

## Guling.

By SAMUEL ISETT WOODBRIDGE.

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THE rising sun sheds amber on the green,  
The oriole his carol has begun ;  
I stand entranced and gaze upon the scene,  
A thousand leagues of green, and birds, and sun.

—*Tang Dynasty Family Poem.*

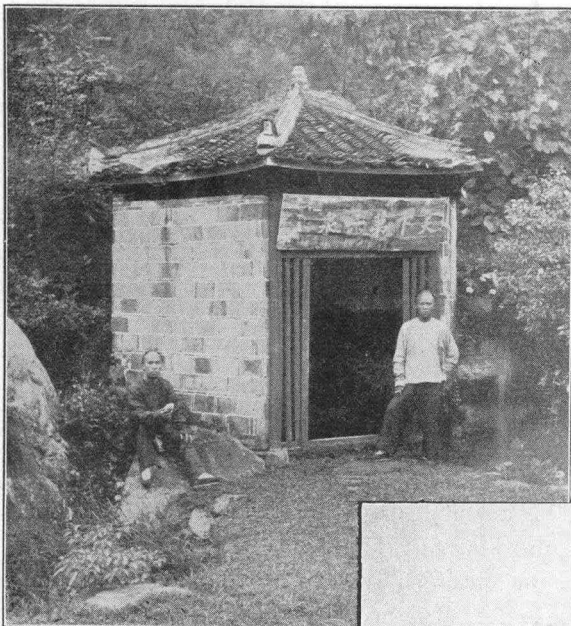
THE *genus homo* abhors monotony just as nature abhors a vacuum. Dead levels and sameness "long drawn out" irritate the ordinary man in ordinary places and under ordinary conditions; and in China there is a large number of extraordinary people living in a hostile climate under abnormal circumstances. They are the picked men of every profession and trade, and hence are apt to be high strung like thoroughbreds. The speed of China is paced slow, but the thoroughbred must, perforce, keep tardy step.

With nothing to relieve the tedium, irritation is bound to develop mental or physical maladies of a serious nature. Recourse may be had to books, but books are not green fields, fragrant woods, or clear, rippling streams; and the European has been accustomed to these from his youth, instead of the horrible stench of the Chinese country or the black, sluggish ooze of Chinese creeks.

Broken health and unbroken routine have driven the expatriated resident on these antipodal shores to cast about for some refuge from the maddening monotony of Oriental life. After the Chino-Japan War, a summer in Japan became impossible to the man of average income, and an outing on the mountains of China would be rudely forestalled by the strict letter of an inconvenient Treaty Article, or some specious objection about upsetting the geomantic *status quo*. The eyes of foreigners, nevertheless, had for years been directed to the long range of blue mountains back of Kiukiang as an ideal sanitarium, and by some hook or crook a precarious right had been secured from the Buddhist priests, who are associated with hills in China just as the opossum is associated with negroes in America, to build cautiously and furtively a small summer house at their foot.

The bungalow became so popular as a place of rest, recuperation and health, that the demand for room could not be supplied. Like *Oliver Twist*, the foreigners soon wanted more. Needs must, especially when the need is for sickly children perishing for pure air while billions of cubic feet of it lie free within easy reach. The situation required strong men and opportunity. Both were found. The men went further afield in quest of a bigger place.

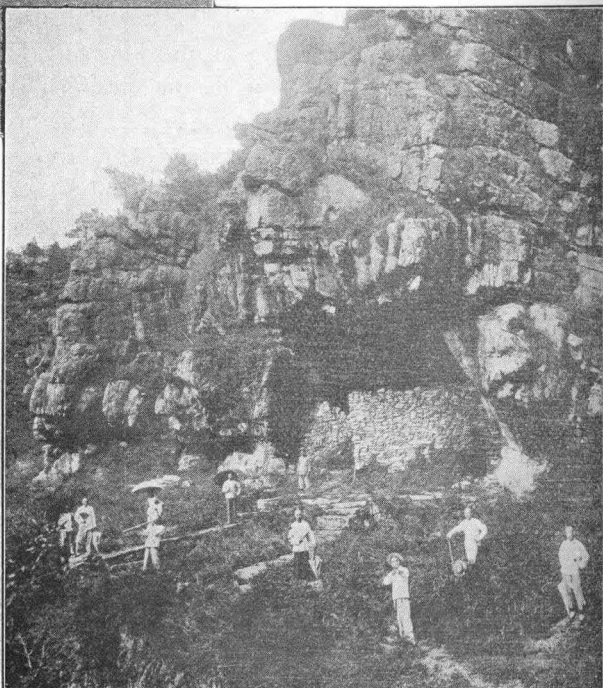
About five miles up from the summer house and thirteen miles from Kiukiang, there is a gap in the mountains known in the Chinese Records of Lushan as *Kuniuling*, or "Bullock Pass." Just above the gap on the left is a huge towering



FAMOUS SPRING OF WATER,  
LUSHAN.

peak which tapers down so as to form the rude outline and image of an ox. The impression is intensified by a number of dark coloured stones which, by a stretch of the imagination, may be said to resemble hair when viewed from certain points. The foreigners hit upon this ox, but the object of their search was more material than fanciful or speculative. What impressed them most potently was not the bovine figure above but the

prospect below. There, far removed from the "smoke of man," was a gently sloping valley four thousand feet above malaria line, at least a mile long and half as wide, intersected by numerous streamlets of cool, fresh water and filled with sunshine! They at once determined to obtain this valley from the natives, and set about the difficult task with untiring patience and indefatigable zeal. After many ups and downs, slips,



THE GREAT CAVE WEST OF KULING.

forebodings, and even dangers, a series of fortuitous circumstances, which cannot be called luck, happened, and to make a long story short, a lease of the property was finally secured and the deeds stamped by the Chinese authorities. In peaceful possession the

owners of the Happy Valley can now smile at the mistakes of the past. "All's well that ends well." The individual resident is joint owner of the rest houses and roads, and there is a peculiar charm and freedom attached to a summer outing on one's own property that a temporary tenure does not possess. And the natives of all classes and conditions are pleased to have the foreigner among them at a time when he is, or ought to be, in the very best of humours and when the dollars stick less closely to his pockets. Few able-bodied Chinese in the district below Kuling have failed to receive certain silver tabloids of various weights and sizes in exchange for labour or commodity.

After the lease was settled, a splendid road was cut from Lienhwatung, or Lotus Grotto, up to the Estate, and brick kilns were set in operation. The land was divided into lots and put on the market. Houses of rubble were erected and a magic settlement soon appeared. It was discovered that the bricks could not be burned with straw sufficiently hard to resist the rigour of cold in the Kuling altitude, especially in exterior walls and chimneys. To-day there are few houses of the original stamp on the Estate. Cut stone dwellings are more durable and cheaper in the long run; handsome cottages with inviting verandahs now adorn the valley; brick kilns have been removed and replaced by tennis courts; and at the junction of the main stream stands a stately church too small already to accommodate the large congregations which assemble on the bright summer Sundays.

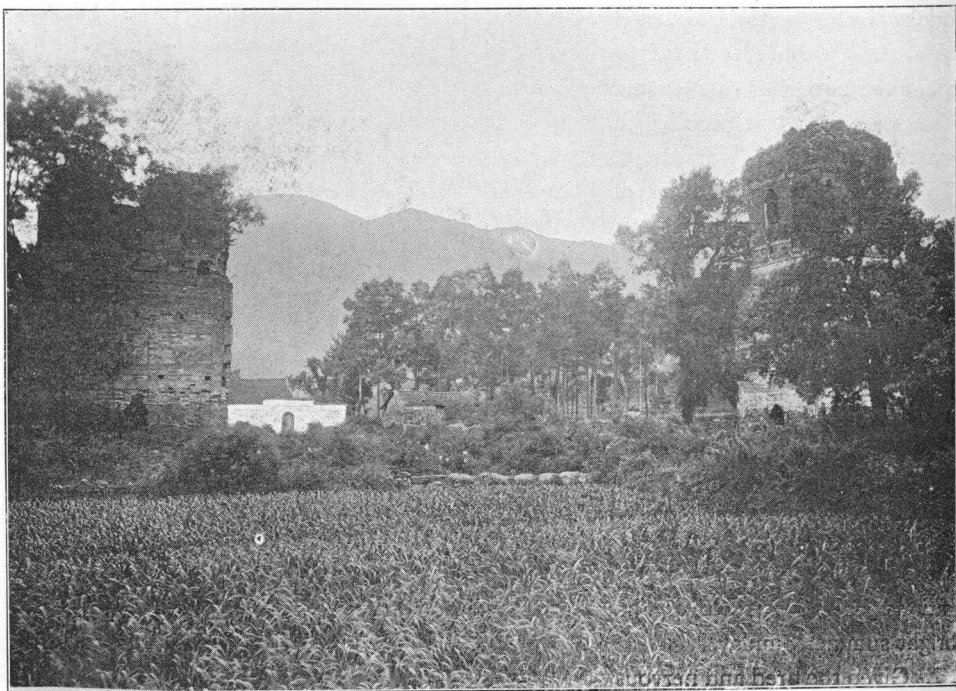
Given the tired and nervous business man a cottage in Kuling, that has cost in the neighbourhood of £200, and two months' vacation, and the problem of how to keep healthy in summer though resident in China will soon be solved. First there is the *Terminus a quo*, the packing up of bedding, cooking utensils and articles of a utilitarian as well as ornamental character, for the family are all going and there will be need for two servants. Even the harmless necessary cat can figure in the proceedings, first, as a source of diversion for the children, and secondly, as a protection against the unsophisticated Kuling rats. Where do these animals come from?—not the cats but the rats.



CATARACT IN BOULDER GORGE.

The river steamers are well appointed and the trip can always be made with convenience and comfort. Starting about the middle of July, it is found that the motion of the steamer *en route* creates breeze enough to keep one comfortable and it is only when the party disembark at Kiukiang that the heat is found intense and almost insufferable. But the courteous Agent of the Kuling Estate here comes to their relief. The luggage is handed over to the carriers, chairs are speedily made ready and the party, necessarily after some slight mishaps, starts off for the mountains through the slums of Kiukiang. The chair-bearers move rapidly forward apparently in imminent danger of knocking over divers pedestrians, superannuated dogs, portable kitchens, fruit stalls, and the *multum in parvo* of a painfully narrow street; but the procession finally emerges safely from the nasty suburbs and heads for the open.

The country road, guiltless of repair, winds around the foothills, through fields of growing rice, past ill-smelling villages, over and along a mountain stream in whose



POST PAGODA.

clear waters the unsoaped Chinese never bathe, and bifurcates at a stone decked with rude sculpture. On this stone the public is informed in Chinese that if one wishes to ascend the mountain he must turn to the left, as the other fork is the highway of Kiangsi Province.

As the chair-bearers bowl along and the slight danger of being pitched headlong into an adjacent field enhances the charm and interest of the situation, one can enquire of himself (it is useless to ask the coolies) why mountaineers *semper ubique*, *semper ab omnibus*, are the uncleanest people in the world. Does familiarity with

water breed contempt, or contact with fresh air chloroform the sense of need? These and other useful problems may occupy the mind for more than three whole hours as the octopod vehicle moves merrily on. The scene has changed before the Lotus Arch covered with the rare old plant is reached; and the lines of Gray express a Chinese and hence a deeper meaning unthought of in the West as the foreign intruder begins the gradual ascent of the fine old hills of Tang.

“Save that, from yonder ivy-mantled tower,  
The moping owl does to the Moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.”

The Kuling Estate owns a Rest House at this place. Here the chairs and coolies are usually changed; it is far better, however, if the day is fine and all things else are equally favourable, to walk up. For the mark of the foreigner is now evident on the roads. Even the raw coolie with an inherited tendency to stampede at the mere scent of a squeeze (and such fat squeezes as are to be found at Kuling were undreamed of by his remotest ancestor) appears docile and contented for the nonce. Under these conditions to walk is better, even if one is reminded next day that within his corporal frame there exist certain unused muscles and tendons that have not developed in proportion to his brain. The road is stone-stepped and guarded in the steep and dangerous places by wooden railings. As the scene opens out, the transformation is complete. Kiukiang and the Long River in the distance; pagodas like pawns and bishops on a chessboard; men like ants moving noiselessly about and the great panorama of the Yangtze Valley! “Kiukiang” means “Nine Rivers;” on the north there appear to be more than three times nine rivers, and on the south the waters have united in one body to form the Poyang Lake. There is a splendid exhibition of the effect of water on land in this view. The bare, massive rocks that now tower above, have been denuded of earth by this active agent and universal solvent which in time cuts away each new base as the centres of gravity shift and the ponderous mass tumbles downward to another level. Bullock Peak ground down to a tiny pebble on the sea floor by the remorseless wash of King Water may be picked up by some little child on the beach at Brighton or Long Branch twenty million years hence. The Great Yangtze which comes in detail from thousands of valleys like Kuling, changes rapidly and at will the configuration of the land, tearing away without ruth in one place and building up in another; and the tongue that first called Kiukiang, mouldered to dust ages ago, would stammer another and a different name to-day. And yet the little mountain stream that splashes gaily over the stones with pleasant tintinnabulation, dodging and scampering in the mad rush to get down to sea level, playing hide and seek with the Kuling children and tickling tens of little pink toes, now appears innocent and harmless as the sucking dove.

But here we are at the top, and another three hours and more have passed. Tired

we are and very hungry, but not "done up" and thirsty. For the lungs have been pump-



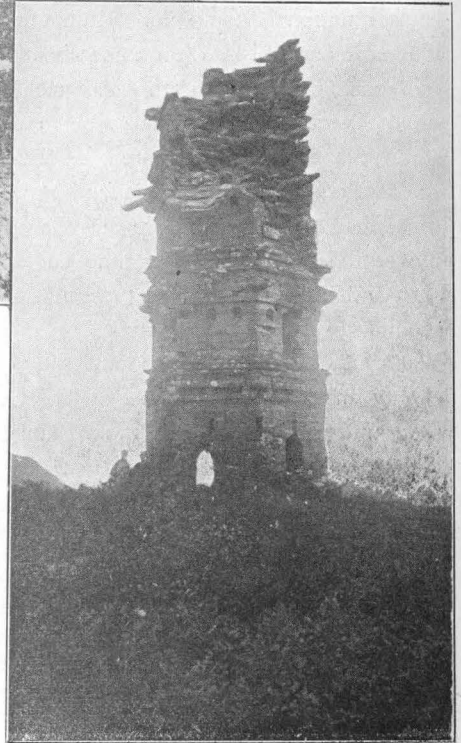
ANCIENT TREES.

ing in pure oxygen, and the system has felt the impact and cordially responded with an exuberance of good spirits!

First through a Chinese town, the newest perhaps in all China, drained by its own watershed, where the shops of the purveyors to the foreigners are strung along one street, then past the Im-

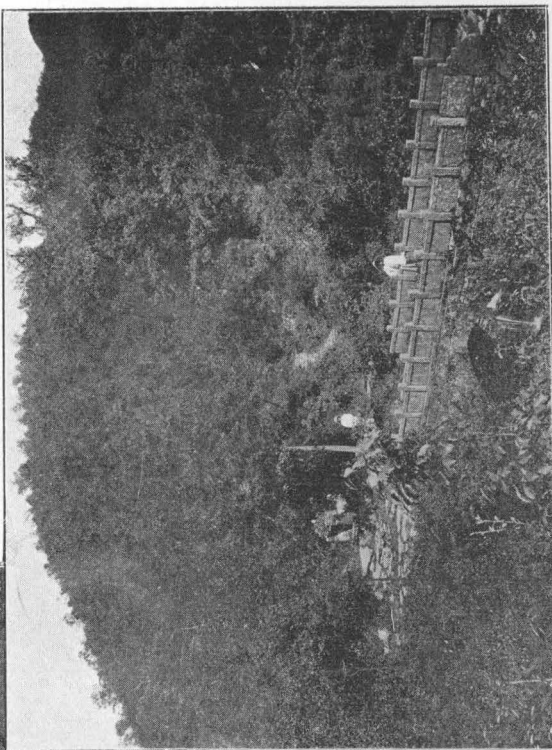
perial Chinese Post Office and the Office of Police just on the outside, and then through the gateway of "The Gap." Here is the Kuling Estate, the *Terminus ad quem!*

The scenery of the Kuling vicinity is varied. A fine view of Kiukiang, the plains and the foothills, is obtained from the ridge just above on the left. The hills are green and restful, notwithstanding the conspicuous absence of large trees. Wild flowers in endless variety and beauty among which



PAGODA AT TIENCHI.

are several species of the lily, dot the hill sides; and only the stress of poverty can excuse the utilitarian native who plucks these lovely flowers and boils them for greens. Some of the points of interest are "The Cave"—a good place for afternoon picnics; "The Waterfall," about six miles from the Estate in the direction of the Poyang Lake which is visible on the way; and "The Dragon Pool," a mile below the Settlement. A trip to the Waterfall requires a whole day, but the penance of steep climbing over rough paths is light for the indulgence of behold-



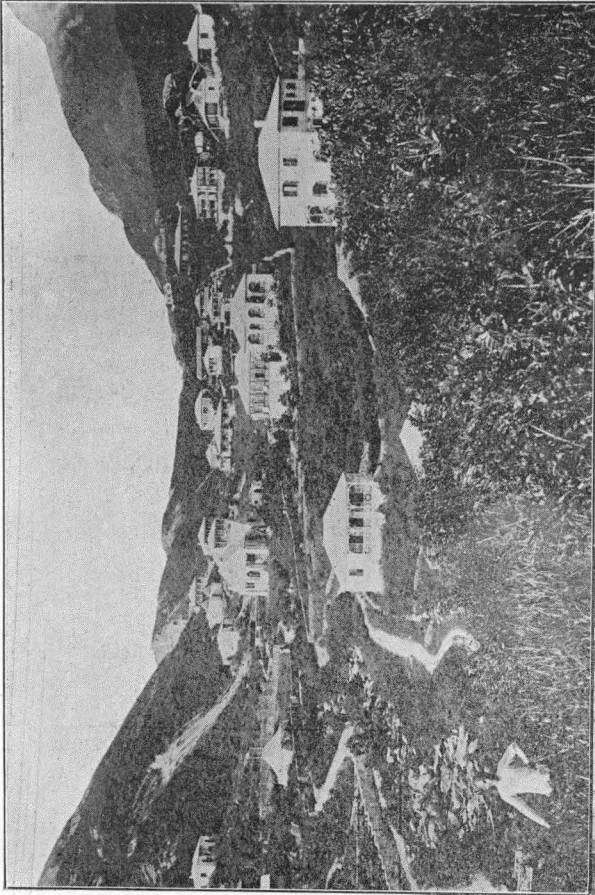
MAWEISHU BRIDGE.



WATERFALL.

ing layer after layer of aqueous rock which form a precipice fully six hundred feet high.

In the summer months the temperature of Kuling ranges between 72° and 86° Fahrenheit. The sun's rays are powerful even on the mountains, but it is cool in the shade and a breeze seems always to be stirring somewhere; rains, too, are frequent, and the valleys are more often swept with mist. Notwithstanding

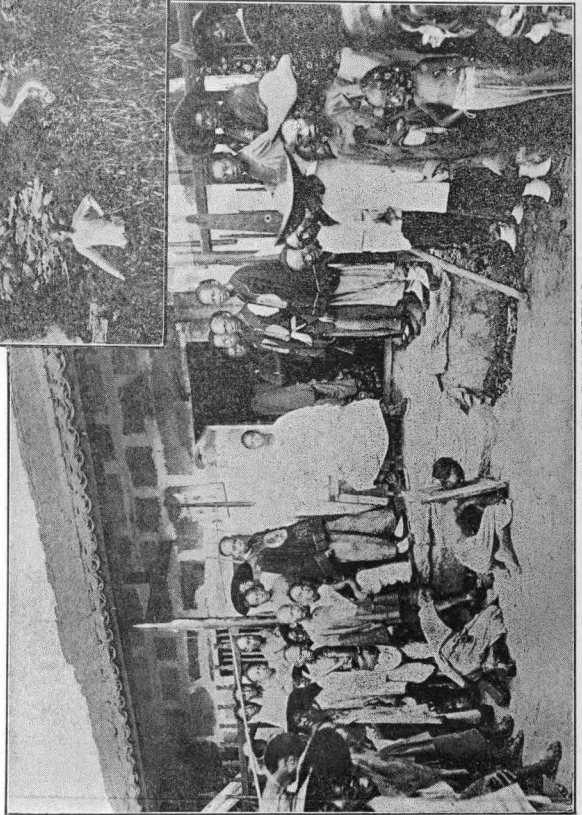


VIEW OF KULING.

these facts, people do not seem to suffer much with coughs and colds. The mist proves to be a tonic and has been called by a Kuling pioneer "nectar." One learns to love Kuling in all its moods and tenses—the rain and sunshine, the lights and shadows, and the smiles and frowns. The sun rises dreadfully late above the high ridges which garrison the eastern boundaries, and his example is contagious if not epidemic. But when he shakes

himself free from the toils of night and fully rouses for the day's work, the shadows flee like frightened rabbits across the mountain defiles, as with limitless prodigality he scatters the sunbeams like glittering dust. And the day is calm, serene, halcyon.

But a change in the atmosphere brought about by the sudden veering of the wind can cool the warm precincts of this cheerful day before the sun sets the good



TRIAL OF PRISONERS.



example of going to bed early behind the high western hill. Premonitions of a storm are seen in little masses of white and grey mist that float about in the air like highly magnified corpuscles, or like the breast feathers of a swan. Their companionship is evidently desirable, for many others soon appear until the whole valley is full—not of small patches now, but of great chunks of condensed wet that wilt the starch and frizzles with a swiftness unknown on the plain. By this time the atmosphere is all churned up. Thunder comes from somewhere and angry clouds dash across the ravines up hill, down dale, it matters not, following apparently in utter confusion, some mysterious mandate to gather together for a grand review: and the little human being is up in the clouds on the spot watching the ordinary and extraordinary process of nature in the manufacture of a nimbus.

It must be admitted that a succession of rainy days tends to dampen the ardour and spirits as well as the houses and roads; but a good long walk with mackintosh and cap in the mist, and a cheerful wood fire at home, sharpen



IMPERIAL TABLET.

the dulness to a remarkably fine point. A promenade in the clouds, however, must be made with great caution, over well-known roads and not too far, for the mist is very thick and deceptive, and several persons have been lost but happily found by search parties sent out at midnight to relieve them. On one occasion a company of ladies and gentlemen, who had been caught in an unforeseen fog and who had wandered hopelessly about for hours, were found sitting near the edge of

a precipice. Tired out and faint they had stopped to wait for the day in this precarious spot, blissfully ignorant of the fact that a few steps farther on would have carried them to the depths below, and, perhaps, to instant destruction.

The government of Kuling is purely moral, but steps are being taken to secure a legal status. Until 1897 entire control was in the hands of a Board of Trustees. At that time a meeting of lotholders elected a Council to act conjointly with the Trustees. Two years later, a Constitution and By-laws were framed and in the summer of 1903, at the Annual Meeting of Landrenters, an enlarged Council was vested with complete power; so that this body now controls all matters pertaining to the Estate. The Council consists of twelve members who hold regular sessions at the Estate Office during the summer. At the close of the season, as soon as it is found that a quorum is not present in Kuling, arrangements are made for an Executive Committee, consisting

of not less than five members of the Council living at or near one centre, to carry on the work during the winter. The Council, being a creation of the Landrenters' Meeting, presents a Budget and report to that body every year. Its actions are thus carefully and impartially reviewed. The annual income from taxes disbursed by the Council for the Manager's salary, wages of servants, and up-keep of roads and rest houses, amounts to about \$6,000, Mexican.

Thus promise is "writ large" on the future of this enterprising settlement—the now famous Sanitarium of Central China.

The winter constellations cross Kuling Valley in the day time when nearly all the residents are "At home" on the mountain. So that very few enjoy the rare pleasure of witnessing Orion near the meridian with the Dog following hard. The sight is always associated with crisp air and the spring and snap of winter, but in the high altitude of Kuling, where the stars ever shine with unusual brilliancy, the effect defies description.

It is more comfortable, at least, to sit and watch the star-ships that pass in the night of Summer. The sight is fresh every evening.

"Boats sail on the rivers  
And ships sail on the seas;  
But the stars that sail across the sky  
Are prettier far than these."

It becomes too cool for comfort on the verandah, marking stars and exchanging unadulterated optimism with congenial friends, before Arcturus makes a brilliant effort to twinkle while going out, or Pegasus straddles the sky as if posing for a photograph. The doors must be shut before Alcyon rises and the "sweet influences of the Pleiades" pervade and mellow heaven and earth in their peculiar, inexpressible, Oriental way. But the Scorpion, gradually doubling up for a spring over the skyline, and the great glittering Cross hung diagonally above in Ophiuchus, are on view all the early evening; when all the air holds a solemn stillness, and when the glittering host moves noiselessly and majestically across the hemisphere of heaven.

If there be vapour floating about in the east, a moonrise will flush the sky almost red; but when Cynthia unveils her peerless light, all visible nature—the plains, the valleys and the mountains,—is shot with a silver sheen, while the planets hang steady in the blue grey sky like apples of gold.

