

Staircase. The Montmorency Falls descend from an altitude of 260 feet into a kind of funnel-shaped ravine, bordered by sombre precipitous rocks, whose jagged edges and salient angles are known by the fiercely foaming eddies. A cloud of silvery vapour rises in the air, and in the sunshine glows with a thousand rainbows—arch upon arch of living light! The crest of the rocks is enriched with a bright fresh vegetation, and bright runlets wind beside the principal cascade.

The reader will be familiar, by description, with the *rapids* of the river Amazons at Pongo de Manserichi, where the mighty flood is pent up in a narrow defile, and struggles like a giant to break from its thralls. Those of the Connecticut River are also remarkable for their grandeur. In Europe we may refer to those of the Rhone at Pierre Encise,—

“ Where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted ;”—

of the Rhine at Bingen ; and of the Danube at Orsova.

[The defile at Orsova is the famous “ Iron Gate”—a table-land of rugged rock, 4250 feet in width, over which the great river formerly swept with an infernal commotion and a thunderous noise. This rapid, which was followed up by a series of dangerous eddies, whirlpools, and shallows, was at one time an obstacle of insuperable difficulty to the upward progress of vessels, no craft being able to traverse it which drew more than two and a half feet of water. But by a series of successful blasting operations the terrors of the pass have been so far diminished, and the channel deepened, that it is now accessible to vessels of eight and even nine feet draught.]

Among the great *cataracts* of the world, those of *Maypures*, on the river Orinoco, have acquired a wide celebrity. They consist, in truth, not of one, but of many successive cascades or falls. The best point of view, according to Humboldt, is from the height of Manimi :—*

On reaching the summit of the rocks, says our great philosopher and traveller, the eye suddenly measures a sheet of foam more than a mile in extent, with enormous rocks, black as iron, emerging from its bosom ; some are mamelons, grouped two by two, like hills of basalt ; others may be compared to feudal towers, strong fortresses, and ruined edifices. Their gloomy colour vividly contrasts with the silvery splendour of the foaming waters ; each rock and each islet is crowned with clumps of flourishing trees. From the foot of these mamelons, and as far as the view extends, a dense smoke is suspended above the river ; through the white-gleaming mist spring the tops of the lofty palms.

The other great cataracts of America are those of the Potomac, the James River, the Missouri, the river Columbia, the Niagara, the Tequendama—not far from Santa Fè de Bogota—and that of the Yosemite, in California, which is 2600 feet in height. The Rio San Francisco, in Brazil, ceases to be navigable for a course of two-and-sixty miles, owing to a succession of cataracts which terminate in the Cachoeira-Grande, and are constantly enveloped in whirling masses of vapour.

* A. von Humboldt, “ Voyage aux Régions Equinoxiales,” tome vii., p. 170.