

July 1948

Chapter 20

TWO MILES TALL

March, April, May, and June. Total weekends, 17. Two unavoidably lost visiting parents, hers and mine. The other 15 spent snowshoeing, skiing, technique-practicing, climbing. Heft the bag: Big Si, Little Si, Lundin, Guye, Snoqualmie, Sluisin, Huckleberry. Plus a glacier on Rainier and a tempest on Adams.

Surge into July on the momentum of seven consecutive Monday mornings of coming to Bagley with face blistered by sun or bleached by rain, legs languid-loose from pounding trail (a little) and plowing snow (a lot), blood dehydrated by the Sunday sweating that builds a thirst that takes until Tuesday to ~~slack~~^{slake} with delicious water and ambrosial beer, brain a kaleidoscope of glories, lips and ears a-flapping in the exchange of exploits.

This is the rhythm of the week: the Monday rapture-revery, the Tuesday cud-chewing contentment, the Wednesday ~~reinforcement~~^{enthrallment} by ~~reinforcement~~^{blurred} snapshots picked up from the drugstore, the Thursday anticipation of the next adventure, the Friday checking of gear and buying of food, the Saturday departure for the hills to do it all over again. This is the life -- the climber's life.

Yeah, climber. In my farewell to the ^{summit pitch} ~~Final Cliff~~ of Huckleberry I realized I could run up and down that goat highway no hands, no sweat, all day. On the descent I'd exulted in the void below, the ropelessness above. If I could be the lonesome hero-loader of Huckleberry I surely could follow bigtime heroes on Experience Climbs. Not every peak on the list. But except for the likes of Rainier, why not have a fling, play out the string? Our club dues were paid through the end of the year. A shame to waste the money. 1949 was soon enough to settle down as superhiker.

Coming up, on the first 3-day weekend of the summer, the Experience Climb of Eldorado. Never heard of it. Well, 2 years ago I'd never heard of Tooth or Cruiser or Huckleberry. A promising name. A large peak, said Monie, and rarely climbed, yet within the plodding ability of even a Betty. Everybody was going -- all the Old Faithfuls, all the Intermediate students who'd been our instructors and would be our ropeleaders, all the surviving Elementary students. I didn't mind. I sort of looked forward to mingling with the mob again. One can develop a taste for ~~visiting~~ zoos and insane asylums. And there were bound to be openings for a bit of discreet bragging about Huckleberry.

Friday afternoon, July 2. Stomping up to the stockroom window came Kermit the Hermit. Accompanied by an amazingly almost-genial Crabby Dick. Never before had I seen him smile. Nor had I ever smiled at him; as an undergraduate he'd played center on the University basketball team, no crime in itself but my policy was to distrust persons a foot taller than me.

"Hey!" shouted Kermit, standing barely a yard away but wanting to make sure he was heard. "What you bagging this weekend?"

Eldorado.

"Oh BAH! Good berg, terrible schwarm! You better come with us -- we're going after Gletschergipfel! On der skis! For der schuss!"

Amended Dick, "Skis bah! That's horseshit this time of year. He's busting his back hauling boards, the rest of us are walking."

Translation, translation. Even if I knew German the Kermit jargon would baffle. "Gletschergipfel." Glacier Peak!

"We're doing a new route! A possible first ascent, an erstaussteig! Everybody goes up the north or south side but we think we've spotted a way up the west side!"

Added Dick, "The last time ~~there~~ we sure as hell found all the ways not to go up the west side."

"You don't want to hold hands with der bobel of mouldy Mountaineer scheisskopfs!" cried Kermit. "You want to come with us!"

Bagleyite bullies bellowing and towering -- what choice did I have? Eldorado was obviously preposterous.

Hearing my change in plans, Betty pouted the least bit and then allowed as how she could tolerate my absence from her side a third weekend in a row, that it wouldn't bother her to try Eldorado on her own. While being rescued from Lundin she'd met a lot of nice people -- nicer than some people she'd gone hiking with.

A Major. 10,430 feet above saltwater, unsurpassed in Washington except by Rainier, Adams, and Baker. Too deep in the range to be commonly

viewed from lowlands. Never heard of by the average Puget Sounder, entirely overlooked by school geography books and Chambers of Commerce. A secret volcano known solely to initiates.

Not until 1942, atop Surprise, did I discover its existence. Just once had I approached close, on Sulphur in 1946, and then could merely guess the cloud-buried ~~hugeness~~ ^{enormity,} Subsequently I'd often seen the white cone shining on the far-north horizon, most recently from Huckleberry, and among gestating plans was a someday exploration there.

The meadow slopes and moraines I'd been planning to explore. Not the high ice. The volcano bulk was intimidating. Pile all my peaks together and they'd be a pimple beside the massive mound.

And the summit. 10,430 feet! More than 3000 feet higher than I'd ever climbed. A giant step. Could I so soon forget the danger-thrill ~~felt~~ on Adams?

Yet Adams demanded an upward vault of 5000 feet, Glacier only 3000. In suspect high air I'd be a quick run or stagger down to the proven security of 7000 feet. After all, Eldorado was 8875 feet and I'd resolved to test myself that far. Glacier was just a stretch farther. The Clock ~~would~~ ^{feel} would give warning. At first alarm I could sprain an ankle, ~~fall~~ a twinge of appendicitis, retreat without public dishonor.

Remember the Adams fear, yes. But remember too the Joe Lake fear. See how that day ended.

And what if -- just if -- I could breathe at 10,000 feet? Bagging a volcano! Who could've dreamed, last February? Not me. Newly Huckleberry strong I could, I did.

The dented rusty prewar sedan labored to the curb and stalled. Trapper Nelsons were lashed to front fenders. The open trunk lid

(secured by ropes) revealed more packs. I looked in the window to see more gear and not Kermit and Dick only but three more Bagleyites.

I reminded Kermit the V-8 was handy.

"Oh bah! Two cars would be a waste of gas! Plenty of room!"

Crushing into a corner of the back seat to make room for me, ^{tucking} ~~making~~ knees of too-long legs under ~~his~~ chin to make room for my pack, Crabby Dick ^{thought} ~~obviously-felt~~ otherwise. Quite hospitably, though, he grumped, "If you don't come with us we'll just have to cruise around looking for a hitchhiker willing to pay a penny a mile."

Said another Bagleyite, "He tried to get his mother to come along but she refused to pay the full Mountaineer rate."

Said another, "It won't be so bad after he fillets us and pours in the olive oil."

The honor of being invited to share the hero's adventure diminished. Also the pleasure.

Past Everett on Highway 99, as I was about to ask for an emergency stop at a hospital to have gangrenous legs amputated, a tire ^{flattened} ~~collapsed~~ under the overload. Putting on a spare (requiring emptying of trunk to get at it) permitted walking up and down the shoulder to restore circulation.

Sardine-packed again, it struck me we were staying too long in Puget Sound lowlands, were driving far north of the latitude of Glacier Peak. I now learned we were not heading directly for the mountains. Kermit was applying for a faculty position at the teachers' college in Bellingham. On Saturday?

"He could've got an appointment during the week," grouched Dick, "But that would've meant going up and back empty."

"You have to understand," explained another, "Kermy's in training for the Olympics. ~~He~~ He's clinched ~~a~~ a spot on the all-America cheapskate team but wants to beat out Jack Benny ~~and the Number One skater~~ for the gold medal."

"Oh bah!" yelled happy Kermit. "You guys seem to think I love you for your money! ^{You're} ~~That's~~ wrong! It's your stimulating company, your sparkling conversation! Your friendship is the most important thing in the world to me! I'm not even charging you for the extra mileage!"

"A free ride?" hollered Dick. "We're getting a free ride to Bellingham? You mean to say that right this minute I'm sitting in your car and it's not costing me money? I should be delirious with joy. Tell me, why am I not happy?"

"Because," said our back-seat companion, grimacing at ~~the~~ ^{stabbing} rib-thrusting ~~of the~~ horns of my Trapper Nelson, "You've got an ice ax up your ass."

In Bellingham Kermit stopped at a gas station -- avoiding the pumps. ^{"He's trying to wear the poor bucket," explained Dick, "Careful, Kermy!"} ~~"Careful, Kermy!" warned Dick.~~ "Get too close and ~~this poor bucket~~ ^{it'll} ~~might~~ see that other peoples' cars are fed something besides stove oil and ~~dirty~~ paint-remover."

Jovial Kermit ducked into the restroom and emerged in suit and tie, ready for his meeting with the college president. Waiting for him on the deserted campus we regained use of limbs. Pain alleviated, hunger pangs ^{were} ~~made themselves~~ felt. When professor-to-be returned and we retraced our way southward through the lowlands on 99, requests were made for a restaurant halt.

"It's late! Got to get to the trail!" declared suddenly-stern Kermit, for emphasis thumping foot ~~on floorboard~~ to floorboard the accelerator, as if that could increase the speed of the wheezing old beast above 40.

Said Dick, "Kermie hasn't seen the inside of a restaurant since the price of hamburgers rocketed to 15¢."

^{Cried}
~~Said~~ another, "Gawdammit, Kermie, I'll buy you a hamburger!"

Said Dick, "You're missing the point. It isn't just his own money he hates to spend. He hurts ~~xxx~~ in the wallet when he sees any money spent."

Death by starvation was prevented by ^{death of a tire} ~~effort~~ Digging from trunk of spare -- the second spare -- allowed digging from packs of trail food. We survived, but not gladly. Cheese and crackers are weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable consumed by a hamburger-stand-lined highway (except, of course, ^{at the point} where the tire collapsed) ^{with} breezes waft ^{ing} maddening aromas of pickles, onions, and hot grease.

After we turned east off 99 opportunities frequently arose to recover from sardine paralysis. Entering the mountain front on ~~the~~ rough, much-cracked concrete of the narrow, twisty Stillaguamish valley highway, tires began popping like a string of firecrackers. With the third and ^{last} ~~final~~ spare deployed, Kermit whiled away the afternoon fiddling with tire irons and cold patches and pump.

Muttered Dick, "When other people make a passenger car into a truck they buy tires with tread. But Kermie knows a wrecking yard where you can buy baldies for two bits apiece, five for a buck."

By fits and starts we stuttered up the North Fork Stillaguamish River, passing through cow pastures and second-growth forests to Darrington.

From that mouldering, half-abandoned logging town we jounced along chuckholes and mudholes of the grandiloquently-called Mountain Loop "Highway" beside the Sauk River, then turned off on a rougher set of ruts up the Whitechuck River. From scattered white billows floating in the Puget Sound sky we'd journeyed under massy gray clouds slicing the summits from peaks, obliterating the sun; no stimulating views eased monotony and anguish, no ~~was~~ bright ^{nest} light ~~and~~ ~~emotional~~ ~~deepening~~ darkness of spirit. When we seemed doomed to eternity in the miser's clunker, at 4 o'clock the road ended. For a 3-hour trip we'd been underway 8 hours. 4 o'clock. A hell of an hour to begin a 9½-mile hike.

Hiking and climbing with Kermit since Boy Scout days sufficiently explained Dick's crabbiness. But he had other cause as well. Since leaving farmlands west of Darrington we'd been driving through fir-hardwood forests of steadily diminishing age and height, scrubby second-growth dating from railroad ~~logging~~ logging of 10 and 20 and 30 years ago. In the recently-vandalized Whitechuck valley the fireweed and alder and vine maple thinly masked piles of charred logs. (This is clearcut logging: whack down everything that grows, ~~and~~ haul to mill the trees you want, burn the shit out of the rest.) The final half-mile of road traversed death-brown desolation of a fresh clearcut. Bulldozers stood poised at the trailhead to continue the advance, after the holiday weekend, into ^{living} ~~xx~~ virgin timber.

"THE GAW DAMN BASTARDS!" exploded Dick. "This is all new since last summer! Jesus Christ! When I first came here with the Scouts in 1940 we started hiking right where the Whitechuck joins the Sauk. We'd been on the trail 9 miles, a good long day, before we got this far. Big trees the

whole way, almost like the rain forests in the Olympics. Dammit, 9 miles of valley put through the grinder in 8 years! At this rate we'll ~~be~~ be driving to the edge of the glaciers in 6 or 7 years."

Hidden Lake, Silver Creek, Gold Creek. Now the Whitechuck, half lost before I even knew it. In my dream vision the unknown North Cascades lay far beyond the logging frontier, free from pain, a monastery retreat secure for my lifetime. But if the barbarians were gutting the Whitechuck, where, outside Olympic National Park, could one run? Having helped last winter to protect Olympic Park, what was Conservationist Dick doing about this outrage?

"Grying a lot, mostly. If you don't like what's happening in a National Park you can gripe to somebody and they'll listen and once in a while ~~even~~ do something about it. Write letters bitching to a National Forest and they don't even answer. If you're not a logger they won't talk to you. I remember thinking as a kid the Forest Service was practically the same as the Park Service, they were both in the business of protecting the country. Well, it was pretty much true then but now all the Forest Service knows how to do is ^{chop} ~~chop~~ chop chop!"

Thrilling, the Friday prospect of adventuring with heroic Kermit in mysteries of the primeval North Cascades. Depressing, the Saturday reality. Faust was a grubby penny-pincher. The monastery-wilderness was the shithouse of dirty rotten loggers. On top of that, the weather was looking lousy.

No religious awe did I feel in cathedral miles of huge and ancient ~~Douglas~~ Douglas fir and hemlock and cedar, chorale hours of green-and-white

~~roaring~~ river. In mind's eye I saw clearcuts, heard turgid rumble of muddy, slash-choked sewer.

At 8 o'clock, arriving at Kennedy Hot Springs, another jolt. People! Hike 9½ miles and not escape people? I'd supposed the one other car at the trailhead belonged to some fisherman working near-road stretches of the river, never imagined we'd have to share the upper valley. Except in Rainier Park and at alpine lakes that attract the trashy crowd of ~~frout-strangl~~ ~~fishermen~~ ^{hardly ever} I'd ~~practically never~~ met another party on a trail. Well, the trespassers weren't total strangers. Four more Bagleyites. Nevertheless our elite band of Gletschergipfelsteigers now numbered 10. Elite! A panzer division. ~~Each~~ Fuhrer Kermit had a nerve scorning the Mountaineer schwarm.

Sunday, 5 a.m. Gray dawn. Why no bustle in the forest? Pulling on of boots, packing of rucksacks? Where is hero leader? A mist began to fall and still in bag I stood up and hopped from the mossy nook where I'd sought a measure of solitude into one of the two leanto shelters. My thump-thump-thump entrance woke Crabby Dick.

"Isn't it time to leave?" I brusquely asked.

"Leave!" he snarled. "It's pouring down rain!"

He sank back in crabby sleep. Nobody else stirred. By now the Mountaineers were high on Eldorado. Not to be cowed by a drizzle were they.

Eventually slugabeds crawled from bags to cook breakfast -- and cook and cook and cook. When breakfast was finished they commenced a leisurely lunch that obviously would continue to suppertime. All these months I'd done homage to dauntless Bagley bergsteigers. Shit. They were sackhounds. Gut-stuffers. Sunshine soldiers. Actually, ~~no~~ except for Kermit none of these guys were among the Bagleyites I'd thought of as potential -- or at least desirable -- mountain companions. ^{Bagley} ~~Bagley~~ might not be a lost cause. ^{mangey mungy} ~~mangey mungy~~ This ~~mangey mungy~~ gang of mooks was.

I should've gone to Eldorado. Betty was there. My Huckleberry partner. Scurvy brush-apes. Raw-boned female phys-ed teachers. Hyperthyroid Boy Scouts. Necrophiliac instructors. Rabble-rousing demigods. Tall Parka ~~was~~ wielding ~~cat-o'-nine-tails~~ cat-o'-nine-tails. The complete menagerie. Lots of laughs there today. And it would be just my luck for the jokers to bag the peak.

I walked the footlog over the river to the hot springs, where a half-dozen stupid-blissful engineers were immersed in the steaming well of diarrhetic water several yards from the cold-clean ~~at~~ stream. On the mucky cliff above them a couple dozen nonchalant mountain goats who should've been ashamed of themselves for not being up in the crags were slurping the yellow-red ooze. In Glacier Peak country even the goats were crapouts.

Debacle. At 3500 feet in dreary gray-lit valley-bottom forest. Mountaineers gird loins to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. Bagleyites make peanut butter sandwiches.

Some work of noble note may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.

I shouldered rucksack and grasped ax and struck off toward the trail to Lake Byrne, shown by the map to be in a 5700-foot cirque directly above us. The lake would be snowed in and fogged in but the hike would sweat out bilo, was better than standing around in dripping forest watching engineers and goats feed their faces.

As I sullenly passed Kermit's campfire he extracted sandwich from mouth and asked where I was headed. I told him.

"Bah! You should go with us!"

Where? What for?

^{Up on the gipfel!}
 "We're not positive there's a ^{route} ~~way up the gipfel~~ from here! We thought we spotted ~~a route~~ ^{one} last summer but couldn't be certain!"

Who cares?

"If there is a route and if the schmuck clears a little we'll ~~be~~ shteigen der berg tomorrow!"

Was I wrong about Kermit? Or rather, right in the first place? Who cares if Faust is a tightwad? It hadn't occurred to me it was possible to climb on the third day, which would be quite full just hiking out 9½ miles and driving (and tire-repairing) home. A bold notion for sure. The hell with Lake Byrne.

At 2 o'clock, drizzle having ceased, Kermit ~~snapped out of tempo and~~ dashed from camp. I followed, and several others, switchbacking briefly up the Whitechuck trail, then leaving tread and crashing into brush. Shortly we crossed the Cascade Crest Trail, which a little way upvalley and southward diverges from the Whitechuck trail to proceed northward in high country, and continued uphill in trackless forest. Trackless but not untrodden --

long-healed blazes said somebody once had been here. Bad ~~for~~ for hopes of der erstausteig. Good for hopes of a summit route.

The slope steepened sharply but Kermit's pace didn't slow. Pausing to gasp I saw I was his solo remaining follower. At about 6000 feet we thrashed through a thicket of alpine scrub onto an open snowfield. Below, cloudsea was breaking ~~into billows~~, giving glimpses ~~between~~ ^{up} of gloomy-dark valley forest and foaming ribbon of river. Above, whiteness-grayness ~~of~~ ~~the~~ revealed no hint of a mountain. We plugged steps in snow along sidehill shelves, then climbed to bare-rock ridgetop.

As we ~~w~~ walked the crest the gaseous whiteness ahead seemed to coagulate in a solid Presence. If real, not the chimera of foggy eyes, it was a monster. Suddenly, dark slashes seen in whiteness. Crevasses! A glacier -- Glacier!

At 7000 feet we stopped. The ridge merged in unmistakable mountain. Off left an icefall tumbled down from whiteness of cloud. But to our right smooth whiteness of snow extended across the west side of the peak and -- as jabbering Kermit in excited German gibberish explained and with croaking yodels celebrated -- led easily to the south slopes he'd climbed last year.

That evening, washing dishes in Kennedy Creek, I noted the dull-white cataract eerily glow as if with inner fire, had the nape-prickling feeling of being Watched, raised eyes from pots, and up the lane of the creek, far above green-black trees, saw a shimmer of sunset-pink snow.

Gletschergipfel!

My God it was beautiful. ~~My~~ Dear God it was high.

No deep sleep, a fitful doze, awaking often to see if stars remained bright in tree tops, to flick on flashlight to check watch. Precisely at the agreed rising hour of 2:30 I lept from bag. Shock of star-frigid night air. Chill of ecstasy-terror -- Der Tag had begun, the day I'd find out. Let loose a shivering howl of agony-joy. Burst into teeth-chattering song: "Oh what a beautiful morning! Oh what a wonderful day!"

"What you trying to do?" bellowed Crabby Dick from sack. "Wake up the birds? You have to be a nut to go 7000 feet up and down in a day and hike out 9½ miles and drive home! Shut up and let us sleep!"

Kermit's hero legs wouldn't function until he'd built a fire and boiled a bucket of Zoom to cram in hero gut. I forced a cupful down. Not until 3:20 did we set forth on the trail by flashlight. Four Bagleyites followed.

Night paled ~~was~~ ^{as} we climbed, stars and ~~glare~~ flashlights blinked out. But no rosy-fingered dawn touched high snows, morning brightened to half-day and no more. From timberline we saw a gray ceiling ^{nearly} brushing the summit of the peak and in the valley a sinuous gray snake squirming along the river toward the base, ~~of the peak.~~

The Course lecturer had said, "Clouds at two levels invariably mean rain, often in a matter of minutes."

Through the ~~thin~~ thinning stratum of clear atmosphere between high cloud and low wailed winter-bitter wind; we pulled on parkas. Starlight

had frozen the snow ice-hard; we strapped crampons to boots.

It begins. The race against the weather. No rests can be afforded, no comfortable rest-step. Piston-pumping legs stamp iron daggers in crunching snow, laboring lungs suck-in wheeze-out air, eyes ^{numbly} focus on Kermit's flying bootheels. Snowfields are unbroken by crevasses, probably aren't glaciers; whether or not, no time is wasted roping up.

Across west slopes of the volcano we angle upward to a cleaver of lava crags and there, in a gale-swept saddle, halt for the first time -- halt so Kermit can remove skis from back and cache them, abandoning the plan for a ski ~~ix~~ descent from the summit. High cloud is dropping, low cloud rising, we're in the squeeze.

Look north past the bulk of Glacier to bewildering array of cold snowy mountains dodging in and out of roiling clouds. Baker alone, volcano even taller than Glacier, stands forth between converging darknesses. Somewhere in the confusion is Eldorado. Betty and the mob must be finishing breakfast, preparing to hit the downtrail. Did they make their mountain yesterday?

Look south through shifting holes in cloud-muddle to glimpses of Rainier, Stuart -- and Chimney, close neighbor of my Huckleberry. How hot that day, how brilliant Glacier then.

Look over Whitechuck valley -- ~~and~~ look down -- to white tips of peaks submerging in swelling gray ~~and~~ -- and remember from map how high are these peaks!

Tremulously ask Kermit how high we are.

"Right about 9000!"

Faint! But no. Brain is dazed but not dim. Clock is tick-tocking fast but regular. Suspiciously savor air. Doesn't smell any different entering nose, feel any different inside.

Gaze down on summits higher than any I've ever climbed. Mountains so tall should be above me, to look down upon them is disrespectful, perhaps dangerously blasphemous.

No time for fear. Clouds are chasing, Kermit is charging. Follow. Don't lag. Don't be left behind. Not here. Onward around southwest slopes of the peak, upward. A steep gully. Follow Kermit's crampons up. He ~~stops~~ stops. We've run out of mountain! ~~Scramble to the top of the mountain~~ ~~to the top of the mountain~~ Grip ice with crampons lest one step off the top of the world and wander forever in hostile clouds. Brace against blasts of bruising wind, half-crouch not to be beheaded by ~~the~~ swift-rushing ceiling scraping summit plateau.

It's war. It's Armageddon. Battle to the end between Sky and Earth -- and Earth is losing -- we are losing. The high cloud is a steel hammer poised to crush. The low cloud, swallowing every peak but ours, is the anvil awaiting the blow. Suddenly a black-hearted hump, not a storm but a Thing, churns up from cloudsea and ~~Nightmare~~ attacks. The Nightmare. We're caught.

shriek
Kermit's ~~screech~~ pierces screaming gale: "DOWN! DOWN! DOWN!"

At 10:20 in the last morning of Earth ^{we} plunge down -- run down -- flee down down down in victorious cloud.

But the blow does not fall. ~~Apparently~~ ^TThe black squall, unseen, ~~was~~ has swerved and missed us. Thus at the lava-cleaver saddle ~~to~~ Kermit

yanks skis from snow and announces triumphantly, "Now the fun begins!" And indeed it does for us booters, watching the skier chatter across ice. His eyeballs are still rattling around in sockets when we catch him, returning boards to back and crampons to boots.

Laugh. Relax. In haste but not panic ~~we~~ continue the traversing descent through milder, less-malign fog toward our ridge. Where is the ridge? Stay too high and we'll cross over the top of it into an icefall. Drop too low and we'll hit it where the sides are cliffs and be forced to ~~descend~~ ^{beat down} through unknown tangles of moraine and brush. Pause often to strain eyes in whiteness.

Whiteness. Whiteness of cloud, whiteness of snow. Pure Platonic Whiteness. Some 5 hours we've lived in elegant austere Whiteness. Never have I been so long bathed in sublime soul-cleansing Whiteness, the color of deity.

The ridge.

What odd phenomenon here? What foreign but hauntingly-familiar hue? A tree! Incredible, eye-gladdening vegetable. Green! The soul is cleansed by simple white, the heart is warmed by complex green. Worship the White Goddess, love the Green Woman.

At 2 o'clock I sag to sweet Earth at Kennedy Hot Springs. And only now in low-valley Greenness feel and know how high in whiteness I've climbed. What hath Manning wrought? It all happened so fast -- 10½ hours from camp to summit to camp again. I never had a chance to notice if there was anything wrong with the air at 10,430 feet. Whether or not, I breathed and lived.

And grew.

No superhiker am I. In violent high Whiteness of Gletschergipfel
I evolved beyond humanity into superman. Two miles tall am I.