



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

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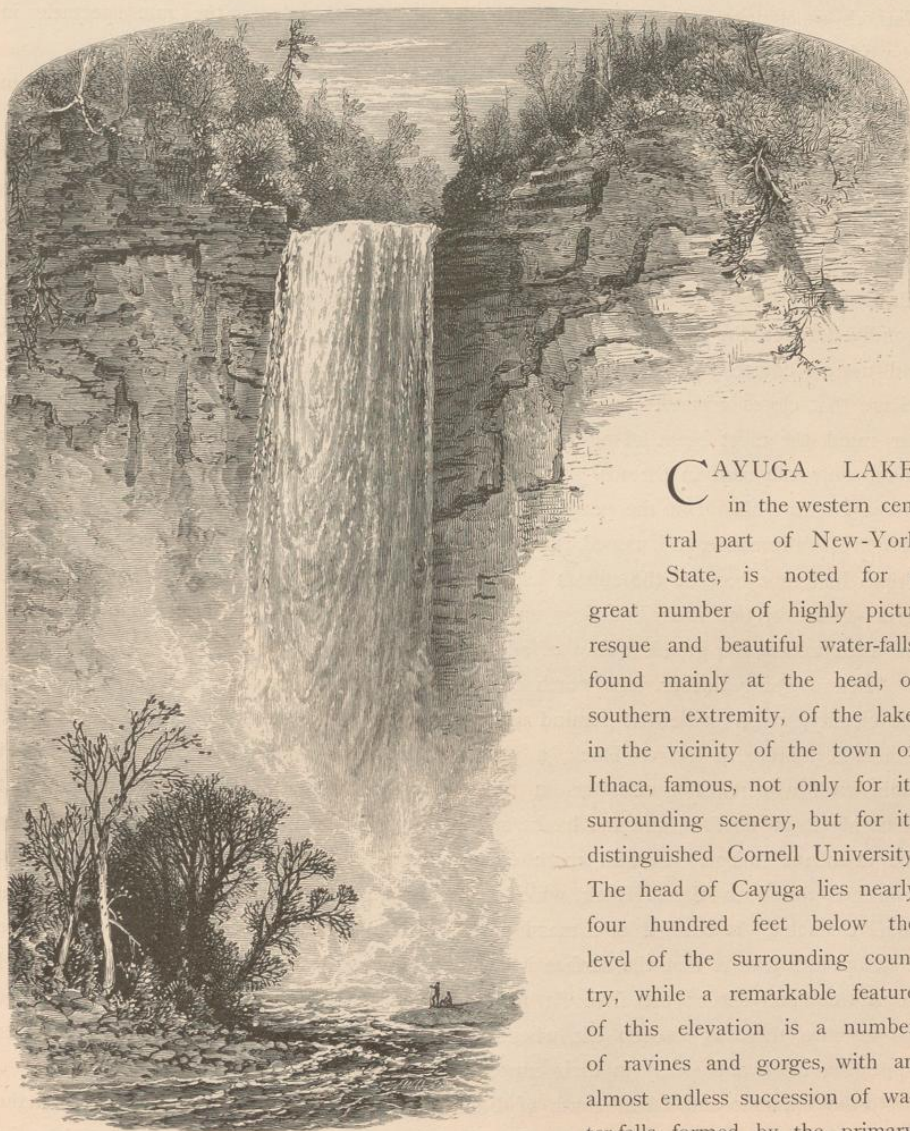
New York, 1874

Water-Falls At Cayuga Lake.

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WATER-FALLS AT CAYUGA LAKE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. DOUGLAS WOODWARD.



Taghanic Falls.

CAYUGA LAKE, in the western central part of New-York State, is noted for a great number of highly picturesque and beautiful water-falls, found mainly at the head, or southern extremity, of the lake, in the vicinity of the town of Ithaca, famous, not only for its surrounding scenery, but for its distinguished Cornell University. The head of Cayuga lies nearly four hundred feet below the level of the surrounding country, while a remarkable feature of this elevation is a number of ravines and gorges, with an almost endless succession of water-falls, formed by the primary streams which drain the middle

portion of the northern slope of the water-shed between Chesapeake Bay and the gulf of the St. Lawrence, their first point of rendezvous being Cayuga Lake. In summer, the ravines are frequented by the residents of near towns, and by visitors whose numbers increase year by year, as the fame of the wild, cool retreats spreads abroad. An after-
tea walk takes the visitor to Ithaca from crowded streets into the most beautiful of Nature's sanctuaries. In winter, also, the ravines are visited, for the rare spectacle in ice-work which forms about the cataracts.

The most northerly of those ravines which pass through the city is Fall Creek, in which, within a mile, there are eight falls, all of them exceedingly fine. The walls of the chasm are abrupt and high, fringed with a dusky growth of forest-trees. A pathway was worked through it some time ago, and its sombre depths and reverberating waters are now accessible to all who have the courage and endurance necessary to follow the rugged way. Four of the falls range from sixty to thirty feet in height, while a fifth, Ithaca Fall, attains one hundred and fifty feet. In the latter the foaming torrent leaps grandly between the fractured rock. Several times its headway is broken by projections, and narrow courses lead threads of the silvery water from the main channel into the foliage that closes around. Not far from here we also find the Triple Fall, which is, to our mind, the most beautiful of all. It should be named Bridal-Veil Fall. The water pours over the rock in threads, as in a veil of gauze, and is not woven into a mass, as in the Ithaca Fall. But the people who had in charge the nomenclature of this region have avoided romance, and named the places in a matter-of-fact fashion. They have called Triple Fall thus because the stream leaps thrice before it ripples forward again on the level—first over one rock, bubbling on a ledge a while before it descends to the next, and then taking the grandest leap of all.

Before going farther, it is worth our while to examine some curious formations in the vicinity, which somewhat remind us of the eroded sandstones of Monument Park, Colorado. Here is Tower Rock, a perfect columnar formation, about thirty-six feet high, with a sort of groove across the top. The water of the lake stretches out smoothly from its foot, and the banks around are rocky and jagged, hidden in part by the abundant foliage. A still more extraordinary monument of Nature's inexhaustible whims is found in Castle Rock, which has a certain regularity of form, despite its unusual character. It consists of a massive wall, with a magnificent, arched door-way. One of its peculiarities is that the surface is torn and fractured, and in the deep seams formed some trees and shrubs are living a precarious existence. In the arch of the door-way, for instance, there is a deep slit, whence spring two sturdy trees, their slender trunks appearing bleak and lonely in their exposed situation.

About a mile and a half south of Fall Creek is Cascadilla Creek, smaller than the former, but more delicate and harmonious in its scenery. Between the two ravines, its chimes mingling with their babble, the university is situated, on a fair expanse, nearly



CAYUGA LAKE SCENERY.

four hundred feet above the level of the lake. The principal buildings are ranged on the summit of a hill, which slopes gently, and rises again in richly-scented fields of clover and wild-flowers. The outlook is beautiful beyond description. Nearest is the pretty town, with its regular streets and white houses; then, the luxuriant valley; and, beyond that, twenty miles of the glistening lake are seen, bounded by verdure-clad banks and lofty cliffs. One of the buildings, Cascadilla Hall, is close to two of the most beautiful falls on that stream; an excellent road, built by the toil of self-educating students, crosses the gorge by a picturesque bridge, seventy feet above the stream, afterward winding through a romantic grove, and affording many fine views of the lake and the valley.

Six miles from the city, in a southwesterly direction, is Enfield Falls, a spot of great interest on account of the great depth which a stream, of moderate dimensions, has furrowed into the earth. The water reaches the main fall through a narrow cañon, a hundred feet deep, and then tumbles down, almost perpendicularly, a hundred and eighty feet, into a chasm, whose walls rise three hundred feet on each side. Thence the stream reaches the valley of the main inlet to the lake through a wild, broken, wooded course, to explore which is a task suited only to those who have strong nerves and limbs. The main fall has the same thread-like appearance as Triple Fall, and, like that, it is broken several times in its downward course. The torrent leaps six times over the protruding rock before it reaches the foot, and proceeds on its way in comparative calm. As we stand on a rock in the eddying pool below, and glance upward through the murky chasm, with its sheer walls and sentinel evergreens, the scene is impressive in the extreme, and much more sombre than other parts of the neighborhood. The stream in the main fall of Buttermilk Ravine also issues from a deep channel, with jutting and somewhat steep walls. In this ravine there is another of those fanciful stone monuments which we have referred to.

But the most noted and perhaps the most impressive of all the water-falls about the head of Cayuga Lake is the Taghanic, situated about ten miles northwest from the town, and about one mile up from the west shore. It is more than fifty feet higher than Niagara, and is considered as grand as the Staubbach of Switzerland. The most interesting features are the very deep ravine, the extraordinary height of the cataract, its sharply-defined outlines, and the magnificent view of the lake and the surrounding country that may be obtained in its vicinity. The water breaks over a clean-cut table-rock, and falls perpendicularly two hundred and fifteen feet. Except in flood-time, the veil of water breaks, and reaches the bottom in mist and sheets of spray. The rugged cliffs through which the stream rolls before it makes its plunge are about two hundred feet in depth, and form a triangle at the brink of the fall. From the foot a strong wind rushes down the ravine, the walls of which are here nearly four hundred feet high, and as cleanly cut as though laid by the hands of a mason. This ravine is reached by a series of stairways, hewn in the rock, and by rugged pathways.



VICINITY OF ITHACA.