

Correspondence.

THE ASCENT OF MT. RAINIER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION :

SIR : In your notice of my article in the November *Atlantic Monthly* on the ascent of Takhoma (Mt. Rainier) you state that "the ascent was made within a short time (we think not more than a month) after that here described by Messrs. Emmons and Wilson, of the Fortieth Parallel Survey."

I still think we are the only ones who have ever achieved the summit of Takhoma, for the following reasons :

Soon after our return from the ascent of Takhoma I met Mr. Emmons, and gave him all the information and suggestions I could to facilitate his trip to the mountain. He and Mr. A. D. Wilson, with a well-equipped party from Mr. Clarence King's Survey, "pushed through the forest to Mt. Rainier with very great difficulty," as he reported, and made a survey of the mountain and its glaciers. A little pamphlet published by Mr. King, "On the Discovery of Actual Glaciers in the Mountains of the Pacific Slope," contains Mr. Emmons's account of his survey. In that he nowhere states that he reached the summit, and in describing the mountain he says : "The eastern peak, which would seem to have formed originally the middle of the mountain mass, is a crater, about a quarter of a mile in diameter, of very perfect circular form," etc. Now there are two craters, side by side, neither of which is nearly a quarter of a mile in diameter. The ascent of this mountain is so perilous a feat that I feel sure no one who accomplished it would refrain from announcing the fact with natural pride ; and how could a scientific man so strangely misdescribe the summit if he ever set foot upon it ? Upon this point let Messrs. Emmons and Wilson speak for themselves, and if you can show where they assert that they ever reached the summit of Takhoma I will admit that my belief, above expressed, may be erroneous. I have heard, however, that Mr. Emmons ascended upon our track until he came to the rope we left hanging on the precipitous side of the mountain, and upon giving it a pull to test its strength it came down in his hand, and he thereupon turned back.

Very truly yours, HAZARD STEVENS.

83 DEVONSHIRE STREET, BOSTON, Nov. 19, 1876.

[We have asked Mr. Emmons to speak for himself.—ED. NATION.]

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION :

SIR : I am not a little surprised at the above statements of General Stevens, and still hope that it may be shortness of memory, rather than a lack of that gentlemanly feeling that has hitherto characterized him in his intercourse with me, which has led him to charge me indirectly with a false statement. Let me refresh his memory by recalling to him the afternoon and evening of October 30, 1870, which I spent at his home in Portland, Oregon, en route from Mount Rainier to Mount Pitt, during which I gave him a detailed account of the ascent of the former mountain by Mr. Wilson and myself on the 17th of October, exactly a fortnight previous. He will remember that I then told him that we found the rope he had left at the bad passage of the ascent, strong enough in itself to support many tons' weight, but so insecurely fastened that upon shaking the lower end the whole came down upon me, and that, winding it round my waist, I took it to the top of the "chimney" and there tied it through a hole in the rock so securely that it would be found reliable whenever he might wish to make the ascent again, as he then thought he might do. His statement, therefore, that "he heard . . . that we turned back" may be merely an expression of his disappointment that we did not see the engraved plate which he states he left on the summit ; but we were too much occupied when there with our instrumental work to attend to such (to us) unimportant details. Moreover, the highest point, as determined by the level on our theodolite, which we took to the summit, is not a boulder, as described by General Stevens, but a knob of ice and snow on the northwestern edge of the crater. I repeat here the explanation I then made to him, that his idea of two independent craters is not geologically accurate, but that the more recent crater which now forms the eastern summit has broken through and partly filled a larger one, part of whose rim still encircles its western flanks, enclosing a semi-circular crater-like depression, which, masked as it is by ice and snow, he mistook for a perfect crater. A difference of opinion as to the diameter of either, which was only estimated by the eye by each of us, is not worthy of discussion.

No popular account of our trip has ever been published. In a paper contributed to the *American Journal of Science* for March, 1871, "On the Discovery of Glaciers," etc., mentioned by General Stevens, the statement is not, indeed, directly made that we "achieved" the summit, but I hardly thought that we, with whom during seven years' work in the Rocky Mountains mountain ascents had been matters of daily occurrence, should be suspected of describing what we had not seen without acknowledging our authority. In his trip General Stevens did not see the northeastern side of the mountain, but he nevertheless describes the White River glaciers, and in words strangely resembling those used by me in the paper above mentioned. To be able to announce the accomplishment of so really dangerous an ascent as that of Mount Rainier might occasion a feeling of "natural pride" in one even less experienced in mountain climbing than General Stevens. Our announcement has been delayed in the hope of some day finishing the survey then undertaken, which was rendered incomplete by the breaking of our barometers and by the advent of the winter snows, which drove us away, after a month's hard work, and before we had visited the northern and western slopes of the mountain.

Before closing let me, in a friendly way, correct certain technical inaccuracies in General Stevens's article. The mountain is composed of trachyte, and has no basalt at all, although perhaps the dark color of some of this rock might mislead a more scientific observer than General Stevens. In regard to its drainage, there is no water flowing eastward from its slopes, either through the Wenass, or any other stream ; its most striking peculiarity is the fact that, even from its eastern slopes, it drains westward through the White and Cowlitz Rivers into Puget Sound and the lower Columbia River.

The subjoined topographical sketch of the upper part of the mountain, taken from my field note-book, though roughly made in camp to illustrate



the structure of the volcano, will show to one familiar with contours the general character of the summit, and the partial crater west of the main one which misled General Stevens.—Very truly yours, S. F. EMMONS.

NEW YORK, November 17, 1876.