

and with all the changing charm of successive agriculture. But the tremendous unity of the pine absorbs and moulds the life of a race. The pine shadows rest upon a nation. The northern peoples, century after century, lived under one or other of the two great powers of the pine, and the sea, both infinite. They dwelt amidst the forests, as they wandered on the waves, and saw no end, nor any other horizon ;—still the dark green trees, or the dark green waters, jagged the dawn with their fringe, or their foam. And whatever elements of imagination, or of warrior strength, or of domestic justice, were brought down by the Norwegian and the Goth against the dissoluteness or degradation of the South of Europe, were taught them under the green roofs and wild penetralia of the pine."

These pictures, or rather fragments of pictures, have been taken from the mountain giants, framing the gorges or guarding the passes, inviolate and inviolable ; but here is another upon an humbler subject, equally beautiful, equally original, equally unexcelled for truth of description, delicacy of sentiment and felicity of diction.

Ruskin has been speaking of lichens and mosses :—

"And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us, when all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and gray lichen take up their watch by the headstone, the woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their parts for a time, but these do service forever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

"Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honoured of the earth children. Unfading, as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither

blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark, eternal, tapestries of the hills ; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness\* of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance ; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold.—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, starlike, on the stone ; and the gathering orange-stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years."

One more picture, but this time not of earth or earth's children the last two etchings have been portraits of vegetable life, the pine tree and the lichen ; but Ruskin can transcend the earth, and limn with the same inimitable pencil things above the forest bole and grassy blade, the Bedouins of space, the emissaries of the sun. Here you shall have a cloud-picture :—

"That mist which lies in the morning so softly in the valley, level and white, through which the tops of the trees rise as if through an inundation—why is *it* so heavy? and why does it lie so low, being yet so thin and frail that it will melt away utterly into splendour of morning, when the sun has shone on it but a few moments more? Those colossal pyramids, huge and firm, with outlines as of rocks, and strength to bear the beating of the high sun full on their fiery flanks—why are *they* so light,—their basis high over our heads, high over the heads of Alps? why will these melt away, not as the sun rises, but as he descends, and leave the stars of twilight clear, while the valley vapour gains again upon the earth like a shroud?