

THE JOURNEY

slowly the vegetation changes. Yellow pines, increasingly dense, replace the scattered diggers. Here and there a dogwood's fresh green and the broad cream petals of its blossoms shine in bright contrast. The light olive of snowbrush, the vivid green of bear clover, the polished leaves of chinquapin, perhaps even a tiny patch of azaleas offer a great refreshment to the eye. There is no more brown and powdery grass. The air, while still warm, bears on its tiny wandering breezes just a taste of crispness. Still, the plains and foothills lie below us, and the breath of them follows us scorching; the trees on the slope are of ordinary size — we are even yet in California.

But after three hours or so we make a last scramble over the rim.

Around us are the Trees, our great, beautiful Trees. The grass is green, the water sparkling, the birds shouting aloud with joy, the sky blue. Flowers are all about us, even to the edges of the melting snowbanks. California has been whisked away. We are back again in our magic country, and other places are not. It is as sudden as that; the mere topping of a hill.

We ride along the old road, spying eagerly for the little changes. Winter, the gardener of these mighty domains, has been at work, pruning the limbs with