the first mountaineering book for this new Switzerland.

A New Zealand Alpine club was formed in 1891, and not only its own periodical but also the pages of the Alpine Journal have since brought out numerous articles descriptive of the noble scenery and stirring adventures among these Southern Alps. Of its members one of the most active has been Mr. G. E. Mannerling, author of "With Axe and Rope in the New Zealand Alps" (Longmans, 1891). Doubtless the most exciting of the works that deal with this region is that of Mr. E. A. Fitzgerald, who in 1895 made several brilliant ascents, including the Silver horn, Sefton and Cook. Among the episodes the story of his slip on Sefton and hanging in mid-air supported only by the rope in the hands of Zurbriggen, himself but insecurely placed, is one of the sort calculated to make the heart even of the experienced climber stand still.

Returning now to the western continent, it may be in order to say a few words concerning the development of mountaineering as a sport on this side of the Atlantic.

The far west, and especially the Pacific slope of our continent, offers a much better field; yet even here, at least in the United States proper, distinctly alpine features are for the greater part absent. That vigorous societies have arisen here is not strange; the Sierra club in San Francisco (1892) and the Mazamas (1894) in Portland, Ore. The former finds a grand field for rock climbing in the high Sierra, the latter makes exhilarating and inspiring snow excursions to the summits of the extinct volcanoes of the Cascade range. These beautiful snow-covered domes, Shasta (14,440), Hood (11,225), St. Helena (10,000), Adams (12,470) and Rainier (14,394), present no serious technical difficulties, as may be judged from the fact that large parties of 30 to 40 of both sexes not infrequently make their summits. This is not true of Mount Baker (10,827), which a selected party of Mazamas found almost beyond their powers in 1907.

Mount Ritter (13,156) was ascended by John Muir in the early seventies; Mount Whitney (14,499), the highest summit in the United States proper, by Bengole, Lucas and Johnson in 1873, and Mount Abbott (13,700), whose "forbidding summit . . . is one of the only two great Sierra peaks which has not been ascended" (so wrote Prof. J. N. Le Conte in 1907), was conquered in 1908 by that leading authority on the Sierra Nevada, to whose camera we owe our picture of its precipitous upper slopes.

PRESIDENT AT GOLF

Mr. Taft's Style Is Most Earnest When He Plays.

His Drive Is a Strenuous Performance—A Laugh Invariable at the End of Each Stroke—His Putting Impressive.

Washington.—When President Taft plays golf his style is most earnest when making the play and most nonchalant and deliberate between strokes. He walks from one drive to the other as though he was on a sauntering tour. When the president is to drive off he makes his own tee of sand. He does not use the patent little rubber tee, nor does he have a caddy build the little mound for him.

Mr. Taft's theory on this subject is that it is good for the general exercise of his body and specifically good for what might be termed his middle west to stoop down. So he does it.

But the president stoops down in a way that never will reduce the waist line. He stands on one foot and elevates the other in the attitude of a man stretching across a billiard table for a long shot. Having placed the ball on the tee, the president takes a long, hard look at the course ahead. If there is conversation behind him he turns around and shouts "Fore!" in a tone that cannot be mistaken.

The president's swing at the ball on a drive, with a brassie on the fair green, is a strenuous performance.

All of the Taft smile disappears, and the stern look he assumes would be a shock to the public that has an impression only of the "jolly" Taft. He sets his jaw as though about to veto a tariff



President Taft as a Golfer.

bill or defy Aldrich, and swings with all the force of something more than 300 pounds of active muscle and bone.

Immediately the stroke is made the president assumes invariably one attitude—that of anxious expectancy. He always "follows through" on drives and brassie or iron shots so his club comes up over the left shoulder. It remains there while he watches the course of the ball, his lips slightly apart and his body bent forward. When the ball has settled he straightens up and laughs.

No one who ever played with the president missed that laugh at the end of his stroke. If the play is a good one the president's laugh is a shout, but even if it is a drive into a bunker or off the course, he laughs. Senator Bourne, Gen. Edwards, Vice-President Sherman and others who play often with Mr. Taft have remarked on the fact that he refuses to lose his temper. It makes it hard for a man who does get angry and swear, and these three feel that they have a grievance. No one of them hesitates to express his opinion of a ball that does not go where he intended to drive it, except when he is playing with the president.

Mr. Taft probably is most impressive in his golf game when putting. His putter is a massive piece of wood, iron end lead. The face that strikes the ball is broad, corrugated and with weight behind it. The president does not smooth the turf in front of the ball before putting. He squares himself, carefully shifting his feet until he is directly in line with the hole. Then he putts with care, and watches, again, anxiously the course of the ball. If it goes around the cup, instead of into it, the president says "Pshaw." Then he laughs, and tries again. That laugh is the most trying part of being a partner or opponent of the president at golf. It gets on the nerves of a man who wants to swear.

A Handy Man.

"Why so sad?" queried the young man, looking at her fondly.

"Oh, nothing special; only I have troubles of 'my own,' said the frail young thing, sighing.

"I insist on taking a hand in them," he said, seizing a dainty palm that was wasting its time in her lap.—Boston Herald.