



The Naas Lava Plain.

THE most interesting, certainly the most picturesque, feature of Naas River scenery is its wonderful lava plain, which, in ascending the river, the traveller first comes into contact with at the canyon of Gwinoha, about 68 miles from the coast. Suddenly it opens up as a vista of amazing contrast to the common or spruce-garden variety of scenery to which the eye has become accustomed nearer the sea. The impression produced is one of mingled repulsion and attraction: repulsion, at the rugged brutality and vastness of the deposit as a thing in itself, and its material negation of purpose and charm; and attraction, at the way in which nature has overcome these negations, by making a thing of beauty out of a disfiguring scar. For, truly, never were rocks and boulders so beautifully browned and greyed; so tenderly lichened in chrome, verd and madder as are these rough, jagged masses of lava clinker! And not alone in the details of particular formations has this beautifying process been carried out, but the plain itself, in its entirety, has been rendered pleasing to the eye. All sorts of mosses, some of them like citrine coral, adorn its surface. Patches of unbroken pavement, preserving ripple-marks of lava in its molten state, are here and there verded with a hardy creeper, bearing bright red berries, and with a sort of dwarf ice-plant which the Indians relish very much as a salad in the spring-time of the year. Hartstongue and miniature shrubs grow out of innumerable crevices, and in parts there are incipient boskets of stunted coniferæ. The cliff by the river is quite unique, and exhibits a wealth of artistic suggestion in form, colour, light and shade. Some day an artist will light upon this place, and his first joyful exclamation will be, — Eureka!

The central portions of the plain have not been so badly broken up as the circumjacent parts: the centre has fairly large sized areas of pavement intact; to the north every square yard is pulverised; while to the south, and along the river, large ebullition craters and trenches, with little surviving pavement between, form the chief characteristic.

Geologically, the lava formation is recent. There is no lack of scientific data to prove this, but not herein. The Indian legend is really an historical record, it is not myth. Standing today in lake Dihadal are the stumps of trees, and their charred but undecayed boles bestrew the shore, just as they were left by the eruptive fires, at what time the lake