

On the Way to the Rockies

pulled heavily, and then the bow grated on a half-seen shore.

We leaped out and fastened the boat. The pony scrambled splashing up the beach, and was harnessed, dripping, to a buckboard; and presently we rattled over stony plains toward the ranch as the earliest dawn began to break. The cool valley, four thousand feet above the sea, the upsweep of tawny hill-slopes, and the grey mountains sharply outlined against the south-west sky, had something austere and impressive about them as wide, untenanted spaces.

A freight train crawling up the pass on the other side of the river was a procession of ants; the scattered log houses were only dots on the broad hillsides, and the ghostly cones of Indian teepees seemed lifeless. Man and his works showed for very little in a gigantic valley, where the grim mountains pushed the dusky blue sky so far above them.

Perhaps it was only the human lack of courage at three o'clock in the morning that daunted me as we drove through a silent, impassive world, seeming too huge and unconquered for mortal man to feel at home in; but I was thankful when the sunrise spread warm tints in the greys, and the soft low of cattle came from the hills, and a vesper sparrow began to sing, just as his fellows do in the east.

The mountains had covered their austerity with the most delicate and feminine of gauzy garments, and all the world was rosy and warm with level