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H. Knapp
April 24/90.

Shasta Route.

MOUNT SHASTA.

Shasta is the last grand towering landmark of the Sierra in the north, standing alone in its white, silent majesty : half its slopes of evergreen and half of snow, this crowning glory of the north is forever and from all sides overpowering in its grandeur. It matters not whether it be by glimpses through the pine slopes of the Sacramento Canyon, from the broad table lands of Strawberry and Shasta Valleys, or from the summit of the rugged Siskiyou, the eye turns with an ever-increasing interest and delight towards Shasta.

There are immense glaciers in its awful gorges on the eastern and northern sides ; but on account of the almost inaccessible heights and depths in their neighborhood they remain for the most part in secret solitude in their icy beds. With the exception of Whitney—the giant of them all—they have been designated by Indian names. The most southerly one, which heads near Thumb Rock, is Konwa Kiton (mud glacier), Wintun (Indian tribal name), Hotlum (Steep rock), Bolam (great). From these great ice bodies there flow in summer myriads of translucent streams ; in winter old Boreas seals them up with his step-mother breath, and no sound of trickling rill is heard again until the time of the singing of birds is come.

Shasta is visible for two hundred miles of the Portland route ; from the upper Sacramento Valley its pale, cloud-like shaft is faintly outlined against the northeastern sky. From Castle Creek to McCloud fragments of its dazzling white tower are disclosed through frame-work of dark-green pine needles ; at Sisson, the noonday splendor of its mighty front shines down full upon you with a power that stirs you to the very soul. Receding from it northwards there are visions of splintered peaks, lava-worn abysses and beetling crags, their deep recesses enswathed in a whiteness like unto wool. Distance lends a mellow enchantment to the view, paring down the rough spurs, dips and angles, so that from the Klamath, and all the way up the sides of the Siskiyou this northern buttress of the Sierra seems a thing more of heaven than earth.

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Remarkable Engineering along the "Shasta Route."

The completion a few months ago of the all-rail line between San Francisco and Portland, Or., marked the successful termination of one of the most difficult and costly railway engineering achievements on the continent. For some years the Southern Pacific Company and the Oregon & California Railroad have been in operation respectively from San Francisco north and from Portland south, nearly to the boundary between the two States; but the tremendous mountain ranges which intervened constituted a barrier not only discouraging to those who were called upon to provide money for overcoming it, but it was even believed by some, would baffle the skill of the engineer and the railway builder if the completion of the work was really undertaken. The Southern Pacific Company, however, did undertake and did successfully carry through this great work; and now the traveler, by palace car between the chief cities of California and Oregon, is enabled to view, along portions of the "Shasta Route," the grandest mountain scenery of the Pacific Coast, and probably of North America. While something has been written of the engineering difficulties encountered in completing this line, no description that we have seen gives an adequate idea of what has been overcome.

Leaving San Francisco at 6.30 p. m., the tourist reaches Delta, 298 miles northward, about 6.30 a. m., and for the next three hours is viewing the tremendous scenery upon which Mount Shasta, from his snowy heights, looks down.

The barrier that occasioned the necessity of the "Big Bend of the Sacramento" was one of the huge flanks of Shasta that plunges down across the cañon a few miles above Mossbrae Falls. From this point, Eighteenth Crossing, to Edgewood, a distance of twenty-five miles, the route is along the foothills of Shasta, the highest point reached (near Muir's Peak) being nearly 4,000 feet.

The loadstone of the scenery everywhere on this twenty-five mile ride is, of course, the mountains. The eye may sweep the horizon around and meet scenes of sublimity on every hand; but it turns instinctively again to catch the first flashes of almost supernatural light that gleam down through the grand avenues of the pines and finally burst into unobstructed splendor at the plateau of Strawberry Valley.

Words fail entirely here to give the faintest idea of the solemn repose and unspeakable grandeur of this stately giant of the north, who has reared his cloud-capped towers and icy-lava cliffs to an elevation of more than two verticle miles above the surrounding landscape. The neighboring peaks, that elsewhere would attract general attention, dwindle into insignificance in its mighty shadows. Where once the lurid glare of volcanic fires blazed out from this high citadel, there is now eternal hoar frost, ice, snow and utter silence. Glaciers fill its ancient lava grooves; and streams of the coldest water spring from the crevasses made long ago by the burning, fiery lava.

The sublime scenery enjoyed in crossing the Siskiyou Mountains is presented in the afternoon—Gregory, 409 miles north of San Francisco, being reached at 2.30 p. m., Siskiyou at 2.55 p. m., and the day's ride terminating with a short stop at Ashland, in Oregon, a little after 5.00 o'clock. The Siskiyou Mountains, up whose rugged sides the grade reaches the steep pitch of 174 feet to the mile, run at right angles with the Cascades and form a natural geographical, as well as an artificial, State line between California and Oregon.

The scenery all along this tortuous route from State line to the summit and down into the Rogue River Valley is alive with interest. Before entering Tunnel No. 13, going north, the last view of California is had: and it is an appropriate closing scene in the great panoramic exhibition of northern California. Down the northern slope of the Siskiyou to Ashland the scenery is grandly diversified by forest, field and stream, by mountain, valley and plain.

A profile of the long curve over the Siskiyou would show to the engineer very clearly the heavy work that had to be done in cutting a pathway, steep though it is, along the rugged mountain sides, through numerous rocky walls, and over many gorges which had to be spanned with costly iron bridges.

With his mind excited and almost overpowered by the awe-inspiring scenery, amid which he has spent the day, the traveler will contentedly retire as he is carried over the still rugged but less imposing scenery of southern Oregon, and before 11.00 o'clock next morning will find himself in Portland, the capital of that new and wonderfully growing State.—*From Railway Age, May 11, 1888.*

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN



CASTLE ROCK, FROM LOWER SODA SPRINGS.

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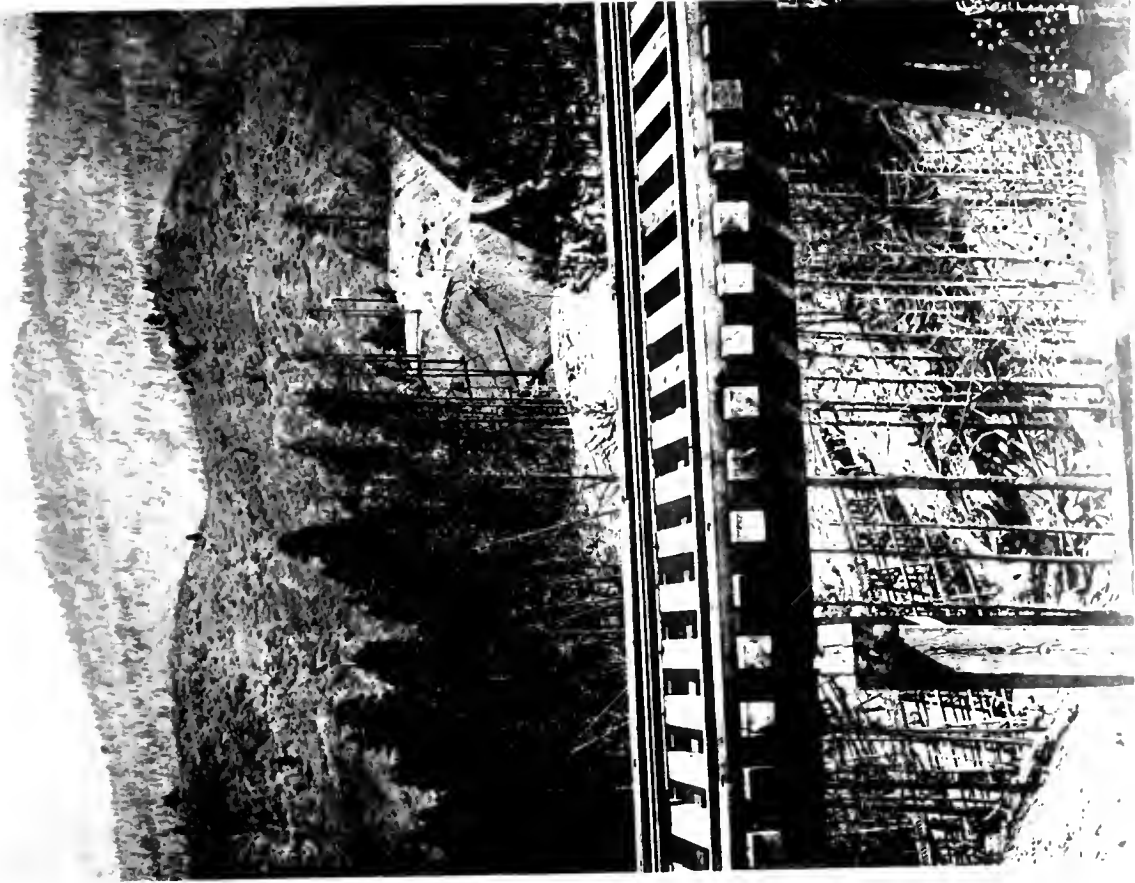
LOOP AND TUNNEL 15, SISKIYOU MOUNTAINS.

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CROSSING OF SACRAMENTO RIVER, O. & C. R. R.

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THREE TRESTLE LOOP, SISKIYOU MTS., O. & C. R. R.



O. & C. R. R., FROM EAGLE CLIFF.

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