WHAT TO SEE

A CONCISE DESCRIPTION FOR VISITORS

BY FRÉDÉRIC ALMY

1.

The most greedy imagination need not
remain long hungry at Niagara. A
single well-used day, with a sun
bright enough to start the rainbows,
is enough to satisfy every expecta-
tion. And yet, many who see the
Falls for the first time are disap-
pointed, even in the case of people qualified to enjoy
their beauty. No one can question Mrs. Jameson’s
keen appreciation of the beautiful, at least in art, but
this is her statement of her first impressions: “I am
no longer Anna.—I am metamorphosed.—I am trans-
lated,—I am an ass’s head, a clod, a wooden spoon,
a fat weed growing on Lethe’s bank, a stock, a stone,
a petrifaction,—for have I not seen Niagara, the
wonder of wonders; and felt—no words can tell what
disappointment!”

Many visitors have expressed the same feeling, as
honestly if not so comically. There are various rea-
sons for so general an experience, but no one of them
implies any short-coming in the place itself. For in-
stance, a rather stolid mind takes in such a sight
slowly. One look is not enough to quicken it. A
more sensitive temperament, on the other hand, is
sure to come to Niagara with such composite antici-
pations that no single aspect of the place could satisfy
them all.

The first view of Niagara comes only once. If
you care to have it the best possible, it is worth while
to choose your approach as carefully as a chess player
chooses his opening. The best first view from the top
of the bank is on the Canadian side; but if you have
arrived by a railroad which leaves you on the Ameri-
can shore it is almost equally good to cross the Suspen-
sion Bridge and then walk up the other bank. You see
the whole sweep of both Falls at once; at the left the
American Fall with its width of 1060 feet, then Goat
Island, with 1300 feet more, and on the right the
Horse Shoe with a curve of 3010 feet; in all, a total
width of a full mile. The fault of this view is that the
great width dwarfs the height and makes the Falls seem
very low indeed. The American Fall is 167 feet high,
the Horse Shoc 158; and yet the effect is of a long, low
wall.

The next best view from above, and the one gen-
erally seen first by visitors, is from the brink at Pros-
pect Park, but here the Falls are seen in profile, and
the line of their length is, as it were, foreshortened. Moreover, from either of these two chief points of first observation the height of the Falls seems much less than when they are seen from below. It is better to insist on seeing Niagara first from its base. What we look down on never seems so great as what we must look up to.

The weather and the season have their influence. A cloudy day will take away the rainbows, and on a chilly day you have to move along from spot to spot, and cannot loiter idly where you choose and live into the beauty of the place.

If you are easily moved it may be that a tremor of excitement will take possession of your senses as you approach Niagara for the first time, and so subdue your judgment that you will have no power to criticise; but, on the other hand, no matter how callous you may be, no matter how utter a Philistine, it is possible for you to be so introduced that you will be made an instantaneous convert to the majesty of the place if not to its beauty. If you are willing to take the climax of Niagara at the outset and so forestall every possibility of disappointment,—man or woman, if you have the heart of a man, and the courage to lay it, at once, bare, against the great heart of Niagara, I advise you without the least preliminary glance of any kind to enter the watery chaos of the Cave of the Winds.

Cross the light bridge that leads to Goat Island, with the rapids of the American Fall slipping furiously under you as they fall from the sky line at the left; with the brink itself a few rods below you on the right, so that you see the plunge, but not the fall; with the roar of the torrent in your ears and the rank, musty smell of the roily water strong in your nostrils; and finally, before you in the distance, rising over the tree tops of Goat Island, the pillar of cloud by day that guards the Horse Shoe. If it is very early morning in midsummer, and the wind is favorable, a rainbow, zenith high, will overarch the scene, but this is hardly needed to quicken the pulses of your heart as you advance to meet the wonder of your thoughts from early childhood. Take now the middle path across the idyllic beauty of the island. You find it a cool bower, sweet with every wood fragrance, carpeted in the spring with masses of blue violets and white trillium, and overspread by branches of huge trees, whose leaves sift out the sunlight until it falls in patches only on the road below. It is a place in which to "loaf and invite the soul," as Whitman says, but now is not the time. Five minutes brings you to the dressing house that marks the entrance to the Cave of the Winds. Here it will take a strong will not to look down over the hand rail on the bank; but the epicure in sensations will refrain. Indeed, to look now is to spoil everything, and to accept for your first view
of Niagara one of the least imposing of all. Instead, step quickly into the house, pay your dollar for the necessary escort of a guide, strip clean to the skin with no thought of retaining even your underclothes, and put on the homely and uncomfortable, but eminently practical suit that is offered you. A blouse and trousers of a light gray flannel, a hooded coat and overalls of yellow oilskin, and slippers made out of a sheet of thick white felt folded around the foot and firmly tied in place with strips of whip-cord—arrayed in these you are like a Gloucester sea-captain in a squall, or like an Esquimaux in oilskin. Now throw around your neck a string to which is tied the key that locks the chest in which you have placed your valuables, let the boy in attendance tie about your waist more whip-cord for a sash, and then, in full court costume, you are ready to be presented to Majesty.

To reach the cave you circle down the cliff by an uncomfortable, small, winding staircase, of a sort familiar to sight-seers abroad. From this you presently emerge, out of breath, upon a ledge of rock, with the dark green waters of the river just below and a vertical wall of granite towering far above. Now, from above, the only way thoroughly to enjoy a precipice is to lie flat upon your face and peer over the edge downward. This is impracticable at Niagara; but from below the height is appreciated keenly as the eye toils upward along the face of the cliff in its effort to find a horizon. Figures seen at the sky-line appear one-half their actual size.

A mere score of steps now brings you around a curve and puts before your sight the enormous sheet of water, vast in itself, but at Niagara insignificant and inconspicuous, which curtains the Cave of the Winds. About one hundred and fifty feet in height, and as much in breadth, it descends between Goat Island and Luna Island. It has no special name, and the ordinary visitor to Niagara will hardly realize its separate existence. Our English cousins who do not go behind it may respect it more if they are told that it leaves the sky at the height of the top of the western towers of Canterbury or of Durham Cathedrals, and that it has twice the width of the main facade of either. If they have ever been behind they need no details to ensure respect. We see it first in profile, a long, curving edge of green and white, not so much falling from the brink above as leaping, with a forward plunge, so that between its inner wall and the retreating surface of the cliff is left a strange gray cavern, now to be explored.

I have been through the cave a score of times, but no number of trips can ever dull or in any degree displace in my mind the impressions of the first visit. In quiet ignorance of what was to come I approached the precipitous wooden stair-case which descends be-
hind the fall. Looking across I saw a patch of blue sky at the farther outlet of the cave, but elsewhere all the air was dark with criss-crossed blasts of sleet, hurtling in all directions like frightened comets. A second later the battery of the fall was on my head and all the Powers of the Air were at my throat. Around my feet a rainbow formed a ring through which I seemed to drop into blackness. The staircase stopped and I was on a narrow ledge of rock, with no more path or rail, hugging myself against a slippery wall of stone. The water clutched my feet furiously. Neither the burly guide nor the stranger who had accompanied me was to be seen. I started to go forward, but as I turned a mass of water struck me breathless. I tried to find the stairs, but a worse dash of water from the other side outdid the first. Facing the wall again I waited, perhaps thirty seconds, wondering, when suddenly the guide appeared with the frightened Frenchman whom he had pursued to the top of the stairs, and there recaptured. It was a lonesome introduction to the place, but we moved on now together through the water, clinging desperately with our toes through the felt to whatever foothold we could discover, and glad to have the support of our hands as well as feet. Dignity in such a place, and such a costume, is the last thing to be considered. Half blinded, quite deafened, gasping,—the agitation of the nerves is too great at first for observation; but
soon the eye learns how to follow the curving inner surface of the falling water, half translucent and of shifting colors, far up to where it leaves the line of the cliff above. It learns to overcome the twilight and gather outlines of black, terraced rocks, dripping with streams of sleet, that form the amphitheatre of the cave. You learn to step fearlessly into the churning water, towards the Fall, knowing that the rebound of the cataract is so violent that even if you lost your footing you would only be thrust roughly back against the terraces. It is soon over. A brief climb up the ledges brings you to dry rock and the bright sun again, but you have seen a cave of Æolus such as Virgil never dreamed of. Henceforth the lines in the opening pages of the Æneid:

_Hic vasto rex Æolus antro_

_Luctantes ventos vinclis et carecre frenat,_

will have new meaning.

A clever writer lately said* that the cave was like a small choky corridor with the deluge going on inside it, and he marvelled greatly that the end of his trip coincided with the point of departure and did not occur _in transitu_. In fact, like my French comrade, he arrived simultaneously at the entrance to the cave and the conclusion that he had had enough. Many men do the same, but hardly ever a woman, though women frequently go through the cave. It is alarm-

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ing but not dangerous, and accidents are almost unheard of.

There is no surer way to take the conceit out of a complacent cockney who affects to look down on Niagara than to make him run this gauntlet. I think always of Emerson's lines on Monadnock:

Pants up hither the spruce clerk
From South Cove and City Wharf.
I take him up my rugged sides,
Half-repentant, scant of breath.—
  * * * * * *
I scowl on him with my cloud,
With my north wind chill his blood;
I lame him, clattering down the rocks;
And to live he is in fear.
Then, at last, I let him down
Once more into his dapper town,
To chatter, frightened, to his clan
And forget me if he can.

The passage through the cave is an experience too grim and colorless for pure pleasure, but the return across the rocks in front of the fall—in a bright sun—is a luxury of delight. The heart that "leaps up when it beholds a rainbow in the sky" will here be in a dancing fever of excitement, for there are whole rainbows, half rainbows and quarter rainbows, not in the sky, distant and inaccessible, but in your fingers, around your head and between your feet, while the pot of gold at the rainbow's foot is a caldron of molten silver, foaming

and rushing about your knees, and tugging at you with an invitation that is irresistible. I have seen grave men frolic in the water, their trousers and sleeves swelled almost to bursting with the imprisoned air; now clenching their toes firmly in some crevice and leaning back with all their force against the cushion of water that rocked them like a cradle; now crouching low with arms akimbo while the interrupted stream sprang high above their heads in an arching curve, like a sea shell around a naiad; now thrusting themselves into invisibility against some rock over which the torrent broke in a noisy cascade,—their heads safe in the airhole near the crest, from which they dimly watched the passing figures in their oil skins, until they chose to startle them by re-appearing. To play so with Niagara brings an exhilaration that is indescribable. It "washes brain and heart clean" and gives a child's courage for the tasks of the world. The exaltation is heightened by the heavy roar of the cataract close above you, and the brilliant beauty of color all around you. You climb through one circular rainbow to the top of a black boulder and descend through another on the other side; you cross slippery wooden bridges, exposed to such furious castigation from the sleet that you bend involuntarily in homage to the fearful power of your recent playfellow. Most glorious of all, whenever for a moment the eye is not so buffeted by driving spray as to deprive you entirely of your
vision, look upwards, always upwards—where the flashing peaks of the American Fall tower above the deluge like the snowy summits of a mountain chain.

In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought is not, in enjoyment it expires,—
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.

II.

The Maid of the Mist.—The Horse Shoe.

 Everywhere at Niagara the genius of the place has many different moods. Often at the Cave of the Winds there is not a rainbow; sometimes when the spray beats down the river you can even enter the cave without a wetting. It may take twenty different trips to see all its splendor, but fully to see it once is worth them all. I know of nothing in Nature to be compared with it. The valley of the Rhone Glacier at dusk, when the white frozen mass of ice falls silently at your feet from the sky above, suggests it dimly, but only as the moon in daylight suggests the sun. For many, though, the pleasures of the cave are too robust. All such should still attempt to see Niagara first from below, and the next best way is from the steamer called the Maid of the Mist.

The approach is through Prospect Park, and by taking the central path to the inclined railway you can again reach the water’s edge without so much as one glimpse of the Fall. As you come out of the house at the foot of the railway there is a territory at your left, full of attractions, but your way lies to the right. From the steamer landing you see a broad river of a dark green color, its surface glassy as a mirror, as placid and unruffled as if it had never known a struggle or a fall. Men swim in it with safety. Before you is the disappointing profile of the upper half of the American Fall. The lower half is hid by rocks and spray. Slip on one of the rubber cloaks in the saloon, take a rubber blanket, and rush forward to the choice seats at the very front of the upper deck. As the steamer moves sturdily forward, still through smooth green water, the air begins to fill with a soft spray, as fine and penetrating as a Scotch mist, and the water is thickly overlaid with foam. You coast along the one thousand and sixty feet of the American Fall, close to the rocks below and so very close to the Fall itself that it is almost terrifying. Nothing is distinctly seen, for the eyes blink in the beating rain. You can see better if you wear glasses; the wet glass dims them, but you can at least keep your eyes open more steadily. Nothing is distinctly heard. The deep note of Niagara sounds in your ears with a heavy throb that is almost painful. You are confronted by a rippling, flashing, shimmering
wall of white, a precipice of falling foam, furrowed in
deep creases by the uneven contour of the brink, and
rebounding high in a leaping cloud of spray that always
hides the base from every eye. Near the steamer are
many boulders; the largest the Rock of Ages that
stands before the entrance to the Cave of the Winds.
Then come the bare cliffs of Goat Island, another
thousand feet or more; and then,—the Horse Shoe.
Its lofty curving walls confront each other, one hun-
dred and sixty feet in height, and in their contour fully
three thousand feet, or more than half a mile. The
plucky Maid pushes straight into this pit of falling
waters; forward she goes, into its depths, until for an
instant, for one short second, there is nothing to the
right, to the left, or before, nothing anywhere in the
whole world for you but the enclosing cataracts fall-
ing on all sides from the sky. It is just one second
of crowded, glorious life, worth a year's pilgrimage.
The little steamer has gone as far as the full force of
her engines will carry her; she lurches heavily, tosses
like a cork on the white surging foam, wheels suddenly
around, and shoots like an arrow down the stream
and away.

The views now are from the stern; first of the rap-
idly receding Horse Shoe, then of Goat Island, then of
the American Fall as we coast again along its length,
nearly as closely as before, and finally, from the Cana-
dian dock, a panorama of both Falls. From here the
boat returns to the American landing, but the tourist's
best plan is to go ashore, climb the Canadian bank by
the winding road, and either walk or ride along the
crest of the cliff to Inspiration Point and to the former
site of Table Rock.

It is disappointing to the patriotic soul, but not to
be disputed, that the finest views of Niagara are to be
had on the Canadian side. Goat Island, the Three
Sisters, Prospect Park, the Rapids and the River Road
are all exceedingly beautiful. Perhaps there is more
variety of beauty in the American Park than in the
other, but when you have seen it all there is no place
to which you come back so eagerly for rest and inspi-
ration as to Table Rock and the Canadian shore. It
is not the best first view, as has been said, for the
rampart of Niagara is a mile in width, and, seen from
a distance and from above, looks like a long, low wall.
But for a final view, or a view to rest with, it has no
equal.

The Queen Victoria Park was not established until
1888, or three years after the State of New York had
purchased Goat Island and the land on the American
side, and dedicated it to its people. Here and there
are trifling indications of the different temper of the
governments on either bank. Take for instance the
governmental sign boards with their warning notices,
which in Canada are less considerate of the tender feel-
ings of the dear public than with us. Mark the auto-
cratic barbarity of the British declaration that persons throwing stones over the bank will be prosecuted according to law, as compared with the exquisite delicacy of the placards that meet you at every turn on Goat Island: “Do Not Venture in Dangerous Places.” “Do Not Harm the Trees and Shrubs.” “Stones Thrown Over the Bank May Fall upon People Below.” On Goat Island you feel always as if your mother were with you.

The Queen Victoria Park is much more trig than its neighbor. It has flower beds and close clipped lawns, rustic arbors and wigwams, busts of notables, and even fountains! In the State Reservation, on the contrary, the more important portions are in a condition almost primeval. Goat Island is still covered with original forest, except for the carriage ways and foot-paths that traverse its area. That this is so is due no doubt to the fortunate fact that for generations all the Niagara islands as well as part of the mainland were owned by the wealthy family of Gen. Peter B. Porter, well known in the War of 1812. A summer hotel on the bank of Goat Island, overlooking the Horse Shoe, would have been a source of enormous profit, but the sanctity of the place was never invaded. A pleasant story is told of one of the family who was asked in England if she had ever seen Niagara Falls. Drawing herself up proudly, she quite annihilated her questioner with the unexpected answer: “Niagara Falls: I own them.”

It is well to remind the visitor that in distributing his time the hours given to the Canadian Park should be in the afternoon. At Niagara, Canada is the land of the setting sun, and it is only in the afternoon that the superb bows can be seen which rise high in the sky, sometimes over-arching both Falls in a single curve. It is the other shore which is distinctly Rainbow Land. Give only the sun, and on the American shore the wise pilgrim can have his rainbow, be it morning or be it afternoon. In the morning at Prospect Park if the day is clear one rainbow is certain, two are usual, and to see three concentric bows, each reversing the colors of its neighbor, is not uncommon. At the brink of the Horse Shoe it is the same, while in the afternoon I know of no more beautiful sight at Niagara than the view of Luna Island and the great American Fall, framed by an iridescent bow.

Suppose, then, that it is the afternoon. You make your way along the Canadian shore towards Inspiration Point, and what we still call Table Rock, though the last vestige of the rock itself fell over forty years ago. You find at once that here the railroad has entered Paradise. The tracks of an electric road accompany you all the way. It was built in 1892, and runs along the whole Niagara gorge from Queenston, seven miles below, to the placid beauty of the Dufferin Islands, where iron railroad bridges now run side by side with all the older ones of inoffensive wood. The world must move. Electric cars run from The Hague to the
bathing houses of Scheveningen. They run even from Florence to Fiesole, and how can Niagara be spared. They are necessary and laudable, but to the eye as unattractive as the cheap books that have opened literature to the million.

Below Inspiration Point the view may possibly be disappointing, but from this point on it is difficult for one who knows the place to see how even a newcomer can fail to be most powerfully impressed, especially if the conviction of the height of Niagara has been first well driven home by a journey through the Cave or on the steamer. Still, a Bostonian looked first from here and promptly wished to improve on Nature by removing the barren wall of Goat Island, so that there should be one continuous fall. A more legitimate and not infrequent source of disappointment is due to the heavy spray. Over and over travellers brought with care to Table Rock for their first view, open their eyes to see only an invisible Niagara, both American Fall and the Horse Shoe being veiled completely by a loud thundering cloud of mist.

Ordinarily, however, as you advance towards the Horse Shoe, and see farther and farther into its white recesses until at Table Rock you are admitted almost to the heart of its secrets, the sensation of awe in the presence of such majesty is irresistible. You stand at one limit of the vast curve. Your eye traverses the whole extent of the silent sheets of plunging water, and follows them downward to the milky sea beneath. From below rise such enormous clouds of shifting spray that at times all outlines are confused. The vagueness magnifies each distance, and through the blur the opposite crest seems infinitely far away, and the chasm bottomless. The effect is all of white and gray, and yet conspicuous before you is the great Green Water, the one place where the flood of Niagara does not break instantly into foam but clings together in a solid sheet that descends for many feet unbroken, exhibiting the exquisite color of the green deep sea. The water nearer is sometimes turbid and yellow. Everywhere its surface has a waxen, sheeney glaze that is characteristic of Niagara. At the convergence of the two opposite faces of the cataract the confusion of waters is indescribable. Above all mounts the white column of spray that seems to

"Rise like a cloud of incense from the earth."

The man or woman here who does not descend to the foot of the precipice commits a sin unpardonable. Fear may forbid the Cave of the Winds, or even the Maid of the Mist, but here you have firm Mother-earth to stand on. If the whim of the wind allows you dry rocks you can lie at your ease in the sun and drink in almost the view which the prow of the steamer presents for a second and then snatches from you. You are in the same white pit of downward rushing walls. You have almost the same sense of having
conquered the inaccessible, of having invaded sanctity. It is like the disembodied joys of spirits.

Mr. Howells has spoken of the repose of Niagara. Another paradox is its silence. The sheets of falling water are so unchanging to the eye that the motion seems no more actual than when the breeze runs through a field of grain. It moves without moving. In some such way the unchanging volume of sound soon leaves on the ear a strange sense of silence. Now and again, however, as some more compact mass of water makes its fall, a new note strikes the ear, and under all is the heavy beating of the air as if of sound too low for the range of human hearing. It has always seemed to me as if much of the voice of Niagara might be to us inaudible.*

It is strange that no great poem has yet been written for Niagara. Many have tried their hand, but there is nothing of established fame, nothing that is known for itself as well as for its subject. There is line after line, however, of Coleridge's Hymn to Mont Blanc which if once thought of at Niagara will be always thought of there. Verse after verse is curiously apposite. Those who have never made the translation from mountain to cataract will find in it a wealth of new associations for both poem and place.

* In Scribner's Magazine for February, 1884, there is an article on "The Music of Niagara," by Eugene M. Thayer. He writes the chords of its different harmonies, but finds them four octaves lower than the key boards of our pianos.
WHAT TO SEE.

The waters at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form,
[Fallest] from forth thy silent sea of green,
How silently.
O dread and silent [Fall!] I gazed upon thee
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought. Entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,—
Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy—
Till the dilating soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there,
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven.

Who gave you your invulnerable life,
Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam?

Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?
God!—let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!

III.

The Islands—The Rapids—The American Shore.

The Titans of Niagara have been presented. They
are grand, beautiful, but overpowering. The strain
on the sensations is so exhausting that to stay long
with them is oppressive. You look your fill and then
are more than glad to withdraw to the more human
pleasures of the islands. Above the Horse Shoe on
the Canadian shore the Dufferin Islands are the per-
fection of rustic loveliness. They are just a tangled
cluster of wooded islands, with thin gray sheets of
swift water rushing around them, but they are ex-
quiseite. There are Lovers’ Walks, and bowers,
and platforms, and on the outskirts the open, breezy
river, and the sweep of the White Horse rapids. The
American islands, however, are anchored in the very
centre of Niagara. Two of them, Luna Island and
Goat Island, are on the brink of the Fall, and the latter
of these is a famous treasure-house of delights. You
circle round it by a shady road with cool forest depths
on one side and on the other a steep, wooded bank
with glimpses of the river through the leaves. A
flight of steps leads down to Luna Island, and from its
landings affords the finest view that is to be had of the
American Fall. If you study it closely you will find
that there are subtle harmonies in the color of Niagara
as well as in its music. The Fall is by no means only
gray and white. If the sun favors, you will find at
times faint tints of lavender, of rose, and green.

A low bridge leads directly over the roof of the
Cave of the Winds to Luna Island. This bridge in
winter is so thickly crusted with ice that as you cross
your feet are almost level with the railing at the side.
The island itself is so called from the lunar rainbow
which is often seen from it in the spray,—a mere, dim
ghost of a rainbow, hardly brighter than the third arch
even of a solar bow. It is beautiful to see, but the
beauty lies less in the bow itself than in its weird
accompaniment of night shadows and moonlight. The
island is small, and so flat upon the water that a trifle
would submerge it. The shallow transparent sheet of
water that passes over the long ragged edge of the
American Fall is so near your feet that you can touch
it as it leaves the brink.

In fact, everywhere the great accessibility of Niagara
is strongly felt. It never holds you at arms length.
From the opposite bank, at Prospect Park, it is the
same. As you look down at the huge clouds of
smoky vapor you lean over a low parapet of stone
along which the river brushes as it makes the plunge;
and if you continue now along the Goat Island road
to the Horse Shoe you can paddle in the water at
the very verge. There is never the tantalizing wish
to get “a little nearer.” Except for occasional dashes
of spray, no monarch of Nature allows more absolute
freedom of approach.

From Goat Island, the Horse Shoe shows but one
of its curving faces, but it is that which is crowned by
the wonderful Green Water already mentioned. It is
better seen from the bank above than from below.
The rich green mass descends unbroken until it is lost to sight behind the nearer curve of the Fall. You see no chasm; merely two edges with a deep seam or scar between, broken at moments by a sudden, spurtng leap of spray from the invisible depths, a silent messenger of the tumult below.

The road leaves the Horse Shoe. A broad, breezy view fills the eye, and presently appear the iron bridges of the Three Sister Islands. The first bridge crosses a thin stream of water, so quiet that no one would be afraid to wade to the other side. There is no suggestion of the rush and roar of Niagara. The second stream is much more turbulent. The third, narrow but noisy, comes racing down the slope with breathless speed, and crashes immediately over a low parapet of rock with an uproar as of forty Niagaras. It is so little and so furious that it frightens you. It shakes the water into shreds and tatters and flings it down in a tangled heap of white motion, to pass on instantly without reprieve to the new fate beyond. It is like torture before death. A soft green dimple in the lower stream is all that marks the vortex of the Horse Shoe into which the water plunges.

The small bridge quivers with the rush of water so close below it. This bridge and Prospect Park are said to be the favorite resorts of men intent on suicide, but those who care for life can hardly find a dearer lingering spot for a long summer's day than at the foot of this small torrent.

The Third Sister gives again the broad, free outlook on the river. Not far from the shore is the Spouting Rock, or Leaping Horse, where the water shoots up at intervals in a dash of spray. A little clambering over the rocks of the island brings you to the water's edge, where you can look up the current to the horizon. By springing over a narrow gap you reach a boulder near the shore, on the farther side of which the water sweeps down a little glassy shoot shaped like a beaver's tail. Tiny white waves keep curling up it from below, trying to climb the slope. The pigmy army is unwearied in its attack, but, like Sisyphus, it toils upward in vain.

The carriage road and foot path lead from the Sisters to the Parting of the Waters at the upper end of Goat Island, where the river divides its mass for either Fall very quietly, with only a light ripple on the shore; and still farther is a glen known as "The Spring." Then come the bridges to the main land, and the tour of Goat Island has been accomplished.

It is late to speak of the famous rapids above Goat Island bridge. To half the visitors of Niagara they are the chief source of pleasure. To see them it is necessary, absolutely, to descend to one of the platforms at the river's edge. Unless you do so they have not been seen. Sit half an hour, at least, watching, and the fascination will seize you irresistibly. It is like a great turmoil of tossing ostrich feathers, except that there is feverish life in these white plumes, restlessly curling. There are tags of verse in the mind
everywhere at Niagara. The one that speaks to me here is from Matthew Arnold:

Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

And again:

The wild white horses foam and fret,
"Margaret! Margaret!"

In sunshine these rapids blaze from a distance like white fire and are intolerable to the eye. Beyond them, at the water’s edge, is a willow grove which gives again the constant alternation between peace and conflict that makes Niagara so bewildering; and if you wish in full measure a benediction on your day, return to the train by the lovely River Road which follows the bank in an easy curve that is a delight to the senses. It is but a moment longer to the station, and I know of nothing that will leave so sweet a flavor in the mind.

IV.

Lower Niagara—The Whirlpool Rapids and Whirlpool—Lewiston.

All this—Cave of the Winds, Maid of the Mist and all—may be seen in a day by the abject slave to time. He will come away dazed, uncertain, almost, whether the cataract flows up or down, and unfit, utterly, to say a word in criticism, either of praise or blame. Still, if a day is all that life allows you, it is best to crowd it full

Even the one-day tourist, if not afraid of mental indigestion, can make room in his day for all this, and yet find time for a glimpse, too, of lower Niagara.

Ten minutes by trolley, five by the train, take you to the village of Suspension Bridge, the Whirlpool Rapids, and the Whirlpool. Rather than these, however, if you are pressed for time, take the open observation cars of the New York Central through the gorge, to Lewiston. You will not be able to cross off the Whirlpool from your list of sights accomplished, but the deep gorge of the Niagara to Lake Ontario is more worth seeing. If time allows, however, see them all, especially the lower rapids.

The Whirlpool Rapids are wilder, finer, in every way more splendid than the rapids above the Falls. You go down Buttery’s elevator (the other is less good), and at the foot between high walls of rock you find a mass of roaring water that leaps incredibly into the air. Seen from the bank it sometimes hides a low house on the other shore. The place is one to linger at for hours, and is one of the chief glories of the Falls. In trying to swim these rapids Captain Webb was drowned. Here all the army of cranks pass through in barrels. Here, too, in 1886, a modest Boston policeman, William J. Kendall, swam through with only a life preserver to protect him.

From the rapids if you are adventurous you can reach the Whirlpool by following the shore and climb-
ing up the bank. If more prudent or in haste, you take the elevator as before, and then the road. Through the inevitable bazaar of curiosities you pass to the grounds of the Whirlpool. As you look down over the bank the first sensation is surprising, almost uncanny. Niagara is caught in a trap. It enters a circle without outlet. Your eye follows the whole contour and finds no interruption in the line of shore. From a few steps farther to the right you see below you the narrow gap through which the river turns, at a full right angle with its former course. It seems as if a girl could throw a stone across, but men have tried and seen the stone land on the nearer shore, short of the water's edge.

Those who expect to find a maelstrom in the Pool will be ludicrously taken by surprise. No country mill pond could be more serene. The water circles lazily around its pen as if indifferent whether it escaped or not. Above the hole and below is the rattle of the rapids and the glitter of their white spray, but the Whirlpool itself is dark and still. When the first disappointment is over at not seeing the boiling, riotous whirl of the railway posters, you realize a silent strength and majesty that grow awful. It is not so hard to believe that what is once drawn down into its center will not emerge for days.

To catalogue the pleasures of Niagara and not describe the many tramps it offers would be a great mis-

take. The shortest and perhaps the best is down the gorge to Lewiston, about five miles, a very easy journey for an afternoon. Begin not at Niagara but at Suspension Bridge. Two miles of country road lead to the Devil's Hole, the scene in 1765 of a massacre of English by the French and Indians who forced them down the cliff. Upon a broad plateau of rocks you look down on the tops of trees that fill the pit below. The rapids of the river spot its dark green surface with white, and their clamor is always in the air. A few steps farther on you leave the road, from which there are no views, and take the railroad track, a ledge half way up the side of the cliff, with a sheer mountain of rocks above and the wonderful river talking loudly below. Keep on the track to Lewiston and then come back by train; or if you have a whole day's time and can stand a more vigorous walk, begin on the Canadian side of the Suspension Bridge, walk by the road to the Whirlpool, crawl around its circling beach over ground thick with petrified leaves, and when you reach the outlet climb somehow up the bluff and keep to the brink until you reach Brock's Monument and Queenston. It is perhaps seven miles, and if you are rowed across at the Queenston ferry and come back up the railroad track from Lewiston you will have had a glorious day. The walk along the Canadian brink is tangled and rough, and often lengthened by retreating gorges which have to be skirted, but the views are
beautiful. There are many jutting bluffs, and in the gorges are fantastic boulders. Upon the hill below the monument to General Brock you look far off to Lake Ontario; it is another place for a day’s resting.

If you take this for an epilogue to Niagara you may like also a prologue. There is no pleasanter approach than to walk or drive from Buffalo on the Canadian shore. The distance is not more than twenty miles and the road is almost always at the water’s edge, almost upon the beach.

V.

Seasons and Moods.

The perfect time for the trip to Lewiston is in October. The Canadian bank is then a blaze of flame, and the green river below and blue sky above make a beautiful color picture. The most lovely time for upper Niagara is in early spring, when Goat Island is covered with flowers and the trees show every tender shade of green. The most wonderful season is, however, undoubtedly mid-winter.

Niagara in winter is like a fairy tale come true. The spray gathers and freezes so incessantly that twigs the size of knitting needles are cased with ice until they have the bigness of a squirrel’s tail. Whole bushes are so covered, with a heavy splendor that pins them to the earth. A low sun flashing through this ice turns it to jewels. It is as if the rainbows of Niagara were flung before you in a tangled heap.

Below the American Fall the ice cone gathers and grows to the height of seventy-five or even of a hundred feet. Men climb it with spiked shoes and coast fearlessly down. The freezing spray covers your hat with enamel and makes your overcoat a rigid board.

Once in three or four years a so-called ice bridge forms. A warm day melts the field of ice above the Falls. It crashes down and chokes together in the narrow gorge below, forming an ice floe like a bridge from shore to shore. This bridge becomes a second Ponte Vecchio. It is lined at once on either side by mushroom booths where peddlers sell their wares. They take your tintype with Niagara for a background, but those who lend themselves to such an insult to the place are usually satisfied to sit before a hideous pasteboard scene although Niagara itself is close at hand. The merchants deal in foreign liquor upon the doubtful international line.

The ice bridge in itself is only this. It is its association with the winter scenery, and the vantage ground it gives for novel points of view, that make it well worth seeing. In winter usually you miss the charm of lazy summer lingering, but on the ice bridge you change the fleeting views the Maid of the Mist affords for ones more at your ease. You walk sturdily where you will, and look till you are satisfied. The pleasure,
too, is greater at the water’s edge than on a steamer’s deck. Just so in summer it is pleasantest to cross by a small row-boat that ferries passengers.

It is not only the seasons that change the aspect of Niagara. In fact it differs every day in mood. You cannot go twice to the same place without seeing some new thing. One day you can climb higher than ever before upon the rocks at the base of Prospect Park until you sit dry in the shadow of the American Fall, fairly behind its sheet. Another day you cannot put your head outside of the house at the foot of the inclined railway without meeting a blinding shower of spray from the same Fall that makes any visit to the rocks impossible. These changes of the spray occur with disconcerting suddenness, especially below. The wind whips suddenly around the compass and before you think lashes the spray at your face. I have seen a girl who stood too near the Fall drenched instantly with such a rush of spray that everything upon her was wet through. Even when above a little wetting often comes.

These are the natural aspects of Niagara. To see it in more unfamiliar, curious beauty, as only one in hundreds cares to do, walk by summer moonlight through the Lewiston gorge or see the Horse Shoe by the winter moon.

To read too much of a place before seeing it is to prepare the way for disappointment. Unconsciously

you expect to crowd into the first impression all the finest aspects of repeated visits made by others in their happiest moods. You are in danger, too, of displacing your own natural sensations by others ready made. A descriptive guide book stunts perception as often as it stimulates it. The purpose of this sketch lies in the hope that, just as a word may kindle memories and enrich itself in the mind of the hearer, these details may serve for a nucleus around which the scattering recollections of the place may gather more distinctly.

One final word. If after all, with all the time you have, Niagara disappoints you, pray have the grace to remember that the fault may be your own. In a sense you can see in it only what you bring with you. As has been said, if no man is a hero to his valet it is not perhaps because the hero is no hero, but because the valet is only a valet.

STATISTICS.

_Niagara._ Said to be an Iroquois word, meaning “Thunderer of Waters.”

_Niagara River._

Width, above the Falls, about 4,400 feet; below the Falls, about 1,000 feet; at the Whirlpool, about 400 feet.

Length of river, from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, 36 miles.
Descent, from lake to lake, 336 feet, as follows: from Lake Erie to the Falls, (22 miles,) 70 feet, (55 feet of this in the Rapids, ½ mile); at the Falls, 160 feet; from the Falls to Lake Ontario, (14 miles), 106 feet.

Current, estimated at from 4 miles per hour in the quietest places to 40 miles at the Whirlpool Rapids.

Depth, estimated at 20 feet in the river above the Falls; at the Whirlpool Rapids, 250 feet; in the Whirlpool, 400 feet.

Volume. Estimated that 15,000,000 cubic feet of water per minute pass over the Falls, or about one cubic mile per week.

**Niagara Falls.**

Width of Falls at the brink, including Goat Island, 5,370 feet, as follows: American Falls, 1,060 feet; Goat Island, about 1,300 feet; the Horse Shoe, in 1890, 3,010 feet.

**The Horse Shoe Falls.**

Height, 158 feet. Contour, in 1890, 3,010 feet; in 1886, 2,600 feet; in 1842, 2,260 feet. Width across, at widest point, about 1,200 feet. Depth of water at brink, estimated 20 feet.

Average annual recession, 2.18 feet; total recession from 1842 to 1890, 104½ feet. Total area of recession for the same 48 years, 6½ acres.

**The American Fall.**

Height, 167 feet. Contour, in 1890, 1,060 feet; in 1842, 1,080 feet. Average annual recession, 7½ inches; total recession from 1842 to 1890, 303½ feet. Total area of recession for same period, ¾ acre.

**The New York State Reservation.**

Area, 107 acres. Purchased by the State of New York, under Acts of April 30, 1883, and April 30, 1885, for $1,433,429.50: formally opened to the public July 15, 1885.

**The Queen Victoria Niagara Falls Park.**

Area, 154 acres. Preliminary Act of Legislature passed 1885. Park opened to the public, May 24, 1888.

**Goat Island.**

Area, about 63 acres; in early records said to have contained 250 acres. (Gull Island, south of Goat Island, is said to have contained two acres of land in 1840. There is hardly a trace of it now.) Circumference of island, about one mile.

First bridge built, 1817; present bridge, 1856.

Bridges to Three Sister Islands built 1868.

The price paid by the State of New York for Goat Island and all the surrounding Islands except a part of Bath Island, was $525,000.00.

**Suspension Bridge.**

Height of floor above river, 190 feet; height of
towers, 100 feet; length of span, 1268 feet. First built, 1868-69; blown down and rebuilt, 1889.

Steamers "Maid of the Mist."
First boat built and run, 1846. Larger boat built, 1854. Ran the Whirlpool and Rapids to Lewiston, to escape the sheriff, 1861. First of present boats launched, 1885, 71 feet long; second launched, 1892, 85 feet long.

CHARGES.
Within New York State Reservation.
Inclined Railway, Prospect Park. Either way, 5 cents. Stairs free.
Steamers "Maid of the Mist," with rubber coat, 50 cents.
Cave of the Winds, guide and dress, $1.00.

Within Canadian Reservation.
Behind Horse Shoe Falls, with guide and dress, 50 cents.
DuSserin Islands, 50 cents for carriage and all occupants, 10 cents for pedestrian.
Suspension Bridge.
Upper bridge, over and back, 25 cents. Lower bridge, two miles below, over and back, 10 cents.

Whirlpool.
American or Canadian side, 50 cents.
Whirlpool Rapids.
American or Canadian side, with elevator, 50 cents.
Brock's Monument, 185 feet high; built 1853. A former monument, 126 feet high, built in 1826, was destroyed by explosion in 1840. Gen. Brock fell in 1813. Admission to top of monument, 50 cents.

CARRIAGE HIRE.

N. Y. Reservation Omnibuses.
Round trip, including circuit of Goat Island, with stop-overs, 25 cents. Shorter trips with stop-overs, 15 cents. Children under twelve years, half fare. Children under five years, free.

Carriage Rates by Niagara Falls Ordinances.
Two horses, first hour $2.00, each additional hour $1.50. One horse, first hour $1.50, each additional hour $1.00.