

Unknown America—Looking Over Lookout

By HARRY BARNET

WITH but few exceptions, tourists who have clambered over the rocks and soil where the "Battle Above the Clouds" was fought on Lookout Mountain will doubt the statement that if you follow the trail leading off to the south from the battle spot, you continue atop the mountain for eighty miles, through what is, perhaps, one of the most picturesque parts of the South.

"It can't be done," any one of these doubters will tell you, "because I saw all there is to be seen on Lookout Mountain in one afternoon, and I certainly didn't walk eighty miles in that time."

There you have a difference of opinion that is entirely honest. Lookout Mountain, and what popularly is known as "Lookout Mountain," are artificial divisions of the same height. The latter is the battleground, and it has been so thoroughly press agented as "Lookout Mountain" that before tourists come to see it they are prepared to believe by all they have read and heard about it that Lookout Mountain is nothing more than an impressive bluff overhanging the Tennessee River, or a dull-tipped peak, rising abruptly out of epic country. And when these tourists leave the national shrine they carry that notion away with them.

It is the natural thing for them to believe. No one has made it very plain that where the spectacular fighting took place on Lookout Mountain is only the jumping-off place on the north end of an elevation that is one of the geologic mysteries on the continent, and that back of this jumping-off place there is a world of thrills for whoever is of a mind to indulge his taste for adventure. On the subject of the mountain itself, press agents have been strangely silent.

The outline of the mountain also has had a great deal to do with the creation of a wrong impression. It is a grotesque mass, shaped like a man lying upon his back, with his face turned squarely toward the sky. The attitude of the body is restful. The head is in Tennessee, and apparently it is pillowed upon the right arm, because there is nothing more than a faint bulge where the right arm should be. The left arm is thrown carelessly toward the east.

It is a curiously shaped head, if you stop and study it for a moment, that begins at the toe of the moccasin outlined by the Tennessee River southwest from Chattanooga. From the river bank there is a gradual upward slope, as though the skull is peak-shaped, and the rear half of it is buried in the earth. On the slope there are houses and trees, an unusually good automobile road, a street car line, and about the middle of the slope there is a railroad tunnel through it. Near the front hair line the skull rears straight up, and forms a monstrous jagged-rock bluff. This is the forehead; and it was up the side of this bluff, and

across the face of the hulk, that the "Battle Above the Clouds" took place. If you are more interested in the ground that was fought over than you are in what may lie away from it, then you undoubtedly will believe from what you see that Lookout Mountain is a bluff that was made sacred by the men of yesterday.

In the length of Lookout Mountain there is but one place from which a view is possible into the valleys on both sides at the same time. That is on the neck, opposite Rising Fawn, Georgia, a small village at the foot of the western slope. Here, again, the temporary closing in of the mountain is likely to give the impression that the battleground is a peak. The body widens gradually into a plateau, seventeen miles long and from eight to twelve miles wide. The hips are opposite Ft. Payne, Alabama, also located at the foot of the western slope. The thighs and legs are normal. The right foot is thrust impudently into the outskirts of Gadsden, Alabama, and the left dangles in the waters of Coosa River. The mountain lies in a southerly direction, and between scalplock and heels its length is eighty miles, unbroken and extending into Georgia and Alabama. The line separating these states follows a fairly straight path about midway the east and west brows of the hulk. The average height of the elevation is about 1,300 feet above the surrounding country.

Around the brow of the mountain there is a broad band of rock that has the appearance of a smoothed gray ribbon, tied about it to keep it from falling apart.

"An' that 'ar ol' rock band, hit goes pret' near clean 'round that 'ar ol' mountain, hit does," is likely to be the preface to the first bit of native legendary explanation you'll hear about things on Lookout Mountain, if you're lucky enough to fall in with Jim Alread as a fellow vagabond on its surface.

While Jim is a mountaineer of the type that is familiar in fiction, he is exceptional to the extent that he will talk, and do it a-plenty at any time. Nearly every other he and she highlander that I've seen any place in the hill country of the South appears to be of an economical turn of mind, and holds fast to the opinion that making talk is a sinful waste of time and words.

THE guides who have escorted you who have visited the famous battleground, have had little to say of the wonder spot that stretches for eighty miles and of which there is much to be told. It's really one of the picturesque bits of Unknown America.

"Sometimes I think I know a leetle reeligion," old "Uncle Burrell," who lives neighbor to Jim, said one day, "an' sometimes th' way other people say hit, why, I think maybe I don't know very much about hit.

"But th' way I think about hit," he went on, "th' Lord, He give a man one tongue t' talk with, an' two ears t' hear with, didn't He? An' hain't hit fer t' hear twice as much as y' talk?"

"Ef hit hain't," continued "Uncle Burrell," satisfied with an affirmative nod that his explanation was understood and agreed to, "ef hit hain't, why, then a man 'ud hev two tongues an' one ear, wouldn't he?"

"Now, that 'ar ol' Jim, ef y' didn't see him, an' only heerd him, y'd think he had two tongues, an' only one ear."

Jim is especially loquacious when he is on his way from the vicinity of a moonshine still. Then he jumps



Winter in the Lookout Mountain country.

high into the air, cracks his heels together, and announces himself as, "th' he hawg 'v th' Cumberland's, an' strong 'ith th' pow'r 'v th' Lord." About that time it is the wise thing to do to take a seat that has a tree between it and Jim; he is likely to be reckless, and shoot in any direction just to see folks step lively.

But this is not the story of Jim.

"An' th' ol' devil, he done hit," is the next statement that Jim makes in this, his favorite story, concerning the smoothness of the rock band that is around the top of Lookout Mountain.

"Now, Jim, you can't tell me that, you know," never fails as usher for whatever narrative there may be playing hide-and-seek near the end of his tongue.

"He shore did hit," is the impatient reply. "That 'ar dad-bummed ol' coot, he made that 'ar ol' rock band smooth, he did hit."

"Sure enough?"

"Shore nuf, he did hit," Jim goes on. "Them 'ar ol' rock bands, they war all rough an' scraggly, they war, an' pow'rful onhandy lookin', an' one afternoon that 'ar ol' devil, he said t' hi'se'f, 'I kain't stand a-lookin' at 'em that 'ar ol' way no longer, I kain't,' he said, an' he begun a-trimmin' 'v 'em, he did, an' a-puttin' 'v them 'ar ol' trimmin's in his apron which he war a-wearin', he did."

"Now, hit war a pow'rful warm afternoon, hit war, an' that 'ar ol' devil, he got th' notion, he did, that he wanted a long drink from th' Ohio River, which hit is a long way off yonder beyond Kaintucky, an' which hit war then all level land betwixt hit an' here. So that 'ar ol' devil, he jumped off 'v that 'ar ol' mountain, he did, a-flyin', he war, 'thout a-takin' off 'v that 'ar ol' apron 'v his'n, that 'ar ol' devil he did, an' when he got up thar 'bout th' Emory River, why, his apron string, hit busted, hit did, an' them 'ar ol' trimmin's, they begun a-fallin', they did, but that 'ar ol' devil, he war a-go'in' so fast, he war, that them 'ar ol' rock trimmin's, they war jest tumbled all over Tennessee an' Kaintucky, an' clean t' Cincinnati, they war, an' not all in th' same place.

"Whooc!" Jim always exclaims in conclusion when

he tells this tale, "but that 'ar ol' devil, he war a-flyin', shore nuf, he war, fer his drink 'v Ohio River water, an' that's whar all them 'ar ol' mountains betwixt Cincinnati an' Chattanooga, they come frum; they're th' trimmin's off 'v Lookout Mountain."

Soon after you've started on this trail that leads south from the battleground, you'll have no doubt about Nature being a wanton with her handiwork on Lookout Mountain. Later on, you'll begin to wonder if the lady didn't use the place as a studio, where she tried out color schemes, and put together astonishing combinations and distortions of heavy materials as models there before she did very much work any place else. For Lookout Mountain has in miniature a good many things that other places have in magnitude; and it has some things that evidently are patterns from which no duplicates have been made. But Nature kept a disorderly workshop, and never yet has found time to do very much cleaning up in it. Over here, she made reality of an idea that could only come during a spell of nightmare, and dropped it to work out off yonder a notion of beauty, and dropped it in turn when her nimble mind visioned another contrasting creation, until these things are spread over the whole of the top side of Lookout Mountain in a way that must give the creeps to our prim brethren whose conceptions of beauty are straight-ruled by regularity.

This variety crowd dots a surface that is badly gnarled. There are hills and valleys, and plateaus and plains on Lookout Mountain that give to it something of the appearance of a composite relief map of scenic America. Three rivers that have their sources near the upper part of the body of the mountain do their part toward taking the places of the trio of nationally

important waterways on this fanciful relief map. These streams meander near to one another toward the south, until they reach the hips, where they join, and continue as one river. Just below their junction this stream that is formed by the combination of three rivers falls over a precipice. During mountain flood times the falls are nearly as wide as the American side of Niagara Falls.

But what is of more interest to the explorer is the fact that he or she can travel over Lookout Mountain in any sort of a fashion that has the greatest appeal—afoot, in an automobile, on horseback, or in a horse-drawn vehicle that is reminiscent of gay-young-blood days not very far in the past. The elevation is inhabited, but thinly settled, by a quaint set of folk, and they are strange human documents to ordinary din-jaded, white-light-blinded people from the city. These people of the mountain have some good roads that branch off from the trail that runs a southerly course from the north end of Lookout Mountain to the south end of it. Other roads are not

so good and still others are mere ways through virgin forests, and along the edges of savage, timber-bristling cliffs. Of course, to get back into extreme primitiveness and wildness there is no other means than walking. Camping places on the mountain are as plentiful as little pine bushes.

Seeing what is to be seen on Lookout Mountain is largely a matter of living with your eyes wide open in any sort of a make-believe world that you're of a mind to wander through for the time, and the enticement of it is that you can change your mind and your environment without going very far to do either one thing or the other. Coming out of a virgin forest that is carpeted with amazing flora, you step directly and without preparation onto the edge of a rock field that is horribly naked reality. And you not only do this once, but you do it a dozen times, if you follow the main trail, and the trails that branch off from it, to their ends. These fields are rocks that seemingly bubbled, and boiled, and flowed, and covered hundreds of acres with an uneven, and cavern-hollowed scum before they hardened into gray-white plains. Their appearance is a riot of desolation, heightened by spurts of pebble-pitted rocks, haphazardly rearing aloft. A good many of these uprearings are larger in bulk than ordinary dwelling houses, and the impression they give is that of tormented souls reaching out in agonized supplication from a hardened hell. And in what seems to be an extra effort to repay you for the trouble in getting to these rock fields, other outcrops in the likenesses of nearly every variety of loathsome reptile apparently are slinking across the surface in a crafty effort to make prey of you.

Across this gruesomeness there are tiny flecks of color and brightness. The winds have carried small heaps of soil from one place to another and lodged them in depressions. Germs of dwarf pines and of rock-crawling plants made their way into these heaps and took root. There they struggle with forlorn determination to live, one beside another—gay patches of multi-colored mosses, clumps of evil, yellow-blossom

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