

THE MOUNTAINS

BY

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WHITE

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THE FOREST

THE BLAZED TRAIL

THE SILENT PLACES Etc.



WITH PICTURES BY FERNAND LUNGREN

VI.—The Inferno

FOR eight days we did penance, checking off the hours, meeting doggedly one after another the disagreeable things. We were bathed in heat; we inhaled it; it soaked into us until we seemed to radiate it like so many furnaces. A condition of thirst became the normal condition, to be only slightly mitigated by a few mouthfuls from zinc canteens of tepid water. Food had no attractions; even smoking did not taste good. Always the flat country stretched out before us. We could see far ahead a landmark which we would reach only by a morning's travel. Nothing intervened between us and it. After we had looked at it a while, we became possessed of an almost insane necessity to make a run for it. The slow maddening three miles an hour of the pack-train drove us frantic. There were times when it seemed that unless we shifted our gait, unless we stepped outside the slow strain of patience to which the Inferno held us relentlessly, we should lose our minds and run round and round in circles—as people often do, in the desert.

And when the last and most formidable hundred yards had slunk sullenly behind us to insignificance, and we had dared let our minds relax from the insistent need of self-control—then, beyond the cottonwoods, or creek-bed, or group of buildings, whichever it might be, we made out another, remote as paradise, which we must gain by sunset. So again the wagon-trail, with its white choking dust, its staggering sun, its miles made up of monotonous inches, each clutching for a man's sanity.

We sang everything we knew; we told stories; we rode cross-saddle, side-wise, erect, slouching; we walked and led our horses; we shook the powder of years from old worn jokes, conundrums, and puzzles—and at the end, in spite of our best efforts, we fell to morose silence and the red-eyed, vindictive contemplation of the objective point that would not seem to come nearer.

For now we lost accurate sense of time. At first it had been merely a question of going in at one side of eight days, pressing through them, and coming out on the other side. Then the eight days would be behind us. But once we

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had entered that enchanted period, we found ourselves more deeply involved. The seemingly limited area spread with startling swiftness to the very horizon. Abruptly it was borne in on us that this was never going to end; just as now for the first time we realized that it had begun infinite ages ago. We were caught in the entanglement of days. The Coast Ranges were the experiences of a past incarnation; the Mountains were a myth. Nothing was real but this; and this would endure forever. We plodded on because somehow it was part of the great plan that we should do so. Not that it did any good: we had long since given up such ideas. The illusion was very real; perhaps it was the anodyne mercifully administered to those who pass through the Inferno.

Most of the time we got on well enough. One day, only, the Desert showed her power. That day, at five of the afternoon, it was one hundred and twenty degrees in the shade. And we, through necessity of reaching the next water, journeyed over the alkali at noon. Then the Desert came close on us and looked us fair in the eyes, concealing nothing. She killed poor Deuce, the beautiful setter who had traveled the wild countries so long; she struck Wes and the Tenderfoot from their horses when finally they had reached a long-legged water-tank; she even staggered the horses themselves. And I, lying under a bush where I had stayed after the others in the hope of succoring Deuce, began idly shooting at ghostly jack-rabbits that looked real, but through which the revolver bullets passed without resistance.

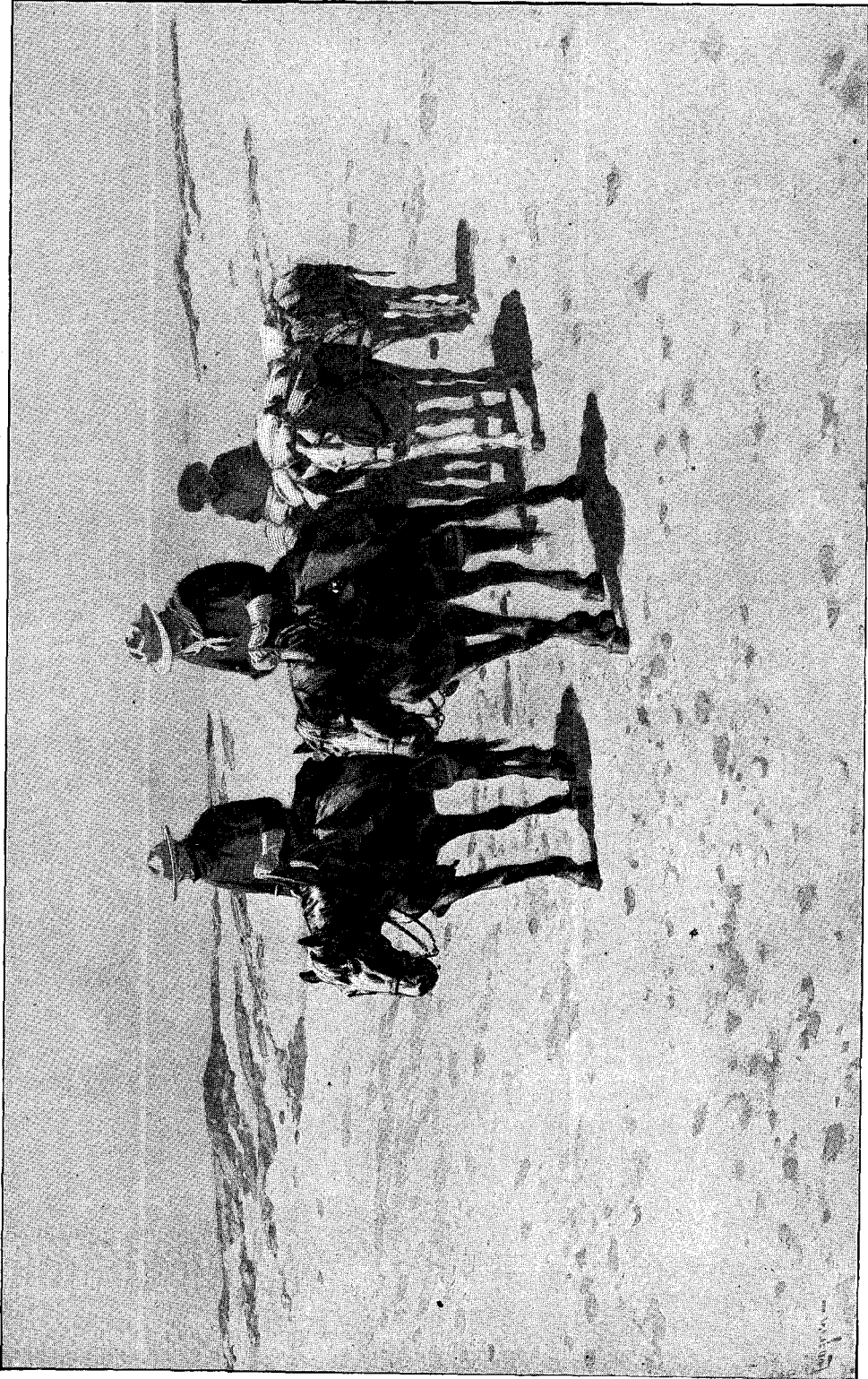
After this day the Tenderfoot went water-crazy. Watering the horses became almost a mania with him. He could not bear to pass even a mud-hole without offering the astonished Tuncmah a chance to fill up, even though that animal had drunk freely not twenty rods back. As for himself, he embraced every opportunity; and journeyed draped in many canteens.

After that it was not so bad. The thermometer stood from a hundred to a hundred and five or six, to be sure, but we were getting used to it. Discomfort,

ordinary physical discomfort, we came to accept as the normal environment of man. It is astonishing how soon uniformly uncomfortable conditions, by very lack of contrast, do lose their power to color the habit of mind. I imagine merely physical unhappiness is a matter more of contrasts than of actual circumstances. We swallowed dust; we humped our shoulders philosophically under the beating of the sun; we breathed the debris of high winds; we cooked anyhow, ate anything, spent long idle fly-infested hours waiting for the noon to pass; we slept in horse-corral, in the trail, in the dust, behind stables, in hay, anywhere. There was little water, less wood for the cooking.

It is now all confused, an impression of events without sequence, a mass of little prominent purposeless things like rock conglomerate. I remember leaning my elbows on a low window-ledge and watching a poker game going on in the room of a dive. The light came from a sickly suspended lamp. It fell on five players—two miners in their shirt-sleeves, a Mexican, a tough youth with side-tilted derby-hat, and a fat, gorgeously dressed Chinaman. The men held their cards close to their bodies, and wagered in silence. Slowly and regularly the great drops of sweat gathered on their faces. As regularly they raised the backs of their hands to wipe them away. Only the Chinaman, broad-faced, calm, impassive as Buddha, save for a little crafty smile in one corner of his eye, seemed utterly unaffected by the heat, cool as autumn. His loose sleeve fell back from his forearm when he moved his hand forward, laying his bets. A jade bracelet slipped back and forth as smoothly as on yellow ivory.

Or, again, one night when the plain was like a sea of liquid black, and the sky blazed with stars, we rode by a sheep-herder's camp. The flicker of a fire threw a glow out into the dark. A tall wagon, a group of silhouetted men, three or four squatting dogs, were squarely within the circle of illumination. And outside, in the penumbra of shifting half light, now showing clearly, now fading into darkness, were the sheep, indeterminate in bulk, melting



"WE JOURNEYED OVER THE ALKALI AT NOON"

away by mysterious thousands into the mass of night. We passed them. They looked up, squinting their eyes against the dazzle of their fire. The night closed about us again.

Or still another: in the glare of broad noon, after a hot and trying day, a little inn kept by a French couple. And there, in the very middle of the Inferno, was served to us, on clean scrubbed tables, a meal such as one gets in rural France, all complete, with the *pâtage*, the fish fried in oil, the wonderful *ragout*, the chicken and salad, the cheese and the black coffee, even the *vin ordinaire*. I have forgotten the name of the place, its location on the map, the name of its people—one has little to do with detail in the Inferno—but that dinner never will I forget, any more than the Tenderfoot will forget his first sight of water the day when the Desert “held us up.”

Once the brown veil lifted to the eastward. We, souls struggling, saw great mountains and the whiteness of eternal snow. That noon we crossed a river, hurrying down through the flat plain, and in its current came the body of a drowned bear-cub, an alien from the high country.

These things should have been as signs to our jaded spirits that we were nearly at the end of our penance, but discipline had seared over our souls, and we rode on unknowing.

Then we came on a real indication. It did not amount to much. Merely a dry river-bed; but the farther bank, instead of being flat, cut into a low swell of land. We skirted it. Another swell of land, like the sullen after-heave of a storm, lay in our way. Then we crossed a ravine. It was not much of a ravine; in fact, it was more like a slight gouge in the flatness of the coun-

try. After that we began to see oak-trees, scattered at rare intervals. So interested were we in them that we did not notice rocks beginning to outcrop through the soil until they had become numerous enough to be a feature of the landscape. The hills, gently, quietly, without abrupt transition, almost as though they feared to awaken our alarm by too abrupt movement of growth, glided from little swells to bigger swells. The oaks gathered closer together. The ravine's brother could almost be called a cañon. The character of the country had entirely changed.

And yet, so gradually had this change come about that we did not awaken to a full realization of our escape. To us it was still the plain, a trifle modified by local peculiarity, but presently to resume its wonted aspect. We plodded on dully, anodyned with the desert patience.

But at a little before noon, as we rounded the cheek of a slope, we encountered an errant current of air. It came up to us curiously, touched us each in turn, and went on. The warm furnace heat drew in on us again. But it had been a cool little current of air, with something of the sweetness of pines and water and snow-banks in it. The Tenderfoot suddenly reined in his horse, and looked about him.

“Boys!” he cried, a new ring of joy in his voice, “we’re in the foot-hills!”

We calculated rapidly. “It’s the eighth day to-day; I guessed right on the time.”

We stretched our arms and looked about us. They were dry brown hills enough; but they were hills, and they had trees on them, and cañons in them, so to our eyes, wearied with flatness, they seemed wonderful.

VII.—The Foot-Hills

At once our spirits rose. We straightened in our saddles, we breathed deep, we joked. The country was scorched and sterile; the wagon-trail, almost paralleling the mountains themselves on a long easy slant toward the high country, was ankle-deep in dust; the ravines were still dry of water. But it was not

the Inferno, and that one fact sufficed. After a while we crossed high above a river which dashed white water against black rocks, and so were happy.

The country went on changing. The change was always imperceptible, as is growth, or the stealthy advance of autumn through the woods. From moment

to moment one could detect no alteration. Something intangible was taken away; something impalpable added. At the end of an hour we were in the oaks and sycamores; at the end of two we were in the pines and low mountains of Bret Harte's "Forty-Nine."

The wagon-trail felt ever farther and farther into the hills. It had not been used as a stage-route for years, but the freighting kept it deep with dust, that writhed and twisted and crawled lazily knee-high to our horses, like a living creature. We felt the swing and sweep of the route. The boldness of its stretches, the freedom of its reaches for the opposite slope, the wide curve of its horseshoes, all filled us with the breath of an expansion which as yet the broad, low country only suggested.

Everything here was reminiscent of long ago. The very names hinted stories of the Argonauts. Coarse Gold Gulch, Whisky Creek, Grub Gulch, Fine Gold Post-Office in turn we passed. Occasionally, with a fine round dash into the open, the trail drew one side to a stage-station. The huge stables, the wide corrals, the low living-houses, each shut in its dooryard of blazing riotous flowers, were all familiar. Only lacked the old-fashioned Concord coach, from which to descend Jack Hamlin or Judge Starbottle. As for M'liss, she was there, sunbonnet and all.

Down in the gulch bottoms were the old placer diggings. Elaborate little ditches for the deflection of water, long cradles for the separation of gold, decayed rockers, and shining in the sun the tons and tons of pay dirt which had been turned over pound by pound in the concentrating of its treasure. Some of the old cabins still stood. It was all deserted now, saved for the few who kept trail for the freighters, or who tilled the restricted bottom-lands of the flats. Road-runners raked away down the paths; squirrels scurried over worn-out placers; jays screamed and chattered in and out of the abandoned cabins. Strange and shy little creatures and birds, reassured by the silence of many years, had ventured to take to themselves the engines of man's industry. And the warm California sun embalmed

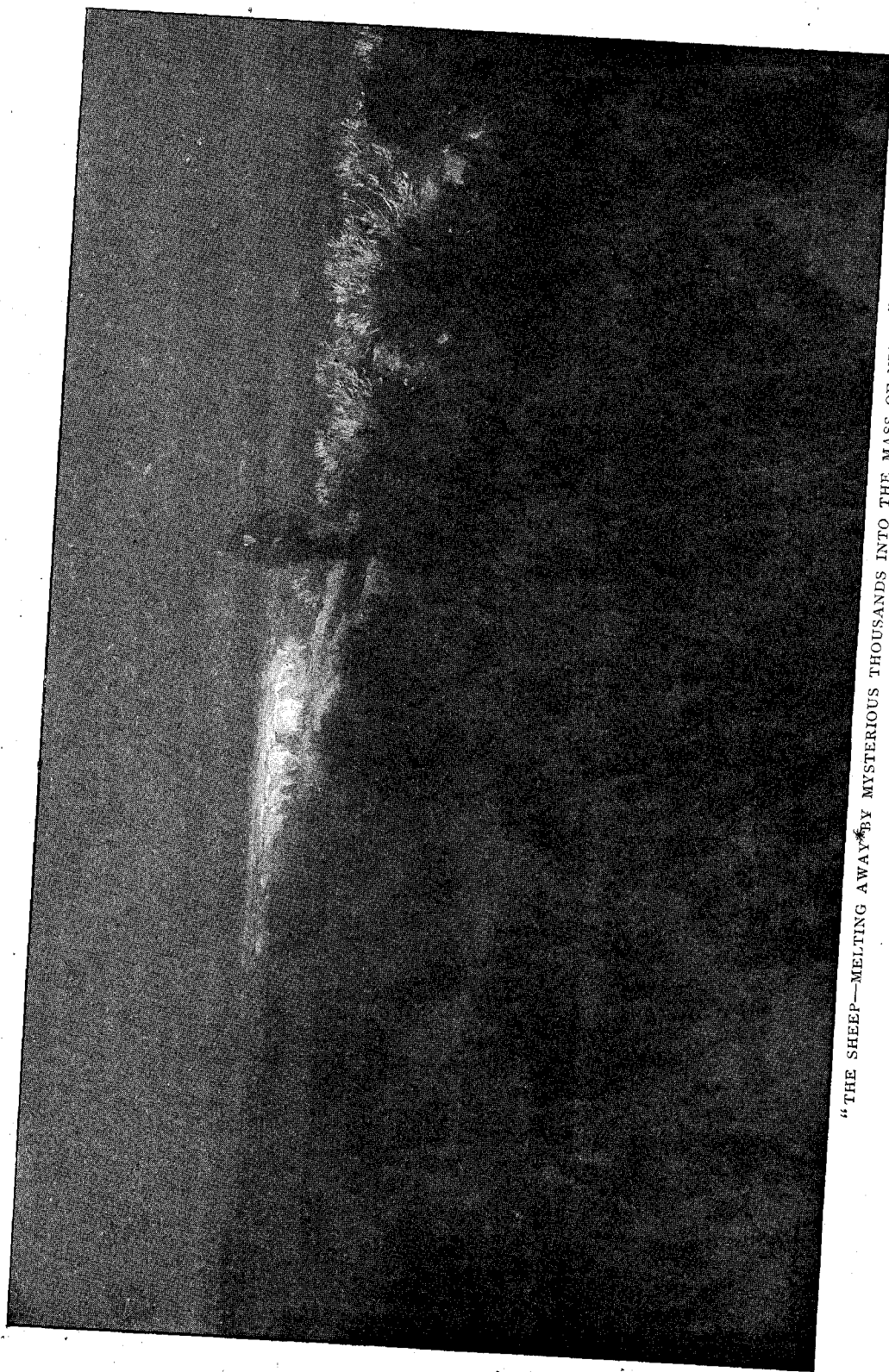
it all in a peaceful and pleasing forgetfulness.

Now the trees grew bigger, and the hills more impressive. We should call them mountains in the East. Pines covered them to the top, straight, slender pines with voices. The little flats were planted with great oaks. When we rode through them, they shut out the hills, so that we might have imagined ourselves in the level wooded country. There insisted the effect of limitless tree-grown plains, which the warm drowsy sun, the park-like landscape, corroborated. And yet the contrast of the clear atmosphere and the sharp air equally insisted on the mountains. It was a strange and delicious double effect, a contradiction of natural impressions, a negation of our right to generalize from previous experience.

Always the trail wound up and up. Never was it steep; never did it command an outlook. Yet we felt that at last we were rising, were leaving the level of the Inferno, were nearing the threshold of the high country.

Mountain peoples came to the edges of their clearings and gazed at us, responding solemnly to our salutations. They dwelt in cabins and held to agriculture and the herding of the wild mountain cattle. From them we heard of the high country to which we were bound. They spoke of it as you or I would speak of interior Africa, as something inconceivably remote, to be visited only by the adventurous, an uninhabited realm of vast magnitude and unknown dangers. In the same way they spoke of the plains. Only the narrow pine-clad strip between the two and six thousand feet of elevation they felt to be their natural environment. In it they found the proper conditions for their existence. Out of it those conditions lacked. They were as much a localized product as are certain plants which occur only at certain altitudes. Also were they densely ignorant of trails and routes outside of their own little districts.

All this, you will understand, was in what is known as the low country. The landscape was still brown; the streams but trickles; sage-brush clung to the



"THE SHEEP—MELTING AWAY BY MYSTERIOUS THOUSANDS INTO THE MASS OF NIGHT"

ravines; the valley quail whistled on the side hills.

But one day we came suddenly into the

big pines and rocks; and that night we made our first camp in a meadow typical of the mountains we had dreamed about.

VIII.—The Pines

I do not know exactly how to make you feel the charm of that first camp in the big country. Certainly I can never quite repeat it in my own experience.

Remember that for two months we had grown accustomed to the brown of the California landscape, and that for over a week we had traveled in the Inferno. We had forgotten the look of green grass, of abundant water; almost had we forgotten the taste of cool air. So invariably had the trails been dusty, and the camping-places hard and exposed, that we had come subconsciously to think of such as typical of the country. Try to put yourself in the frame of mind those conditions would make.

Then imagine yourself climbing in an hour or so up into a high ridge country of broad cup-like sweeps and bold outcropping ledges. Imagine a forest of pine-trees bigger than any pines you ever saw before—pines eight and ten feet through, so huge that you can hardly look over one of their prostrate trunks even from the back of your pony. Imagine, further, singing little streams of ice-cold water, deep refreshing shadows, a soft carpet of pine-needles through which the faint furrow of the trail runs as over velvet. And then, last of all, in a wide opening, clear as though chopped and plowed by some backwoodsman, a park of grass, fresh grass, green as a precious stone.

This was our first sight of the mountain meadows. From time to time we found others, sometimes a half-dozen in a day. The rough country came down close about them, edging to the very hair-line of the magic circle which seemed to assure their placid, sunny peace. An upheaval of splintered granite often tossed and tumbled in the abandon of an unrestrained passion that seemed irresistibly to overwhelm the sanities of a whole region; but somewhere, in the very forefront of turmoil, was like to slumber one of these little meadows, as unconscious of anything

but its own flawless green simplicity as a child asleep in mid-ocean. Or, away up in the snows, warmed by the fortuity of reflected heat, its emerald eye looked bravely out to the heavens. Or, as here, it rested confidently in the very heart of the austere forest.

Always these parks are green; always are they clear and open. Their size varies widely. Some are as little as a city lawn; others, like the great Monache,¹ are miles in extent. In them resides the possibility of your traveling the high country; for they supply the feed for your horses.

Being desert-weary, the Tenderfoot and I cried out with the joy of it, and told in extravagant language how this was the best camp we had ever made.

"It's a bum camp," growled Wes. "If we couldn't get better camps than this, I'd quit the game."

He expatiated on the fact that this particular meadow was somewhat boggy; that the feed was too watery; that there'd be a cold wind down through the pines; and other small and minor details. But we, our backs propped against appropriately slanted rocks, our pipes well aglow, gazed down the twilight through the wonderful great columns of the trees to where the white horses shone like snow against the unaccustomed relief of green, and laughed him to scorn. What did we—or the horses for that matter—care for trifling discomforts of the body? In these intangible comforts of the eye was a great refreshment of the spirit.

The following day we rode through the pine forests growing on the ridges and hills and in the elevated bowl-like hollows. These were not the so-called "big trees"—with those we had to do later, as you shall see. They were merely sugar and yellow pines, but never anywhere have I seen finer specimens. They were planted with a grand sumptuousness of space, and their trunks were from five to twelve feet in diameter

¹ Do not fail to sound the final *e*.

and upwards of two hundred feet high to the topmost spear. Underbrush, ground growth, even saplings of the same species, lacked entirely, so that we proceeded in the clear open aisles of a tremendous and spacious magnificence.

This very lack of the smaller and usual growths, the generous plan of spacing, and the size of the trees themselves, necessarily deprived us of a standard of comparison. At first the forest seemed immense. But after a little our eyes became accustomed to its proportions. We referred it back to the measures of long experience. The trees, the wood-aisles, the extent of vision, shrunk to the normal proportions of an Eastern pinery. And then we would lower our gaze. The pack-train would come into view. It had become Lilliputian, the horses small as white mice, the men like tin soldiers, as though we had undergone an enchantment. But in a moment, with the rush of a mighty transformation, the great trees would tower huge again.

In the pine woods of the mountains grows also a certain close-clipped parasitic moss. In color it is a brilliant yellow-green, more yellow than green. In shape it is crinkly and curly and tangled up with itself like very fine shavings. In consistency it is dry and brittle. This moss girdles the trunks of trees with innumerable parallel inch-wide bands a foot or so apart, in the manner of old-fashioned striped stockings. It covers entirely sundry twigless branches. Always in appearance is it fantastic, decorative, almost Japanese, as though consciously laid in with its vivid yellow-green as an intentional note of a tone scheme. The somberest shadows, the most neutral twilights, the most austere recesses, are lighted by it as though so many freakish sunbeams had severed relations with the parent luminary to rest quietly in the coolnesses of the ancient forest.

Underfoot the pine needles were springy beneath the horse's hoof. The trail went softly, with the courtesy of great gentleness. Occasionally we caught sight of other ridges—also with pines—across deep sloping valleys, pine filled. The effect of the distant trees seen from

above was that of roughened velvet, here smooth and shining, there dark with rich shadows. On these slopes played the wind. In the level countries it sang through the forest progressively; here on the slope it struck a thousand trees at once. The air was ennobled with the great voice, as a church is ennobled by the tones of a great organ. Then we would drop back again to the inner country, for our way did not contemplate the descents nor climbs, but held to the general level of a plateau.

Clear fresh brooks ran in every ravine. Their water was snow-white against the black rocks, or lay dark in bank-shadowed pools. As our horses splashed across we could glimpse the rainbow trout flashing to cover. Where were the watered hollows grew lush thickets full of birds, outposts of the aggressively and cheerfully worldly in this pine land of spiritual detachment. Gorgeous bush-flowers, great of petal as magnolias, with perfume that lay on the air like a heavy drowsiness; long clear stretches of an ankle-high shrub of vivid emerald, looking in the distance like sloping meadows of a peculiar color-brilliance; patches of smaller flowers where for the trifling space of a street's width the sun had unobstructed fall—these from time to time diversified the way, brought to our perceptions the endearing trifles of earthiness, of humanity, befittingly to modify the austerity of the great forest. At a brookside we saw, still fresh and moist, the print of a bear's foot. From a patch of the little emerald brush a barren doe rose to her feet, eyed us a moment, and then bounded away as though propelled by springs. We saw her from time to time surmounting little elevations farther and farther away.

The air was like cold water. We had not lung capacity to satisfy our desire for it. There came with it a dry exhilaration that brought high spirits, an optimistic viewpoint, and a tremendous keen appetite. It seemed that we could never tire. In fact, we never did. Sometimes, after a particularly hard day, we felt like resting; but it was always after the day's work was done, never while it was under way. The Tender-

foot and I one day went afoot twenty-two miles up and down a mountain fourteen thousand feet high. The last three thousand feet were nearly straight up and down. We finished at a four-mile clip an hour before sunset, and discussed what to do next to fill in the time. When we sat down, we found we had had about enough; but we had not discovered it before.

All of us, even the morose and cynical Dinkey, felt the benefit of the change

from the lower country. Here we were definitely in the Mountains. Our plateau ran from six to eight thousand feet in altitude. Beyond it occasionally we could see three more ridges, rising and falling, each higher than the last. And then, in the blue distance, the very crest of the broad system called the Sierras—another wide region of sheer granite rising in peaks, pinnacles, and minarets, rugged, wonderful, capped with the eternal snows.

America: Elect Among Nations

By Amanda T. Jones

Now who are these thronging thy gate?

One knocks at thy door:

"Behold where my multitudes wait!

They hunger, and great is thy store!

They have drunk of the fountains of salt

Where the red lions breed;

They are leprous and fevered and halt,

They are humbled and bruised as the reed."

Is not this the Master indeed?

Foot-weary and worn,

The heat of the day he has borne:

Wilt thou comfort all these in their need?

Wert thou not cast up from the sea

To a banquet of blood?

And are there not balsams for thee,

Magnolias and laurels in bud?

Thy harvests—who reckons their worth?—

Wheat and corn in the seed;

For the armies that trample the earth

Who numbers thy cattle that bleed?

Shall Christ for his desolate plead,

Nor move thee to bless?

O thou, who art rich beyond guess,

Turn back to thy records and read!

Uplift them—the Black with the Brown;

Anoint the torn feet.

Are they troublers—of evil renown?

Yet cleanse them and they shall be sweet.

Who murdered that lover of men?

Not theirs was the deed!

If they wound thee in anger, what then?

He calls thee—O serve him with speed!

Stand forth in thy beauty and feed

His poor unashamed;

Full sweetly thy name shall be named,

And who shall thy glory exceed?