

THE WEEKLY EXPOSITOR,

AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM.

OR REFORMER OF PUBLIC ABUSES, AND RAILWAY AND MINING INTELLIGENCE.

Vol. 1.]

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1846.

[No. 7.

LITERATURE.

EIGHT YEARS IN CANADA, &c.

By the Author of "Ecarte," &c.

DE OMNIBUS REBUS ET QUIBUSDAM ALIIS.

[A difficulty of arrangement having occurred with the only two London publishers to whom the following pages have been submitted, the Author has decided on reversing the usual practice, and publishing in Canada first; thus affording that means of direct communication with other metropolitan publishers, which his absence from London renders a matter of much inconvenience. It will be borne in mind, therefore, by the Canadian reader, that what is now offered to his perusal was, intended for an English public.]

CHAPTER III.

The season of my arrival in Canada, was not one of a nature to impress me favorably with the scenery near which my infant days had been cradled. The waters of the Niagara looked cold, dark, and sullen. The banks, high, and in many parts precipitous, were yet unclothed with verdure. The trees of a gray and dingy color, were without even the promise of a leaf, and, in short, the whole aspect of the country was monotonous and cheerless to a degree; while, to crown all that was unfavorable in the picture, the roads were in a condition little better than those over which I had travelled between Utica and Syracuse.

Along this road, and amid a scenery such as I have described, I accompanied a party from the residence of a younger brother, then member for the town of Niagara, in order to behold the reputedly greatest wonder of the world—the Falls. In these thoughts there would be ample recompense for every minor disappointment, and that the grandeur of the surrounding country would, in some measure, harmonize with the immensity of water, the dull roarings of which became, at each moment of my approach to them, more audible and distinct. The glowing descriptions which I had read in the publications of modern tourists, and particularly that of Fanny Kemble, had led me to suppose that a sentiment of mingled awe and admiration, would have been excited on my first view of the mighty torrent.—I confess I was disappointed. I felt admiration, but acknowledged no awe. I had expected to see the mass of water tumbling, foaming, from something like a height, and threatening, at every moment, to enshroud the spectator in one huge sheet of prismatic spray, and to plunge him into the vortex which formed its bed; whereas, on gaining the table rock I remarked, a few feet below me, a large flat sheet of water, that gurgled, and hissed, and lashed itself into fury at its immediate point of descent, but which, as far as the eye could reach above, presented an almost unbroken uniformity of surface. It is this want of irregularity, added to the absence of corresponding scenery, that robs the Falls, in my estimation, of much of the imposing grandeur that otherwise attaches to them.—What would not be the effect upon the mind and the imagination, if the vast volume of water that necessarily lashes the gigantic rock, were to come bounding and leaping down amid the chain of Pyrenean mountains, the caps of which are so often lost in the dense clouds which overhang them. Then, indeed, might the never-sated eye acknowledge that nothing of grandeur or sublimity could be found in nature to surpass them.

But, although my first approach to the Falls was not marked by these astounding sensations declared to be inseparable from a sudden proximity to so vast and so magnificent a sheet of water, I confess that the longer I lingered near them, the more was I filled with astonishment at their immensity. From the first creation of the world this vast tide of fresh and impetuous water had, in all probability, continued to pour forth its mighty strength into the boiling cauldron below, and yet the predominant feeling of the spectator is a desire to comprehend whence are derived the absolute seas which in endless succession leap, hiss, reel, dance, and then as it were recovering themselves from the dizziness produced by their fall, move rapidly on to the whirlpool, where being subject to the same rapid and rotatory motion, they at length issue purified and calm and after mingling with the waters of the great Lake Ontario, pursue their onward course through the St. Lawrence, and finally empty themselves into the Ocean.—And whence indeed, and where the source of that incomprehensible

volume of fresh water, unimpregnated with one saline particle? True it comes immediately from Lake Erie—from Lakes St. Clair, and Huron beyond that, and originally from the majestic Superior itself; but how, again, are these fed? Unsupplied from other sources of commensurate magnitude, a few short years would suffice to drain off the whole of the waters of those lakes, and yet so mysteriously renewed are they that, instead of any declination of the rivers of the West, I, after an absence of nearly twenty-five years, found that they had every where overstepped their former boundaries, and, in some instances, even had swept away dwelling-houses once familiar to my infancy, and which I looked for in vain. Whence, then, I repeat, does this great and incomprehensible mass of living water derive its being? The only true answer is to be found in the following extract from a work, entitled "Christian Philosophy," by Dick, which fully explains the phenomenon:—

"Water has been ascertained to be a compound body, formed by the union of two different kinds of air, oxygen and hydrogen. It has the property of becoming, in certain cases, much lighter than air; though in its natural liquid state it is eight hundred times heavier than that fluid, and has also the property of afterwards resuming its natural weight. Were it not for this property, evaporation could not be produced; and, consequently, no clouds, rain, or dew, could be formed, to water and fertilize the different regions of the earth. But, in consequence of this wonderful property, the ocean becomes an inexhaustible cistern to our world. From its expansive surface are extracted those vapors which supply the rivers, and nourish the vegetable productions of every land. 'The air and the sun,' says an elegant writer, 'constitute the mighty engine, which works without intermission to raise the liquid treasure; while the clouds serve as so many aqueducts to convey them along the atmosphere, and distribute them at seasonable periods, and in regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.'

"Notwithstanding the properties now stated, motion was still required, to secure all the advantages we now derive from the liquid element. Had the whole mass of waters been in a stagnant state, a thousand inconveniences and disastrous consequences would have ensued. But the All-wise Creator has impressed upon its various masses a circulating motion which preserves its purity, and widely extends its beneficial influence. The rills pour their liquid stores into the rivers, the rivers roll their watery treasures into the ocean; the waters of the ocean, by a vibratory motion, roll backwards and forwards every twelve hours, and by means of currents and the force of rivers, are kept in constant agitation. By the solar heat, a portion of these waters is carried up into the atmosphere, and, in the form of clouds, is conveyed by the winds over various regions, till it descends in rain and dew to supply the springs which run among the hills; so that there is a constant motion and circulation of the watery element, that it may serve as our agent for carrying on the various processes of nature, and for ministering to the wants of man and beast.

"In fine, were the waters in a perpetual state of stagnation, the filth of populous cities would be accumulated to a most unwholesome degree; the air would be filled with putrid exhalations, and the vegetable tribes would languish and die. Were they deprived of the property of being evaporated (in which state they occupy a space sixteen hundred times greater than in their liquid state) rain and dew could never be produced, and the earth would be turned into a 'dry and parched wilderness'; neither for use our clothes, when washed, could not be dried; and a variety of common operations, which now conduce to our convenience and comfort, could never be carried on. But the infinite wisdom of the Creator, foreseeing all the effects which could probably arise from these principles of nature, has effectually provided against such disasters, by arranging all things in number, weight, and measure, to subserve the beneficial aims for which they were ordained."

In accordance with the system above propounded, it is probable that, by reason of the exemption of the waters of America from that brackishness which is often to be discovered in rivulets and rivers which empty themselves into the sea, the lakes perform, for their own tributary streams, what ocean itself does for other parts of the world. The evaporation which rolls backwards and re-supplies their sources, comes from the vast lakes themselves, the currents of which are even less powerful than those of the Atlantic, and are consequently more predisposed to the evaporating process. That the lakes themselves are voluminous enough to purvey, in the manner above shown, to their own sustenance, will be evident to the European reader from the following statistics:—

"Lake Superior is 400 miles long, 60 wide, 900 feet deep, and contains 23,000 square miles. It is 594 feet above the level of tide water.

"Lake Michigan is 220 miles long, 60 miles wide, 1,000 feet deep and 578 feet above the tide water. It contains 22,000 square miles.