THE MOUNTAIN; RENEWED STUDIES IN IMPRESSIONS AND APPEARANCES
JOHN C. VAN DYKE

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The Weisshorn from above Täsch Alp.
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AND APPEARANCES

BY

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"NATURE FOR ITS OWN SAKE," ETC.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1916
PREFACE—DEDICATION

To

B. R. C.

Our first fancy in mountain scenery is usually the spectacular, the startling, perhaps the fantastic. The spurs and spines of the Dolomites, the sharp shaft of the Matterhorn, the beetling height of Kinchinjunga command our wonder by their extraordinary display of form. Years after, when the ranges have become a more familiar story, we perhaps care less for the abrupt than the quiescent and are content with the flowing lines of the Appalachians or the rounded forms of the Scotch hills.

We change our point of view, but the mountains themselves change not. Whatever face they turn to us, whatever their appearance, it is always one of beauty. They are mere breaks in the crust—crushings of the earthshell—and by the same reckoning color is a mere break in the beam of light, but what a
wonder work each of them spreads before us! We pick and choose here and there—some for the strength of form and others for the glory of color—but nature herself makes no choice and has no preference. For she formed and garbed and hued each manifestation, from the first gentle heave of a foot-hill to the last sun-flash on a pinnacled peak, with a singular care and endowed it with a peculiar and a superlative beauty. Each after its kind was made perfect and complete within itself.

When nature sets such a pace what better can one do than follow? In these studies of mountains I have not given either preference or illustration to any one form of mountain beauty. I have spoken much of the Rockies and devoted the first chapter to the long approach to them across the prairies of Dacotah; but I have also taken many illustrations from the Alps, the Carpathians, the Caucasus, the Apennines, the Mexican Sierras—some of them quite as familiar to Americans as their own mountains. From all sources and from many lands I have tried to show the varied features and different types of mountain splendor. The variety is infinite, and the Ruskins who have formed theories of mountain form and color
from the Alps alone fall short in their generalizations. There is a peculiarity—one might say a mountain individuality—about not only the peaks but the ranges. No two of them are alike.

For the rest these sketches should speak for themselves. They will tell you that my interest is with the beauty of the mountains rather than their science, their history, or their conquest by Alpinists. I have used science herein by way of illustrating the bases of form and color and used history and narrative merely as a setting for the picture. It is the picture—the pictorial in the mountains—that I am seeking, and the remainder is only so much pigment, varnish, and gilt frame. All the world loves the mountains—loves them as color patterns on the blue, as marvels of light and shade, as symbols of peace and purity—loves them, in other words, as one might a picture. That there is a supreme grandeur about the peaks and a great beauty in the lesser hills every one will acknowledge.

But the grandeur of the peaks is as hard to capture with the brush as the beauty of the hills with the pen. The landscape-painter and the writer have had very moderate success in
portraying them. The great features of nature seem defiant of representation. Whether this attempt of mine is better or worse than others I know not. It may have a saving grace of difference. For the greater part of it is record of my own seeing carried over a long number of years. I shall have to insist that the record is true so far as it goes—that is, true to my point of view.

J. C. V. D.

San Bernardino Mountains
August, 1915.