

## At Foot of Canadian Falls, Niagara.

A spot sublime and weird is this ; strange sounds  
 Flit by on mystic quests. Methinks that here,—  
 Among these winds, that beetling rock anear,—  
 We have at last passed Silence and the bounds  
 Withholding us from Nature. What confounds  
 The mind, what stupefies the sense ; those clouds  
 Is it, that shut the scene in hoary shrouds ;  
 Or is it that relentless force that pounds  
 Against th' eternal pillars of the world ;  
 Those countless billows into mid-air hurled :  
 The terror of this frigidic mist ;  
 These is it, or the distance of those heights,  
 Where first the Morning by the Night is kissed :  
 Where ev'ry Ev'ning burns its yellow lights ?

JOHN STUART THOMSON.

## Concerning Mirrors.

WHERE did the word "mirror" come from? That old-fashioned book, Sullivan's Dictionary of Derivations, says, from the French *miroir*, and that from the Latin *miror*, to admire. But the common Latin word, "I see," is *video*, the Greek *eido* ; and the Greek *horas*, and *opto* ; the Sanscrit *iksh*, *dris*, and *pasya*, the Zend *vened* and *astriete*, do not agree with the Spanish *mirar*, to behold. Spain derived *mirar* from the Basque *miratu*, to see, *miiretsi*, to admire ; and leaving out of sight the Ugrian and Caucasian dialects, we must find *mirar*'s classical ancestor in the Japanese verb "to see," namely *miru*. Then, the Japanese were once in Italy? No, they never were there ; but the Etruscans, who made polished bronze, silver, and even gold mirrors, that the Romans called *specula*, were, if language and physiognomy count for anything, occidental Japs. The Basques are a remnant of these western Japanese who still retain their original tongue, which the Etruscans lost about a century before the Christian era. The Iberians of northern Italy, of France and Spain, the Silures of Wales, and the Damnorics of southern Britain and Albion, the Picts of the latter country, and the Tuatha-de-Dunans of Ireland, were all medium-sized, dark-featured, straight, black-haired, western Japs, who taught the Celt civilization, and lost their language either to him or to the Roman.

Now, this ancient Iberian was not a beauty, although in youth his daughter was comely, as is the similar relative of his modern representative. But it does not follow that he was conscious of his lack of personal attractions, nor that, if he had been, the fact would have hindered his invention of the looking-glass. People have been much misled by the fable of Narcissus. That beautiful blockhead, obdurate to the affection of the charming nymph Echo, fell in love with the reflection of his own face in a clear fountain, and, happily for spring gardeners, faded away, in his love-sick egotism, into the flower that bears his name. Probably the author of this myth was right in making clear, still water the first mirror. For the first man who saw what he was like, it must have been a revelation, and, in a higher sense, it has been the same to every man and woman since. Some regard the eye of other humanity as the first mirror, but it is too microscopical for the purpose, it inverts the image, and autopsies discredit its power of retaining impressions beyond the moment. Nevertheless that eye is a mirror very much looked to in this world, and with very varying results as regards the happiness of him who looks.

The inventors of metal mirrors, though not Adonis-like, had a considerable conceit of their personal appearance. Like the ancient Egyptians, whom they may have taught, and, unlike the Semite, the Greek, and the ancient Roman, they eradicated from their faces the few hairs that sought to adorn them. The sense of touch, of course, might have made them acquainted with these, but, on reflection showing up their number and relative positions, it would be easier to apply the tweezers or metal worm for their extirpation. The looking-glass seems to be the necessary accompaniment of the depilatory, however the latter works, in modern as in ancient times. It is only when nature herself or the silk hat performs its function on the top and back of the head, that the tendency to consult the mirror slackens. There are other ways of improving one's personal appearance than that of plucking out superfluous hairs, and for all of these the reflector is valuable. It may be a mark of vanity to spend

much time before the looking-glass, but not to consult it at all denotes either colossal self-conceit or total lack of regard for the opinion of others. The captains of exploring or trading vessels, bound for the shore of the barbarian, formerly carried with them a supply of cheap hand glasses to dicker with the natives. At first, the noble savage did not recognize himself, and smashed the glass in order to get at the fellow who was staring at him, as dogs, cats, and birds confronting a mirror often attempt to do ; but, afterwards, he and his better-halves took huge delight in complacently beholding the reproduction of their peculiar features.

It must have been a generous act of self-denial when the ladies of Israel surrendered their looking-glasses, called *mareah* in Exodus, but *rei* by the author of the book of Job, for the purpose of casting out of them the bronze laver of the tabernacle. The subject is one worthy of commendation to our more serious-minded poets. Philo says that Moses counselled the priests, when they cleansed themselves in the laver, to remember the materials of its construction, and forthwith try themselves by the mirror of their own conscience. It is more than half likely that the Alexandrian evolved this advice from his own inner consciousness. The prophet Isaiah looked upon such glasses as part of the unlawful bravery of the wanton daughters of Zion ; but the worthy son of Sirach, in his Ecclesiasticus, makes a strange application of them. He says "Never trust thine enemy : for like as metal rusteth, so is his wickedness. Though he humble himself and go crouching, yet take good heed and beware of him, and thou shalt be unto him as if thou hadst wiped a looking-glass, and thou shalt know that his rust hath not been altogether wiped away." This is something like the proverb, "Scratch the Russian and you will find the Tartar." The thought of an everlasting enemy, however, is a somewhat painful one, especially when you find him in a mirror ; yet there are such. Anacreon found no such enemy, although in his eleventh ode, dedicated to himself, he said : "The women tell me 'thou art old, Anacreon!' and I take the mirror to contemplate the locks that are no more and the bald forehead ;" for, in spite of these, he expresses himself ready for "jocund sport."

St. Paul and St. James make beautiful use of the looking-glass as an illustration. The latter has, indeed, the forgetful hearer, who, going away after having seen the reflection of his face in a glass, straightway forgot what manner of man he was. But both he and St. Paul have the notion of a mirrored countenance that cannot be seen face to face by the observer. It is as when the manager of a business sits in the far end of the apartment in which it is carried on, with his back to clerks and customers alike, but with a mirror or more before him in which the whole scene of operations is ever reflected. The great object thus beheld by the two apostles is divinity, viewed in its inimitable perfections or as a perfect law of liberty. Coming down from this lofty elevation of thought, many excellent reasons may be given for employing looking-glasses at times as means through which we may scan and watch the features and actions of others. Whether the designers of Pullman and parlor cars set up their longitudinal front and rear glasses to encourage this laudable curiosity or not, is a question which they alone can answer. They, that is the glasses, make it possible to watch everything that takes place in the car, while modestly occupying the front seat with one's back to it all. What different emotions the scenes and objects witnessed will excite in the heart, and what a consequent play of feature the mirror will bring to the countenance !

To hold the mirror up to nature, and to see ourselves as others see us, are two phases of the same supposed corrective operation. But it must be ever remembered that there are many different kinds of mirror. As a small boy, the writer traversed the Thames Tunnel in company with his father who inveigled him into what Americans call a side-show, wherein were mirrors, convex, concave, and contorted. Whichever way the poor reflected object turned, the prospect was appalling and utterly destructive of vanity, while it provoked the risibility of those who were knowing enough to keep their hats in front of their faces. To have one's countenance represented as three feet long and four inches broad, or two feet broad and one in length, with mouth and nose proportionate, or with its features twisted in all sorts of wry dislocations, was a painful experience, the repetition of which few will covet. Occasionally a piece of bad window glass, with something behind it that acts as a foil, will play the same con-