

THE MONARCHS OF ALASKA

BY R. H. SARGENT



MOUNT DRUM—12000 Ft HIGH

ifeless land one never beheld." The view of this ice field and the adjacent mountains as seen from the ocean is superb in the extreme.

This southern chain of mountains continues to the westward, where it is known as the Chugach mountains, passing around the head of Prince William sound and terminating in the Koniak peninsula, where it forms little more than highlands. Just north of Prince William sound the range is a mass of snow-clad peaks, in the valleys of which are hundreds of square miles of ice, almost entirely unexplored.

Alaska's Highest Volcanoes.

About 150 miles to the northwest of Mount St. Elias are the wonderfully impressive peaks of the Wrangell group, which owe their origin largely to vulcanism. There are many peaks in this group, but four, because of excessive altitude, grandeur or activity, demand special attention. Mount Sanford, the highest, reaches an elevation of 16,200 feet, while Blackburn is a close second at 16,140 feet. Both of these mountains are extinct volcanoes. Mount Wrangell is a great, flat dome 14,000 feet high and about 25 miles in diameter at its base. It is the only active volcano of inland Alaska. Its summit is snow-covered, but surrounding the vent is a coating of ash renewed intermittently by rolling clouds of smoke and vapor which are sent up from the crater. Mount Drum, also a volcanic cone, but now deeply dissected, though but 12,000 feet high is the most impressive one of the group. Situated as it is, well out in the Copper river



CASTLE MOUNTAIN

Mount Logan, altitudes of 18,000 feet and 19,500 feet, respectively, are touched. Mount St. Elias, however, has figured in Alaskan exploration from the earliest accounts. In fact, it is the first point of the territory which was sighted by Bering in 1741. He discovered it on St. Elias' day and accordingly gave it the name. Singularly, it is a cornerstone of the International boundary, since it lies practically in longitude 141 degrees and is on the crest of the range. Here the boundary, which follows the one hundred and forty-first meridian, bends abruptly to the east, fol-

"Seward's Folly" were justified in no other way than by the purchase of this territory as a preserve of scenic grandeur, our far-sighted secretary of state would be wholly exonerated. After a visit to southeastern Alaska one author of note has written: "Combine all that is best in the beauties of the Hudson and the Rhine, of Lakes George and Killarney, of the Yosemite and all of Switzerland, and you have a slight conception of the beauties of this green archipelago." Much of all this grandeur is to be found in Alaska's mountains. Because of the comparative inaccessibility, except at great cost and much expenditure of time, the mountain districts have been visited by only a favored few. But the ac-



MOUNT MCKINLEY ALASKA'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

counts and descriptions of these, fortified by photographs of the regions, are such as to awaken a keen desire in all lovers of nature to see them for themselves.

The steamers running to Juneau and Skagway traverse a course which is yearly pronounced by hundreds who take this trip as the most scenic upon the globe. For a thousand miles the steamer winds its way through tortuous and narrow passages, the waters of which are as smooth as a mill pond, while snow-capped peaks, ice fields, waterfalls and green slopes pass in panoramic view before the eye.

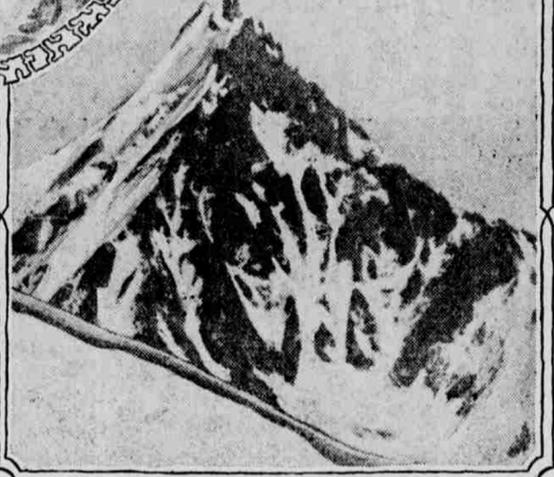
The Coast Range of British Columbia and southeastern Alaska is an irregular mass of mountains with no definite crest line. These mountains may be considered a general northern extension of the highlands which parallel the Pacific seaboard of the United States. Along the entire coast from Seattle to Skagway the sculpturing and general physiographic features of these mountains are such as to make them of particular interest. The broad, smooth-sided, ice-carved valleys, which subsequently were filled with water, due to the sinking of the entire region, make a very irregular coast-line, marked by numberless fiords, many of which extend far inland.

An archipelago of numberless islands, the relief of which is nearly equal to that of the mainland, fringes this entire coast line. The passages between these islands are deep, each being remarkably uniform throughout its entire length. The mountains of both the islands and mainland rise, bold and precipitous, from the water's edge to heights of from 5,000 to 10,000 feet.

Many of the side valleys exhibit to a marked degree that physiographic characteristic of glacial sculpturing—the hanging valley. Often is seen, some hundreds of feet above tidewater, the broad, symmetrically carved, U-shaped shelf, which, colored by the evergreens, makes a wonderful frame about the picture formed in the background by the cold, gray mountains, with their snow-capped peaks, and in the foreground the stream fed by the melting snow and glaciers of the main range, plunging, roaring, often cascading down the precipitous face of the mountains for hundreds of feet.

As the steamer glides past the entrance of a fiord one catches a glimpse of a group of white buildings nestled at the base of the mountains, where the sparkling, mirror-like waters of the inlet meet the precipitous evergreen slopes. An exclamation of amazement at the beauty of the picture is well nigh irrefragable. These buildings are simply one group of which there are scores along the southern coast, making one of the greatest of Alaska's industries, the canning of salmon. There are approximately 200,000,000 cans of salmon sent from Alaska each season.

Route Through the Mountains. Skagway, at the head of salt-water naviga-



SNIDER'S PEAK—RUGGED ANGULAR AND FORBIDABLE

tion of southeastern Alaska, is the southern terminus of the White Pass & Yukon railroad, which is the connecting link between the Pacific ocean and the Yukon river, the great artery of central Alaska. This railroad is one of the interesting engineering accomplishments of the age. Starting at tidewater, it follows the valley bottom of the Skagway river for about three miles, and then gradually climbs the precipitous sides, winding in and out of the smaller side valleys and canyons, frequently crossing them, until 13 miles in a direct line from the starting point it crosses the Coast Range at the White Pass, 2,888 feet above the sea. On the northern side the range slopes gently to the great interior plateau, thus making the grade of the road from the pass to Whitehorse, the northern terminus, very slight, the elevation of the latter place being 2,084 feet.

A trip to the westward from Skagway may take one either by Sitka or through Icy Strait and Cross sound. If the former is taken, an opportunity is given for viewing Mount Edgecumbe, the only recognized volcano in southeastern Alaska. Situated as it is, just off the coast, its dome-shaped summit covered with snow, it adds much to the beauty of the surroundings of Sitka, which is one of the most picturesque spots on the globe.

If the more frequented route through Cross sound is taken, the progress of the steamer will undoubtedly be greatly hampered by winding its way through the waters thickly strewn with floating cakes of ice. These icebergs are supplied by the large glaciers in the vicinity; the Johns Hopkins, Muir and Brady glaciers and many others, each being large ice-sheets covering hundreds of square miles, discharge into Glacier bay, which opens to the sound.

St. Elias Mountains. From Cross sound westward the mountains increase in height and grandeur. The Fairweather mountains rise abruptly from the ocean to heights of over 15,000 feet, while farther to the westward the range increases in elevation until, at Mount St. Elias and

lowing the crest of the mountains.

St. Elias, while not the highest in the group, has become the most widely known because of the numerous attempts to climb it. I. C. Russell, of the United States geological survey, made two attempts to reach the top. One of the expeditions of which he was the leader was financed by the National Geographic society. His narrative of one of these expeditions was printed in the National Geographic Magazine in May, 1891. The harrowing experience is related of two days alone on the snow-clad sides of the mountain at an elevation of 14,000 feet, while a fierce blizzard raged and many feet of new snow were added to the old. Russell was unsuccessful in his attempts to reach the summit, but his suggestions as to the advisable route in an ascent gave such accurate and valuable information to those who followed that the Duke of Abruzzi, accompanied by guides, profiting by his advice, succeeded in reaching the summit in 1897.

While but 18,000 feet in height, Mount St. Elias, as well as McKinley and many other Alaskan mountains, presents difficulties to the mountaineer not usually encountered. Unlike the majority of difficult peaks which have been conquered, where the first few thousand feet of altitude are traversed over roads or trails, the entire 18,000 feet demand extreme exertion and present many obstacles to be overcome. The journey throughout its entire length being over glaciers, the unique problem of combining arctic exploration with mountain climbing is experienced.

Glaciers and Snow Fields.

The eastern part, especially the coastal slope of the St. Elias and Fairweather ranges, is the only portion of Alaska which bears out the popular belief that the territory is covered with ice and snow. Here in the high mountains there are many Alpine glaciers and snow fields, but the Malaspina glacier is the largest single ice field and, indeed, the most extensive on the North American continent. This great piedmont glacier spreads out over the coastal plain, presenting a front of 85 miles to the sea and, including the neve fields which feed it, covers an area of 5,000 square miles.

This ice field is most vividly described by Russell, who viewed it from the upper slopes of Mount St. Elias, as "a vast, snow-covered region, limitless in expanse, through which hundreds and probably thousands of barren, angular peaks project. There was not a stream, not a lake, not a vestige of vegetation in sight. A more desolate or more utterly

plain, with nothing to detract from its grandeur, its isolation commands the observer's undivided attention.

Much of the Wrangell range is covered with ice and perennial snow, forming long, finger-like Alpine glaciers.

On the north, west and south sides of the group the melting snow and ice of the glaciers form the tributaries of the Copper river, which flows southward through the Copper river basin and breaks through the Chugach mountains at about longitude 145 degrees, for the most part in a narrow canyon. Though the Copper river in stretches is very swift and dangerous, it serves as a route of approach to the inland gold and copper fields. The canyons and rapids of the lower river, though serious obstacles to navigation, have not prevented the use of this route.

The Advent of Railways.

The onward march of civilization and development, which has opened up our western states so wonderfully, is steadily at work in Alaska. Already the screech of the locomotive has broken the silence of the mountain fastnesses, startling the mountain goats and sheep from their haunts among the jagged spurs along the canyons. The Copper river railroad is being steadily advanced against the most difficult of engineering obstacles. It follows the valley of the river, crossing it twice to the present point of its construction, and another crossing will be made. If the present rate of progress continues the road will soon reach the base of the Wrangell mountains and thus make it possible to develop the copper deposits of that field. About 200 miles to the west of the Copper river from Reurrection bay northward through a low pass in the Kenai mountains the Alaska Central railroad company has commenced to build a line to the coal fields of the Matanuska valley and is contemplating an extension up the valley of the Susitna across a low pass in the Alaska range to Fairbanks, on the Tanana river, and the center of a large placer district.

The Alaska range stretches from a little-explored region in the vicinity of Lake Clark, west of Cook Inlet, northward for 100 miles or more, then trends gradually eastward, increasing in altitude until in Mount McKinley it attains the remarkable height of 29,300 feet. It is broken by gaps 2,400 feet and 3,000 feet above sea level. The eastern end of the range rises again until at Mount Hayes an elevation of 13,800 feet is reached.

Words fail to express one's impression of the Alaska range when viewed under favorable circumstances. In 1896, while making a trip through the Talkeetna mountains, the writer had such an opportunity as is rarely experienced. His view was from an elevation of about 2,500 feet on the foothills on the western slope of the Talkeetna group. The day was perfect; not a cloud could be seen in the heavens. Below lay the broad, level valley of the Susitna river, beautifully carpeted in the deep green of the conifer, while here and there a shining patch of light, outlining a lake, broke the monotony and through the center of it all the Susitna wound like a silver trail.

JUDGE SEDGWICK AS LAWYER AND JURIST.

It is said of Judge Sedgwick, one of the republican nominees for the supreme bench, that, in his thirty-one years' practice in Nebraska, exclusive of his service on the bench, he has been so successful in prosecuting cases against corporations that his services have been sought in nearly every case of this kind that has been brought in York county.

He believes in compelling all persons and corporations to obey the law, and those more familiar with his services on the bench unite in saying that he is entirely free from prejudice or fear, and that his decisions are not affected by the personnel, either of the parties or the attorneys. He is not afraid to decide a case upon its merits, and for this reason he is popular as a Judge with the best lawyers in the state, and all who are familiar with the work of the courts.

The decision of the Supreme Court, sustaining the present railway commission, was written by Judge Sedgwick, and his reasoning is so clear and conclusive that it was accepted at once by the bar of the state, and the interested parties. It is to this decision that Nebraska owes the existence of the railway commission and that the public is enabled to exercise control over common carriers and all public service corporations through the commission system.

Case of Polio-Myelitis.

Tecumseh.—There is a case of polio-myelitis in this vicinity. Gladys Irvin, the 3-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Porter Irvin, who lives west of Tecumseh, is the sufferer. Dr. Wilson of Pawnee City, secretary of the state board of health, says this is the only case reported from Southeastern Nebraska.

Protest Against Ferrer Execution.

Lincoln.—Circulars were scattered about Lincoln announcing that a protest meeting will be held at which protests will be entered against the recent execution of Prof. Francisco Ferrer at Modelo, Spain.

Good Yield of Wheat.

Dannebrog.—The recent heavy frosts have ripened the corn, and husking will soon be in full blast. Corn is of good quality and will average something like forty bushels to the acre. The threshing season is nearly over and farmers in general are rejoicing over the good yield of wheat, which has averaged about twenty-five bushels per acre. The acreage of wheat sown this fall will somewhat exceed that of last year.

At the National Corn Show.

Kansas, the habitat of alfalfa and the "hogs' idea of heaven" will show the results of some interesting experiments with alfalfa, the plant which has not only given hogs the best feed they have, but has at once solved the problem of soil fertility and maintenance.

A Singing Candidate.

Aurora.—Political interest is now running high in this county. The Wood brothers' quartet is holding singing and speaking meetings in every part of the county. One of the brothers is running for office.

Beaver City Corn Show.

Beaver City.—One of the most interesting events occurring in Furnas county during the year was the boys' and girls' corn show and cooking contests held at Beaver City October 20. Over 200 people were in attendance, and 125 entries were made in the contests.

Quick Trip to Save Child's Life.

Lyons.—Ed. Burdick's 4-year-old child got hold of a bottle of strychnine and swallowed a quantity of it. Dr. Keetel was at once called by phone and reached the place in his automobile in just thirty minutes—a distance of eleven miles—and saved the child's life by the use of a stomach pump. This certainly shows the value of the telephone and the automobile to the farmers.

Beet Sugar Factory Starts Up.

Grand Island.—The factory of the American Beet Sugar company of this city is now in full swing on the 1909 crop of beets. The roots are testing about 15 per cent on the average and a profitable campaign, though probably not quite as long as some have been, is expected. Applications are coming in more rapidly than in former years for contracts for the growing of beets next year, the result of the more favorable price of \$5 per ton flat.

Land Sales in Kansas.

Washington.—Public land sales in Kansas aggregated \$163,229 during the last fiscal year and that state will receive \$7,352 of that amount for educational purposes. The balance goes into the United States treasury to the credit of the fund for reclamation projects in Kansas.

News and Notes.

The Chilean government has decided upon naval expenditures to the amount of \$20,000,000. The program includes the building of a Dreadnought.

Ismael Montes, the ex-president of Bolivia, has accepted the post of minister to Great Britain.

Another of the alleged fraudulent notes handled by John T. Lumbard, treasurer of the town of Framingham, Mass., came to light.

The general education board announced that it had made a conditional appropriation of \$125,000 to Ohio Wesleyan university at Delaware, O. With an imposing military ceremony the Royal Edward institute, from which the fight against the white plague in Montreal will in future be conducted, was formally opened.