NEW ZEALAND SOUVENIR

Arthur's Pass and the Otira Gorge

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ARTHUR'S PASS

AND THE

OTIRA GORGE

BY

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"Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven,"
"Poems from the Port Hills,"
etc., etc.

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MT. ROLLESTON, SEEN BETWEEN BIRCH-BOUGHS
FROM THE "ROLLESTON LOOK-OUT"

C. Beken, photo. (*Protected*)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Parts of this book have already appeared in some articles printed in the columns of the *Lyttelton Times* and the *Otago Witness*, to the editors of both of which I am indebted for permission to republish. To Miss L. E. Cook, and Messrs. W. Beck, A. W. Page, and C. Beken, I would also tender hearty thanks for kind permission to use photographs taken by them, to the last-named also for his beautiful prints. But most of all to that true "mountaineer," Mr. W. A. Kennedy, of Christchurch and Arthur's Pass, do I wish to acknowledge an undischargeable debt of gratitude for hospitalities and generosities of many kinds; and also to Miss Mahala Mills, of Clifton Hill, Sumner, but for whose own deep love of the Pass and Gorge, and endless good offices to the writer, this little book, such as it is, could never have been put together.

B.E.B.

October, 1925

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Arthur's Pass and the Otira Gorge

IN 1864, the discovery of goldfields on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand demanded the discovery also of a direct route by land from the province of Canterbury on the East, across the snowy intervening wall of the Southern Alps. And it was in obedience to this demand that a young surveyor, Arthur Dudley Dobson, pushed his way up a long mountain valley on the Canterbury side, and found, at its head, above the tree-limit, a long open saddle, running for some three miles right across the Divide, and thence plunging suddenly into another precipitous valley; threading his way down which, the explorer emerged successfully in open Westland. This latter valley bears today the name of the Otira Gorge; that on the Canterbury side is known as the Bealey Valley; and the saddle that joins them has been given the first name of its first surveyor, and is called Arthur's Pass.

A coach-road was soon contrived along this mountain-route, and for many years formed the only highway of commerce between Canterbury and Westland; until, after creeping bit by bit from either side toward the Alps, the railway, in 1923, pierced through them by means of a tunnel, five and a quarter miles long, and Canterbury joined hands with Westland underground. It is the mountain-road, not the subterranean, to which this little book would draw attention; and the ways and wonders of Nature there, not of man. Yet, where Nature's power shows so great, is it not fine that human power too should be so manifest? We are very proud of our tunnel, particularly since it by no means spoils our Pass, but, on the other hand, renders it accessible now to thousands who could never else have seen it. A few details therefore about the Arthur's-Pass-Otira tunnel will not here be out of place.

Entering the mountains on the Canterbury side at an altitude of 2,435 feet, it runs quite straight, but downwards, with a maximum width of fifteen feet, a maximum height of sixteen feet and a half, a ruling grade of one in thirty-three, and emerges on the Westland side (not in the Otira

FIVE AND A QUARTER MILES OF TUNNEL,
LOOKING TOWARDS OTIRA

W. Beek, photo. (*Protected*)

Gorge, but in the Rolleston Valley hard by) some 1,586 feet above sea-level. The achievement of so long a " burrow " proved very far from easy ; it had to be taken over by the New Zealand Government from the private firm which began it, but could not continue ; and it needed fifteen years to complete; but when the headings finally met, they did so with a discrepancy of only $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch in level, and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in alignment. The tool that made the tunnel was the air-drill, for which the needed power was derived from waterfalls near either mouth ; so that we may say the local air and water co-operated with human mind and muscle to put it through ; and we may feel a just pride in recording that, despite the difficult and dangerous working, often through loose shale and rotten rock, there was but one serious accident in all the fifteen years, and only one life lost. To travel through it now is an experience perfectly comfortable, since it is electrified, both as regards traction and light, and splendidly ventilated ; and it has also the distinction of being the longest railway-tunnel in the British Empire, and the seventh longest in the world.

Nevertheless, let us leave it—leave even the sight of its inconspicuous gateway into the

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW UP THE BEALEY VALLEY,
THE PASS IN THE DISTANCE

[*W. Beck, photo.* (*Protected*)

mountain-side on the right of the Bealey Valley, just beyond the railway station of "Arthur's Pass," and address ourselves to the coach-road, that goes climbing up from the grassy flat of the little settlement towards the real Pass, on the left side of the Bealey Valley. Below us flows the small Bealey river; and, across its narrow ravine, slope after slope of mountain-side thickly clothed in forest, so dark that it looks almost black, rises up into the narrow, gilded region of snow-grass, tossing

"Silver and gold in the icy air,"

and, past that, to crowns of snow, or of naked rock, according to the season. Which season shall we choose? Spring is very wet, but that means splendid waterfalls; summer shows a wealth of Alpine flowers, but a poverty of snow-peaks; in autumn, the weather is generally settled, and colour is deepened and enriched; while winter has its own glories, of Alps and icicles. The walk is neither hard nor long—a good nine miles, probably, between the two railway stations. Rain is frequent, but sometimes profitable, and if we may choose our day, let it be one of shower and shine; let us also

choose (for the road is no boulevard) companionable boots; and, above all, do not let us be in a hurry!

How delicious, how delicious the air is, pure, and brisk, and buoyant—mountain-air already! as we walk up the shelf of road, with rocks and tree-roots above us, rocks and tree-tops below. Grey is the colour of the rocks—a cold grey, but comforted by the velvet green or brown of mosses here and there, or brightened almost startlingly by a small close vermilion fungus that looks like patches of paint. As for the trees, they are mostly little mountain-birches (*Nothofagus cliffortioides*) slender, spiry and darkly shining, with an occasional glossy mass of broad-leaf, or the tender, willow-like green of *koromiko*, to lighten their duskiness. In early summer, masses of the little dry daisy (*Helichrysum bellidioides*) smother in silvery snow-drifts both rocks and roadside; but other flowers are few, and about the vegetation this side the Pass there seems always something "heathery" and frugal. Chaffinches and thrushes mingle their chants with those of the little creeks, crystal both in sound and look, that come dashing down leafy,

DRY DAISIES
(*Helichrysum bellidioides*)

W. A. Kennedy, photo.

rocky, mossy pathways of their own above us, run across the road, and dash down again into more rocks and boughs, on their way to join the Bealey. Far ahead, we can see the open sky-line of the Pass (with a fleecy gold-white cloud tossed across it, perhaps, if we are in luck), and a great pure-white shoulder of Mt. Rolleston rising gloriously above it on the left; while, on our right, out of the darkness of the hanging forest across the ravine, and back into it again, there shoots and volleys the silver of a long waterfall, "The Devil's Punchbowl"—a sacrificial stream despite its name, for it supplied the power to make the tunnel on the Canterbury side, and suffers still in volume through the consequent deviation of part of its current. The walk up this creek to the actual "Bowl" beneath the fall provides (for you must spring like the water from boulder to boulder, in the depths of beautiful Bush) one of those minor delights and adventures of which there are plenty to reward a stay in the little settlement; while, on any fine afternoon, the rainbows across the fall as seen from the road illuminate its chasm with an enchantment of sweet and smiling colour, as they mount and float and fly away across

THE FALL,
DEVIL'S PUNCH BOWL CREEK

[*C. Beken, photo.* (*Protected*)

the dusky forest, in glories of violet, and rose, emerald, indigo and gold.

A little further up the road we find, suddenly below us, tucked in between the flowing clear pale beryl of the Bealey and a cliff of dark Bush, a bright, open semi-circle of level, flowery grass —a laughing little spot, which once, in the " good old " bullock-driving days, was wont to laugh much more loudly ; for in it there stood a log shanty, with stores, if report speaks true, of illicit liquor, which, at times, when " the law " approached too near, the innocent Bealey was required to drink....without so much accompanying merriment, I guess, don't you ? Just beyond, however, Nature still supplies a bit of perennial jollity of her own, and one composed completely of water at that, for it is a creek, McGrath's Creek, much larger than any we have crossed hitherto ; which bursts round a recessed bend of the Bush on our left in the midst of a wide boulder-road of its own, unceremoniously swirls and shouts across ours, and plunges on to join the Bealey at short distance on our right. What a broad clearing it makes in the air and the light ! opening to our view an immensity of forest-folds climbing up and back,

one behind another, to the tremendous rocks and snows of Mt. Rolleston, some five thousand feet above, I suppose, his full altitude being 7,500 feet. And what a liveliness, too, it brings, with just its own strong, shouting, and most adventurous self! as it dashes and flashes around its boulders, or over them, in hurrying currents of pale colour, jewel-clear, jewel-bright, but animated as no jewel ever is, and not really quite like anything on earth except living mountain water. This is the first we meet of those larger creeks that are such comrades of our walk—lithe, blithe, spirited, splendid creatures of swirling crystal, full of the most delicious tints and lights, and brimful too of a livingness all their own, which can, however, communicate itself to you, like music, or like a poem, if you will only attend with eye as well as ear, and a little bit more of yourself in addition....Never the same for two shining steps, or two singing staves together, and yet, in another way, always the same.... always vigorous and fresh, reckless, rejoicing, frank and free....real "essence of mountains!"

We cross McGrath's by means of an unsophisticated but sufficient foot-bridge, made of stout single beams laid end to end, with a wire

for hand-hold ; and walk on. Rocks and trees ....an open russet swamp, waving with snow-grass tussocks, that lets in on us the sunshine and that great view again of Mt. Rolleston.... a scrap of deep " Devonshire lane," with tiny ferns sprouting out of its lichened walls, and lovely bronze and emerald colour in the mossy pools beneath....more rocks, more trees.... glimpses, down through the leaves of a high Bush-hung cliff, into the clear eye of the Bealey, glancing up....and then the road sweeps down to cross that exquisite stream, by means of a bridge, called still the " White Bridge " because of the paint upon its first edition, but itself now quite pleasantly and harmoniously brown.

Here let us rest a moment, deep in beauty : for this is one of the loveliest pictures of the road. The valley has narrowed into a gorge, a real mountain-throat, with a swallow of rushing water just parting precipices thickly tapestried with Bush. From near the foot of one of these, we look across and into the other, up which the serried " birches " go on spiring closely, one above the other, for hundreds of feet ; their black effect broken at one place, high up, by the white gauzes of a waterfall (the Bridal Veil), and (down at

THE "WHITE BRIDGE," BEALEY VALLEY,
WITH RUINS OF THE ORIGINAL BRIDGE TO RIGHT

[*C. Beken, photo.* (*Protected*)

the cliff on a level with our eyes) finished off by a brown and emerald coat of shrubs and mosses, over which two more waterfalls spread skeins of silver. The mossy fern-hung bank above us, rich in a secret store of green, white-veined orchids, drips with water. At our feet the tops of a group of mountain ribbonwood (*Gaya Lyallii*), that lady of the Bush, spreads above the stream a kind of sweet mid-air garden of leaves "all a glad light green," and lovely white flower clusters in season, like those of the cherry; indeed the whole tree looks like a wanderer from some orchard.

But how can words, or camera, or brush, give any hint of the real charm of this place? It is the charm of green things in the act of living, of water in the act of flowing, of gilding sun, and snatching shadow (yes, here of all places, ask to see sunshine after rain), of music, of moisture, fragrance, movement, and the rest of that endless, nameless Nature magic, which we can feel so deeply, but express only so shallowly. Or if it should be winter when we come, and the waterfalls are frozen, and the ribbonwoods all bare, then those painted cliffs opposite, and these mossy caverns close at hand will have

put on other jewels instead, for spray and trickle will have frozen as they fall, grass-blades will be enclosed in icicles an inch thick, rocks will glitter with stalactites as clear as glass, and leaf-sprays, as in the old fairy tale, will be sprays of shining diamonds, melting (where the sunbeams meet them) into fairy rubies, momentary sapphires and emeralds.

Crossing the White Bridge, we now have for a little while the Bealey stream deep down upon our left—a lovely waterway as of bluish-green wavy glass, at the foot of a vast, hanging birch forest, right into whose stately ranks we look, as we press up our steep road. The mountain birch is in reality a beech, and like a beech it grows, in layer above layer of boughs, that are spread with sprays of tiny glossy leaves, not unlike those of a magnified maiden-hair fern. Trunk, bough, and twig, the tree is generally furred with bronzy moss, and its layered form and airy leaves let the sunbeams through to glint so freely on this as well as on each burnished little leaf, that, though a dark tree, the birch is often also a bright one. With its wide and long evergreen mantle, it takes the place upon our mountains of the firs in Switzerland, but

SPRAY FROZEN IN ROUGH CREEK,
OVERHANGING A WATERFALL

[*W. Beck, photo.* (*Protected*)

in spring it feels the season, likes to put on plushy tips of vivid new verdure, has the charming caprice of powdering a bough here and there with innumerable tiny scarlet flowers, and at midsummer often becomes the host of a mid-air cloud of the splendid red mistletoe, whose single flowers are like honey-suckle horns, and whose sun-steeped masses glow like fire.

Diminishing in size as we climb, and often wearing a gnome's beard of hoary lichen, this birchen bush takes our road as it were in its two hands, dark but friendly; now allowing a bit of the bare mountain-side to break through it on the right with a sally of boulder, Alpine shrub, and small headlong creeks: now giving a glimpse out, on the left, over its spiry tips, of the valley below sweeping away up, with the river buried in its black folds, towards mighty Rolleston. Dive in under the boughs a moment, and see what a delicious little world of their own they make and occupy. It is quite still and windless, whatever the wind outside; slender, satiny tree trunks, hung with moss, pillar it closely, and maze the peering eye; and it is a perfect treasury of the greenest possible mosses, which heap the ground between fallen boughs, tufts of

springing ferns, and shining silver "star-fishes" of Astelia-leaves. A perching tomtit, maybe, cocks his ruffled big black velvet head above his little primrose vest, observant of his observers, but serene ; and serene too is the sunlight, slipping long cool fingers of brightness through the dim boughs, flecking their wan white with silver here and there, and visiting the velvety ground with the sweetest gleams and glows, like fairies playing with the gnomes' piled emeralds. But do not let us stay too long in this gentle Paradise of silver and green and brown. Come, for there is better beyond. Come back to the road....to see, presently, on the left, the birch-boughs part, to frame-in a vignette almost terrifying in its vastness—of that Titan, Mt. Rolleston, in his full majesty, from heel to head, from side to side....Up from the spreading spurs, shaggy and black with forest....up past the seams and scars of a great grey amphitheatre of rock....up to huge shining shoulders curved along the sky, and twin peaks ascending up into it, " white as no fuller on earth can white them," with everlasting snows. Nothing, to the brain, but reared-up earth and frozen water ; but, to the spirit, how much more !

THE "BIRCHES" IN WINTER, AT THE TOP OF THE BEALEY VALLEY

C. Beken, photo. (*Protected*)

" O congregated Glories, what are ye
In truth, beyond white snows ? "

This (see frontispiece) is called the Rolleston Look-out. There is a track near by, if you can find it, down to the unseen Bealey river which can then be followed up to its source, in a pool below a glacier of the mountain. But we must go on, between the ranks of the birches again, grown very small now....and presently, all of a sudden, all gone ! We are out—right out of their shade and their shelter, upon an open, moor-like, warmly-coloured expanse, half a mile wide perhaps, hemmed in by mountain-slopes that sweep up from it on the right hand and the left. The light is larger, the air—Oh, the air is divine! One cannot breathe it deeply enough in, or taste its freshness to the full, so racy it is, so free....full, too, of so rare a fragrance, coming, going—sweet, aromatic, and wild. Everything is very open ; everything feels very frank and simple. There is a sense of escape, of freedom ; one's very spirit seems to draw a long breath. We are out !

Yes, we are out ! This is the Saddle, this is the Pass proper, the " Col," as they would

say in Switzerland. We are no longer looking up at the Alps from their foot, but neither are we up among their summits; we are as it were lifted and held, in the hollow of their hands —mighty hands, and a league-long hollow. The peak of Mt. Rolleston is now behind us; but one of his spurs, (with a last corner flung over its shoulder of that faithful black-birch mantle, which here we shall leave behind for good) sweeps on to form the western side of the Pass, and extends along our left in an even rampart, short-coated with green and striped with the grey of shingle-slips; while on the right side of the "corridor," the mountain-slopes are more recessed, more mysterious, and draw away from the road in a richer mantle of Alpine shrubbery, and to a more romantic ascension of crags and snow. The open, undulating level which forms the "floor" of the saddle, and is between three and four thousand feet above sea-level, is here strewn with great grey boulders, some as large as huts, that rise above waving snow-tussocks richly russet-gold in colour, and mounded masses of low Alpine "scrub," olive-green, silver, bronze-green and myrtle. A white cascade, known as the Ribbon Fall, streaks with its shining

ON THE PASS, LOOKING TOWARDS OTIRA

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo.*

the greenery high on our right, and presently the creek from this comes leaping across the road, to be followed shortly by another, which joins it a little below on the left, and dashes away with it to unite with the unseen stream of the Bealey. These two are called the Twin Creeks, and it is between them, hundreds of feet underground, that the tunnel traverses the Pass. It is in their neighbourhood, too, that I for one always have to linger a little, for a good look into the new face of the world up here. Will you not stay too?

There are these tussocks of Snow-Grass, first, to greet—magnificent Struwel-Peter-like shocks of streaming, shining tresses, planted everywhere among the boulders like ripe-coloured harvest-stooks, waist high. Then there are all the individual members of this sub-Alpine "scrub," cuddled so close together in compact, close-clipped masses, ducking their heads, as it were, to escape the keen Pass-wind, on which the tussocks love to toss. The curious little Grass-tree (*Dracaena*) it is true, stands erect, and with its slender wands of what looks like climbing tufts of grass points the others bravely to the sky; and the New Zealand flax (a lily really) bran-

dishes at large the innumerable sword-blades of her leaves, that flash in the sun like fire. But the rest crouch as low and as close as ever they can—tiny-leaved *Coprosma*, on whose tawny tangle of twigs the raindrops love to hang in diamond chains; *Cassinia* of the aromatic breath, whose grey-green plushy mounds are tipped in spring with rose-red tufts that by summer have blossomed into creamy flower; dwarf Celery-pine, pungent too, and lit with red cone-candles in September; Bush *Senecio*, very cheerful, its plump leaves of glossy green prosperously lined with thick silver; and the Mountain *Veronica* which, for most of the year, is a bright and tidy little greencoat rather like garden box, but in early summer turns to a lovely soft snow of tiny white flowers, tipped, how tellingly! with black, by their outstanding stamens. And, shy though they are of the wind, to the light on the other hand all these mountaineers respond most eagerly; for one and all have burnished leaves, which glister and glisten even on a dull day, and on a bright one bring the sunbeams down to the earth, and toss them aloft again in a million twinkles. Humbler plants nearer the ground have the same characteristic, and swell this

chorus to the sun, the lily-leaves with broad bright mouths, the Celmisia-stars with silver tongues, joyfully repeating every ray.

Then there are the two rushing creeks themselves, mountain-voices, mountain-lives, but also strong little sons of the sea, homeward bound! On, forever on they speed—all snow and silver between the dappled grey stones (that do their best to check them, but never can) ....over them in rapid-gliding crystal....within them held (for a moment) in deep pools of pulsing aquamarine, divinely pure. And above these, along the mountain-side, there rolls, on such a day as we have chosen, another, though a voiceless, current—the mists' "bright volumes of vapour," at hide-and-seek with the Pass....now snatching themselves into sight out of empty air, now vanishing —luminous .... fading .... re-evolving .... but flowing onward all the while.

The Saddle runs almost due north and south. The sunrise, therefore, never visits its long lane, neither does the sunset, though the first paints with rose colour Mt. Rolleston's snow of a morning, high on the west, and sunset kindles the lofty crags on the eastern side. Noon, however, crowns the Pass, and, if sunshiny, turns its simple, open

space, with its simple, rather austere colouring, to a real Home of Light. Underfoot, overhead, earth, air, sky, sunshine, water, snow—all, are thrice radiant. Whatever before gleamed, now glitters, what shone, sparkles. The white of foam or snow or petals becomes silver, russet and tawny turn to red-gold, every leaf is alight, every ripple is a sun-flash, the very stones shine blue; and the well-tuned heart, it knows not why, triumphs, exults, and is full of the heartiest Hosannas! In most winters, the place wears now and then a robe of fresh-fallen snow, and looks, from end to end, all purity. And every spring and summer make of it a garden of Alpine flowers, that, for some reason still uncertain, are mostly pure white too.

The first practically to arrive, about October, are the "Mountain-Primroses" (*Ourisia*) which are really more like Primulas, milk-white with a yellow eye, arranged in clusters one above another, pagoda-fashion, round a stem that is sometimes two feet tall; the leaves, growing in a mat at the base, are of rich green lined with a beautiful purple. Every slope and bank of the Pass is thickly scattered with these gentle flower-towers, that look so delicate and are so

MOUNTAIN LILIES (*Ranunculus Lyallii*)

[*C. Beken, photo.* (*Protected*)

hardy, delighting in the stoniest spots, and indifferent to the angriest storms. November reinforces their luxuriance with that of the Aniseed and Mountain-Carrot, whose light panicles of blossom weave a kind of veil of white lace over the scrub and rocks; with outbursts of white bells (not unlike those of the Lily of the Valley) on the small, spriggy bushes of *Gaultheria*; with many a startled shy white violet, veined with mauve; with the snow-smother of the Veronica; above all, with multitudes of the lovely Mountain-Lily, which, botanically, is not a lily at all, but the most glorious of buttercups—*Ranunculus Lyallii*. Along the roadside, this gracious queen of our Alpines lifts at intervals her shining candelabra of flower-cups, sometimes thirty or forty in number, whose globing petals, virginal, pure and soft, look as if carved from snow fresh-fallen, and whose depths are sunny diadems of gold; but the roadside is not really the right place to see the Mountain-Lily properly at home. We should climb away up by some creek, and visit the unguessed-at gardens of its bed. One such I know, so wrapped in a robe of lilies, almost from its headlong birth below a crag, that you

cannot, from a little distance, tell the white water from the white petals. The leaves, too, are in their own way as rare—all in one piece, dark-green, thick and beautifully veined as the rind of a cantaloup, large as plates, in-curved like goblets, and so polished within that they flash in the sunshine like golden glass. After rain, they stand like green Ganymedes, offering a pure draught of their own: for crystal creek-water, too, they make the very choicest cups.

Then, in December and January, the *Senecios* bloom—those glorious Groundsels which one would never take to be groundsels at all, but tufts of Marguerites or Cinerarias—deep-yellow, pale-yellow with a purple eye, or, commonest and best of all, shining silver-white. These also love the creeks, and often line them with great beds of bloom. The mountain Bell-flower, too (*Wahlenbergia saxicola*), now dances by thousands everywhere over the Pass—the little delicate, dainty Mountain-Maid, as she is sometimes called, with each single star-like flower, (the size of a sixpence, purest white, or loveliest veined mauve-blue and always with the most trustful, innocent expression) buoyed up half a foot or so on a stem so slight that it hardly shows and the flower

MOUNTAIN DAISIES
(*Celmisia coriacea*)

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo.*

seems to float upon the air. It is a darling flower ; it somehow takes the heart, as in the Swiss Alps the Gentian takes it ; but what most takes the eye here, in the summer season, is the *Celmisia*, the Mountain Daisy, a plant of some forty species, most of which are peculiar to New Zealand, and many of them dwellers on the Pass. All are beautiful ; one, *C. coriacea*, is royal. He it is who grows, in his tens and his twenties and his thirties, out of these stiff silver leaves set like stars among the boulders. His stem is silvery too, and tall, his multitudinous petals are shining white, and so long that they wave freely in the wind ; while, from deep within their lovely lashes he looks benevolently forth with a " mild but magnificent eye " of grave gold. If the lily is queen of our Alpine flowers, he is the king ; and never was there a kinglier or a kindlier. Over many subjects he rules—countless members of his own family, Eyebrights white and yellow, little Orchids (pure white with a flush of pink), tall " Spaniards," resplendent in gold, slashed with green, and spiked with daggers against some foe long-vanquished—and many others ; the Pass, in full summer, is a lap full of flowers. Then, finally, in early autumn, arrive

the gentle armies of the Gentian, all pure white here in New Zealand, and not unlike bunches of large snow-drops, only that they look confidingly up instead of humbly down. These little sisters of the stars are our Antipodean "Fair Maids of February," and the last of the Pass's earth-angels. So now we can go on.

Just beyond the Twin Creeks, the road, still rising, brings us to the top of the Pass—the Divide between Canterbury and Westland, distinguished by humans with an upright stone beside the road, all over initials, and by Nature with a quite new view—down the long Alp-lane with its ribbon of road, and out upon the dreamy summits of Westland, far, far away. As foreground to this, and as the very crown of the Pass itself, she has provided a "Moss"—a peaty bog, tawny with tussocks, and gleaming with small pools, set among the tussocks like moonstones in bronze. There is a certain fascination about this bare, wild little spot....an outlandish, elfin fascination; it might be one of those moor-marshes that glimmer out of the pages of Hans Andersen, where innocent flowers grow, and yet queer things may confidently

THE "MOSS" AT THE DIVIDE

[*W. A. Kennedy photo*

be expected to happen. You will easily recall for instance, his tale of "The Lass that Trod on a Loaf," if you will step, with caution, out on the embossed ground between the pools, and examine it with the closer scrutiny it certainly deserves. Springy cushions compose it, of a small, hard patch-plant, dark-green in colour; and on this, in summer, a white waxen bell of its own sits up, without a stalk, while here and there, Daisies star it, white or golden-yellow, trails of ruby berries run across it, or summer-colonies of red-haired sticky Sundew sit about on it, catching flies for dinner. In early autumn it is also invaded, here and there, by crowds of an impish-looking inch-high Bladderwort (*Urticularia monanthos*), another clever little carnivore—whose tiny snapdragon-snouts are of a beautiful bright purple, and colour the moss with patches, here and there, as of violets; and at the same season Gentians stand about it like peaceful sentinels that shine like silver in the sunshine. Isn't it beguiling, this multitudinous population, so individual, mimic, and quaint? Would one ever have guessed—Oh! Oh! Help! ....You have suddenly found yourself ankle-deep in water and the moss is laughing at you,

Ho! *Ho*! *Ho*! for all the while it coaxed you to admire it, it was sinking stealthily beneath your feet—a regular goblin-joke! But the pool is clean, at all events, for this is a mountain-moss, nor is it deep; and the road will soon walk the wettest dry. On with us!

On, accordingly, in Westland now we go, with the shrubby, rocky mountain-side on our right still striding along uninterruptedly, and on our left the moss running down into a soft, meadowy interspace between us and the Rolleston flank all greenly-glittering with his armies of flax-blades. Sweet white clover, the ruddy, furry burrs of "Biddy-bid," and pure-eyed Mountain-Maids in summer line the pleasant, undulating road. A little creek crosses it now and then—flowing, you notice, the other way now, a ground-lark, brown and white, runs before us, or the wail of an unseen kea, the queer mountain-parrot, floats down from far above. Then, presently the "meadow" ends, in moor-waters and one lovely little tarn, called by some Lake Misery, by others "the Eye of the Pass," or Lake Bright-Eye; which, shining serenely up to the sky from between a bushy brow of cliff and a rich fringe of sedges, does really light up the Pass rather like an eye,

MT. PHILISTINE, FROM PEG-LEG,
ARTHUR'S PASS

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo*

worn Cyclops-fashion in the centre of its forehead. We leave it behind, to see, beyond its bluff, this western wall slashed wide-open by a great valley, on whose further side a grey, rugged, snowy-cloaked giant of a mountain rears himself up, and, coming to the Pass, builds its wall anew beyond; while a small stream hurries down the valley-depth towards the road. The giant is Mt. Philistine, another scion of Mt. Rolleston; the stream is the infant Otira River, along whose course lies all the rest of ours.

Small, but very swift, and very white where it is not blue, round the foot of Mt. Philistine it dashes, and, edged by two borders of bare and hungry moraine, now rushes along our left, below the brink of the road; towards which, out of a most romantic green glen gashing, in its turn, the recessed wall on our right, there presently dances across, to join the Otira, what is perhaps the loveliest creek along the whole route, but certainly the most uncouthly-named, for, after a cripple who once had a hut in its vicinity, it is called "Peg-leg." Anything really less crippled, however, anything less wooden, never was seen. Leaping, romping, racing, pure

as a precious stone, sparkling and shouting as with laughter, this lovely, lively, agile being bursts impetuously out of the Bush, and down on, and over, the road, which it enriches as with a brave bluish - green breast - jewel, exquisitely clear and beaming more like brimming light than water. It turns us off the road, however, and we must go up the creek's stony coast until a log-bridge lets us cross it where it issues from the Bush ; which little detour does us the service, at least in summer, of making us observe how much greener, brighter and airier the latter now appears. It is the mountain Ribbonwood (*Gaya*) that is responsible. Everywhere about this end of the Pass she leads her troops and companies of lovely nymph-like little trees, often arm in arm with bushes of the prickly, gnarly greyish native Holly (*Olearia ilicifolia*)—like dainty sisters with surly smaller brothers. In winter, no tree could ever look more dead than *Gaya*, who, alone of all these mountaineers, casts her leaves ; but, in spring and summer, on the other hand, no tree ever looked newer, and her abundance of fresh bright green breaks out then upon the other shrubs' sobriety like outbursts of the sweetest laughter made visible.

ON THE PASS, LOOKING TOWARDS PEG-LEG FLAT

W. A. Kennedy, photo.

A small climbing congregation of trees quite different crests the spur past Peg-leg Creek —giant Grass-trees, *nei-neis*, or " pine-apple trees," as they are sometimes called, whose naked, crouching stems and tufty crowns look more than a little wild and weird, and seem almost to shiver in their exposed situation. But see them of a bright afternoon ! Bareness and bleakness prove their riches then, for the sunshine clothes them from head to foot, and, glitteringly irradiated, they spring out against the great blue opposite mountain-wall pondering in shade, like eager votaries of light made all but one with it in worship. We round the spur, and find a green glade of *Gaya* and Holly running back from the road and up the foot of a new ridge on the right, that runs along the sky in stark grey cliffs and saw-teeth, deeply crevassed. This is Mt. Otira. Gaunt and terrible he looks up there against the blue, but at his foot, between the road and the grove, there nestles a little mountain-lawn, extraordinarily sweet. Green grass, very thick, soft and spongy with innumerable tiny herbs....smooth blue stones deeply asleep in it, fine seats for sun-beams....white violets in spring, their two top petals upright as a startled

hare's ears, and a palely gold buttercup-star flat on the ground between them, here and there ....snow-pillows, later, of Dry Daisy....then, in full summer, thousands and thousands of the delicate delicious little bell-flowers—Mountain-Maids—in their dainty dresses of the purest white or pencilled mauve, or "lovely forgiving blue," dancing airily above the ground, in company with tall, shimmering grasses....dragon-flies in gauzy green and gold, hovering dreamily.... moths orange and brown, gleaming in and out of the flowers, and, between the basking stones, burly grasshoppers that one never can track, spurting and gone!—Yes, in a myriad forms, lowly and fragile, yet fearless, life makes merry here on humble Bell-flower Lawn, in the face of those terrific sharp heights overhead; and hospitably offers to every passer-by with the wit to pause, the refreshment of a little sweet slice of charm.

Rocks, house-high, at the end of the lawn, emerald rocks, all moss—a turn in the road (Death's Corner, so called from a coaching accident)—a sharp twist up-hill to the right, with a chaos of boulders each side of the road—and then, peering over the edge of these on the left,

THE BRINK OF THE SADDLE,
FROM DEATH'S CORNER

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo.*

we find we have come to the end of the Pass. And what an end!

Earth has broken off abruptly; we face out upon empty air. Down below, far down, a deep, narrow, forest-filled gully twists down further yet between dark forested spurs, whose rocky summits, far above our heads, step down along the sky to those far off Westland heights which, seated musing in heaven, like gods in session, round-in the enormous view. The dark forest, sun-dappled and bloomy with its own blue breath, lies motionless. The enwalling mountains sweep majestically down and up. But hundreds of feet below us, the river, suddenly so far down, roars and foams in a struggle with blocking boulders, and, from those scowling cliffs of Mt. Otira, a thousand feet or so above, boulders, boulders, nothing but bare boulders, sweep right down to the water's edge in a tremendous, wide, naked scour, an "abomination of desolation" like a huge open wound. The whole mountain-side lies, as it were, in ruins before us. One's puny human senses recoil a moment before the immensity of force that has been able to work such havoc; and then, perhaps, recoil against their own recoil and return to exult in it.

For this dramatic ending to the Pass proper, this sudden brink of the gorge, is in reality a kind of silent paean to Power, and one of the finest possible places for its contemplation. Behind, is the serene majesty of the Pass ; below, the gashing river, and its gouged-out Gorge ; at our side, the ceaseless denudation of the " slip," enormous, headlong, and still at work ; overhead, the power-house of the mountain-tops ; beyond, the far-off heights, testifying, with their changing glooms and glories, to the ever-active hosts of light and air. Upon this broken brink, the strength of the sun, too, steeps us ; the strength of the wind sweeps us ; the bursting showers burst sheer, the great clouds swim full-sailed up the Gorge—whose depths and heights alike are so stupendous, whose folds of forest so unbroken ! Underground, moreover, the tunnel, piercing the solid earth to a quick transit for human affairs, minds and bodies, bears unseen witness to the power that is in man. This " high mountain-platform," in short, so remote from what we are apt to call " life," really holds us out, safe and at home, into the very midst of

" The stir of the Forces,
Whence issued the world."

LOOKING DOWN INTO
THE OTIRA GORGE

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo*

But Power is not the finest principle at work in the world; one feels that afresh, as one turns for a last look along the Pass. Its greatness, its candour, its serenity bear constant witness to that "Something far more deeply interfused," that "Light, whose smile kindles the universe,
That Beauty, in which all things live and move,"
which are so ever evident to the Nature-worshipper—who, by the way, never actually worships Nature, should you think? but, rather, worships through her. She is his "angel with the great wings green and blue" (how, on the Pass one can see those great wings shine!); and the mystic who exclaimed

"Ah, Nature, Nature, Nature my mother,
Thou art God! and God is the Whole,"

did not mean that Nature was the whole too; but only one expression, as man is another, of that everlasting Essence of Life which can come pulsing to us through her as through him, when we are rightly ready, and they at their best. Of such pure places, altars of the spirit, this saddle of Arthur's Pass is certainly one—In wet

weather? yes, even in the wildest, wettest weather; for then, more surely than ever, it instils its doctrine of faith and fortitude, and its gospel of re-assurance. Blessed place! clear of squalor, clear of ignorance, free from all the human sins and struggles. How often has one of your lovers brought up to you a sense well-nigh intolerable of

> "The burden and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,"

and you, quite unconcerned, have gone on singing with your creeks, and soaring with your summits, and shining with all your little leaves and flowers and tussocks....till, when at length their listener and looker turned back to resume the aching load, why! it had all been lifted, and sung, and streamed and shone away; and more—the world, through your strong showing, had been seen to be not only stably but also nobly governed; not only justly, but generously, and all for beauty, all towards joy! Our human shingle-slips of devastation and ruin have been perceived to have (like yours) the Everlasting Arms almightily beneath them; Death, with the help of your flowers, has been found blooming on into the

Beauty which never dies; and even treachery, that worst of all fogs, to be dissolvable at last into the bright air of Truth, and that with a smile, too, like your luminous evanescent mists. For all Life is one, ruled by one Law, and that Law right; and whether you know it, or know it not, O simple, O mysterious place, very clearly do you reveal it.

We must leave you now, though, and go: following the road across the shingle-slide, which no doubt will break it off some day, as it broke off, see! that former edition, now dislocated and forlorn, below us. On the boulder edge at its desolate brink, two keas once, with many a wail and wheeling, alighted to investigate the writer; and a more swashbuckling and ruffianly-looking couple nobody, I must say, could possibly wish to meet! The bronzed green of their plumage, dully iridescent, matched the scrub well enough, but it looked tattered and untidy, while the deep blood-red over the tail and under the wings, revealed by their ungainly hops and sidlings, showed sinister in that bleak place, and recalled the bird's evil reputation as a sheep-killer. But, still, the kea is a mountaineer; up in cliffy inaccessible crevasses like

A KEA AT HOME

[*A. W. Page, photo.* [*Protected*)

those of Mt. Otira, he has his home and his nest ; his voice is the only living thing's to mingle with those of the Alpine wind and water, and, moreover, to the human mountaineer he is not only perfectly friendly, but also a humorist, a recognized wag. A dozen keas at a time have I seen perch upon an alpenstock whose other end was in my hand, heard them tobogganing sportively down a hut-roof all night, or watched them rolling empty tins up and down, with deep seriousness, under the moon ; and once a tent collapsed upon me at daybreak because their patient mandibles had industriously used the night-hours to untie everyone of its ropes. As a licensed joker, in fact, amid sublime surroundings, the kea, well away from sheep, is much to be enjoyed. On this occasion, which fell in spring, this particular pair played, with their usual solemnity, a little comedy of love ; screaming at each other what were no doubt endearments, but sounded like oaths, and taking each other by the mandibles in what was perhaps a kea's kiss, but would upon tenderer lips, have been a fatal error.

And now, the Pass clean out of sight, the road enters upon a masterly cork-screw, known as the Zigzag, back to the river-side and down

into the Gorge. The blessed company of the green things makes haste to gather over the rough stones and set the air again "in spice;" but there are some changes among them. The Snow-Grass is gone for good; daisy-flowered *Olearias* mingle with the Grass-tree and *Cassinia*; and so does another shrub, with pointed dark leaves like those of a myrtle, and, in late summer, a ruby crown above them of flower-stars made of stamens. This is the Rata (*Metrosideros lucida*), which really is a myrtle, and lower down develops into a tall tree, that takes the place, on this moister side of the Alps, of the black-birch in Canterbury, and forms the staple forest of the Gorge; flushing its own dusk, in flower-time, with a rose-red diffused and mantling as that on the cheek of an apple. At the first turn of the Zigzag, we may look down upon the mounded heads of a number of these, all crimson in season, interspaced with rich masses of broadleaf, and starry spikes of *Nei-Nei*; they make altogether a little mountain park, or pleasaunce, upon whose leafy lap the afternoon sun especially loves to linger, and make its every colour glow, when the sun is dropping fast behind the crags of Mt. Barron

across the Gorge, and all the rest of it is already sunk in shade; often, too, one may listen here to the liquid notes of a bell-bird.

Down, and round, and down again! twisting down to the engulfing forest, that hangs before us and below us and above, almost perpendicularly. Lilac-tasselled *Koromiko* takes the place of *Gaya* the gracious, and there are small thickets of *Coprosma* that in autumn put on berry-necklaces of pale pink and pale blue; but soon the Fuchsia supplants these too, for we and the Bush are coming rapidly downhill together. Presently the last turn of the Zigzag confronts us with the sight, from the bottom now, of that mighty shingle-precipice, and of the Otira River careering madly down it, and along the foot of Mt. Barron; between us and whose tremendous flank of forest, it thunders along unseen, in a rocky Bush-hung cleft so narrow a child could toss a stone into the trees opposite. It is a most romantic place, this tiny thread of air and light down in the dark forest, with the torrent raging unseen, great rocks disputing the Bush, thick bush the rocks. It only needs a robbers' castle to complete the thrill, and this, since desired in appearance only, can easily

be provided in a single second by means of a little imagination and the actual emergence of a red-roofed roadman's hut from the trees and mossy rocks of its picturesque perch above the road, as we go swinging down-hill. It is almost startling to come on any sign of human dwelling in such a place ; and indeed for the most part this one stays deserted ; yet it is needed too, for just beyond it, the Gorge has been widened out, and the Bush torn all away, by another wild shingle avalanche, not so wide as that above, but more dangerous. When there were coaches still upon the road, a string of them was one day crossing this slip, when, *Plop* ! just as the first three had got safely across, down fell an immense boulder, and blocked the last one. Such were the hazards from which the tunnel has now delivered travellers—to develop, no doubt, a few of its own ; but what were life without some risks ? Nature herself seems to ask the question ; for see how, amid the arid insecurity of the slip, she has set a score of buoyant little Mountain-Maids to blossom and dance—the loveliest little flower piece laughing out of a mask of death !

Perhaps, too, it was this slip that has set the river free ? Out now it comes rushing from

AT THE WAIST OF THE
OTIRA GORGE, WALLIS POINT

[*Miss L. E. Cook, photo.* (*Protected*)

the rocky, leaf-hung gateway of its cleft, in a succession of small snowy falls and bright blue pools. That blue of the Otira! It is a loveliness all "on its own," a kind of brilliant kingfisher-blue, brilliant even on a rainy day, and, on a bright one, absolutely amazing, especially in contrast with the sombre Bush about it—one looks and looks,

"And still the wonder grew
That simple water could be such a blue!"

From this point on, it is full in view all down the Gorge, rushing along below the road in a kind of whirling necklace of alternate white and transparent kingfisher-turquoise beads in the midst of a barbaric tumble of grey stones splashed with red. These colours, grey and red and white and olive, pave the bottom of the Gorge; green, green, and green again is all the rest of it, except in Rata time, or when spring floats a white mist of Clematis here and there among the trees, or a creamy one of "Lawyer" by the road. This last, cut out of the living rock, now winds closely with the river; now and again, from the leafy cliff that overhangs it, a small creek comes dashing over it, or under,

and of these the first and chief is a little waterfall that is called (though erroneously, for its true name is Read's Fall) the Bridal Veil, and is said to leap, when in flood, right over the road from its rock-lip above. Generally, however, it is just a cloud of silvery spray above the road, and a little clear creek across it. Mosses gleam from its dark wall, and a few Daisies and other bold plants dot the cliff here and there. But the Gorge is no place for flowers; it gets too little sun.

The opposing forest-folds by and by draw closely together; and from a mossy parapet above the water, we turn, at the waist of the Gorge as it were, for a last look up at its great head, with the Zigzag mounting up through the thinning bush, and the giant saw-teeth of Mt. Otira far, far above, jagging the sky. Let it be sunset; and let us stand and watch those tremendous cliffs rising how loftily and freely up! out of the dusky Gorge, into a region of rich light. Burning, burning, there they stand! like springing flames of fire that have been turned to solid stone, and the red-gold crown they set upon the scene looks like one not only of light, but of triumph, that draws the heart as well

FROM DEPTH TO HEIGHT
IN THE OTIRA GORGE

[*W. A. Kennedy, photo.*

as the eye to its feast.—Earth has so visibly gone up to heaven in that great and solemn ascension into glory, that one knows for certain all aspirations will some day triumph too. This is really one of the most wonderful sights of the walk, but the straight-on walker seldom sees it; it asks a little loitering and waiting on the light, to get the full effect.

On the other side of the river, as we now walk on, another great stone-slip comes curling from far up in the forest, and plunges down to the water like a highway set on end. It is more striking than lovely; but the omnipresent Bush swallows it quickly out of sight, and winds on, fold after fold. There is no song or sight of bird, alas! Once it was not so; flocks of parakeets, green as grass, were wont of old to dart through the Gorge like flying ferneries. What has become of them? Stoats, I fear, and weasels know! But the real ferneries of the West Coast are now about to begin, and great plumy bunches of them begin to dot wayside and wall; though not as yet with the real Westland wealth. We must reach Otira for that.

Our next event is a bridge of stout timber, by means of which we cross over to the left of

the river, and find ourselves on a less impetuous down-grade through a lovely sylvan scene, lightlier roofed with Bush, and more visited by sunshine. There are Violets and Mountain-Maids along the grassy roadside in flower-time, and above them a lacy fringe of Olearia and Fuchsia leans over the widening river-bed, with their brighter, airier foliage in beautiful relief against the uncompromising forest darkness of the opposite huge wall. Here, maybe, we shall see a tomtit flutter, or a friendly fantail flit about us—a little handful of active grey and brown, with a white-tipped feather-fan for a tail. And, down the Gorge, a most noble view begins to appear in the opening sky—the lofty, single, symmetrical snow-peak of Mt. Alexander, dominant as befits his name. His feet are in the valley of the Teremakau, ten or twelve miles away; but, especially from a second bridge, that soon leads us back to the shady right of the river, the Gorge frames in the picture of his lordly head, with a cliff of the most delicious mossy brown and green on the left hand, crimson sprays of Rata on the right, and, below, the rushing river's perpetual sweet surprise of that so rich and brilliant blue.

TOWARDS THE FOOT OF
OTIRA GORGE

[*C. Beken, photo.* (*Protected*)

Then, for another mile or so, road and river run on together, much less steeply now, down a valley growing ever more open: the road proceeding past Bush and ferns and over one wide crystal creek (the last of our "little living waters," and one that comes quite decorously through its banks of standing leaves): the river thundering, as if with haste to leave the Gorge. It does leave it at last! and is joined, amid a wide waste of stones, by the Rolleston valley, and the railway, which has left the tunnel, as inconspicuously as it entered it, a little way up the Rolleston; while the road, emerging from the shade of the Bush, through the green paddocks and past the blue smoke, of the little Gorge Hostelry, with its pastoral cows and fowls, crosses flat and river by a long bridge; and in another half hour or so has reached the township of Otira, with its power-house, and its railway station—whence you may go on to the old gold-fields, the coal-fields, the glaciers and glorious forests of Westland, or back to Canterbury through the tunnel.

Or there is yet a third choice—to walk back, after a night's rest, the way we have come—up the darkling Gorge with its rare sudden smiles

of sunshine, to the Zigzag's quick thrust upward into light....round the tragic ruins of the land-slip to the sweet idyl of Bell-flower Lawn, and the noble opening Pass; over Pegleg, that flowing jewel, past Bright Eye, that shining one; with the memory, if not the presence of the Alpine flowers; past the elfin Moss of the Divide, with its still waters, and down to the shouting ones of the Twin Creeks....the double crown of summits for company above if it be fine, and if it be wet, always the glancing footstool of the "scrub," and the bending, blowing Snow-Grasses; always the free, sweet, spicy air; always the brave, silent spirit of the Pass..... Then the black woods of Bealey, the mountain majesty—from head to foot—of Rolleston, the loveliness of the White Bridge, and the opening of Bealey-side at last to the plains of Canterbury. It will be the same road, yet not at all the same; for the way thither never is the same as the way thence in any single thing. Each brings its own vision to its own views.

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