

Preface

As the traveller climbs upward the scene changes among the barren rocks and frowning precipices, for here Nature stands revealed in majestic mood, and the lines of the landscape are sketched out rugged and severe. Then comes the sudden turn round the corner of some cliff, the o'ertopping of some steep stone ledge, and behold! before one, in a high alpine meadow, lies a garden such as kings might envy. But how describe the ecstasy of standing knee-deep in the fragrance of a thousand flowers? After crossing the bare bleak rocks it is like a triumphal entry into Paradise. Here are Pink Garlies, Harebells swaying in wild waywardness, Veronicas and Forget-me-nots looking up with wide-open eyes, Heathers red, rose and white, amethyst Asters, White Geraniums and Moccasin Flowers, all mingling with the shining green leaves and waxen petals of the Rhododendrons and the snowy chalices of the Globe-flowers and Anemones.

It matters not at what hour one goes to the mountains, whether in the amethyst dawn, when the golden gates of sunrise fall ajar and the first faint rustle of the leaves stirs the dreaming world to consciousness, dispersing mists and dew; in the brilliant noontide, when life marches on with all her banners unfurled, and every plant is budding and blowing as the sap runs freely, and the sun's rays gild hill and vale; or in the amber evening when purple shadows steal with phantom feet from cliff to cliff, and down in the dusk of the forest dewdrops spangle leaf and bloom, as God lights the star-lamps of His high heaven and puts out the day.

Even when we listen to the rhythm of the rain all is beautiful, for the flowers that greeted the dawn with opal hearts wide-blown; that at noontide were found with