

sky, they marshal forth how lordly, how angelic a procession ! After midsummer, purple is their favourite wear; but I have also seen them clothed by rainbows in pale rose and delicate green. Sometimes they look like one continuous wall, sometimes the ranges stand distinctly one behind another, and you may pick out not only every peak but also every river-gorge that intersects their chain. Dawn reveals on each fine morning the marching of the mountains into light, one peak after another striding forward into the sunshine, while the foothills below, still in shade, are of the velvety colour of violets. Morning sees the snows still clear, silver-white gashed deep with cobalt; or, if the sun be hot, perhaps the summits have tossed themselves already out of sight into a curdle of luminous cloud. Noon shows them melting pale and wraithlike into the pale blue of the sky; in the afternoon they lie in shadow against the light, and it is only the Kaikouras, far out at sea, that stand all rose at sunset . . . except, indeed, on nor'-west evenings, of which we must presently say a little more.

Then, the Plain. Naturally the Plain varies with the season. Ploughland and pasture, in the winter, patch it with English greens and browns—it would be a great sight to see it, for once, all white with snow, but this, I imagine, can happen only rarely, for winter here, though shrewish at moments, is seldom stern for days. Spring flings across the Plain a Joseph's coat of green in many tints, threads it with shining silver by means of rain-filled runnels, and paints the little rivers brightly blue. The budding willows, too, build daily on it soft round mounds of green, and perhaps it is in spring that the luminous violet vapour, so often lying on it like a bloom, is at its loveliest. Then comes summer, and the Plain turns yellow; from haytime to harvest its gold deepens, as its riches increase, till Autumn substitutes, first the pallor of the stubble, then, by means of March rains and the plough, the pleasant eye-reviving squares of green again and brown. And both spring and autumn scatter the Plain with jewels, here glinting, there gleaming, yonder blazing brightly—the homely yet splendid jewels of farm fires, which, in turn, fasten to the bosom of the Plain long veils and broideries of bright waving smoke. The effect of these latter, as, spiralling up into the air and incessantly changing both in form and volume, they catch and vary the light, is entrancing, and fills both the Plain and one's own mind with fancy. In spring they seem like the prayers and aspirations of new-sown paddocks rising up to heaven; in autumn one imagines the Plain dotted with the altar-pyres of a wide thanksgiving.

It is vapour, indeed, of various kinds that, from the artistic point of view, makes half the beauty of the Plain; nor does

it need the passage of a season, even of a day, to prove this. Sunrise, especially in winter, reveals the face of the flat covered with silken mists that ebb and flow through the most delicate gradations of colour—white, silver, ivory, dun and fawn, opal, amethyst, violet and rose. Even high noon steals seldom all the bloom away, and sunset suffuses it again with a glamour of purple and rose, or a breath blue as wood smoke. Then there are accesses—white days, when all the sky is pearly-pale, and all the Plain lies dreaming under a light warm haze, and here and there a shower of soft gold light comes Jove-like down from Heaven upon this sleeping Danae; or blue days, when the white sea-fog comes rolling in. This is one of the most spectacular effects of the Road. Above, the sky is stainless azure; opposite, the mountain peaks rise purple; but, between the Road and them, as if by magic, all the accustomed scene is gone. There is no city, and no sea and no plain—nothing, but an immense floor, of the whiteness and texture of wool, rent here and there by crevasses of deep blue, and all moving, billowing, rolling—but all noiseless. It is not unlike a great glacier to look at, only that it changes as you look; softly it washes in and out of the valleys; the spurs stand out into it like headlands advanced into the ocean. I have heard the church bells of the city come up out of such a mist; and it was like listening to the bells of some drowned city of romance. Something of the same effect you may get again almost any day at twilight, when the street lamps gleam with a pale and ghostly fire through the likeness of a gauzy sheet drawn level across along the middle of the hills and across the city.

Then there is the magic of mingled shadow and shine. Think of a windy day, an easterly day for choice, with the clouds all rushing piecemeal, and between them long shafts and largesses of light slipping down to the Plain, and chasing across it—with ever a flying patch of sweet green, most vividly bright, about their unseen feet, and ever a shadow at heel ! And here is a delightful little vignette from the pen of that delicate observer of Nature, Mr. Johannes C. Andersen. "The day had been overcast, and rain had fallen and still threatened. As I stood on Nancy's Knoll, the clouds far away parted, and a flood of light streamed through on to the Plain, lighting up the beautifully fresh green fields. The cloud rift extended slowly towards Kennedy's Bush Valley, and the flood of light approached like a glory, darkness before and darkness behind, until it reached the entrance to the valley, and bathed either spur with sunshine. There it halted. . . . The valley had taken on the appearance of a dell of faerie. There was the high forbidding bluff at its head (Cass's Peak),