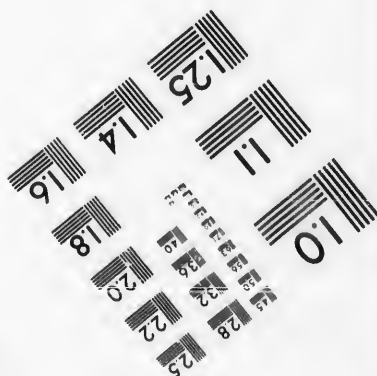
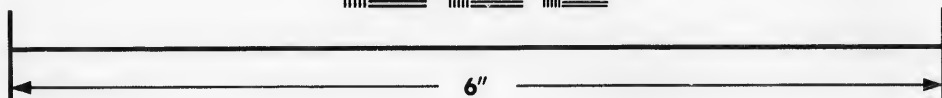
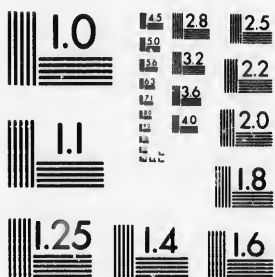


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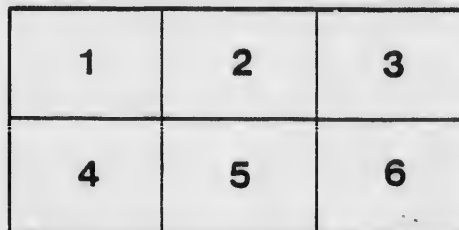
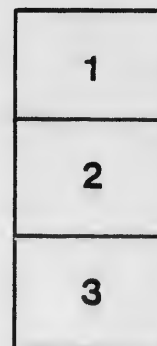
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THE
INTERNATIONAL TEMPLE
OF
NIAGARA.

BY
WILLIAM SHARPE, M.D.

PRICE THREE-PENCE.

REPRINTED FROM *Modern Thought* FOR MARCH, 1882.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT
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THE INTERNATIONAL TEMPLE OF NIAGARA.

Reprinted from MODERN THOUGHT, March, 1882.

IT was foretold long ages ago that in latter days many should run "to and fro," and evidently those days are full upon us; for the swift rushing hither and thither, as we now see it, not only of thousands but of millions around us, stands out in striking contrast to the slow and wearisome modes of travelling in days gone by, and, indeed, in all times prior to this, the age of railroads and steamships. But if in past times travelling, as we now understand it, was confined to the narrowest limits as regards number, owing to the almost insuperable difficulties that necessarily attended it, yet the looking abroad upon the world has always had an attraction for the mass of mankind. This desire has not been limited to individuals, but has been coextensive with humanity; all men, could they do so without taxing unduly their love of ease, their strength, or their incomes, would like to see the earth in the length and breadth of it. The holiday excursions of the

many, and the world-wide wanderings of the few, have alike their origin in this innate longing which urges man forward to look upon some portion of the globe of which he is an inhabitant. The young and the old, the learned and the unlearned, the barbarian and the philosopher, are alike desirous of beholding new scenes and places. The more highly endowed, the artist and the poet it may be, are at times thrilled even to ecstasy, but all, even the rudest and least intellectually gifted, are pleased to look upon whatever is grand or striking. The fact is hopeful, and argues the possession of something godlike even in the lowest of our race—a humanising element to be developed hereafter, even though it be repressed for the present, a strange mystic sympathy with nature as the corporate and visible expression of the Eternal asserting itself in all men. And in this world-wide sympathy with our external surroundings is the original source of our admiration of the “beautiful” as it lies before us, inviting worship, with its temples by hill and dale, by wood, and lake, and sea—temples where the weird and subtle harmonies of nature steal upon the receptive faculties, and though at times the inward response to them be feeble, yet will they nestle in the memory to be again and again revived and called forth with increasing vividness and power, until the soul at length, like an Aeolian harp touched by the passing breeze, becomes attuned to harmony, and sensitive to every pleasing aspect of the material and visible world around it.

But though the inexhaustible wonders of nature abound everywhere, appealing on all

sides to the sympathies of the initiated, yet are there many localities where the imposing grandeur of the spectacle never fails to awake a sense of rapture and admiration even in the breasts of the least discerning of those who look upon them. And foremost amongst these world-renowned shrines, where the higher educational development of the emotional faculties becomes a living reality, are the far-famed Falls of Niagara. Here the great Author of nature has established for the joint use of worshippers from every clime, an "Island Temple,"* whose foundations are upon the caverned rocks; whose roof is the dome of heaven, and whose sacred grove is an expanse of primeval wood; whose ablutionary tank before the vestibule is a troubled abyss, fed with the waters of a continent, arched with the rainbow, and draped in white with clouds of sheeted spray; whose choral music is the deep voice of a mighty cataract; whose vestals are Naiads, and whose warders are the aerial spirits of the flood! Many are the altars and high places around this hallowed fane, from the vantage-ground of which the assembled worshippers, absorbed in silent adoration, hold communion with the Eternal. There, on the angle by Biddle's Stairs, they look into the deep gorge of the Niagara, scanning, as it were in thought, the volume and majestic flow of the sea-green river as it glides swiftly on towards the great "whirlpool rapids," where it is again tormented and lashed into

* A large island unpoetically named "Goat Island," which separates the American from the great Canadian fall. It contains about 70 acres, and is covered with virgin forest.

surging foam : there by " Table Rock " on the further shore, fronting the full sweep of the great Canadian fall, they look bewildered upon that amazing torrent, vainly endeavouring to realize even dimly the force and magnitude of the mighty flood, whose green waves breaking into snowy masses lose and shroud themselves eternally in a wild vortex of mist and spray, on which still, as the sun shines out, the bow of the " covenant " gleams full of beauty and promise as in the days of old : there by the " Cave of the Winds " they look up with astonishment on the falling deluge, which seems to rush as from the heavens, dashing itself into vapour with the roar of a thousand thunders as it strikes upon the rocks below : there by the ruined site of the Terrapin Tower they contemplate in mute wonder, awe-struck as in the presence of God, the tremendous rush of waters hurrying towards their giddy leap, where, converging in their might, the tumbling billows in unbroken line shoot downwards into the unfathomable gulf beneath ; and there, too, by the " Sister Islands " they gaze intently outwards, as in abstraction, upon the wide expanse of tumultuous water, sweeping past in its fury, heaving and tossing itself into billowy mounds as it hastes towards its final plunge, till, like Hindoo priests before their temples on the Ganges, they become entranced by the magnetic power of the rushing torrent, for in the commotion there is calm, in the wild turbulence there is peace ! Then, rapt in meditation, the mind sweeps back into bygone years—visions of the past, ere the strife and turmoil of civilisation broke upon the solitude

of the boundless forest, or jarred upon the deep music of the cataract, which day by day and year by year resounded ceaselessly among the woods, flit before the mental sight of the beholders, who seem to stand in imagination beside that solitary traveller* as the deep, monotonous thunder of the great river first falls upon his ear, and his eye catches the first distant glimpse of that formless vapour which has settled vague and ghost-like over the gloomy verdure of the forest.—How he pauses in wonder and amazement as the sound grows upon him, and the formless vapour becomes more distinct! How full of expectation he advances, drawing nearer and nearer, till presently the mystery is solved—the Niagara has burst upon his sight! He bows in adoration, for he has chanced upon holy ground—he is before the sanctuary, and the power of the Infinite rushes upon him!

Then again in the tumult of thought is the present recalled, and the congregated worshippers take note of the passing moods, and contemplate how season after season, with every changing phase of earth and sky, still new and strange effects succeed each other; how all around the bloom and freshness of the bordering woods have passed into the golden hues of autumn, and how presently the mysterious colouring and dreamy atmosphere of the fleeting Indian summer are replaced by the snows and crisp cold airs of winter, which, with chill, transforming touch, have changed the out-

* The Niagara Falls were discovered by Father Hennepin, in 1678.

ward features of Niagara from the softer beauties of its summer dress to the stern sublimity of its winter garb. Now in the short declining day, when the distant shores and full expanse of the broad rapids are obscured and hidden by the densely falling snow, and no living thing visible save one or two solitary gulls, sweeping to and fro like restless wanderers of the deep, the aspect of the place becomes weird and awful from the pervading gloom and the sense of undistinguishable vastness everywhere present. But anon in the peace and tranquility of night, when the stars are out and the clear full moon sheds her dreamy light abroad, the effect is marvellous, and indescribably beautiful. All around hoary, frost-laden trees, ghostly in their drapery of purest white, cast fantastic shadows upon the snow; great icicles and strange ice formations hang pendant from the rocks, or stand like statuary within the caves; rugged and chaotic masses of ice are jammed across the mighty stream; huge snow mountains rise dome-like beneath the cliffs, as though they would obstruct the rushing waters of the fall, and, as if to complete the weird enchantment, the lunar bow is painted upon the eternal spray of the cataract—the whole uniting to form a spectacle of transcendent and unearthly grandeur—a combination scene of unrivalled and surpassing beauty, where Naiads nightly congregate, emerging from their gem-lit caves far under the mighty falls to hold their mystic dance upon the snows!

Such is the natural temple of Niagara, which, had it been located upon the plains of Hindus-

tan, would have been held in veneration by the teeming millions of Asia, and visited annually by thousands of pilgrims and worshippers from distant lands. Incalculable sums would have been lavishly expended by the rulers and princes of the country in the embellishment of its grounds, and in the erection thereon of gorgeous Indian shrines, while the works of Mammon dare not intrude upon its sacred precincts; for in all times the mighty intellects of the East clearly understood the humanising and gentle regenerating influence exerted over the people by the combined power of great rivers and costly architectural monuments. Yet is the Niagara in its own natural grandeur more influential in this respect than the stately pagodas of the Ganges or the Godavery, and more imposing and awe-inspiring than the colossal ruins of the Nile; for who can estimate even remotely the value of the great thoughts and far-reaching visions that are borne in like a flood upon the minds of thousands who come under the spell of its power.

What rulers of the South will therefore forever distinguish themselves by heartily uniting with the munificent government of the North in presenting this great natural high-place as a free gift, not only to the millions spread over their own wide territories, but to the peoples of the world at large? What high-minded legislators, rising above the petty interest of faction, will enforce the sale of "vested rights," and drive out from hence the "money changers," as those of Jerusalem were in olden time driven out from the sanctuary by Him who loved the wilderness and the mountain, and taught by

Olivet and the Sea of Galilee? What millionaires will buy up and blot out the desecrating works of Mammon which are crowding upon its approaches and located upon its fairest premises? What money-kings will suitably appoint and endow this heaven-instituted sanctuary of the nations, the unspoken eloquence of which is grander and more enduring in effect than the homilies of a thousand churches? but which if the rulers neglect and the people heed not, too much intent upon their all-absorbing and mentally debasing worship of Mammon,—then let them beware that they go not metaphorically down into the abysses of Niagara that they may be purified therein, cleansed as it were in the troubled waters of tribulation!

