

beyond these the ocean and blue sky. It was like a vision seen in the clouds, and we were occasionally reminded of "the dissolving views," when the landscape slowly faded away, and then, in a few minutes, as the fog dispersed, regained its strength as gradually, till every feature became again clear and well defined.

We at length returned to the hotel in the dusk of the evening, much delighted with our excursion, although too fatiguing for a lady, my wife having been twelve hours on horseback. If an inn should be built at the foot of the mountain, the exploit will be comparatively an easy one, and in a few years a railway from Boston, only 150 miles distant (100 miles of it being already completed), will enable any citizen to escape from the summer heat, and, having slept the first night at this inn, enjoy, the next morning, if he is a lover of botany, the sight of a variety of rare and beautiful Arctic plants in full flower, besides beholding a succession of distinct zones of vegetation, scarcely surpassed on the flanks of Mount Etna or the Pyrenees.

If we attempt to speculate on the manner in which the peculiar species of plants now established on the highest summits of the White Mountains, were enabled to reach those isolated spots, while none of them are met with in the lower lands around, or for a great distance to the north, we shall find ourselves engaged in trying to solve a philosophical problem, which requires the aid, not of botany alone, but of geology, or a knowledge of the geographical changes which immediately preceded the present state of the earth's surface. We have to explain how an Arctic flora, consisting of plants specifically identical with those which now inhabit lands bordering the sea in the extreme north of America, Europe, and Asia, could get to the top of Mount Washington. Now geology teaches us that the species living at present on the earth are older than many parts of our existing continents; that is to say, they were created before a large part of the existing mountains, valleys, plains, lakes, rivers, and seas were formed. That such must be the case in regard to the island of Sicily, I announced my conviction in 1833, after first returning from that country.* And a similar conclusion is no

* Principles of Geology, 1st edition, vol. iii. chap. 9.