

DISTINCTIVE CHARMS OF NIAGARA.

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I HAVE spoken of the *distinctive* charm of Niagara scenery. If it were possible to have the same conditions detached from the Falls (which it is not, as I shall show), Niagara would still be a place of singular fascination; possibly to some, upon whom the Falls have a terrifying effect, even more so than it is now. Saying nothing of the infinitely varied beauties of water and spray, and of water-worn rock, I will, for a purpose, mention a few elements which contribute to this distinctive charm.

The eminent English botanist, Sir Joseph Hooker, has said that he found upon Goat Island a greater variety of vegetation within a given space than anywhere in Europe, or east of the Sierras in America; and the first of American botanists, Dr. Asa Gray, has repeated the statement. I have followed the Apalachian chain almost from end to end, and traveled on horseback "in search of the picturesque" over four thousand miles of the Continent, without finding elsewhere the same quality of forest beauty which was once abundant about the Falls, and which is still to be observed in those parts of Goat Island where the original growth of trees and shrubs has not been disturbed, and where from caving banks, trees are not now exposed to excessive dryness at the root.

Nor have I found anywhere else such tender effects of foliage as were once to be seen in the drapery hanging down the wall of rock on the American shore below the Fall, and rolling up the slope below it, or with that still to be seen in a favorable season and under favorable lights, on the Canadian steeps and crags between the Falls and the ferry.

All these distinctive qualities—the great variety of the indigenous perennials and annuals, the rare beauty of the old woods, and the exceeding loveliness of the rock foliage—I believe to be a direct effect of the Falls, and as much a part of its majesty as the mist-cloud and the rainbow.

They are all, as it appears to me, to be explained by the circumstance that at two periods of the year when the northern American forest elsewhere is liable to suffer actual constitutional depression, that of Niagara is insured against like ills, and thus retains youthful luxuriance to an unusual age.

First, the masses of ice, which every winter are piled to a great height below the Falls, and the great rushing body of ice-cold water coming from the northern lakes in the spring, prevent at Niagara the hardship under which trees elsewhere often suffer through sudden checks to premature growth; and second, when droughts elsewhere occur as they do every few years, of such severity that trees in full foliage droop and dwindle, and even sometimes cast their leaves, the atmosphere at Niagara is more or less moistened by the constantly evaporating spray of the Falls, and in certain situations frequently bathed by drifting clouds of mist.