

NIAGARA.

BY MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.

WITH PICTURES BY A. CASTAIGNE.

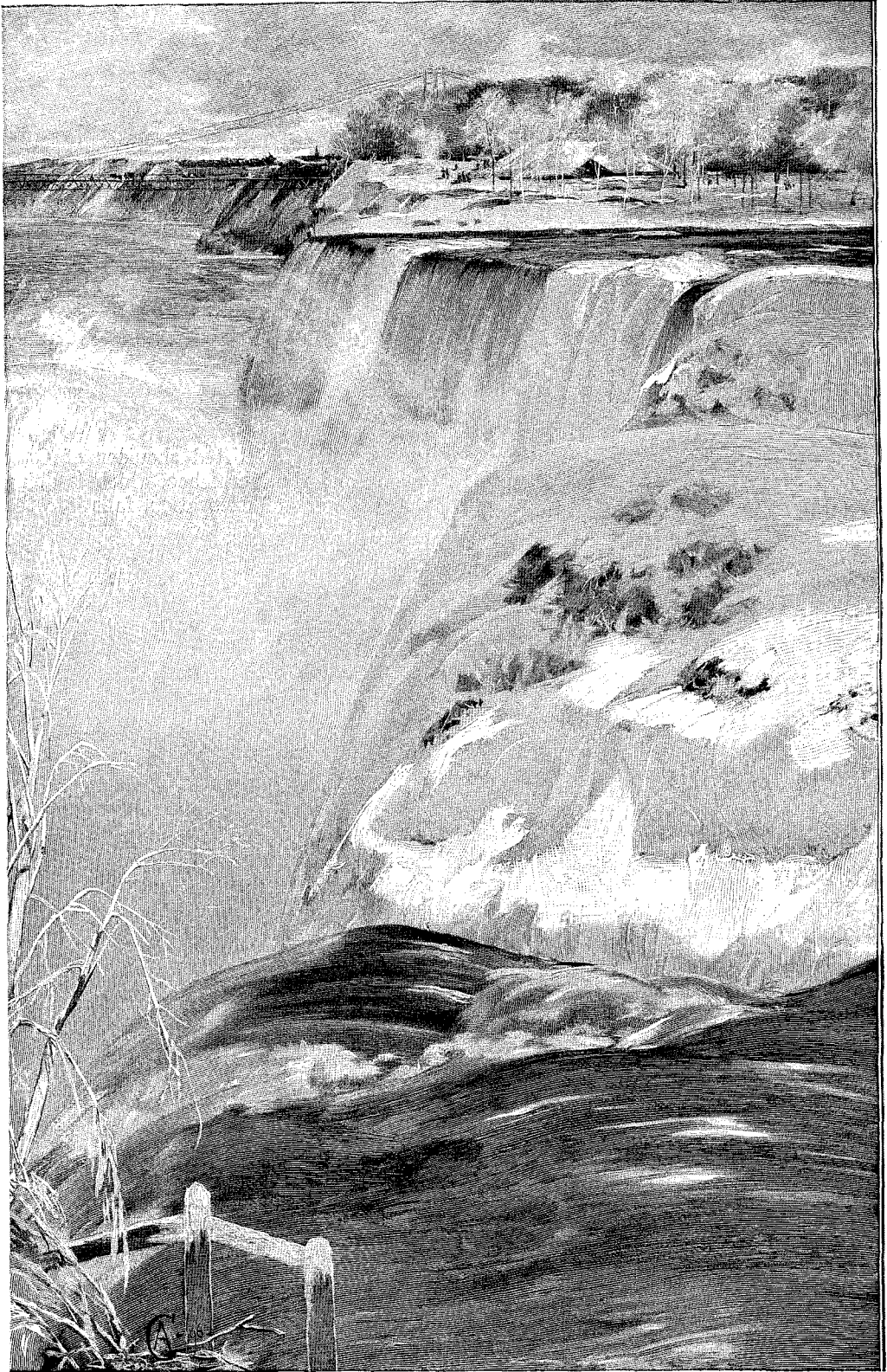
LIGHT and atmosphere, the magicians that take time to show us all the phases of any landscape, are peculiarly important as the interpreters of Niagara. The evening of our first day by the falls will differ greatly from its morning; neither will be quite like the evening or the morning of any other day; and yet some indispensable aids to understanding may be long postponed. There must be strongest sunshine to show the full glory of the place—the refulgent possibilities of its opaline falling sheets, snow-white rising mists, and prismatic bows. But only a soft gray light can bring out the local colors of its horizontal waters and its woodlands, and only the shadow of storm-clouds the vehement temper of some portions of its rapids. Night brings her own revelations—lambent, ineffable in the full, and occult, apocalyptic in the dark of the moon. And while a powerful wind is needed to raise the clouds from the cataracts in fullest volume, and to whip the crests of the rapids into farthest-flying scud, as long as any wind blows it may drive us back from some of the best points of view, drenched and blinded by torrents of vapor.

Even if light and wind never altered at Niagara, still it could not be seen in a day or a week. It must be studied in detail—in minutest detail—as well as in broad pictures. Its wealth in idyllic minor delights is as astonishing as its imperial largess in dramatic splendors. Its fabric of water, rock, and foliage is richly elaborate, as a cathedral's fabric might be if carved and damasked all over with intricate patterns and colors, each helping to explain the ideals of its builders. One whole side of Niagara's charm is unfelt unless every great and little passage of its waters is learned by heart, and every spur and recess of its shores, and especially of its islands, is lovingly explored.

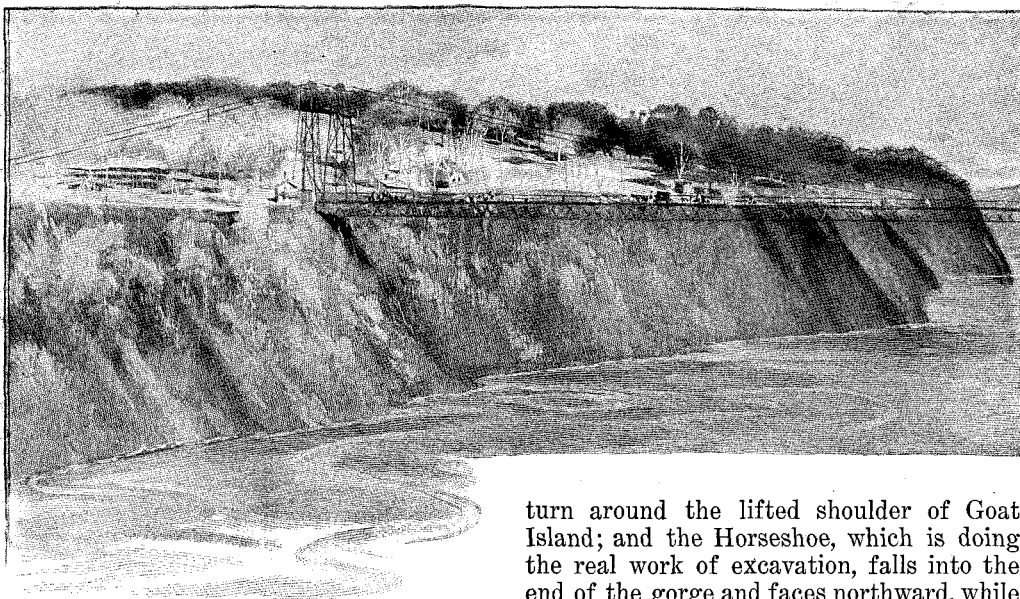
Moreover, the eye alone cannot really perceive high beauty of any sort. It needs the help of emotion, and the right kind of emotion develops slowly. True sight means the deep, delicate, and complete sensations that

result, not from the shock of surprise, but from the reverent, intelligent submittal of sense and soul to the special scheme that the great Artifex has wrought and the special influence it exerts. We cannot see anything in this way if we hurry. Above all, we cannot see Niagara, the world's wonder, which is not a single wonder and yet is a single creation complete in itself—a volume of wonders bound compactly together and set apart between spacious areas of plain, as though nature had said, Here is a piece of art too fine, too individual, to be built into any panorama, to need any environment except the dignity of isolation. Such a volume must indeed be studied page by page; but it must also be read so often that it will leave us the memory of a harmonious whole as well as of a thousand fine details.

And the best season for Niagara? Each has its own claim. Winter sometimes gives the place an arctic picturesqueness, a dazzling semi-immobility, utterly unlike its affluent, multicolored summer aspect; but one could hardly wish to see it only in winter, or in winter first of all. It is most gorgeously multicolored, of course, when its ravine and its islands commemorate its long-dead Indians by donning the war-paint of autumn. And it is most seductively fair in early spring. Then, at the beginning of May, when the shrubs are leafing and the trees are growing hazy, its islands are the isles of paradise. This is the time of the first wild flowers. Spread beneath the forest that still admits the sun-floods through its canopies, massed in the more open glades, and wreathed along the edges of pathways and shores, they fill Goat Island full, whitely bank and carpet it—snowy trilliums in myriads, bloodroots, dicentras, smilacinas, and spring-beauties, varied by rose-tinted spring-cresses and yellow uvularias, and underlaid by drifts of violets. Hardly anywhere else over so large an area can these children of May grow in such profusion, for even when the sun shines hottest upon them the air is always delicately dampened by the spraying floods. Here nature so faithfully fosters them that they need



THE AMERICAN FALL IN WINTER.



SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

not be jealously guarded by man. Whoever will may gather them by the armful.

It is good to see Niagara at this time. But it is still better to see it when its trees and shrubs and vines are in fullest leaf and many of them in blossom. Then their value is greatest as a setting for the endless series of large and small, near and distant water pictures; and then the temperature incites to lingering. The very best time of all is in June.

II.

ABOVE the falls the broad river runs between shores so flat that one wonders why it never mistakes its course; and where its rapids begin, at the head of Goat Island, it is nearly a mile in width. For half a mile these rapids extend along both sides of the island, and at its farther end the waters make their plunge into the gorge that they have themselves created, cutting their way backward through the table-land which extends from Lake Erie to a point some seven miles south of Lake Ontario. They make this plunge as two distinct streams, with the broad, precipitous face of Goat Island rising between them. The American stream falls in an almost straight line; the broader, stronger Canadian stream falls in a boldly recessed horseshoe curve. And there is another difference also. Just at this place the river-bed makes a right-angled

turn around the lifted shoulder of Goat Island; and the Horseshoe, which is doing the real work of excavation, falls into the end of the gorge and faces northward, while the American Fall, like the island's bluff, faces westward, dropping its waters over the side of the gorge into the current that flows down from the Horseshoe.

The wonderful hemicycle that is thus created measures almost a full mile from mainland brink to brink.¹ But the gorge, about one hundred and seventy feet in height above the surface of its stream, is less than a quarter of a mile across. Its cliffs rise almost sheer from their slanting bases of detritus, naked in some spots, in a few defaced by the hand of man, but still for the most part clothed with hanging robes of forest. At first, just below the falls, they look down upon waters that no longer rush and foam, but slip and swing with an oily smoothness, exhausted by their daring leap, still too giddy from it to flow quite straight, and showing proofs of it in long twisting ropes of curdled froth. For nearly two miles their lethargy lasts. One may swim in this part of the Niagara River, the smallest row-boat need not fear to put out upon it, and the *Maid of the Mist* pushes past the very foot of the American Fall up toward the Horseshoe, until she is wrapped in its steamy clouds. This is because, within its gorge, the Niagara is the deepest river in the world. Even near the falls the distance from its surface to its bottom is greater than the distance from its surface to the top of its gorge walls—more than two hundred feet; and down into these depths the falling sheets are carried solidly

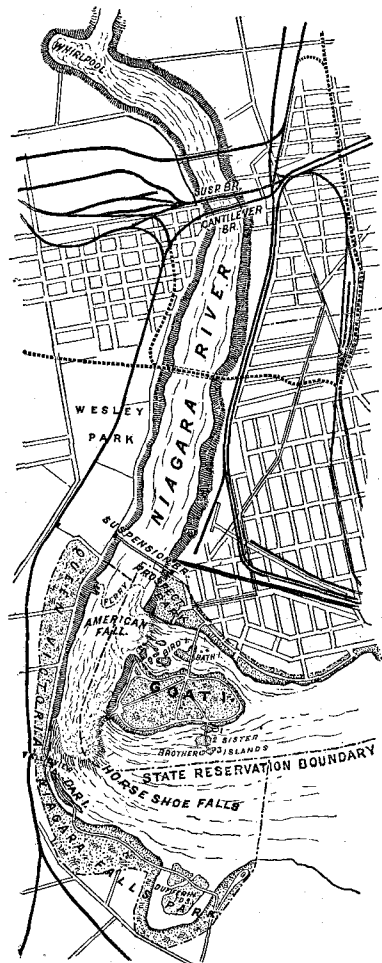
¹ Precisely, it is 5370 feet, the Canadian Fall measuring about 3060, the face of Goat Island 1300, and the American Fall 1060. The narrower branch of this

fall, between the two islands, is 150 feet in width; yet at Niagara it seems so unimportant that no one has ever given it a name.

by their tremendous impetus and weight, leaving the face of the water almost undisturbed. Moreover, the current is relatively slow, because, in the two miles below the falls, the slant of the river-bed is gentle.

At the end of these two miles the water visibly rages again. In the narrowing, curving gorge it is beaten once more into rapids, much deeper and fiercer than those above the falls, and gaining somberness from the high walls that enframe them. At the end of another mile the channel turns at right angles again. But before its waters can turn with it, they dash themselves against the Canadian cliff, and swirl back and around in a great elbow-like basin, blindly seeking for the exit. This is the famous Whirlpool, and it shows the Niagara in still another mood. Except around its edges, there is no rioting and splashing as in the rapids, yet there is no exhaustion as near the foot of the falls; instead, a deep, saturnine wrath, more terrible in its massive, leaden gyrations than any loud passion could be. And when the waters which thus dumbly writhe with the pain of their arrested course find the narrow outlet at last, their great surge outward and onward is sullen like their circlings within the pool. Incredibly swift and strong, running at a rate of some forty miles an hour, they pile themselves up in the center of the channel, but are not boisterous with breakers or combs and jets of spray. These soon come again as the channel enlarges a little and the immense pressure is relaxed; and then, three miles below the Whirlpool, the throttling of the river ends. Here, near Lewiston, the gorge itself ends with the limits of the more elevated plain through which the river is gradually cutting its backward way. The gorge ends, and to right and left, eastward and westward, the edge of the high plain stretches off as a bold escarpment, showing what used to be the shore-line of Ontario, when, a larger lake than it is to-day, it covered the lower flat land. And across this flat land for seven miles, until the present lake shore is reached, the Niagara, half a mile in width, flows smoothly and gently—beautiful still, but now with a beauty like that of many other rivers.

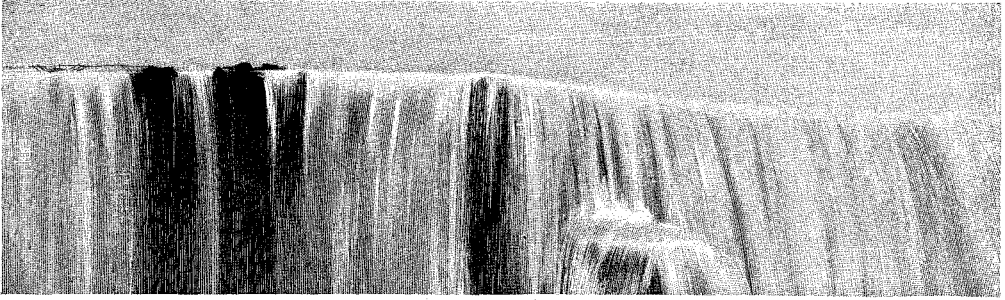
thousand years ago, or we may say, with others, thirty thousand years ago. But even the farther end of thirty thousand years is a geological yesterday; and if it is true that the falls will stand well back of the head of Goat Island in five or six hundred years, this is a very near to-morrow. Moreover, the finest phase of Niagara's life belongs to the geological to-day. It is at its very best now that Goat Island is the central feature of the falls. Before they reached it they must have formed a single undivided and relatively narrow cataract or series of cascades; and after its upper end is left behind there can never again be such a combination of diverse majes-



III.

THE Niagara River belongs to our own era of the world's interminable history, and to it alone. We may believe, with some recent investigators, that it began to cut its way through the higher table-land about six

ties and lovelinesses. Only for the half-mile along Goat Island's side are there divided yet fraternal channels filled with shining, shouting rapids. When it has been left behind, the wide river, flowing over an almost level bed, will approach its cliff quite calmly, and



THE CREST OF THE AMERICAN FALL.

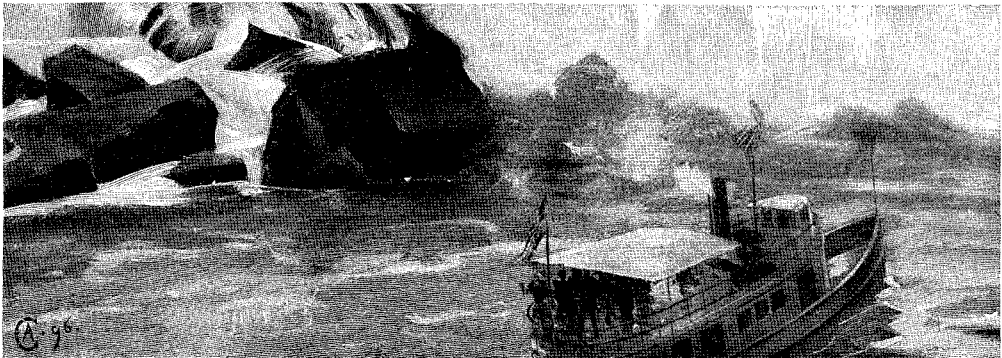
will calmly make its plunge like a mill-stream over a dam. And this forest-clad island, lifted high and set in a fortunate elbow of the river-bed, gives views which no other, farther upstream, can ever afford. It separates and yet unites the cataracts. Now it puts the eye far above them, and again it brings them quite close. With the islets that lie near it, it gives outlooks up both the streams of rapids and the placid river beyond them, across the gorge and down its length, and athwart the one fall and the other; and most of these views it enframes in draperies of luxuriant green. Truly, the pilgrims of a later day will not see Niagara, the marvel that belongs to us.

Hennepin, the famous Jesuit father, who, in 1697, published the first description and the first picture of Niagara, did not find it beautiful. "The waters which fall from this horrible precipice," he says, "do foam and boil after the most hideous manner imaginable, making an outrageous noise more terrible than thunder." The seventeenth century hated the large, the wild, and the awesome in nature. The mood of the nineteenth is different, of course. But to-day some people find fault with Niagara on another count. They do not agree with Hennepin that it is

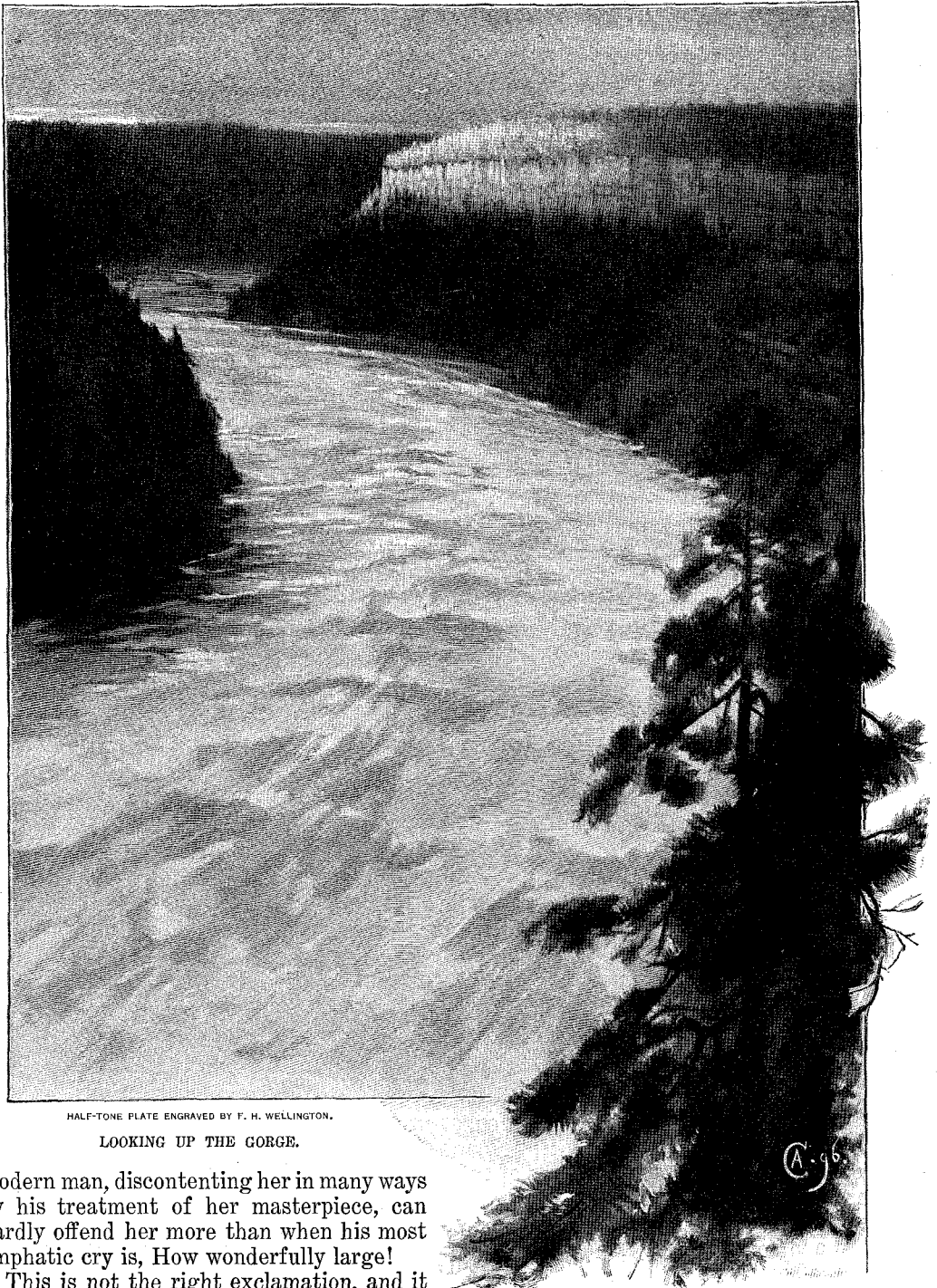
"vast and prodigious." They say that they expected something larger.

This is partly because nothing in the world is great enough to suit and to satisfy certain kinds of dullards. But it is partly because standards of size as well as of beauty have changed since Hennepin's time, while the tradition of Niagara's incredible size has not yet been outlived. The mountain-ranges of the far West have supplied us with new tests for magnitude. Judged by these, Niagara shows only a small gorge, and a waterfall of only medium height. Of course no waterfall in all the West, or in any familiar part of the world, is even remotely comparable with Niagara in breadth or in volume of water. But height stirs the imagination more than breadth or mass, and makes a more instant appeal to the eye. Again, its appeal is much stronger to the upturned than to the downturned eye, and therefore the real height of Niagara is not appreciated from the most accessible points of view.

But these facts are immaterial. When nature began to build Niagara she planned a display of the grandeurs and the fascinations of falling water. When, by her patient processes, she got it as it stands to-day, she must have felt contented with herself. And



THE "MAID OF THE MIST."



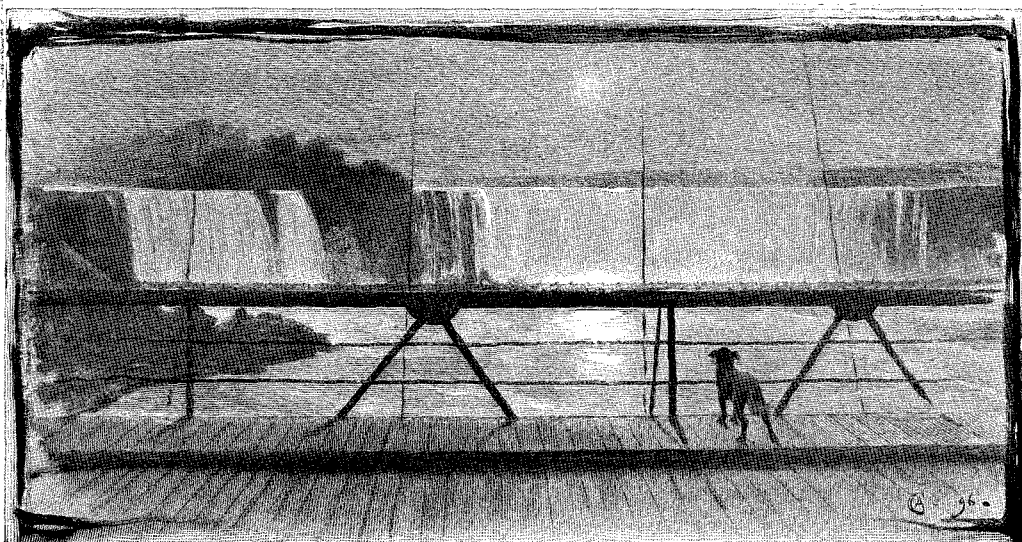
HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY F. H. WELLINGTON.

LOOKING UP THE GORGE.

modern man, discontenting her in many ways by his treatment of her masterpiece, can hardly offend her more than when his most emphatic cry is, How wonderfully large!

This is not the right exclamation, and it does not express the right anticipation. Put magnitude out of your mind when you approach Niagara. Think of beauty instead. Think of the most beautiful things you have ever seen. Expect to see things still more beautiful. Unless your senses are benumbed, you shall not be disappointed. Then, gradu-

ally, truths of great size will dawn upon you, and coming at their proper time, they will impress you doubly because you will feel them as you ought. You will feel them as factors in greatness of beauty, not as facts primarily important in themselves.



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY C. W. CHADWICK.
THE FALLS FROM SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

Also, put out of your mind that image of the queen of cataracts which you have probably built up from the memories of such lesser ones as you may have seen. Niagara is not more unusual in magnificence than in design. Nature intends most of her waterfalls to be seen from below. Niagara she exhibits from above. It does not come falling into a valley whither our feet are naturally led. It goes curving into a chasm in a plain across which we are forced to approach it. Of course it can be seen from below, and there alone it reveals the whole of its size and strength. But nature made this standpoint just possible of access in order that it might complete and emphasize impressions elsewhere gained. The base of Niagara is like the top of a mountain: its revelations are more astonishing and grandiose than any others, but it is not the place where we are meant to dwell. We must look down upon Niagara while we are learning most of its lessons in regard to the beauties of flowing and falling water. And when, at the last, making our way to its base, we stand there precariously on narrow ledges of rock; when, almost defying nature's prohibitions, we pass behind the thundering veil of liquid glass and foam in the Cave of the Winds; when, after sharing all their phases of feeling before they fell and as they were falling, we meet its waters again just after they have fallen, our little ship challenging them to touch us in so fearless a fashion that again we become their comrades; when we swing off from the edge of their white caldrons, exhausted with emotion like the current

that bears us back—then, because we have already learned so many other lessons, we are able to appreciate the most tremendous of them all. Then we have really seen Niagara, because we have felt it; and we have felt it because we have felt with it. Nature made no mistake in designing this cataract. With waters so mighty and so varied, the logical plan, the artistic plan, was to lead through lesser toward greater effects. Thus the greatest win the sublimity of the inevitable; and the impression made by their fearful splendors is enhanced by the way in which they are hedged about with obstacles and are briefly, dramatically shown.

IV.

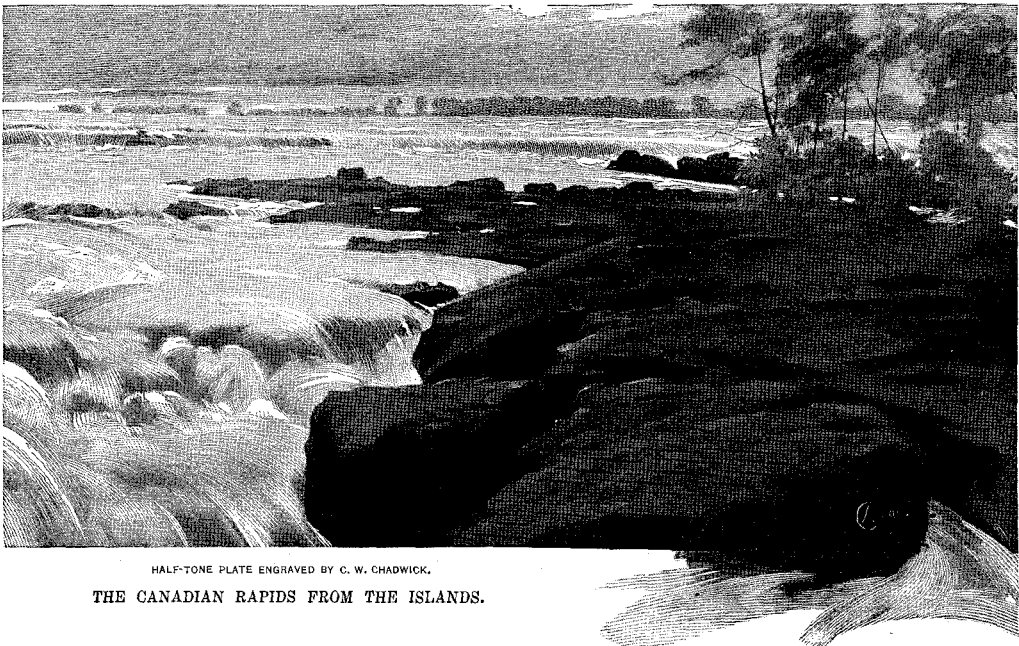
Of course it is easy to ignore nature's leadings and to see Niagara in the wrong way. It is easy to rush at once to the brink of the cataracts, or even to their base. And this is what curiosity counsels. But it is best to sacrifice a little of the ignoble pleasure called amazement, to see beginnings before culminations, to make acquaintance with the upper rapids before the falls themselves are seen near at hand.

Fortunately, the chief hotels on the American side stand on the low shore of the rapids, near the Goat Island bridge. Between them and the water runs a narrow parkway, part of the State reservation. Beyond the water spreads the long, lateral shore of Goat Island, flanked by eleven lesser islets. The prospect is wholly composed of water and verdure. The water is the most

beautiful, although not the most powerful, stretch of rapids at Niagara. And the verdure is the primeval forest that Goat Island has almost by miracle preserved,—richly luxuriant, exquisite in sky-line,—and the dense, picturesque masses that overweight the smaller islets, spreading, drooping from their never-trodden bits of rocky soil like tall green bouquets set adrift in boats hardly big enough to hold them. There is little to suggest that this brilliant, impetuous current is more than a stately woodland river passing from one tranquil phase to another through half a mile of rapids. There is only a distant glimpse of the edge of the fall, where the tossing flood suddenly ends as a straight line of water drawn against the much more distant face of the Canadian cliff, on the opposite side of the gorge, and a filmy upright cloud wavering over the trees of Goat Island—a plume of mist from the Horseshoe beyond them. Even Niagara's lunar bow is hardly as poetic as this high feather of vapor, too thin to be conspicuous in the bright light of day, but shining against a darkened heaven as a pillar of pearl by night, faithfully poised yet ever dimly swaying, beckoning, as though thrown aloft for a sign where the finest feature of the great spectacle may be found. But of course we do not need its proof that the American rapids are indeed a part of a larger whole. This thought is with us as soon as we look upon them, even if we

have as yet seen nothing else, deepening our delight in the most purely charming, the least dramatic of all Niagara's chief pictures.

As this is the best picture to see first, so it is the best to live with if we tarry long. The Canadian hotels are set on the brink of the gorge, directly opposite the American Fall, and they also command the face of Goat Island and the Horseshoe. A sensitive eye must be either dulled or overstimulated by the long continuance of such a prospect, as a sensitive ear would be by the constant sound of an orchestra. Moreover, certain blots mar the scene, like discordant notes in music. Between the hotels and the edge of the cliff run a highroad and a trolley line. Opposite, close to the American cataract, rises the ugly silhouette of the town of Niagara Falls, and the cliff beneath it is defaced by the discharging waters and the rubbish-heaps of many mills. It is better to live with a less heroic and a more harmonious view. Day after day in sunshine or gray weather, and moonlit or starlit night after night, one can look without satiety or strain upon the American rapids, where the swift green-and-white tangle of the musical waters is brought to perfection of charm by the long background of quiet forest. Moreover, the islands are the places where one wants to go most often and to loiter longest, and they form part of the American reservation, while the



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY C. W. CHADWICK.

THE CANADIAN RAPIDS FROM THE ISLANDS.

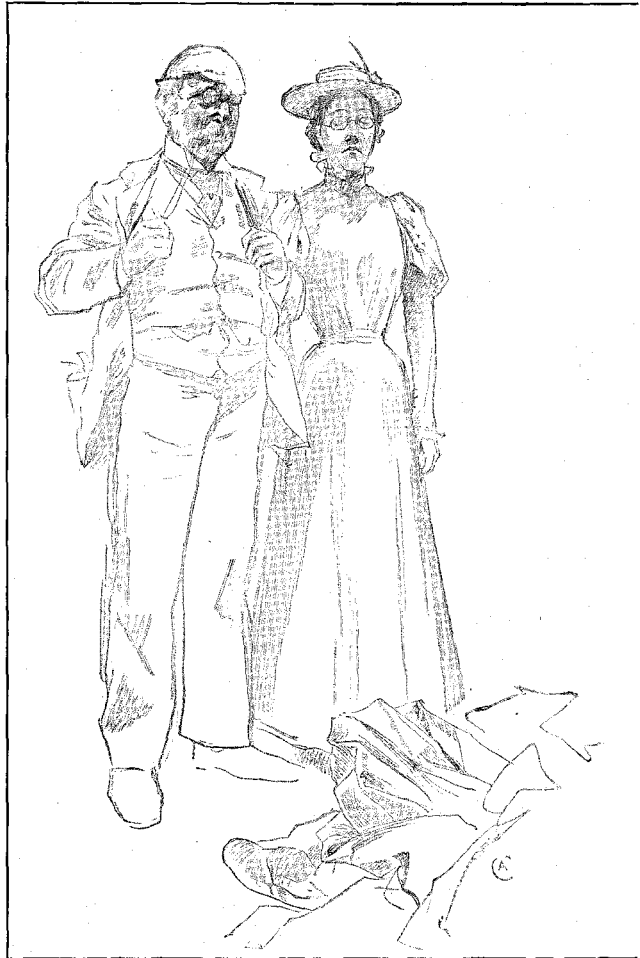
intervening gorge sets them far away from Canada.¹

The mainland part of the reservation forms, by the brink of the American Fall, a wide, shady pleasure-ground called Prospect Park. Thence it extends up-stream for nearly a mile to the historic point still known as Frenchman's Landing. A sordid medley of mills and sheds once crowded this waterside. Now its walks and its driveway, its banks of turf and its romantic nooks, shadowed by old willows, traversed by glinting rivulets, and backed by the trees and sloping lawns of a series of villas, lead us in peace and beauty all along the rapids. And we should linger by them here, and on the bridge that, by way of Bath Island, crosses to Goat Island, and on the eastern shore of the latter, before we look at their wilder brethren of the broader Canadian branch.

At the upper end of Goat Island mere tiny ripples break upon its shore. This is the "Parting of the Waters," where the channels divide just as their storminess begins. Passing westward, the Canadian rapids appear, and their immense spread amazes us even if we already understand that only about one fifth of the water of Niagara runs over the American Fall. The American rapids look like a wide, effervescent river, the Canadian like a wide, passionate lake filled with fuming, whirling pools and vortices, and with unnumbered companies and clans of arching, shattering, spraying breakers.

The waves of the sea advance, although, excepting just along a coast, the water that forms them simply rises and falls. In the rapids of Niagara the case is reversed. These waves are eternalized. Always, in the

same places, they are renewed in the same flexuous shapes; for they are not born of the lashings of the wind but of the irregularities in their sloping bed. On the other hand, the water that forms them advances with an assiduous velocity, with a militant impulse to accomplish its fate, and cheers its own triumph by loud and ceaseless laughter. This



BEFORE GOING UNDER THE FALLS.

swift and strong progression of the substance of the rapids, combined with the permanence in impermanence of their shapes, gives them an astonishing attraction. We

¹ Since the establishment of the New York State and the Canadian reservations the surroundings of the falls have been made free to all comers, and have been redeemed from disgraceful ugliness into a high degree of beauty. The story of this excellent work for the public good is too long to be told here, but none could more convincingly prove the necessity that the people themselves should own and control all places that nature has made of peculiar interest and value. And it must at least be added that the plans for the restoration of

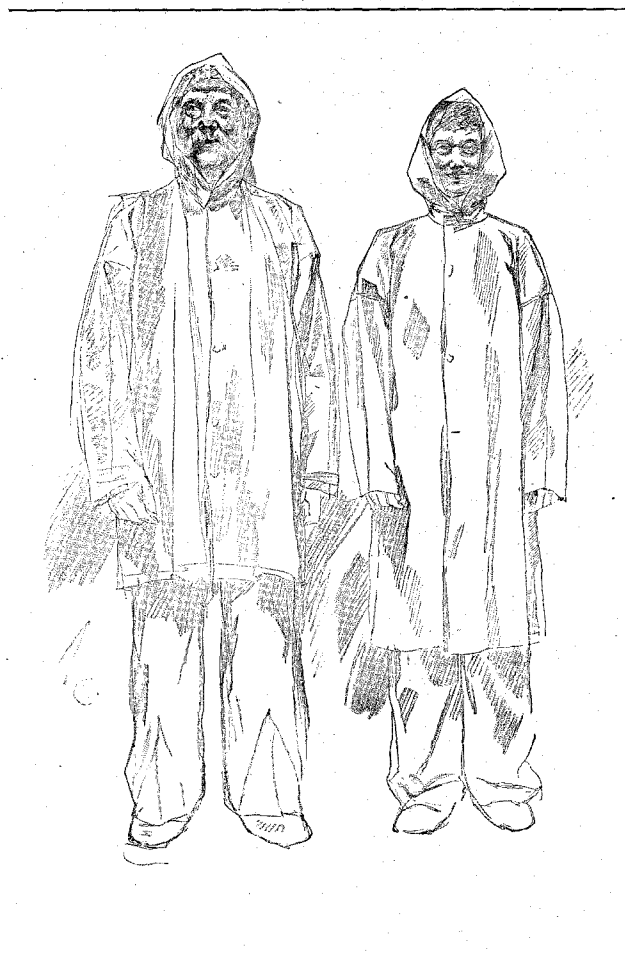
the land owned by New York were conceived by Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, and that their execution has been supervised by Mr. Samuel Parsons, Jr., under the direction of a board of commissioners which has always been kept free from political interference; also, that the public owes an immense debt to Mr. Thomas V. Welch, who, from the first, has been the local superintendent of the reservation, and whose good taste is as exceptional as are his practical qualifications for his important post.

are not tantalized by their beauty, as by that of the breakers on a sea-shore. With each of them we grow familiar, until they seem like gay and friendly water-horses, nymphs, and giant Tritons, always, for our pleasure, doing in the same places the same delectable things. And meanwhile the spirit of the water, which, in passing, forever builds them,

strangest. At the head of these rapids their rocky bed is steep and stair-like. It forms, in fact, long rows of low cascades rather than a network of rapids; and these cover so many feet of descent before they reach the Sisters that, looking upstream, we see nothing but cascades—no smoother flood beyond them. An extraordinary effect of force is thus produced, and of mystery also. We seem to have done what, as children, we always hoped to do. We have reached the horizon, the edge of the world. But we cannot look over it. Where do these violent waters come from? What lies behind the ragged line they draw against the sky? It may be anything—or nothing. All we can say is that, apparently, they are being riven from the heavy clouds. It is like a perpetuation of the second day of the earth's existence. Then the Almighty "divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so." Except in this place at Niagara. Here it was not so. Here it is not yet so. The miraculous division is still going on.

V.

WHERE the tiny ripples of the Parting of the Waters touch Goat Island its surface is low and flat. Here some acres were once cleared and cultivated, and now they are grassy meadows dotted with trees and edged with sumac thickets. Their openness harmonizes with the effect of the peaceful stretch



AFTER GOING UNDER THE FALLS.

runs into our veins. Our pulses and our hearts beat fast with its eager wish to reach the cliff it is seeking, and to prove that it has the courage and power to calm itself for its great leap.

All this may best be seen and felt on the islets called the Three Sisters. One beyond the other, they stretch away out from the western shore of Goat Island; and as we stand on the farthest boulders of the third one, brilliant sunshine means an intoxicating spectacle. In stormy weather it grows vertiginous, and then the up-stream view is

of river; but it is well indeed that everywhere else the old forest garment of the island should have been preserved. It has been thinned, of course, along the shores, and cut by one or two paths. But otherwise its wild-wood density and dignity are unimpaired, and it plays the chief part in giving Niagara a romantic charm. Of all the qualities of Niagara this is the one which has been most seldom celebrated. And among the rare pilgrims that have celebrated it, he who has found the best phrase for it is, oddly enough, Anthony Trollope. "One of the great charms

of Niagara," Trollope writes, "consists in this: that over and above that one great object of wonder and beauty there is so much little loveliness—loveliness especially of water, I mean." But he meant loveliness of vegetation also, and it is the combination of the two that gives Niagara the special kind of sorcery that our fathers recognized when they preferred it above all other places for their honeymoons.

Between the Parting of the Waters and the bluff that separates the two cataracts the surface of the island gradually rises, while the river-bed slopes downward more than fifty feet. So, fortunately, we can look down upon the cataracts; and yet there is provision for near-at-hand views of them. By the Canadian Fall we can descend the cliff and pass, over low ledges of rocks and precarious-looking boulders, far out along its brink. And by the American Fall we can descend again, and can cross by a bridge to the little island called Luna, which lies as flat upon the water as an island may. At both of these places the stairs and their platforms, down to the very edge of the water, are so thickly embowered that every step gives us a new picture set in a newly delightful frame. On the other high parts of Goat Island we look down upon the water, now over broad slants and curtains of foliage, and again over bold rocks sprinkled with tiny flowering plants delicately poised like moths on the wing. Luna Island and the Three Sisters are also densely wooded. The breath of the rushing floods keeps all these summer garments as exuberant as the wild flowers of May, and they are singularly varied in character. One hundred and forty species of trees and shrubs have been counted in the immediate vicinity of the falls; most of them flourish on Goat Island, and its wealth in herbaceous plants is quite as remarkable.

On the steep cliffs and on Luna Island the trees are grotesquely distorted by the burdens of ice they must carry when the mist-clouds freeze. But in summer we hardly notice this, for their trunks are screened by thickets of shrubs, and their branches by veils of creepers—ampelopsis, grape, bittersweet, and poison-ivy.

On the mainland shore the renovating hand of man has already done much to reproduce the natural effects that persist on the islands. Here also are trees and shrubs and vines, fringing the rapids, and varying the broad, open outlooks with a thousand smaller pictures set apart as in verdant alcoves. And here, perhaps, at Prospect Point, where we

stand at the cataract's very brink, the first near-at-hand sight of the falls themselves may best be gained. Here we get one of the finest of all the comprehensive views of Niagara. We look across the American Fall and the bluff of Goat Island, seeing them in sharp perspective, to the full face of the Horseshoe in the middle distance. Here we appreciate the breadth of the great semicircle; and as we get this glorious picture we begin to perceive another of Niagara's peculiar charms. We realize that it invites us to a very intimate acquaintance with its larger as well as its lesser features.

VI.

IN order that the high charm of mystery may not lack in the sum of its attractions, Niagara keeps a few things inaccessible—the center of the Horseshoe Fall, for instance, and some of the smaller islands. But in many places it admits us close to very tremendous sights. At Prospect Point we stand only a couple of feet above the American stream, just where it makes its smooth downward curve. We might touch it with our hand as it bends, solid and glassy, over the long lip of rock. We can lean on the rails and note how soon its polished surface breaks into silvery fragments, powders into glistening dust; and far beneath we can see the frosty mass strike the black boulders and, over and between them, flow off as frosted torrents into the dark-green flood of the gorge. We can also look directly across the descending curtain of water. So, again, we can look from the edge of Luna Island, on the other side of the fall; and here, if we face about, we are close to the narrower stream which divides Luna from Goat Island and forms the roof of the Cave of the Winds. Each change of place, changing the angle of vision, reveals a different effect in the falling waters, all their effects depending, of course, upon the way they receive and reflect and refract the light. Nature could have made no better place than Luna Island to show us what water does and how it appears when it falls in great volumes and is seen very near at hand; for what its surface does not reveal to us, we learn at the foot of this fall in the Cave of the Winds. Of all the accessible spots in the world this must be the most remarkable, excepting, perhaps, one within the crater of an active volcano.

Such testimonies as these do not need to be repeated. The Canadian Fall offers us new ones. It is not a teacher of beautiful



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

ON GOAT ISLAND.

details of fact. The grandest part of Niagara, it is, befittingly, the high priest of beautiful mysteries. It shows the poetic grandeur of vast falling waters that cannot be closely approached.

Even the ledges to which we descend from Goat Island do not really make the Horseshoe accessible. They cross no part of the main Canadian stream, but merely a wide border of it where its current is shallow. Beyond, its bold sweep prevents us from looking directly across its curtain, and forbids us to see deep into the great recess that varies its curve midway. The brow of this central arc glows with the richest of all Niagara's varied colors. Here the falling sheet is exceptionally deep. Therefore, as it curves, it shows a stretch of palpitant, vivid green which is repeated at no other point, and it preserves its smoothness far below the verge where shallower currents almost immediately break. No one could wish that this great royal jewel, this immense and living emerald, might be approached and analyzed. It is rightly set in the way that the great Artifex has chosen—ardent, immutable, and forever aloof, as on the crest of the walls of heaven.

Cross now to the Canadian shore. The spot where Table Rock broke off (about fifty years ago) puts us more nearly in front of the Horseshoe. Here, unless the vapors blow too thickly around us, we get the most astounding impression that Niagara gives, excepting those that will come at the bottom of the gorge; and even more than any of these it satisfies the sense of beauty. Here we can almost see into the central arcanum of the irregular curve. We could see into it, and we imagine that we could see through it into something unimaginable beyond it, if only the clouds that it generates would cease their billowing. But, blazing white and irispenned if the sun shines, pearly white when the sky is gray, they never do cease, rolling upward and outward, lower or higher, rhythmical, mutable, but immortal. No rocky fangs show at the foot of this great middle current. Below are only breakers of foam, flowing off in a river of foam, as above are cumuli of snow and then of mist, and, still higher, streamers of smoke, of steam, of gossamer. Behind these is a cliff of diamonds; in front is an aura of rainbows; and dominating the whole there gleams through the white translucencies the mobile adamant of the emerald brink.

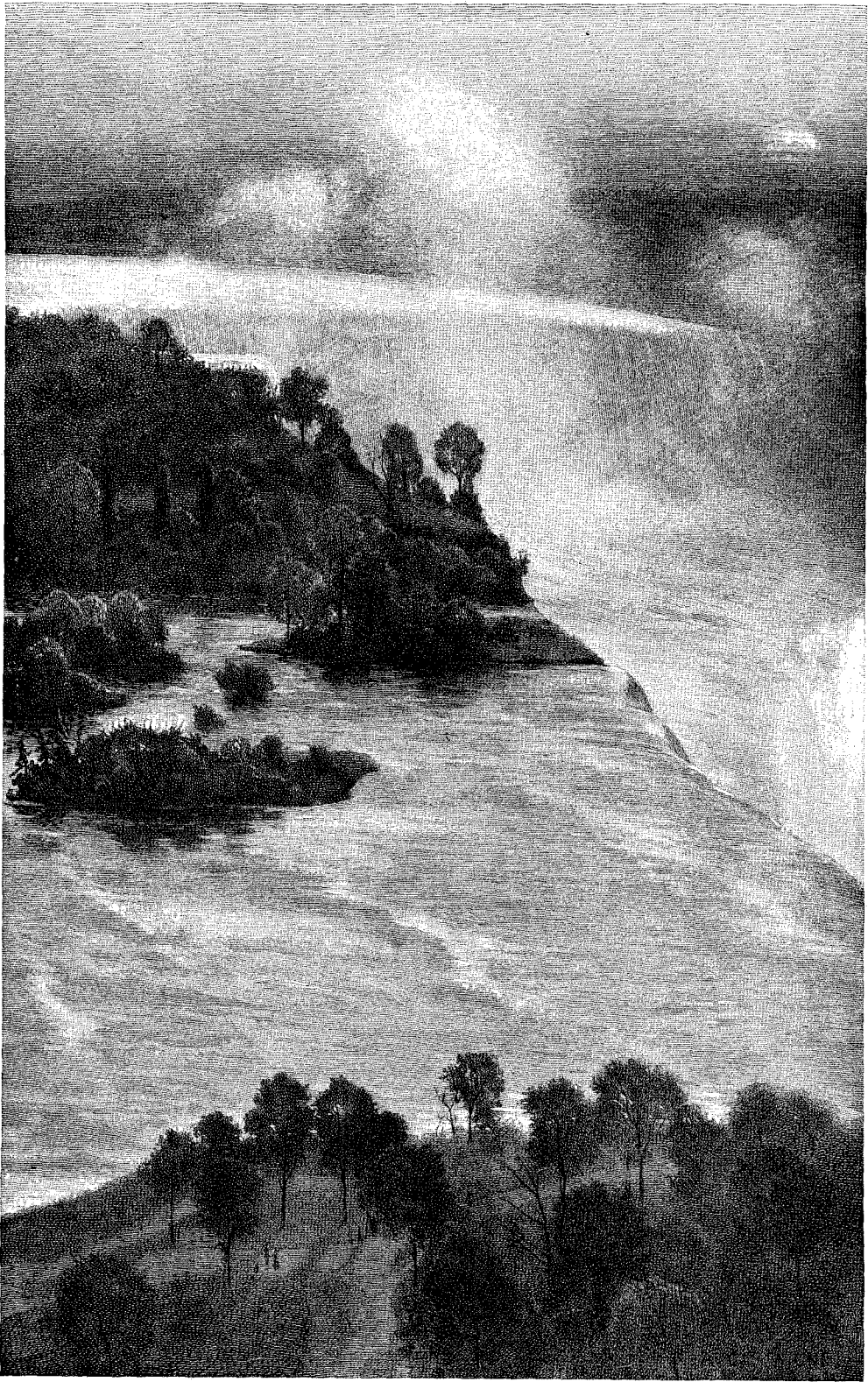
Try as we will, wait as we may, even here we cannot see into the heart of Niagara. But here we can see it beat, and the organ

peal of its beating fills our ears. We are wrapped in soft splendors, soft thunders, until the senses blend their testimonies. Sights and sounds, things motionless and moving, cannot be separated, and our own being is lost in their illimitable rapture. No other sensation wholly physical in its origin can be at once as overpowering and as enchanting as this one. And although we know that its origin is physical, is terrestrial, we cannot grasp the fact: the beauty that we are feeling is too different from any that we have ever felt before. It is a transfiguring of the familiar things of earth into the imagined things of heaven. To the eye it is a revelation of the divine possibilities of light and color, form, movement, and sound; and to the mind it is an allegory of power and purity in their supreme and perfect essence. If there are walls to the city celestial, built of opal, emerald, and some vast auroral whiteness for which we have no mortal term, and bridged for the feet of angels with arches of the seven pure colors, the gateway through them must look like the heart of Niagara. It cannot be more immense, more mystical, more sacredly resplendent. It cannot be more ærial or more everlasting.

VII.

THIS impression is not received with our very first glance. The first effect that the falls produce at any fine point of view is an effect of transitoriness. They awaken an intense delight half composed of terror. They are phenomenal, we say, they are perfect, they are mobile; therefore in a moment they must vanish in a blinding burst of glory. Yet very soon we realize that Niagara's true effect is an effect of permanence. Many as are its variations, it never alters. It varies because light and atmosphere alter. The rapids are always themselves, the falls are always themselves, perpetually reborn as they pass and perish. Tremendous movement thus pauseless and unmodified gives, of course, a deeper impression of durability than the most imposing solids. It is active as compared with passive force. The mutable sea, not its immutable shore, is the synonym for things that change not and cannot be changed. The motion of Niagara is more powerful than any motion of the sea, and is much more coherent and persistent. As soon as this fact is felt, the falls seem to have been created as a voucher for the permanence of all the world.

Bound up with the sense of its steadfast-



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY S. G. PUTNAM.

THE FALLS FROM PROSPECT PARK.

ness is the sense of Niagara's serenity. Before it falls and after it has fallen it may be agitated, impassioned, wrathful. Yet everywhere the persistence of the special mood gives it a dignity greater than that of the moods of the sea; for the sea, we know, whether it most calmly sleeps or most furiously rages, will soon be in another temper. And as Niagara actually falls, it is sublimely serene. Its descent, says Hawthorne, is like "the march of destiny." Unresting, unhasting, invincible, and proudly fair, "rolling calmly into the abyss, rather descending than precipitating itself, . . . it soothes while it awes the mind."

Perhaps it is this quality, incomparably impressive to an artist's or a poet's eye, which makes Niagara seem disappointing to the eye of the mere marvel-hunter. Does he hope to see something barbarously passionate in temper, theatrical in beauty, cataclysmic in effect? He cannot find it at Niagara. He finds a stupendous spectacle, but it is not spectacular. It is dramatic, but not theatric. It is primeval, elemental, but not barbaric. It is phenomenal, but not monstrous. It is not really passionate (Mr. Howells has drawn this distinction), it is only impassioned. It is not chaos made visible; it is the exact opposite of this. The great flood comes to its cliff, not as to a catastrophe, but as to a triumph. It is the finest example in the world of enormous force in glad and confident submission to unalterable law. After the first moments its motion seems as normally august as the rolling of the round earth itself.

This serenity, Hawthorne also says, seems to be based upon prescience. Niagara's flood is not "taken by surprise." It appears "to have anticipated in all its course through the broad lakes that it must pour their collected waters down this height." In truth, beyond the map of Niagara there is always visible to the mind a much wider map, with not Lake Erie only, but three still greater lakes, as the feeders of the falls, and not Ontario alone, but the St. Lawrence and its estuary, as the offspring of the falls. This is Niagara's task: to drain the vast midcontinental basin into the far-away sea. Therefore it may well show speed and ardor. Yet it may well seem permanent and serene, for it knows that fret and hurry are not needed and cannot be helpful. Before it receives its supplies they have been caught and stored in four reservoirs even more remarkable for their depth than for their surface spread—reservoirs that hold water enough to keep Niag-

ara flowing as it flows to-day for at least a hundred years.

VIII.

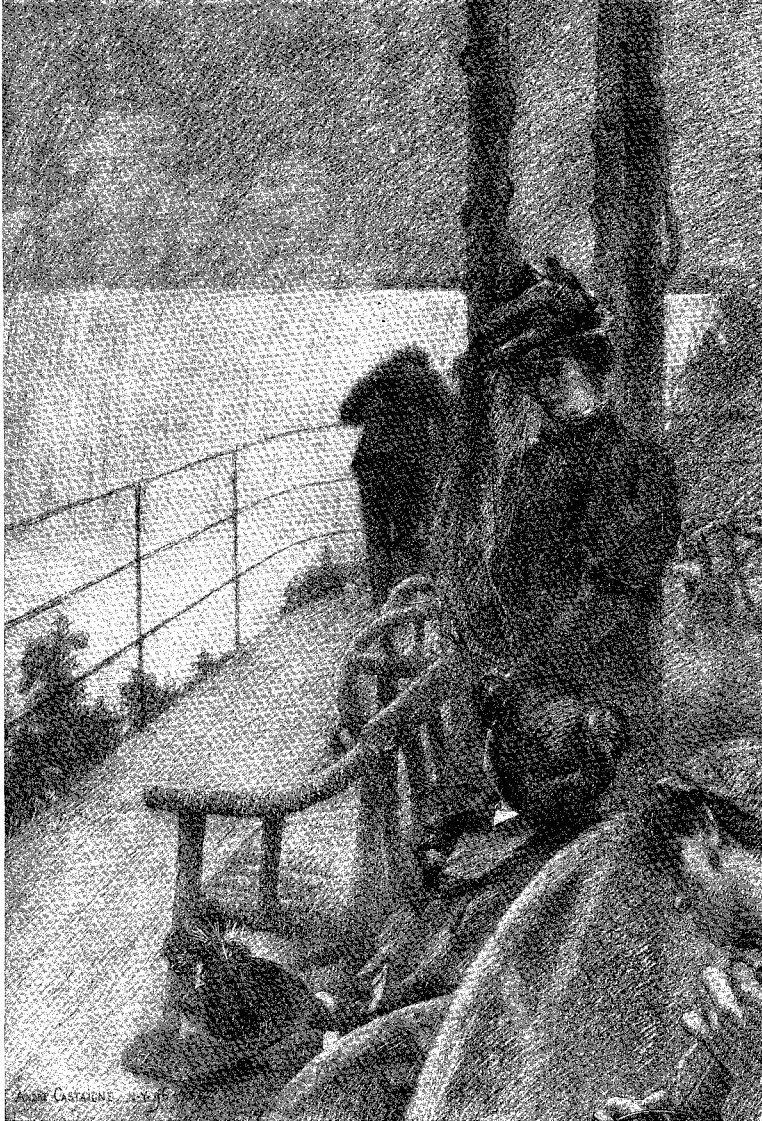
AT Niagara the existence of the Great Lakes benefits the eye as well as the imagination. If the falls were fed by rivers, their volume, which now varies very little, would conspicuously wax and wane with the changing seasons. Again, new-born river-waters would be thickened and discolored with sediment and sand. Niagara's are strained to an exquisite purity by their sojourn in the Western reservoirs, and to this purity they owe their exquisite variety of color.

To find their blues we must look, of course, above Goat Island, where the sky is reflected in smooth if quickly flowing currents. But every other tint and tone that water can take is visible in or near the falls themselves. In the quieter parts of the gorge we find a very dark, strong green, while in its rapids all shades of green and gray and white are blended. The shallower rapids above the falls are less strongly colored, a beautiful light green predominating between the pale-gray swirls and the snowy crests of foam—semi-opaque, like the stone called aquamarine, because infused with countless air-bubbles, yet deliciously fresh and bright. The tense, smooth slant of water at the margin of the American Fall is not deep enough to be green. In the sunshine it is a clear amber, and when shadowed, a brown that is darker, yet just as pure. But wherever the Canadian Fall is visible its green crest is conspicuous. Far down-stream, nearly two miles away, where the railroad-bridge crosses the gorge, it shows like a little emerald strung on a narrow band of pearl. Its color is not quite like that of an emerald, although the term must be used because no other is more accurate. It is a purer color, and cooler, with less of yellow in it—more pure, more cool, and at the same time more brilliant than any color that seawater takes even in a breaking wave, or that man has produced in any substance whatsoever. At this place, we are told, the current must be twenty feet deep; and its color is so intense and so clear because, while the light is reflected from its curving surface, it also filters through so great a mass of absolutely limpid water. It always quivers, this bright-green stretch, yet somehow it always seems as solid as stone, smoothly polished for the most part, but, when a low sun strikes across it, a little roughened, fretted. That this is water, and that the thinnest smoke above it

is water also, who can believe? In other places at Niagara we ask the same question again.

From a distance the American Fall looks quite straight. When we stand beside it we see that its line curves inward and outward, throw-

ice or solidified light, falling in an envelop of starry spangles. Again, it seems all diamond-like or pearl-like, or like a flood of flaked silver, shivered crystal, or faceted ingots of palest amber. It is never to be exhausted in its variations. It is never to



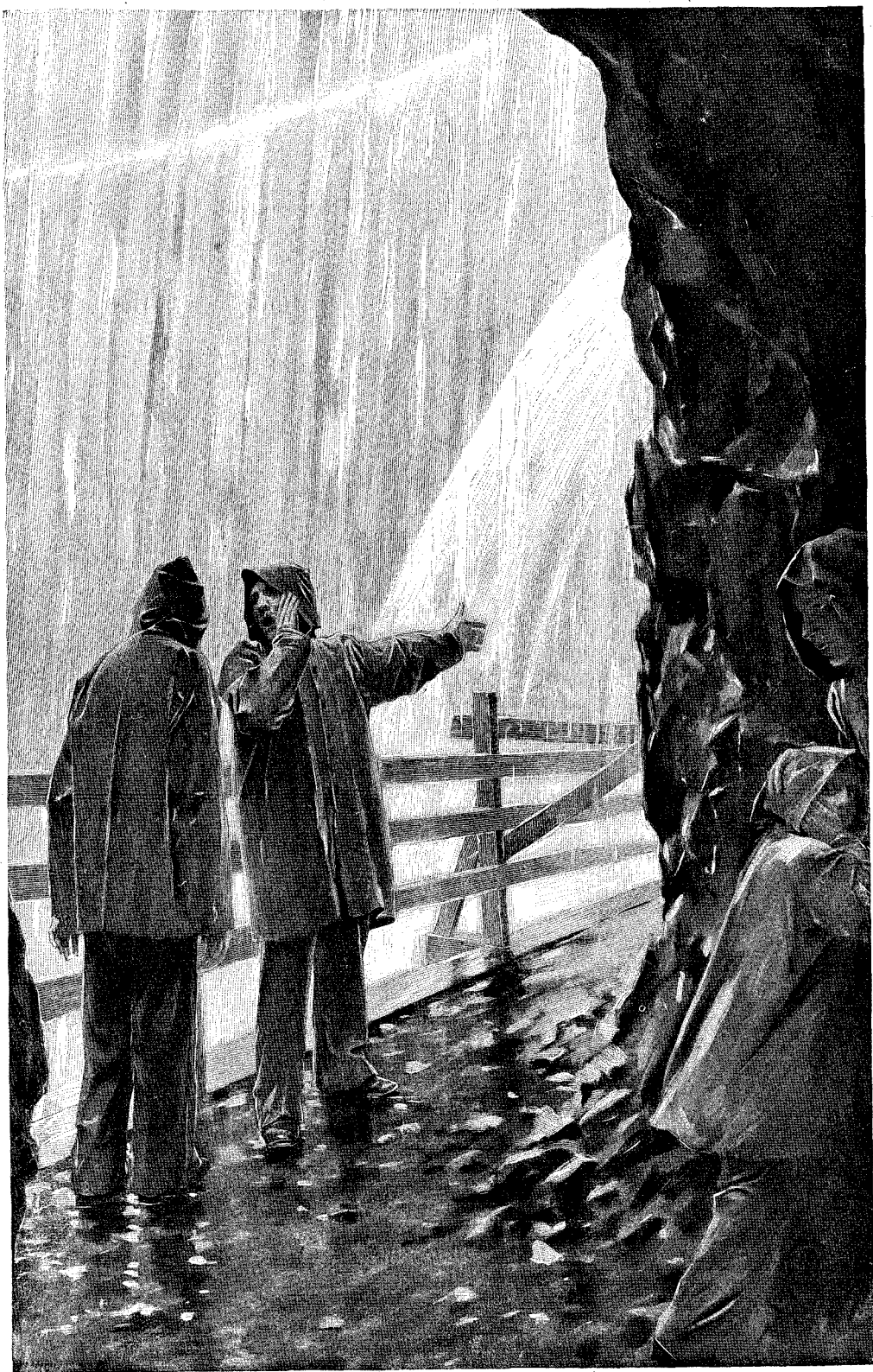
HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY R. A. MULLER.

THE HORSESHOE FALLS, FROM THE CANADIAN SIDE.

ing the falling sheet into bastion-like sweeps. As we gaze down upon these, every change in the angle of vision and in the strength and direction of the light gives a new effect. The one thing that we never seem to see, below the smooth brink, is water. Very often the whole swift precipice shows as a myriad million inch-thick cubes of clearest glass or

be described. Only, one can always say, it is protean, it is most lovely, and it is not water.

Then, as we look across the precipice, it may be milky in places, or transparent, or translucent. But where its mass falls thickly it is all soft and white—softer than anything else in the world. It does not resemble a flood of fleece or of down, although it sug-



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

UNDER THE FALLS.

gests such a flood. It is more like a crumbling avalanche, immense and gently blown, of smallest snowflakes; but, again, it is not quite like this. Now we see that, even apart from its main curves, no portion of the swiftly moving wall is flat. It is all delicately fissured and furrowed, by the broken edges of the rock over which it falls, into the suggestion of fluted buttresses, half-columns, pilasters. And the whiteness of these is not quite white. Nor is it consistently iridescent or opalescent. Very faintly, elusively, it is tinged with tremulous stripes and strands of pearly gray, of vaguest straw, shell-pink, lavender, and green—inconceivably ethereal hues, shy ghosts of earthly colors, abashed and deflowered, we feel, by definite naming with earthly names. They seem hardly to tinge the whiteness; rather, to float over it as a misty bloom. We are loath to turn our eyes from them, fearing they may never show again. Yet they are as real as the keen emerald of the Horseshoe.

IX.

THE aspect of the falls from below, the gorge with its tragic Whirlpool and its exciting miles of rapids, the Canadian reservation with the Dufferin Islands set back in an elbow of the shore—these are things that even the hasty tourist sees, now there are trolley lines to carry him quickly to them. So I am tempted to speak, not of them, but of the little lovelinesses that only the true pilgrim, the true lover of Niagara, notices and adores. Everywhere they are offered by the friendly giant of beauty to those who seek them, but the Three Sisters are wholly compounded of them.

Each of the channels that divide these islets has a character of its own. The first is very shallow, tinkling over its bed of rock like a sheet of sparkles, bordered by unbroken thickets, and sometimes running dry in summer—the very pattern of a mountain brook. The second is wilder, with a rapid of some importance just above the bridge; the third is still wilder and broader, with a great dash of rapids just below the bridge; and the banks of these two are of foliage and great rocks most picturesquely intermingled. Then one may leave the narrow paths that thread the islets, and climb among their glades and thickets down to their edges, finding little fringing waters, various and enchanting beyond all words. Here are cascades of every kind, two or three feet in height or only a few inches, daringly accidental in their as-

pect, or as daintily finished as though planned for the corner of a flower-garden. Here are small and smallest streams in all kinds of channels, calm pools and boiling pools, jets like tiny fountains, wavelets, eddies, pockets, smooth back-waters—all things pretty, odd, and captivating that nature can make with the most flexible of her materials. Each is wholly satisfactory in itself, but each doubly delights the soul because, as much as the great Horseshoe itself, it is a part of Niagara. No matter how feeble or how vagrant it may seem, each is doing its best to help the surplus floods of Superior to reach the Atlantic.

Hour after hour we can watch these miniature devices of Niagara as we have watched its greatest; and then it changes the quality of its charm once more. It grows endlessly amusing. Racing, leaping, pirouetting, these offshoot streams, we see, now gain time by their divergence from the main one, and again they lose time, over-ingenious in their zigzag progress among little capes and massive boulders, projecting ledges and the half-submerged trunks of prostrate trees. Here, sly traitors to their task, they grow tired and pause in cool shallows; there they rage in infantile wrath because some obstacle turns them back. Their delicious vagaries are past counting; and countless, too, are the idyllic pictures that their surroundings imprint upon the memory. Here is a cascade of three steps, so thickly overshadowed that we must part the boughs and pull away the creepers to find the source of its singing. Here is a big bush of ninebark, set in the lee of a rock and leaning its burden of white blossoms into the rapids' spray. Here is a baby gray-birch, stretching itself over a mossy log, and babbling to a rivulet with the restless pointed leaves that are its own little tongues. And here is a raging white caldron with a big boulder out beyond it, a dead juniper slanting over them, in the hollow of the boulder a pink fleabane trembling beside a scarlet columbine, and on the tip of the juniper a bold, small Blondin—a squirrel nibbling his nut as jauntily as though beds of soft grass lay beneath him. These things also are integral parts of Niagara. They are infinitesimal parts of its infinite grandeur and beauty, humanizing and poetizing it, changing the austerity that stern shores would give to such wild waters into a most romantic fairness. For never, while we tarry with the Sisters' small delights, are the wild waters themselves forgotten. Their splendid cry is always in the ear, and if their rioting is hidden from the eye, a step will reveal it,

and beyond it, far away, a glimpse of the edge of the great emerald that marks the brow of the great fall.

What we do forget, on the Three Sisters, is that they are parts of a public pleasure-ground. In their most secluded nooks are shy signs which prove the transit of many thousand pilgrims. Here and there a stone has been worn black and shining by the touch of frequent feet; and where a difficult step must be made, and the bent trunk of a sapling offers support for the hand, its bark has been so burnished by repeated claspings that it looks like a piece of old Japanese bronze. Yet everywhere is such a wilding richness of growth, such a dainty embroidering of flowers and berries and frail tendrils, that we almost believe that even the pathways have been made especially for us as the very first comers.

X.

"It was worth while to come to Niagara," I heard some one exclaim, in June, "just for the sake of its odors." They are indeed many and pervasive, yet one of them dominates the rest. Centuries ago Pliny wrote that the vineyards of Italy gave it sovereignty over all other lands, "even those that bring forth odoriferous spices and aromatical drugs"; and he added, "to say a truth, there is no smell whatsoever that outgoeth vines when they be in their fresh and flowering time." He would surely have written the same words had he stood on Niagara's islands in one of his far-back Junes. Everywhere are wild grape-vines, draped in thick curtains or swung in wide loops, and they bloom a long time, for one species begins to open its flowers as another is setting its fruit. For many days this most dainty, individual, and bewitching of all odors meets us on every soft puff of wind, with such persistence that wherever it may meet us again in future years it will seem like a message from Niagara.

And the noise of Niagara? Alarming things have been said about it, but they are not true. It is a great and mighty noise, but it is not, as Hennepin thought, an "outrageous noise." It is not a roar. It does not drown the voice or stun the ear. Even at the actual foot of the falls it is not oppressive. It is much less rough than the sound of heavy surf—steadier, more homogeneous, less metallic, very deep and strong, yet mellow and soft; soft, I mean, in its quality. As to the noise of the rapids, there is none more musical. It is neither rumbling nor sharp. It is clear, plangent, silvery. It is so like the voice of a steep brook—much magnified, but not made coarser or more harsh—that, after we have known it, each liquid call from a forest hillside will seem, like the odor of grape-vines, a greeting from Niagara. It is an inspiring, an exhilarating sound, like freshness, coolness, vitality itself made audible. And yet it is a lulling sound. When we have looked out upon the American rapids for many days, it is hard to remember contented life amid motionless surroundings; and so, when we have slept beside them for many nights, it is hard to think of happy sleep in an empty silence.

Still another kind of music is audible at Niagara. It must be listened for on quiet nights, but then it will be heard. It is like the voice of an orchestra so very far away that its notes are attenuated to an incredible delicacy and are intermittently perceived, as though wafted upon variable zephyrs. It is the most subtle, the most mysterious music in the world. What is its origin? Why should we ask? Such fairy-like sounds ought not to be explained. Their appeal is to the imagination only. They are so faint, so far away, that they almost escape the ear, as the lunar bow and the fluted tints of the American Fall almost escape the eye. And yet we need not fear to lose them, for they are as real as the deep bass of the cataracts.

WINTER WIND AND MOONLIGHT.

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

DUSK blue above; white, marble white, below;
And woven shadows of the swaying trees,
That roar and moan like far-off rising seas;
Frail, huddled weeds, complaining here and there,
Like ghosts above their graves; and everywhere
The snow—the endless snow—and still the snow.