

## VARIOUS NOTES

than to view the sunrise. He may have ridden a mule, but probably went at least part way on foot. We have no details; nothing but the brief passage from the historian Spartianus (*Vita* 13, 3): "Post, in Sicilian navigavit, in qua Aetnam montem conscendit, ut ortum videret arcus specie, ut dicitur, varium. Inde Romam venit."

The event seems to have confirmed Hadrian in his love of mountain climbing. Three years later in Syria (*Vita* 14, 3), he ascended from sea-level Mt. Casius (Jebel el Akra, 5318 ft.), thought to be the seat of Zeus. This may have been a first ascent, for local people never went beyond the temple at its base. Once more the emperor hoped to watch a sunrise, but was overtaken instead by a thunderstorm, lightning striking both the animal which the emperor was offering in sacrifice and the acolyte who was making it ready.

This is the last record of mountaineering until the early middle ages, when Peter III of Aragon (1236-85) climbed Pic Canigou (9135 ft.) in the Pyrenees. Curiously enough, he goes down in history as the liberator of Sicily.

J. MONROE THORINGTON

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

December 17, 1954.

Dear Sir:

Ever since Mt. Everest was determined to be the highest known point on the earth's surface, its elevation, as published by responsible and irresponsible sources, has fluctuated alarmingly from the figure computed by the authority best qualified to speak on the matter, the Survey of India.

It is refreshing, therefore, to note that in November, 1954, the Survey of India, in announcing the result of three years of careful observations from a number of stations within 20 to 40 miles of the mountain, established the official height of Mt. Everest as 29,028 feet. The probable error is considered not to exceed 10 feet.

Let us hope for wider and more permanent acceptance of this elevation than was accorded the Survey's original figure, only 26 feet lower.

Yours very sincerely,

Walter A. Wood.