



PICTORIAL GUIDE
TO
NIAGARA FALLS.

PART I.

NIAGARA STRAIT
AND THE
BORDERING SETTLEMENTS.

“Unchanging form! unceasing roar!
Niagara, — what art thou?
Spray — Thunder — Foam —
The breath — the voice — the robes of God!”

NIAGARA.

There's nothing great or bright, thou glorious Fall!
Thou may'st not to the fancy's sense recall—
The thunder-riven cloud, the lightning's leap,
The stirring of the chambers of the deep,
Earth's emerald green, and many-tinted dyes,
The fleecy-whiteness of the upper skies,
The tread of armies, thick'ning as they come,
The boom of cannon, and the beat of drum,
The brow of beauty, and the form of grace,
The passion, and the prowess of our race,
The song of Homer in its loftiest hour,
The unresisted sweep of Roman power,
Britannia's trident on the azure sea,
America's young shout of liberty!

Oh! may the wars that madden in thy deeps,
There spend their rage, nor climb th' encircling steeps;
And, till the conflict of thy surges cease,
The Nations on thy banks repose in peace!

MORPETH.

Nov. 3, 1811.

PICTORIAL GUIDE TO NIAGARA FALLS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CATARACT—HOW FORMED—RIVER—ST. LAWRENCE—
SUPPLY OF WATERS—SITUATION OF THE FALLS—ORIGIN AND
MEANING OF THE NAME—CLIMATE—ANIMATE AND INANI-
MATE LIFE—GENERAL ASPECT—NATURAL RELIGION—IN-
DUCEMENTS TO VISITERS—ROUTES OF APPROACH.

NIAGARA.

Shrine of Omnipotence! How vast, how grand,
How awful, yet how beautiful art thou!
Pillar'd around by everlasting hills,
Robed in the drapery of descending floods,
Crowned by the rainbow, canopied by clouds,
That roll in incense up from thy dread base,
Hid by their mantling o'er the vast abyss,
Upon whose verge thou standest, whence ascends
The mighty anthem of thy Maker's praise,
Hymn'd in eternal thunders!



NATURE has many waterfalls, a few cataracts—ONE NIAGARA! That stands alone, vast, grand, indescribable!—the mighty alembic in which the world of waters is refined and etherealized!—the august throne upon which

Nature sits, clothed in the glorious attributes of power and beauty!—the everlasting altar, at whose cloud-wrapt base the elements pay homage to Omnipotence!—The floods that pour down its tremendous heights, seem gushing from the opened heavens, and plunging into the depths of the unfathomable abyss!—Air groans, earth trembles, deep calleth unto deep, and answering thunders roll up the vast empyrean! Like a seething hell the gulf below sends up the smoke of its torment, and the foam of agony thickens upon the face of the dread profound, while far above upon the verge of the precipice, sits the sweet Iris—like faith upon a dying martyr's brow—arching the fearful chasm with its outspread arms, and smiling through all the terrors of the scene.

Bright bow of Promise!

Sit ever thus upon the beetling brow
Of the dread cataract, which but for thee
Were all too terrible:—Smile ever thus,
Making that beautiful which else were hideous.

This cataract, the most wonderful and amazing curiosity in the natural world, is formed by the precipitous descent of the river Niagara down a ledge of rocks of more than one hundred and sixty feet perpendicular height, into an abyss or basin below, of unknown, but probably much greater

depth. The river Niagara is that portion of the St. Lawrence, by which the lakes Erie and Ontario* are united. It is the outlet by which the vast volume of surplus waters of those great inland seas, Erie, Huron, Michigan, Superior, and of the St. Clair and other smaller lakes and streams, is poured into lake Ontario, from whence, by the river and gulf of St. Lawrence, it finds its way to the Atlantic ocean. The St. Lawrence is one of the largest and longest rivers on the globe, having its source in the rocky mountains, many hundred feet above the level of the sea, and distant from the ocean into which it flows, more than two thousand miles.

Some idea of the immense quantity of water forced over the falls of Niagara, may be formed from the fact, that the lakes and tributaries which supply the river Niagara, cover a surface of not less than one hundred and fifty thousand square miles; and contain, as nearly as can be estimated, about one half of all the fresh water on the globe. The land surface drained by this vast extent of lakes and rivers, measures scarcely less than half a million of square miles. While the earth and

* This lake was formerly called Lake FRONTENAC, after a French Count of that name, who was erst Governor of Canada.

the operations of nature continue without material change, Niagara must ever exhibit a scene of undiminished grandeur and sublimity.

This stupendous cataract is situate in latitude $43^{\circ} 6'$ north, and longitude $2^{\circ} 6'$ west from Washington. It is twenty-two miles north from the efflux of the river, at Lake Erie; and fourteen miles south, from the introgression of the stream into Lake Ontario. The whole length of the river is therefore, thirty-six miles—its general course is a few points to the west of north. Though commonly called a river, this portion of the St. Lawrence is, more properly speaking, a STRAIT, connecting as above mentioned, the lakes Erie and Ontario, and conducting the superfluous waters of the great seas and streams above, through a broad and divided, and afterwards compressed, devious and irregular channel, to the latter lake, into which it empties—the point of union being about forty miles from the western extremity of the lake.

Niagara is a word of Indian origin—the orthography, accentuation, and meaning of which are variously given by different authors. It is highly probable that this diversity might be accounted for and explained, by tracing the appellation through the dialects of the several tribes of aborigines, who formerly inhabited the neighbouring country.

Such an investigation, however interesting to the philologist, would present but little attraction to the general reader, and is therefore quite foreign to our present purpose. There is reason to believe that the etymon belongs to the language of the Iroquois, and signifies the *Thunder of Waters*. The word Niagara has also been defined “*a large neck (or strait) of water,*” — “*across the neck (or strait) of water,*” — “*a fall of water,*” — “*broken water,*” — “*running water,*” — “*the voice of waters,*” etc. That this name was applied by the natives to the river (or strait) as well as to the cataract itself, is certain:—adjectively, it has been retained by both—substantively, it should belong to the latter.

The climate of Niagara is in the highest degree healthful and invigorating. The atmosphere, constantly acted upon by the rushing water, the noise and the spray, is kept pure, refreshing, and salutary. There are no stagnant pools or marshes near, to send abroad their fœtid exhalations, and noxious miasmas, poisoning the air and producing disease. The face of the country for miles around, though nearly level, or but slightly undulating, is yet so elevated, as to be neither damp, disagreeable, nor unwholesome. No pestilential or epidemic complaints ever infest this spot;—it is sacred from

their approach. Even the cholera kept aloof from its raging waters.

Sweet-breathing herbs, and beautiful wild flowers spring up spontaneously even on the sides, and in the crevices of the giant rocks; and luxuriant clusters of firs and other fine forest trees, cover the islands, crown the cliffs, and overhang the banks of Niagara, where their emerald foliage waltzes with the feather-footed spray to the music of its roar, and they grow and gladden in the bounty of its breath and the joy of its presence.

Here are no mosquitoes to annoy, no reptiles to alarm, and no wild animals to intimidate;—yet there is life and vivacity. The many-hued butterfly sips ambrosia from the fresh-opened honey-cup—birds carol their lays of love among the spray-starred branches—and the lively squirrel skips chattering from tree to tree. Varieties of water-fowl sport among the rapids, the sea-gull plays around the precipice, and the Eagle—the banner-bird of freedom—hovers above the cataract, plumes his grey pinions in its curling mists, and makes his home among the giant firs of its inaccessible islands.

Around the Falls all is soft, yet exciting—the cataract itself, terrible yet attractive. It has a fearful yet fascinating beauty, a dreadful but alluring greatness. Apt emblem of Divinity! it awes

while it invites—and while it commands reverence, it secures affection. Nature, as if by a revelation of her beauty and majesty, to teach us a religion in which justice is softened by mercy, and authority sweetened by love, has here concentrated her powers of thrilling and exciting, and gathered round one holy spot of earth all that can awe and terrify, with all that inspires and delights.

The great features of Niagara are ever the same, but their individual expression is constantly changing. With every season, with every sunbeam, with every shade they assume a different appearance, inspire a fresh interest, and exact a new admiration.

Serenes skies and a more salubrious atmosphere are nowhere to be found. Add to this the ocean-formed, rock-pillared, cloud-mantled cataract, and the marvels and glories by which this most sublime and stupendous of all natural wonders is surrounded, and what man or woman possessing leisure and means, would not desire to visit Niagara, if but to pay the homage of a day's admiration at this altar and type of the Eternal. An hour at the foot of Niagara would amply reward a pilgrimage from Timbuctoo or Pekin; and yet one can scarcely begin to realize its

grandeur, immensity, sublimity, and beauty, in less than the lapse of days.

No place on the civilized earth offers such attractions and inducements to visiters as Niagara, and they can never be fully known except to those who see them, from the utter impossibility of describing such a scene as this wonderful cataract presents:—when motion can be expressed by colour, there will be some hope of imparting a faint idea of it—but until that can be done, Niagara must remain undescribed.

The invalid may here find rest, refreshment, healthful exercise, and pure air, and that gentle exhilaration of mental and bodily spirits, so desirable in all cases, and often so necessary to a speedy recovery. The convalescent will here be relieved from the languor of weakness, and much of the danger of relapse, by the pleasurable excitement scenes of such extreme beauty and majesty must ever produce. The business man, desirous of escaping for a time the troublous round of toil and care in which he commonly moves, can here enjoy his leisure, and dignify his relaxation. The merchant or planter, flying for a season from the fever-smitten cities and fields of the south, will find here the safety he covets, and the happiness he cannot but desire.

The man of science can nowhere else find such an ample field for research, nor a subject which would so much honour investigation; for, destined to be the wonder of all time, Niagara is yet almost entirely unknown, though the world is full of its fame. What chronicles of past ages may there not be niched in these eternal walls?—what monuments of mighty changes sculptured on these hoary rocks? This mountain-rent chasm is an unsealed volume of the past! Who has the skill to divine its mystic lore—to decipher its time-traced pages?—Let him come!

The lover of nature can here gratify his longing, and hold sweet communion with the object of his adoration; nay, more, he will find here the temple of his divinity, and may stand beneath the very arches of its altar! Every one who has an eye to perceive, a heart to feel, and a soul to realize the grandest exhibitions of creative energy, and the mightiest manifestations of Omnipotent power, will here find an answer to his highest aspirations, a favourable response to his desire for the spirit-kindling ecstasy of emotion.

There is however one class of people, (at least we fear there is,) those who cannot relish the vast unless it descends to the vulgar, nor enjoy the sublime, unless it stoops to the sensual—for whom

neither Heaven above, nor Niagara on earth were ever intended ; and they (if there be any such,) are especially requested to keep as far from the latter place, as they are like to be kept from the former. Nothing can be less endurable than being bored by an unmitigated blockhead, while gazing upon such sublime and thrilling scenes. It is like Paradise with a devil—*only worse!*

There are various routes by which travellers from distant parts of the country approach the Falls. The principal ones however, terminate at Buffalo, the commencement of steam-navigation on lake Erie ; or at Lewiston, (or Queenston, opposite,) the landing place of the lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence steamers. From either of these places, it is a short ride to the Falls, and there are different modes of conveyance. The traveller will of course, suit his inclination by choosing that which pleases him best.

