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INDICATIONS AS TO CLIMATIC CHANGES FROM THE TIMBERLINE OF MOUNT WASHINGTON¹

By Dr. ROBERT F. GRIGGS

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

WE stand on historic ground. The arctic plants of the Alpine Garden, here isolated on Mount Washington, played a decisive role in establishing Plant Geography as a science; and this science was the crucial point on which turned the acceptance of the doctrine of Evolution. In the years before 1859 progressive naturalists were seeking an answer to the riddle of the Origin of Species. No aspect of this problem was so vexing in those days as the question raised by species with disjunct distribution. Had there been two acts of creation resulting in identical species, one in each of the separate ranges? or was the

present dispersal the result of immigration from a single original center? It was the answer to this question which finally disposed of the doctrine of special creation in the minds of Darwin and his associates. Feeling the need of additional data on this question, Darwin asked his friend, Asa Gray, to discuss the relationships of our eastern flora. Gray did so under the unpretentious title of "Statistics of the Flora of the Northern States."² In a second paper, still antedating the "Origin" he amplified and strengthened the theoretical opinions cautiously expressed in the first.³

¹ Address given at the Symposium on Alpine Ecology, Ecological Society of America, Mount Washington, June 26, 1941.

² *Am. Jour. Sci.*, Ser. 2, 22: 23, 1856-57.

³ "On the Botany of Japan." *Mem. Am. Acad. Arts and Sciences*, 6: 443 *et seq.* (Read December 14, 1858,

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