

Ridge after ridge we mounted, thinking it the summit where rest and warmth and refreshment awaited us; but that was still further on, and we went winding and creeping up higher and higher, and the sun sunk and the wind rose, and night—a strange, chill, solemn, supermundane night—fell upon us. We were all meek and quiet. Even the horses, as they steadily climbed and struggled and twisted from point to point, panting heavily and quivering in every limb, seemed oppressed with awe and subdued terror, and it was a relief when at length and quite suddenly we passed over the last ridge, to be greeted by a joyful bray from a burro standing by the station, and to hear it answered by an animal of the same family connection in our cavalcade. Even our horses gave a feeble responsive whinny. All distinctions of caste were forgotten at that supreme moment. There was a camp-fire blazing brightly before the little low stone house, from which the stars were to be reviewed and the winds timed, and the lower world signaled all through the wild winter, and beside this fire stood two or three of the young gentlemen of the corps.

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“Last, at last, as I lay looking out through the open door, meditating on the vanity of human hopes and the vanity of human nature, I saw the moonlight and starlight glimmer slowly out, and the great dark depths of air at the east of the Peak change into a vast purple sea, and that again change into violet and crimson and gold, with a luminous throbbing point in the centre. Brighter grew the strange light, and larger and ruddier, till it was