



NIAGARA RIVER

FROM
LAKE TO LAKE.

Original Etchings.

By Amos W. Sangster.

Remarque Copy.

NIAGARA
RIVER AND FALLS
FROM
Lake Erie to Lake Ontario
A SERIES OF
One Hundred and Fifty-three Original Etchings



ETCHED ON COPPER BY AMOS W. SANGSTER
FROM HIS OWN DRAWINGS

EDITED BY JAMES W. WARD, LIBRARIAN GROSVENOR LIBRARY

BUFFALO, N. Y.
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Dedicated

By Permission

and

With Great Respect

to

The Hon. Grover Cleveland

President of the United States

by

His Friend

The Artist.



INTRODUCTORY.

OF THE WORK OF ART here presented to the public, little need be said. Nothing in the way of apology, not much in explanation. It may as well be left to speak for itself. It simply offers to the lovers of nature, and to students of art, a selection of original etchings, all by the same hand, of the splendid scenery of Niagara River. Pictorial illustrations of this beautiful and wonderful River, it may be thought, and truly enough, are no novelty. Pictures and descriptions of its marvelous scenery, its mystic legends, and its historic memorials, are undoubtedly—I might be excused for saying, unfortunately—numerous enough, and quite familiar to the world.

By pen and pencil, by brush and graver, by canvas and photograph, its more prominent and best known attributes and prospects, especially those in the neighborhood of the Great Cataract, have been often narrated and delineated; and its many features of sublimity and loveliness have been from time to time the inspiration of poets and artists, and the bewilderment of impetuous enthusiasts, since that distant day when its first-known civilized discoverer fell on his knees, in speechless emotion, before the unparalleled magnificence and loveliness of the awful torrent.

But “a thing of beauty” is fascinating, certainly in great part, because its varying charms, like those of the moon, or like the group of cloud pictures heliographed in tints of flame around the setting sun, are diversified and revived by constantly occurring changes and surprises. It is true that the fame of Niagara, Queen of Waterfalls, has been made known, in all tongues, to all people. Poets and painters of every measure of audacity, and of various degrees of fitness and fidelity, have ventured on the task of representing, intelligently, its most popularly attractive, and therefore best known, features. But, nevertheless, it is surprisingly true that the pictorial literature of this unparalleled River is meagre and defective. Scarcely excepting so much of it, the greater part, in fact, as is devoted to the Cataract itself and its surrounding or associated scenery.

But were it not so, the present work could exhibit a substantial reason for its existence, and stand upon its originality, inasmuch as it is the only one ever yet attempted, strange as it may appear, possessing its especial characteristics; that is, it is the only one that embraces

in its scope the entire River from Lake to Lake, or that presents the views selected for reproduction, in the effective form of etchings—a form of the graphic arts that secures to the artist capable of making use of it a vitality and freedom of spirit and expression obtainable by no other method.

Niagara River, or Falls, is a theme of which no one will grow weary; considered, even, in its most usual and familiar aspects. It is a story that never will be fully told; a panorama never to be quite unrolled. Its beauty is so luxuriant and affluent, it can be seen only in parts, and described in parts. Few can comprehend it in its entirety. The eye of the observer, wearied with the magnitude and profusion of its allurements, soon comes to rest upon some minor picturesque detail, and he enthusiastically exclaims, "How beautiful!" But another feature of equal fascination soon captures his attention, and of that also his instant impression is, How beautiful! But he can rarely give an account of his impressions. In fact, a view may be equally beautiful to different observers, but for quite different reasons; depending not only upon personal mood and temperament, but also upon actual changes of appearance, due to changes in the angles of observation, to the ever-varying conditions of sky, and cloud, and atmosphere, to the frequent temporary intrusions of unusual objects, and also to variations of a more permanent character, so often occurring, in the direction and quantity of water, and in the positions and aspects of the River's overhanging rocks and banks. To detect and properly estimate, pictorially, such subtle effects as these, is the province of the experienced artist, whose trained eye is capable of selecting the best features, at the most favorable moments; who knows that the Book of Nature is not to be read hastily and superficially; and whose fidelity to truth restrains his fancy, and obliges him to authenticate his impressions by repeated observations. It is only the artist that is able to discern that this erratic and wonderful River, though it maintains a characteristic constancy and unity, nevertheless, develops its diversified scenery in ever-recurring and unexpected variety. Many an admired touch of an artist's hand is due to the fascination and inspiration of a casual glance; like a meteor's burst,

"Ere we have said
Look! look! how beautiful!—'tis fled."

But the artist seizes the effect in its flight, and his pencil gives it similitude and duration. He gives expression and form, simply, to a momentary conception. He cannot, if he would, prevent so much of his personality from entering into his work. Some writer, somewhere, speaks of the "sympathetic absorption"—I should rather say revelation—"of an artist in his subject." There is more of an artist than his tablets and pencil. Touches of ravishing beauty, harmonious associations, abrupt and surprising contrasts, light in darkness; all such effects, that excite our admiration and delight, are the artist's thoughts vivifying and illuminating his work. What we admire in the sketch is the artist's idea; what he felt when he drew it. The satirist says truly:

"He ne'er will as an artist shine
Who copies Nature line by line."

Of the principles to which I have here incidentally referred, these drawings by Mr. Sangster, now for the first time brought to the notice of the lovers of art and nature, may be regarded as at once the suggestion and the illustration. They are artistic productions that will, I think, find eager acceptance as the conscientious and sympathetic work of a true and patient searcher after Nature's spontaneous and unembellished beauty; and their attractiveness has been further enhanced by the elegant method he has adopted for their reproduction. For it must

be remembered that all the views presented in this superb collection have been drawn and etched from Nature by Mr. Sangster's unaided hand; to whom, indeed, the art-world is indebted not only for the original drawings and the engraving of the prints, but, as well, for the entire conception of the whole plan of the work. In fact, the production of these lovely views of the Beautiful River has been his cherished dream and hope for many years; to the realization of which hope he has devoted days and nights of laborious but alluring exploration. He has wandered along its shores from Lake to Lake, drifted upon its restless waters, scaled its precipices, and dreamed in the shadows that lie upon its spray-sprinkled slopes. He has, in a word, studied Niagara, in all seasons and under all conditions; selecting points touched with ideal beauty, and rejecting what was common-place and trivial. The result, there is reason to believe it will be conceded, has been as successful in execution as the plan was felicitous in conception. To all familiar with the varied scenery of Niagara, the spirit and fidelity of these sketches will require no confirmation but their own recollections. To those to whom the wonders of Niagara are still to be revealed, I can only offer the assurance that these charming pictures are actual views of the points and places intended to be represented. To all, the work will have especial merit as a really charming collection of specimens of the effective and popular art of the etcher; an art comparatively new in America, and hitherto unapplied to Niagara. This work will also pleasantly serve to introduce to those to whom he may be still unknown, the name and work of an artist whose versatile ability has already obtained wide-spread acknowledgment.

It should be added, in conclusion, with reference to the press-work of these sheets, that the etchings were entrusted by Mr. Sangster to the tried and skillful hand of Mr. J. H. Daniels, of Boston, the leading plate-printer of the United States. The letter-press work is from the well-known art-printing house of Matthews, Northrup & Co., of Buffalo, and exhibits the high degree of perfection already attained by the printer's art in this City.

JAS. W. WARD.

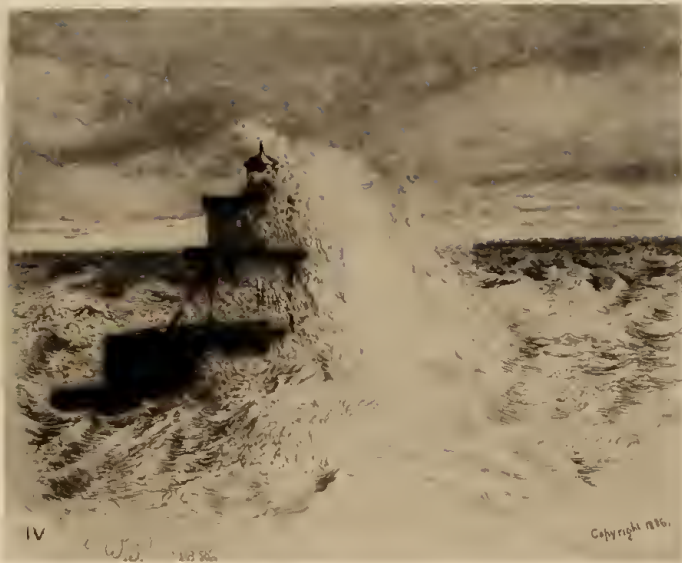
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THE SCENERY of the low-lying belt of shore land that bounds the lower portion of Lake Erie where its rapidly descending waters, flowing between the visibly approaching shores of the United States and Canada, become the Strait, or River, of Niagara, makes no pretension to boldness or sublimity of feature, and has even been described as devoid of any picturesque interest or beauty; a reproach, however, that will scarcely be conceded. Indeed, many really charming effects can be pointed out in the prospect; many pleasing nooks discovered; groups of trees, concealing beneath their shadows the limpid waters of the coves and pools that indent the boulder-strewn shore; green patches of brush overhanging billow-washed beaches; sandy knolls and rocky dykes, against which the rippling surf of the Lake beats and splashes continually; tranquil and misty byways veiled in soft combinations of light and obscurity; the whole forming a connected series of agreeable and harmonious pictures, stretching across the distant horizon, as seen from either bank of the broad and rapidly flowing River; embracing in its graceful sweep many objects and features of a local nature, that add essentially to the variety and picturesqueness of the general landscape.

With the pleasure inspired by the view of a wide expanse of water, lying in repose, there is always associated a placid and soothing sentiment of beauty peculiar to itself, and to which all minds are confessedly susceptible; broken and agitated water, irrespective of its surroundings, possesses, transcendently, a spirit-stirring charm, the influence of which no frank soul can resist.

In fact, the view of Lake Erie from any point in the vicinity of Buffalo will always be found impressive and pleasing. The shadow-dropping clouds that skirt the distant horizon — the spray and sparkle of the laughing ripples, skipping over the rocks and breaking musically upon the shelving beaches — the gray undulating hills, just visible in the misty distance — the towering light-houses and beacons that assure the storm-driven mariner of refuge and



security — the ceaseless shifting and drifting hither and thither of innumerable sail-boats and steamers — the hazy blue of the visible atmosphere that veils and softens the distant inland slopes and downs — the curious display of soaring spires and tower-like stacks that silhouette the smoking city on the clear gray sky, especially at evening — the lovely reflections in the gently-ruffled water of the

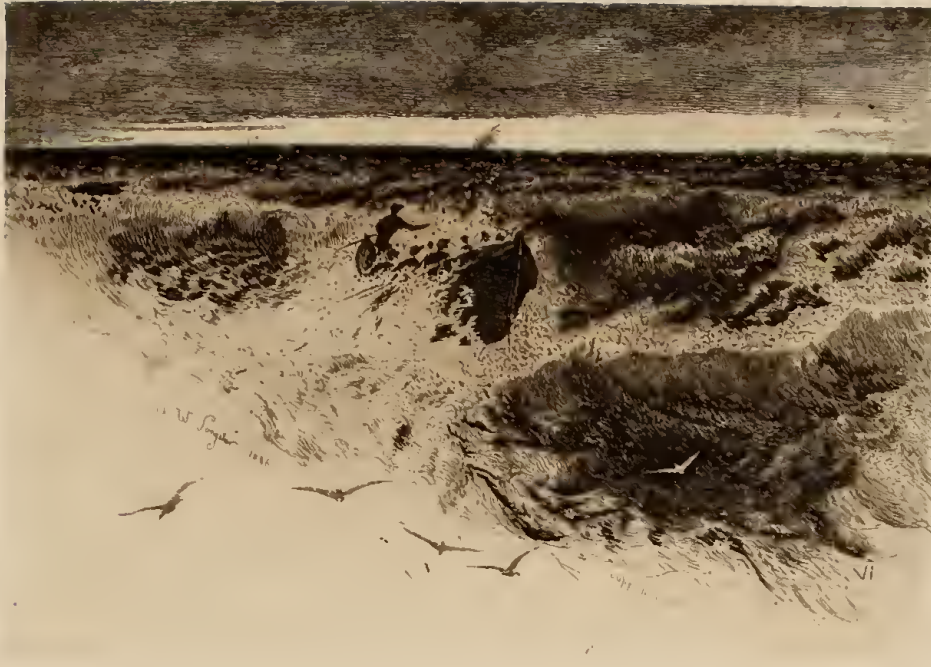
many-tinted and ever-varying cloudlights, that stream over the surface in vanishing and rapidly interchanging glimpses of blue and green and golden yellow bands — surely phenomena and occurrences like these must produce pictures of unwearying variety and charm; awakening in the observer a sense of quiet and restful beauty that swells at moments into admiration and delight.

And under ruder aspects — for the Lake has its humors and does not conceal its irascibility, and the winds are not always gentle with it — and when the storm and the tempest assail it, and the wind-burdened clouds sweep down impetuously upon the terrified water, and the wild gale, cracking its whips of spray, plunges into the vainly wrestling billows, tearing their snowy crests into strings and flocks of foam, then old Erie leaps and roars for joy, and resumes her traditional majesty and glory, terrific to encounter, but exhilarating to witness. The tattered waves hurled by the riotous gale against the rocky walls of the beacon in the outer bay, spring in showers of spray entirely over the lantern, and further on break in long lines of bubbling cascades against the protecting break-waters of the inner harbor. Standing upon one of the city piers, if one will make sure of his head, in a tempestuous hour like this, the Lake on its rollicking revels is a sight worth seeing.

And it is fraught with dangers as well. Dangers imminent and insidious; as thousands of wrecked "toilers of the sea" could testify. The bottom of the Lake is strewn with the relics and débris of many a deplorable disaster, destructive alike to life and property. Many a shattered hulk lies muttering its weird dirge of warning, and bleached and fractured spars stalk like spectral sentinels all along the shore.

In view of the many hazards that attend the navigation of the Great American Lakes, and moved with sympathy for the oft-imperilled mariner, much interest of an organized nature has been awakened in behalf of all such as may be exposed





from day to day to these frequently recurring dangers. In the prosecution of this humane work individual enterprise has happily received the support and co-operative assistance of the General Government, and storm-signal posts and life-saving stations, equipped and manned in the most efficient manner, and supplied with every requisite, and with all approved expedients, are stretched, at convenient and carefully-chosen distances apart, along the whole line of the Lake coast.

In these ever-ready and philanthropic measures for the safety and rescue of the shipwrecked mariner the City of Buffalo has also had its share; it is one of the National life-stations, of the first-class, and Capt. D. P. Dobbins, one of its honored citizens, and inventor of the justly celebrated life-boat that bears his name, himself highly experienced in all coasting and maritime matters, is Superintendent of the Ninth United States Life-Saving District, which includes the shores of Lake Erie in its widely extended jurisdiction. The ingeniously-constructed boat which Capt. Dobbins has contributed to this important service is considered, by experts familiar with its peculiar merits, to be one of the most perfect of its kind. In the confident words of its designer, it is "self-righting, self-bailing, and insubmersible." It is strong, portable, easily managed, and may be speedily launched through the most violent surf, carrying with easy control fifty or more persons. Having been successfully tested upon occasions of great severity of weather, and under conditions of extreme peril, this unrivalled boat has been pronounced by competent official authority, superior to all others with which it has been brought in competition. No higher commendation can be conferred upon any invention designed for practical service in the affairs of life, than the assurance, from actual experience, that it will thoroughly perform its duty. This testimony has been frequently bestowed upon Capt. Dobbins' life-boat, by persons quite competent to estimate properly the difficulties and dangers to which it has on several occasions been exposed; always proving itself staunch and trustworthy.



TO ONE taking only a hasty glance over the eventful history of the eastern end of Lake Erie, there will appear, with marked prominence, three graphic occurrences, distantly consecutive, it is true, but locally related, and of notable interest in connection with the romantic annals of Buffalo. They would seem to be entitled to brief mention here. Of but slight mention indeed, anywhere, heretofore.

There was a time, long passed out of present recollection, when these shore-lines of the Lake and the low head-lands of the River presented a very different appearance from what they do now. When the astonished gaze of the early explorers of these mysterious and unknown waters first fell upon the amazing scene, these hillsides and banks were covered to the water's edge with a dense and almost impenetrable forest: the gnarled and rocking branches of majestic oaks, beeches, and tall lindens and maples, were tangled together in an intricate mass by the cable-like stems of the grape, the celastrus, the ampelopsis, and other woody climbers, beneath the shadowy shelter of which prowled the bear and the wolf and the catamount and other predaceous animals. The whole prospect was wild and treacherous. Birds of prey hovered over the breezy tree-tops, and innumerable water-fowl swam unconcernedly in the reedy marshes of the coves and bayous of the Lake. But for fuel and food, for security and shelter, and other needs and conveniences of man, all this has long since disappeared.

But two hundred years ago, this dark leafy curtain of the primeval forest still cast its shadows over the sandy flats that obstructed the mouth of Buffalo Creek, warning the too adventurous pioneer of the perils and infections it so sombrely concealed. With such surroundings, one day in August, in 1679, an Indian, of the confederated tribes that then had possession of this wild region of the Lakes, stood upon a hillock of sand, in a sunlit clearing near the mouth of the sluggish Creek, leaning upon a dilapidated French fire-arm, gazing fixedly at an object that held him motionless with surprise and wonder. White caps were gamboling gaily over the wind-broken surface of the water; rabbits were burrowing under the fallen leaves, and squirrels were frisking over the swaying branches of the adjacent trees, beneath which, on a lichen-covered log, a red fox, with his nose upon his paws, lay crouching in simulated slumber. The man's figure, dressed in the scanty costume of his



people, was inclined forward in the eager attitude of curiosity and astonishment. And, indeed, what he saw there, would have compelled the attention of a much more experienced observer, had one been there to witness the strange event then taking place.

It was Robert La Salle's great day; the day of his triumph over accumulated disasters and discouragements; a triumph over difficulties and oppositions that only a brave and patient heart could have survived. What the genius of the intelligent and energetic adventurer had devised, his perseverance had finally accomplished. Indian canoes, and such trivial craft as he had discovered paddling about the shores of the Lake, he saw clearly enough could be of no service in any serious attempt at navigation, and he determined to construct a small schooner for the purpose. Procuring with much difficulty, and after many discouraging delays, the requisite material, and hauling it, by aid of some sailors and Indians, to a point a few miles above the Falls, about, as seems most probable, where the village stands that now bears his name, he set his men to work; and after many days of incredible patience and labor, the vessel was finished and launched into the swift current of the River. Here new difficulties and delays awaited the enterprise, for the little schooner's sails were no match for the descending force of the rapids. Tow lines manned by stout arms came to the rescue, and succeeded in dragging her to a point, where, finally, the approving winds from the west filled her white sails and bore her, in triumph, upon the unfriendly waters of the Lake. Truly was it a day of wonder. The event then disclosed was one of far-reaching significance; the fore-runner of results impossible to have been imagined by the simple savage who stood there in sullen amazement, muttering his monotonous croak of wonder and distrust.

The comely and trimly-rigged little schooner, with her fair suit of sails filled with the freshening breeze, sped gallantly upon her adventurous course. Pennants fluttered from her foretop—banners waved from her prow—and the roar of cannon and musketry pealed from her careening deck, arousing old Erie's astonished echoes from their primeval slumbers. And



so began the navigation and commerce of the Great American Lakes. Not, it is sadly necessary to add, without disaster. Infuriated Eric resented the intrusion. "La Griffon" reached Green Bay in safety, but on her return voyage was lost; as was supposed, in a storm; but there was no man left to tell the tale.

A little over a hundred years brings us to another interesting event, in the stirring history of Buffalo Creek. It was in 1791; time had wrought its whirl of chances and changes, and many things had happened. The influences of the new civilization were making themselves felt in various ways, not always exemplary. The march of improvement had penetrated the wilderness. Much of the primeval forest had disappeared; the clearing about the Creek had been greatly extended; and a goodly and cultivable land was beginning to attract speculation and enterprise. And one day, and upon the same spot upon which the Iroquois had stood and watched the progress of the booming "Griffon" speeding to its deplorable fate, stood now another and quite different figure. It was that of a man as different in character as in figure. He stood there with an eye to business inducements, and being a man of foresight and decision, and captivated by the encouraging prospect of navigable waters and broad pastures, and weary with his tedious and adventurous journey from the sterile and pixy-haunted crags of the Hudson, he determined, with honest Dutch assurance, to plant himself and his potential fortunes, then and there, upon the wretched sand-bank upon which he stood pondering. The outlook was not exhilarating; concurrent probabilities were not in the ascendant. But everything must have a beginning, even Buffalo; and having made up his mind, and deliberately sketched his plans, he sent East for the needed material, and dug out his boulders and hewed his timber, and soon saw completed a good and sufficient house, with a roomy shop for trading purposes attached—the first structure in the resemblance of a house erected by a white man on the site of the present goodly City of Buffalo. Around him, relieved here and there by a few not very extensive clearings and a passable road or two, was the wilderness, and his only neighbors were some nomadic families of Seneca Indians, constituents of the Great Sachem of the Wolves, the renowned and really princely Red Jacket; a "wide-awake" man, but whose territorial rights do not seem, in those early days, to have been of that self-evident sort that the too rapaciously enterprising pale-faced land-jobbers of the period felt under very urgent



obligation to respect. But there was peace in the land, and recognized rights of domain, and possession, of some definable sort; and it came to pass, at all events, about a hundred years ago, that one Cornelius Winne, a sturdy and responsible adventurer from the region of the Catskills, quietly established his abode and his business on the banks of Buffalo Creek, with all needed papers, and the possibilities and potencies of the future City of Buffalo, in the capacious pockets of his "bulbous-bottomed" breeches.

One hundred and eleven years, of memorable import in the chronicles of nations, intervened between the passage of the first sail-boat across the mouth of Buffalo Creek and the erection of the first white man's dwelling upon its wind-swept bluffs. Subsequent events moved more rapidly. The village of the Creek began soon to assume an air of pretension and importance; houses and inhabitants multiplied, roads began to be called streets, and neighbors talked encouragingly about the prospects of trade and crops; evidently Cornelius had done a good thing. But prosperity did not come at a bound; it was a day of small things for a while, and progress was still slow. But there was pluck and confidence, and encouraging results began to appear, when war came, and with it confusion and trouble. And there was mustering of men, and marching to battle in defence of the frontier; 130 men from the heroic little village, old and young, went out upon the war-path. And the invaders came upon the defenceless town, and there was terror and flight, and bloody conflict, for miles around, with Indians and English; and the vision of "a lieutenant with a squad of men" rushing about in the midst of the shrieking panic and terror with flaming fire-brands, which soon laid the town in ashes—only half a dozen houses escaping the conflagration. The disaster was cruelly disheartening, and the loss seriously crippling. But the courage and energy of the inhabitants did not fail them. Though war was still devastating the frontier in all directions, they took friendly counsel together, swept up the ashes, and joined hands and means for the rebuilding of the town, and, as usual, on a better and broader scale. And when, after another year of calamity and bloodshed, peace was proclaimed in the land, Buffalo was visibly once more on the road to assured prosperity.

Three years after these occurrences, and about twenty-eight from the day the judicious Winne, building wiser than he knew, laid in solitude the foundation of the City of Buffalo, and upon the same spot upon which he had stood, enveloped in smoke, forecasting the probabilities of his project, one day in August, a little flaxen-haired boy, apparently in charge of a buxom Indian girl, who squatted by his side in the warm sand, sat upon the end of a storm-splintered log that lay half buried in the sand, watching, with more than

childish interest, the slow and labored motion of a small steamboat struggling up the rapid current of the River, which, for many hours, so feeble was the power of the little craft's over-taxed energies, resisted and delayed its passage into the Lake. But the boat, the "Walk-in-the-Water," the first vessel moved by steam to engage in the already active and thrifty commerce of the Lakes, possessed a special attraction for the boy, as he sat there watching its approach, less interested in its spasmodic efforts to overcome the refractory current of the River than in the bold and curious figure-head it bore at its prow. It was an object he had seen before, as appeared by the piece of paper that lay upon his knees, upon which, as the astonished group of villagers that stood around him had slyly discovered, he had drawn, with the stump of a pencil, a rude but really obvious sketch of the figure-head that had so absorbed his attention. This incident of the infant artist, associated as it is with three memorable epochs in the eventful annals of Lake Erie—the first sail-boat on its waters, the first house on the site of Buffalo, and the first steamboat at its dock—gains an additional interest in the fact that this historical boy, born in Buffalo in the midst of the calamities and desolations of war, was James H. Beard, whose natural tendency to art, thus precociously exhibited, and cultivated and expanded in after life with that patience and energy of purpose that characterizes true genius, brought him at last the honor and fortune due to an artist, whose acknowledged ability has so largely contributed to the advancement of American art.

It would have gratified a pleasant fancy, if I could have left it on record here, that the distinguished painter I have alluded to was the first resident artist to exercise his talents in the then nascent, but auspicious, field of Buffalo fine arts. But it is quite clear that he will have to share the honor with the unknown, but doubtless very respectable, sculptor whose dexterous hand chiseled the shapely figure-head that first inspired his awakened genius. What a curious coincidence of relationship is here presented to one's imagination. Genius and steamboat; both started together on their respective and unrevealed careers; and they had a parallel and contemporaneous development; keeping pace in historic importance, and, though by distinct and special paths, winning high places in the world's esteem. One expands into a splendid fleet of steamships, transporting the produce and wealth of nearly half the American continent, from end to end of our great inland water system—and the other, with concurrent ambition, and intent only on its own alluring inspirations, attaining the goal of success and recognition towards which it struggled.

The short-winded "Walk-in-the-Water," for the prospective needs of steam-navigation, was scarcely more capable than the inexperienced child for the work of an artist; but the immense enginery and traffic of the Lakes was the outgrowth of that unpromising beginning, as the accomplished artist was evolved from the artless boy.





AS WE MUSINGLY SAUNTER along the gravelly banks of the Wonderful River, it is impossible to put aside the reflection, that the interest we feel in its amazing annals, written and unwritten, recent and retrospective, is inseparably connected with by-gone and archaic times and occurrences, which seem to supersede all the more prosy and local considerations that first invoke our interest, and carry us back in fancy to far-off prehistoric eras and conditions, that charm and bewilder us, as if by some occult and irresistible spell. To this subtle influence, we willingly yield ourselves captive, until we stand, in imagination, in a world of the past; awe-struck, in the presence

of the grand and gorgeous reality of a fully developed and exuberant life; so far distant on time's appalling track, that our knowledge of it is derived only from unearthed vestiges, and the self-impressed records and memorials concealed in stony tablets that lie beneath the soil that now supports a floral and animal existence of quite another and feebler character.

Of the presence of a vast and wide-spread ocean of ice, that for many long ages submerged and devastated the entire northern half of our continent, I have already pointed to the unmistakable evidences. But we may also know if we read aright the same unimpeachable record, that long before these invading mountains of ice crept from their arctic beds and ground their irresistible and destructive way down the gentle declivity of the continent, the entire region thus for untold ages smothered and overwhelmed in this crystal mantle, was basking in a genial climate, and exulting in a vitality so luxuriant and glorious that the entire northern territory was profusely covered with a rank and gigantic vegetation; consisting of deciduous trees of immense growth, rugged vines and flowering plants of lavish variety, generally of species known now, with a few significant exceptions, only by their buried and transformed remains; or still more unmistakably, by the perfect and beautiful



impressions of their leaves and seeds stamped upon the shaley rocks and compressed clays, that then formed the rich soil in which they grew. All this splendor of arboreal growth is not only quite unknown in the same region now,—grand and luxuriant as we know the vast forests of the north and west to be—but is unsurpassed in profusion and beauty by that of any existing richness of forest growth on the face of the globe.

Impressed with the startling thought that the spot upon which we now stand, and all the vast territory north of us, was once and for many resplendent ages, thus arrayed in the glory of this gigantic vegetation, till the ice torrents and arctic glaciers poured down upon it and swept it from existence, have we only a smile for the homely Hans-Breitian question, where is that forest now? And still more astounding, where are the superb and stately creatures that roamed and ruled beneath its verdant shelter? And before what human eyes was all this majesty of beauty and vigor displayed? The dead past has buried its dead well; some silicified relics and crumbling bones, some cave-preserved skulls, and teeth, some exquisite impressions in the rocks



and solidified sands—these alone tell the marvellous story of the vanished pageant; so utterly has all this transcendent glory departed. And when was this, will it further be asked? He who attempts to measure time-distance, in the ever receding direction of such mighty phenomena as these, with the delusive methods of historical chronology, will find, when wearied with his trivial computations, that he has but stepped beneath the outlying shadows of the impenetrable wilderness, whose majestic mystery still baffles and restrains his temerity.

But we must leave these far-off periods. We cannot tarry to see these ice-crag melt away, nor wait till the dismantled earth re-clothes itself in its garments of green; nor shall we linger to watch the infant Niagara plunge over its craggy harrier into the slowly sinking Ontario, somewhere about the present site of Lewiston. These are interesting epochs in Niagara's ancient records, and the last one brings us down to within twenty thousand years of our own time, and may be regarded as comparatively recent. As we hasten on we get glimpses now of nomadic hordes of stone-chipping savages, wandering beneath the newly grown forests, and along the reed and fern covered banks of turbid streams, hunting the mastodon and the bison, and gigantic stags and bears, that then roamed in herds over this whole northern land. We must speed down the centuries; making no attempt to count them, until we reach the period when our proud and ancient River, had excavated inch by inch its long deep cañon, back through its massive bed of limestone and grit, to about its present position between the two Lakes. On the way we hear of the Eries and the Hurons, and the Algonquins and Iroquois, and other invading clans of the aboriginal inhabitants of the North, endeavoring to exterminate each other in their long and bloody struggle for supremacy, and for the possession of the vast Canadian Wilderness. Further down the stream of time, we find at last more peacefully disposed tribes occupying the lands bordering on the



River; and then we meet with European missionaries and explorers, with their allies and satellites the traders and fortune-hunters, traversing the wilderness in pursuit, not signally successful, of mineral and territorial wealth, and the subjugation of the confiding and defenseless inhabitants. Following in the wake of these intrepid adventurers, we discover also thrifty bands of British traders and trappers, bringing merchandise of various sorts; trinkets and blankets, powder and whiskey, and other civilizing agencies for the moral suasion of the aboriginal intelligence. Knavery and strife follow in due time; and the interposition of military protection becomes necessary; and block-houses are erected and garrisoned, and picketed posts are established along the principal roads and water-courses, as places of shelter and refuge, alike for traders and explorers, and armed troops.

It was under such prudential necessity as this, that at length Fort Eric came to be established on the thickly-wooded banks of the Lake that gives it its name. There

seems to be no definite mention of this ill-starred Fort at an earlier date than 1764; though there are intimations and traditions of an earlier origin; indeed, there is a probability of its having been in existence in some ambiguous state, at the period of Pouchot's visit to Canada in 1761. It was at first a very insignificant affair; a rough wooden structure built by the English as a trading post, and a place of refuge when too hotly pursued by their enemies the French and their Indian allies. Accessible accounts of its subsequent history are singularly meagre, and very contradictory, but none the less, traditionally and anecdotically, interesting. There are reasons for the belief that it has not always occupied its present site; a probability that in a measure helps to explain the otherwise quite unaccountable discrepancies that occur in the few maps and narratives that remain as records of its early history. Near the close of the last century we find it described, wherever it may have stood at that period, as a construction so weak and unserviceable, that the military authorities determined to remove it "some distance" up the Lake. It was doubtless in this inefficient condition, when the Duke de la Rochefoucault saw it, who described it as merely "some roughly formed wooden houses, surrounded with tottering palisades," and without ramparts or any other protective works. "The term 'Fort,'" he adds, "cannot with any correctness be applied to the place." The American Colonel Procter, then reconnoitring in this portion of the frontier, in a despatch to the Secretary of War, in 1791, informs him that the British had already, at that date, "laid the foundations





for a new fortress some distance higher up the Lake, beyond the reach of thirteen-inch shells; not being able to maintain their present position." It would seem to be a fact, therefore, that the "quadrangular walls of stone," of which we still see the decayed remains, and the other "strong works" which the British, in 1806, certainly constructed somewhere, were erected on the "new foundations" referred to by Colonel Procter. But the evidence obtainable on this point lacks definiteness and is somewhat conflicting. The most interesting events connected with the chronicles of the Fort, however, are those that illustrate the important part it played in the military operations on the northern frontier during the war of 1812. When President Madison's flying ponies carried to the alarmed backwoodsmen, the unwelcome news of the declaration of war against Great Britain, the Fort was in possession of a small British garrison. But its supplies being quite inadequate for its defence, and the British commander of the frontier forces fearing an attack from the American side, and needing the men elsewhere, in the spring of 1813, ordered its abandonment and destruction. The magazines and other important portions of the structure were accordingly blown up and demolished. Soon after its evacuation it was taken possession of by an effective body of American troops who crossed the River from Buffalo and Black Rock, under command of Colonel Preston. The new occupants immediately set about the work of repair, and soon had the shattered structures restored, and the whole position strengthened and enlarged. But the Americans could not long spare the men required for its defence, and in a few months it was again abandoned. Not long after, a small British garrison resumed possession, and held it without molestation until the beginning of July 1814, when Major-General Brown, then in command of the troops at Buffalo and Black Rock, acting under direction of the Secretary of war, and aided by Generals Scott and Porter and the regiments under their command, crossed the River with a force of 3,000 men, and by a well devised manœuvre, and under cover of the night, captured it without the necessity of firing a shot; the garrison surrendering on summons. Thus like a foot-ball, on the Niagara campus, was this stranded waif of fortune,



subject to the chance claim of every new comer, tossed back and forth between the contending parties engaged in the brief struggle for the control of the Canada frontier. It was the scene and the occasion of many a bloody conflict, and was witness to the prowess and valor of many a gallant heart,

"that found on Erie's gore-stained beach,
An honored bed."

Having thus secured possession of the Fort, on the following day, General Brown, regarding this invasion as the first effectual step in the then proposed "conquest of Canada," with 3,000 men, commenced his adventurous and eventful march down the River towards Fort George; the momentous consequences of which movement he could in no wise have conjectured. He did not reach the British stronghold at the mouth of the River; but the ghastly and decisive occurrences at Chippewa Creek, Lundy's Lane, and finally at Fort Erie again, rendered the accomplishment of that purpose unnecessary. As is too well known to justify the repetition of the narrative in detail here, on this march, and at the points just named, took place in that fearful summer of 1814, the pluckiest and most intrepidly sustained struggles of the war. Although shattered and disordered by the bravery and severity of the American attack, the British commander, General Drummond, was tempted by the arrival of reinforcements to rally his retreating troops for another attempt to recover the ground lost at Lundy's Lane; but again, and finally, were his weary veterans repulsed. Fortified by nerve and resolution, writes Mr. Holley, Niagara's poetic and trusty historian, the grim inspiration of English obstinacy and Scotch tenacity, rallied for this last attack. "It was made with desperate energy with both bullets and bayonets, the latter being often crossed under the ghastly sheets of flame that fitfully illumined the thick darkness that enveloped them. But neither obstinate courage, nor tenacious endurance availed. The fierceness of the struggle





made it short; and when it ceased, our war-grimed soldiers, after twelve hours of incessant fighting, found themselves masters of the field; it being midnight when the din of battle ceased. The hour was made still more impressive by the deep diapason of the Great Cataract, which sounded its ghostly dirge for the dead, and its solemn chorus to the groans of the wounded and dying."

Both sides suffered severe and about equal losses. It was probably the most appalling and obstinate engagement of any recorded in history. The American Generals, Brown and Scott, were seriously wounded, and the troops were ordered to retire to Fort Erie. General Drummond followed with a strong force soon after, and laid the place under siege, taking his position two miles below the Fort, and behind a thick shelter of trees; under concealment of which he erected his batteries and planted his siege guns, in active preparation for an early and sharp attack; to which, after numerous irritating and annoying skirmishes with the American pickets and reconnoitering parties, he finally advanced, on the 14th of August, and towards midnight commenced the assault with deadly impetuosity. A fierce and disastrous conflict, lasting throughout the night, fitfully illuminated by the incessant blaze of cannon and the flashing of musketry, resulted in driving back the distracted and frustrated assailants;

both parties suffering fearful losses. For the combatants were equally matched in bravery and endurance. In the narrow space, "a dreadful interval," the contending lines,

" * * * front to front presented,
Stood in terrible array."

The Fort at this time was in command of General Gaines, supported by the brigades of Generals Ripley and Peter B. Porter. The vigor and determination of the assailants, led by General Drummond in person, was appalling. Again and again forced back into the woods by the unyielding energy of the besieged, four times the British regulars rushed upon the blazing wall of fire that held them at bay. The deafening reports of muskets and ar-

tillery, writes Major Douglas in his reminiscences, "were blended in one continuous roar;" not unlike the rattling "double-drag of a drum-corps." The unrelieved horror of the wild havoc was suddenly intensified, in the very height of the tumult, by the accidental explosion of one of the magazines adjoining a stone bastion temporarily in possession of the besiegers. The effect of this startling disaster was tremendous and decisive; being fatal to a large number of the British assailants. The on-rushing troops, thus suddenly arrested and thrown into disorder, were with little difficulty driven from the field by the promptly renewed activity of the American batteries. After the necessary attention to the dead and wounded, the Americans were soon engaged in the work of re-constructing the battered and demolished batteries and walls of the Fort; for the British commander had by no means abandoned his intention to retake it at all hazards. During three weeks following this repulse, he several times renewed the attempt, and with such energy and determination that by the first week in September, his battalions were well advanced towards the walls of the Fort, and obstinately handled night and day. To its brave and imperilled defenders, the situation became alarming. Its weak defences were rapidly giving way under the terrific bombardment to which the place was exposed. The destruction of the garrison seemed inevitable. In this emergency, the engineering skill and military genius of of General Peter B. Porter came to the rescue. A plan of action, previously devised by him was now accepted by the council of officers to whom it was submitted and energetically carried out. Under the General's direction it was determined to make a sally in force upon the assailants, capture their numerous batteries, and by a sudden and simultaneous charge upon the several divisions of their really formidable lines, drive them from their position. Every detail of the movement was carried out, with such precision and promptness, that the besiegers, taken by surprise, and overwhelmed by the celerity and impetuosity of the attack, gave way, and were forced back to their encampment. The strife was hot and deadly, but of brief duration; and the achievement one of the most splendid in the history of modern warfare. Three days after the British troops were marched to Fort George, and the Americans remained in possession of their prize. The following month the troops were removed to winter quarters at Buffalo, and the Fort torn to pieces and demolished; and in this useless condition it fell again into the hands of its rightful proprietors. And thus ends, told here with compulsory brevity,

"this strange eventful history."





UPON a prominent rock-supported, though not very steep, bluff, that rises quite a fair height above the Niagara shore, and stretches like a green ridge along the southwestern corner of the city, stand the unpicturesque ruins of Fort Porter; a place of far more importance, topographically, and of greater capabilities as a post of defence, than would be supposed from a view of its present abandoned and dilapidated condition; a condition, happily, soon to be remedied; the Secretary of War having ordered its immediate restoration and enlargement, with a view to its permanent and efficient occupancy, by a competent body of U. S. Troops.

Naturally, and especially since the beautiful green esplanade adjoining it on the east has been attached to the City Park System, the position is very attractive and pleasing; affording a charming variety of beautiful prospects, and many far-reaching views of both Lake and River. It is the one chief point of picturesque interest to which all visitors to the City are taken by their resident friends. And its many beauties justify the surprised exclamations of delight and admiration bestowed upon it by complaisant strangers. In whatever direction the eye of the sympathetic observer turns, over land or over water, there springs to view a succession of pictures of singularly diversified attractiveness and brightness. It is a glorious place for the loiterer and dreamer; for there is a lavish supply of such stuff as dreams are made of associated with the surrounding region, which, as far as the view extends, in almost any direction, is fertile in reminiscences of exploration and adventure, and prolific in traditional and provincial lore. Vestiges of vanished generations; memories of heroic deeds; ever green chronicles of illustrious and honored names; the wonder-waking trail of the spectral past; such are the inspirations that come to us from every bank and rock, and grove and pathway, that enters so pleasingly into the composition of the tranquil landscape. But occurrences and activities of more recent dates have also left here their impress, and equally invite our attention and contribute to our enjoyment. We see, at this moment, the broad stream before us enlivened by passing water-craft, of different descriptions; ferry boats, sailing yachts, and small row-boats, scudding and paddling and steaming about in considerable numbers. The small boats and sculls, just here, have a pretty hard and struggling time of it, as the current of the River at this point begins to move with increased rapidity; rushing down its impatient and perilous course, in fact,

at the rate of over seven miles an hour; though before it reaches Grand Island, some ten miles below, its velocity becomes reduced to only two and a half miles an hour; and there the small boats have a more comfortable crossing.

Just below us, on the River, and drifting towards the International Bridge, that spans the River so gracefully and lightly, about a mile farther down, we see a fine sight; a fleet of five large and shapely barques heavily-laded with sawn lumber. The vessels move easily with the current, but they are attached by long tow-lines to each other, and from the bow of the leader to the bustling, smoke-enveloped little tug, that keeps them in line and aids their progress. If we turn to the left, towards the Lake, we shall see, just entering the head of the River, another smoking tug, dragging into the current, three other similar vessels, also deeply loaded with lumber, the broad piles of which completely cover the decks. These indications of business activity, and especially of the enormous trade in lumber of which this short River is the principal channel, are but instances of similar spectacles to be seen on these waters, and even, at times, of still greater magnitude, almost every day, for six months of the year. These vessels are on their way to Tonawanda, a



busy town of rapidly advancing importance, situated on the River bank at the mouth of Tonawanda Creek, about ten miles below our present position. This stirring place, is the great lumber mart of the State, from which is annually distributed, by water and rail, over 500,000,000 feet of lumber, chiefly pine in the shape of heavy timber and rough planks and boards; though a large proportion of it first goes through the local manufacturing establishments. This remarkable town, already distinguished for its enterprise, and for the large capital and shrewd intelligence engaged in the management of its immense annual business, is one of the surprises and commercial curiosities of our beautiful River, and well repays the visitor's inspection of its massive piles and heaps of sweet-smelling wood, and its humming saw mills, and huge rattling factories of boxes and shingles, and planed flooring. This is an activity in which, of course Buffalo takes a hand, and much of the business is under the management of men who have their residence in that city. The fleet of barques that attracted our notice a few moments since, are now approaching the Bridge, the revolving girder, or draw of which, is, as we see, already turning on its central pivot pier to admit them. It is worth noting how smoothly and firmly the draw,



362 feet in length, swings on its turn-table, without sag or deflection of any kind. The whole structure is an unusually perfect example of the Pratt quadrangular Truss Bridge; a superstructure of riveted wrought iron, resting on heavy cut stone piers. There are six of these piers, and two massive abutments for the shore ends. The entire length of the roadway of the bridge is 3,652 feet, about one third of which is by embankment across Squaw Island. This fine Bridge, the only entrance into Canada of the immense transportation business of the Grand Trunk Railroad, was built by English capital, under the supervision of the principal contractor, Col. C. S. Gzowski of Toronto, aided by an able staff of Engineers, of which Mr. E. P. Hannaford was chief. The structure has been much, and very deservedly, admired, for its plain but elegant simplicity, no less than for its thoroughly tested strength and stability. Its erection was determined on, and even commenced, under the most discouraging difficulties, and in spite of much openly declared and persistently urged opposition. But there was a will enlisted in the enterprise, that could only be deterred by the impossible; and the genius and energy of the principal promoter and contractor of the undertaking, Col. Gzowski, finally triumphed over all obstacles, both natural and frivolous, and in less than three years from the removal of the first barrow of earth, the work was accomplished; and on the 27th day of October 1873, the first locomotive, under direction of an engineer of the Grand Trunk Railroad of Canada, crossed the bridge without a throb or tremor.

Returning to our point of view upon the green and breezy escarpment of the Fort terrace, we observe still other, and equally interesting evidences of affluence and business thrift and enterprise, that invite inquiry, and testify to the vast amount of energy and shrewdly directed tact, that for so many busy years has been engaged in devising and directing the various industries by which all this solid and splendid prosperity has been achieved. A village of one or two thousand pioneer settlers, however industrious, however high and hopeful in their expectations, could never have become, in the period of two generations, an influential city of two hundred and fifty thousand people, without the co-operation of sagacious heads with willing and dexterous hands. Skillful labor was needed, truly enough; not much can be accomplished, in this world, without that; but the nimble functions of foresight and push were quite as indispensable, to enable any community to bring into existence such mighty agencies as are to be discerned even within the limited scope of our present range of observation. We see steamboats of every capacity hurrying to and fro on Lake and River; and bustling and screaming tug-boats, dragging out of the city harbor half a score of heavily freighted vessels, of all burdens, varying from

300 tons to 3000, which are soon to be delivered over to the treacherous, but generally favorable, gales of the open Lake; while at our feet flow the quiet waters of the broad and world-renowned Erie Canal, the broadest, longest, deepest, and most commercially serviceable, artificial water-way on this continent, considering only the part it has performed, during the 60 years of its life, in the eastward transportation of the annual produce of the vast grain fields and timber forests of the West. Reflecting on the drowsy plodding toil of this lowly ally of human enterprise it may be allowed to have fulfilled the promises of its projectors, and to have well earned, at last, its freedom: freedom, as at present, for whoever chooses to navigate its peaceful current; the freedom of a public highway.

Its great rival, the splendid steel-linked, knightly Railroad, that runs by its side for over 350 miles, whose echoing trumpet-blasts of warning and defiance hourly proclaim it the master of the situation, and champion of the road, claims our notice also, as a feature of some consequence in the circuit of our present survey. The New York Central Railroad beyond all cavil, deserves its world-wide celebrity. In strength of construction, and in perfection of appliances, as well as in methods for effecting security and speed, and comfort of travel, this superb road has no superior on this continent. It has four steel tracks, reaching from Buffalo to the Hudson River, two for freight transportation and two for the exclusive use of passenger trains; a provision which insures safety from collisions, and greatly expedites the transit. The high position attained, and the conceded success of this grand highway, which connects the Great Rivers and Lakes of the western half of our country with the sea-ports of the Atlantic, are commensurate with the thoroughness of its organization and the excellence of its management. The portion of the road here seen, is only its special diversion to Niagara Falls; to which place the Erie Railroad, which skirts the city along



its eastern and northern boundary, and the Grand Trunk Road of Canada, which, with the popular Canada Southern, crosses the International Bridge from Black Rock to the quiet little village of Victoria, on the opposite bank of the River, also run frequent daily trains to and from Buffalo. Travel by railroad between these two points began, it should be mentioned, in 1836, which was eleven years after the arrival at Buffalo of the first boat to reach the city by the Erie Canal; an event duly celebrated by powder and banners and speeches. The general aspect of the whole surrounding landscape as viewed from the River, or from our present position upon this fine bluff, was quite different, fifty years ago, from what it is now. And there was no Fort here at that time; not even a battery; though the eligibility of the situation for the purposes of a National military post, had already attracted the attention of Col. Jos. G. Totten, Chief of U. S. Engineers; but it was not until the spring of 1841, after a more thorough and careful survey of the site, that its purchase was recommended by the War Department, and authorized by an act of Congress, which appropriated for the purpose the sum of \$50,000. The land was held by several private owners, citizens of Buffalo, and was sold to the Government in parcels, at an aggregate cost of about \$20,000, including the two story embattled stone residence of Col. James Mackaye to whom about two thirds of the tract purchased by the U. S. had belonged. The final transfers of the whole tract of about 28 acres to the possession of the United States, including the title acquired by patent from the State of New York, of the portion it held under its original Canal reservations, were not completed till the fall of 1842. Work upon the construction of the Fort was commenced the following year, under the personal supervision of Capt. W. D. Fraser of the U. S. Engineers, who, after many retarding vexations, delivered the structure ready for occupancy, to the War Department, in the fall of 1846; the stone mansion of Col. Mackaye, becoming, with some few alterations, the residence and head-quarters of the commandant of the Post, as it still continues to be.

The Fort proper, or redoubt, rather—for it had neither the magnitude nor the strength of a fortress—consisted of a deeply sunk keep, or tower, sixty feet square, and over seventy feet in height, from the bottom of the excavation in which it stood. It was built of cut stone columns, and covered with six feet of earth, resting on a thick coating of mastic and gravel, its exposed surface smoothly finished with green sodded turf. This central tower, or redoubt, was surrounded on all sides by a quadrangular walled breast-work and parapet, provided with flagged traverse circles for carrying an intended armament of 32 guns. Along the inner sides of this parapet, was laid a banquette, or covert-way, connected by draw-bridges to the central redoubt, which was two stories in construction, and its walls



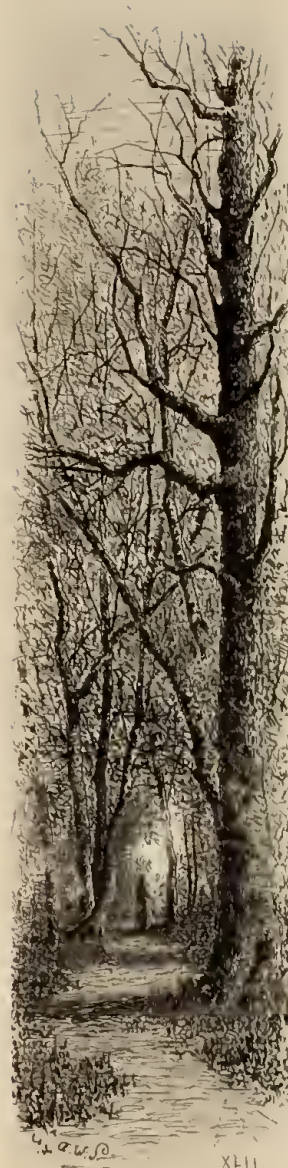


pierced by loop-holes in each of its four sides, for the use of musketry. Within this tower were the men's quarters, and the magazines and store-rooms for a garrison of three hundred men. The whole work, but little more than a well constructed, casemated, bomb-proof battery, was designed for an armament of 39 guns; 13 on each of the two sides that commanded the Lake and the River, 3 on each of the other sides, 3 on its north-eastern angle, and one on each corner of the central tower, in connection with its bomb-proof roof. By this disposition of its armament, every approach to the Fort, by land or water, would have been guarded, securely enough, against the advance of infantry and light artillery; but under seige, or any serious and well-equipped attack, by land or water, no commander would be willing to expose his men to the destructive assaults of the missiles and appliances of modern warfare, in so insecure a shelter. Its defensive strength, however, was never put to trial; nor were the guns supplied by the War Department for its armament, ever mounted. They lay piled up about the walls, and in other parts of the city, unused, till 1862, when they were removed to Washington, and were soon effectually heard from in the active part they afterward took in the defense of the Union.



During the war the place remained simply a garrisoned rendezvous and recruiting station for the United States troops; while the open ground around it was utilized as a temporary drilling camp for State volunteers. By a fire, at night, which originated in some accident, in one of the storage rooms of the redoubt, on the 24th of November 1863, it was burnt, and its usefulness, for any defensive purposes, quite destroyed; and it has remained a ruin ever since. After 15 years of disuse and abandonment—excepting the use of the barracks for temporarily quartering U. S. troops, withdrawn from active service at other posts,—the War Department has at last ordered the restoration and improvement of the place, a work which is not, however, to include the reconstruction of the keep, or tower. It is quite probable, rather, that what remains of that structure, will be entirely removed, and the place put in condition to be maintained, with more suitable and sightly quarters, for officers and men, as a garrisoned post; but in a shape more effective and creditable than ever before, notwithstanding the demolition of the so called Old Fort; the memory of which, and of its many pleasant associations, must long be perpetuated by its familiar and honorable name; which will, of course, still remain attached to the post, whatever destiny may attend it.

But we must tarry no longer on this interesting spot, though much remains to be pointed out. We may take a parting glance, as we descend, at the two steam vessels about to pass through the gate of the bridge. One is quite large, and is over-crowded with its hilarious company of excursionists; the other, a small and handsome craft, has apparently but few people on board. These boats are on their way to Grand Island, a green and beautiful spot, that lies in the middle of the River, just in the angle where it takes its sudden trend to the north, about four miles distant from this point. The larger boat is bound for the open groves of the Island, while the smaller and more graceful yacht is carrying its quieter party of members and visitors to the tasty and attractive house and grounds of the Falconwood Club, that beautify the southwestern corner of the Island. We shall have more to say of this Island in the next part.



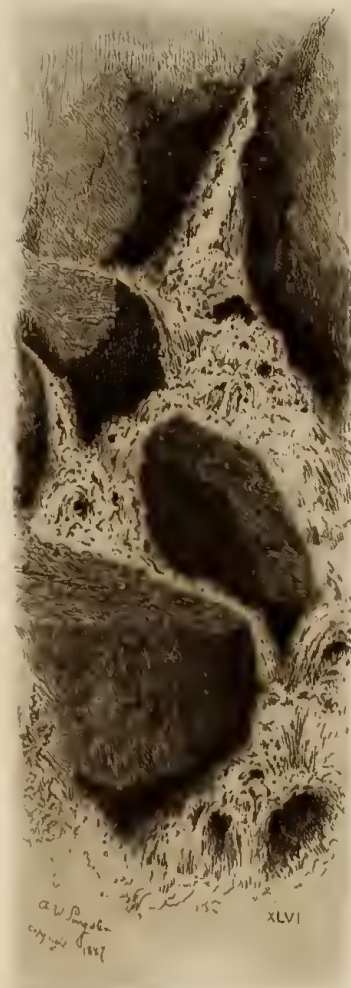
XLII



XLIII



CONTINUING our rambling glance at the many points of interest that present themselves to view all along the pleasant banks of our resplendent and wayward River, we find that our reveries are more in harmony with the evidences it affords of present prosperity and industry, and with the sweet and salutary influences of its verdant and luxuriant natural aspect, diversified and enlivened, as we now view it, by a rapid succession of interposed objects, alternating with its more indigenous beauties; mill and hamlet, villa and meadow, creek and forest, river and railroad;—all these prove of more immediate interest to us than the stern and gory events, and ghostly recollections, of its turbulent and peril-haunted past. Deeds of prowess and devotion, and harrowing adventures of trial and triumph, are recalled, it is true, with impressive vividness, at every step of our way; but the beauties and activities of the life that surrounds us on every side, prove to us that Nature has still the strongest hold upon our sympathies, and contributes the most to our present enjoyment. Nature is so varied and complex in her attractions—so overflowing with ever-renewed delights—so abundant in resources—so spontaneous and inventive in surprises—so veracious and genuine—so generous and benignant—so ready and responsive to all demands upon her ingenuity, be it for dew-drop or cataract,—truly, when we consider it, the tiresome caprices and mischances of man and his doings disturb but little the pure and restful inspirations that come to all who yield confidingly to her benign persuasions.



But we are admonished by a peremptory persuasion of another and more practical sort, that other and more prosy considerations await our reluctant attention. The course of our life, like the diversified scenery that here surrounds us, is but an interlacing, if sometimes, alas, it be not rather a confusion, of facts and fancies; and to facts we must return, the most conspicuous one before us this moment being the beautiful Island, with a brief reference to which we closed our last number.

About three miles below Black Rock, the River, greatly reduced in speed, widens out to more than double its width at Buffalo, and divides into two unequal streams, which form and enclose the sandy mound of table land known as Grand Island; the widest of the two streams and the main channel of the River, passing to the Canadian shore, leaving the Island separated only by the narrower branch from the American shore; on which account, chiefly, it was conceded, by the British and American Boundary Commissioners, in 1822, to belong by natural chance as well as by international usage, to the United States; and so the prize fell to the State of New York, and it is now rapidly gaining favor in general estimation, as the most desirable and attractive residence town within the boundaries of Erie County. All circumstances, and innumerable local advantages, indicate unmistakably the already dawning accomplishment of this high and not improbable expectation. The charm of its insular and salubrious position—its beautiful bird-enlivened groves, and green, undulating downs—its aquatic facilities—its proximity to the Falls—its exemption from the

annoyances and disfigurements incidental to the trade and traffic of a business mart, which it never can become—the luxuriance of its vegetation—the space it affords for parks and gardens, and the convenience of local food supplies—the ready access assured to all desired Railroad facilities,—and its nearness, for all trading and commercial purposes to the City of Buffalo—all these influences point unerringly to the fulfilment at no distant day, of the destiny assured for it by Nature herself.

This fine Island, which lies opposite Tonawanda with which it is connected by ferries, has an extent in area of about eight miles in length and a breadth averaging from five to six and an elevation, at its highest point, of over 50 feet above the River. It affords many delightfully picturesque views of both shores, and especially lovely ones of the River, which, after passing Buckhorn Island, a copsy little affair which lies near its northwestern



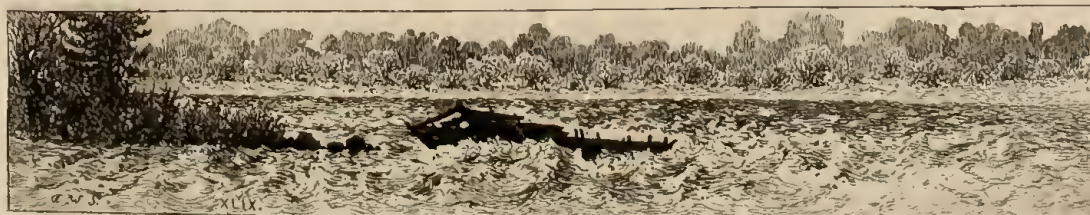
corner, expands into the appearance of a small lake, whose smooth and quiet waters seem to attain here a breadth of over eight miles; after a gentle flow of about three miles in a northerly direction, they reach the rocky decline of the Grand Rapids, rushing down which, with swiftly accelerated velocity, they presently take their tremendous plunge over the precipitous walls of the Horse-shoe cliffs, on their tumultuous and rollicking way to the Atlantic Ocean.

In the early period of the settlement of this part of the State, this Island, then in possession of the Seneca Indians, was densely covered with a forest of valuable timber trees, the cutting and utilization of which by the pioneer settlers on the American margin of the River, occasioned many angry and dangerous contentions with the savage proprietors, which were only terminated by the purchase, by the State of New York, in 1815, of the admitted legal title to the property remaining in the aboriginal owners. Soon after this there were quite extensive clearings made, by enterprising white-oak cutters, in several parts of the Island, which came in the course of a year or two to be occupied by a lawless bandit sort of confederacy of American and Canadian Squatters, employed ostensibly in wood-cutting and shook-shaving, for which they had acquired no license, an industry that required but little capital, and found a ready market in the settlements. This illicit business was really prosecuted with considerable though rather intermittent activity, and with no little profit. The enterprise was winked at for a long time by the State authorities, but becoming more and more troublesome and disorderly, after numerous formal complaints, and several



peaceful and therefore ineffectual movements for the suppression of the factious confederacy, more active measures were determined upon, and in 1819, an armed detachment of State troops, under command of the gallant Col. Benjamin Hodge of Buffalo, crossed the River in canoes and invaded the clearings. After a brief and feeble show of resistance they sacked and broke up the camps and drove the contumacious constituency from the Island, chiefly to the Canadian side of the River. It was three years after this, the stave shaving business having been resumed under more legal auspices, that the Boundary Commission confirmed the possession of the Island to the United States. It has ever since proved an attractive place of resort for huntsmen and fishermen as well as for idlers and pleasure-seekers: being a capital place, in the words of Mr. L. F. Allen, one of its earliest and most widely known citizens, for that "listlessness and laziness so congenial to squatter and roving life;" especially during its wilderness period, when its thickets abounded in deer, rabbits, and squirrels, and were not infrequently visited by bears, foxes, and wolves, its sedgy shores swarmed with duck, and all the wild birds of this region, and its encircling waters also yielded an unlimited supply of the finest fresh water fish to be caught in the world. Truly was it a "paradise for sportsmen" and explorers, and a tempting free tramping ground for vagabonds and squatters.

The most curious and unique episode that attaches itself with some significance to the romantic history of the Island, relates to the ambitious but infelicitous undertaking of Mr. Mordecai M. Noah, a learned and upright Jewish citizen of New York, to secure its possession for the establishment, beneath its breezy groves, of a new Hebrew Community, open to the faithful from every corner of the earth. He conceived the possibility of founding on



this secluded spot, by purchase of as much territory as might be needed, and the expected personal co-operation of his fellow Israelites throughout the world, a broad city of residence and refuge, under the control of a central judicial government, of the ancient type; exclusively for the ownership and occupancy, of people of that faith from all lands. Infatuated with this pretentious project, he imagined that the scheme, if once properly authenticated and boldly promulgated, and with the proposed city once fairly planted upon ostensibly consecrated foundations, would attract to its support by thousands, the people for whose benefit and solace its erection was intended. Perhaps, if the main conditions of the undertaking could have been fulfilled, it would have done so. The plan was not wholly un-

reasonable, nor the hope of its really honest deviser wholly visionary. But the details and preliminaries of the project were incoherent and impracticable, and the measures adopted for its realization premature and ill-judged. He began at the wrong end. He dreamed of a city without a people; he should have collected a people who required a city. The scheme assumed at once that taint of vagueness and visionary speculation, which, however unjustly to the man and to the integrity of his really fraternal purpose, prevented and repulsed at once, the very authenticity and co-operation from within the borders of the Jewish fold, which alone could have assured him that general concurrence which was essential for its success. It failed from inherent arrogance. As the specious sophistry of an excentric dreamer, an individual speculator, the guise it at once assumed, in the view of those most immediately interested, it was rejected without discussion. Its author had no affiliated co-laborers, no sanction excepting that of a few outsiders, not of his own religious persuasion, who could have had, and really had, no part or lot in the matter. What sincere concern could one whose daily prayer was for the conversion of "Jews and Turks," and all other "infidels," to a religion which they denied and rejected, have in a movement to endow a community whose vital purpose was to be the propagation and perpetuity of the Jewish faith and polity exclusively? Surely none. What Mr. Noah needed, to render possible the stability of the frail fabric of his imagined metropolis, was the patronage and counsel of his own people. But this utterly failed him, and his assumption of the functions of a "Judge in Israel," or even of that of a director, was impugned and derided throughout the world. Personally, Mr. Noah was a man of impressive bearing and cultivated and cordial manners, and was esteemed for his many excellent and generous qualities; he was a man of ability and sound impulses,





kind-hearted, capable and trust-worthy, in all his relations with his fellow-men. He was educated to the law, and served his country creditably in the capacity of Consul at the city of Tunis, and afterwards held the office of Judge in one of the Criminal Courts of the City of New York; in which place he died, in 1851, at the age of sixty, lamented by all who knew him, even by those who, excusably enough, had indulged in many a sly joke and jeer, over the inflated inscription sculptured upon his abandoned and paradoxical "corner-stone," so ostentatiously and vainly consecrated, as the nucleus of his chimerical "City of Ararat," now, henceforth, and finally, to rest where it now does, among the curios in the museum of the Buffalo Historical Society. So true is it, as Grand Island will always hereafter remind us, that

The wisest and the best of men
Will fool a little, now and then.

Grand Island,—once threatened with the appellation of White Haven, if the Post-master General had not, in 1839, refused to establish a Post-office upon it by that name, "because it was so near Tonawanda,"—derives its more appropriate and now assured name, with a slight euphonic change, from that given to it by the Seneca Indians, who simply called it what it was, "the Great Island;" Tonawanda, lying opposite, being in their estimation, the "Little Island." Half a dozen other small islands lie scattered about in its neighborhood; Navy Island,—which is the English equivalent of its French designation, "Isle de la Marine," they having utilized it for ship-building purposes, called also by the Senecas, "Big Canoe Island"—belongs to Canada: it lies at the north-western corner of its grander neighbor, and has been discredibly notorious as the sequestered rendezvous and skulking-ground for rebels against the Canadian Government, and their accomplices, such marauding tramps, as were found to be purchasable by copious allowance of whisky, and who could so be made available for almost any casual scrubby job of rascality and plunder. Some lawless Americans being detected in this fancy for taking a hand in promiscuous and disorderly enterprises of this sort, some fifty years ago, that alert and experienced frontiersman, and wary soldier, General Winfield Scott, got his vigilant eye upon them, and he marched down upon them one day, when they soon scattered beyond all chance of rally, or even of discovery. It is quite true, rarely, that the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the wretched instance referred to demonstrated clearly enough that they fly well when a loyal defender of his country's honor gets after them. A vigorous cannonading from the Canadian shore swept through the Navy Island woods, and the "incident was closed." Of the other Islands referred to, Tonawanda, on the American

side, at the mouth of the Creek of the same name, though small, is a place of considerable and rapidly rising business importance; Beaver, a copsy little affair, near the southwestern corner of the larger Island, in the Canadian branch of the River, is the pleasant seat of a small private club; Buckhorn and Strawberry are low grassy islets, of interest only as they add variety and delicate touches of prettiness to the gentle and peculiar beauty of the low scenery of this really attractive portion of the River.

Wherever the eye turns it is arrested by some object revealing the locality of some spot of by-gone interest; some fading memorial of vanished times. For we here stand at the chief converging point, the fertile cradle and source, of the romantic though often conjectural annals and traditions of the pioneer explorations and discoveries in the perilous solitudes of our northern frontier. On the bushy borders of these waters, and underneath the lofty forests of majestic oaks and pines that once adorned these circling shores, now covered with a vegetation of more recent growth, dwelt communities of peoples known to have become quite extinct before the appearance in this region of even the predecessors of the Indian tribes who were discovered here by the first European explorers of the American interior. Here, as we glance around, we encounter innumerable mementos of the presence and doings of those unshrinking and audacious adventurers. Here, we are reminded at every turn, what a blending and interweaving of romance and recollection, of mystery and conjecture, as well as of struggle and disappointment, make up for us the glowing but only half told story of the opening and planting of this much coveted region of the Lakes; a story illustrated by many gallant personal exploits, and many chivalrous enterprises, as well as overshadowed by narrations of much personal suffering and many cruel wrongs and misfortunes. For our River was for a long period the principal and best known feature, the one grand geographical landmark, of all this vast northern wilderness, and formed the very outskirt of the rude and experimental civilization, that accompanied the slow and timid advance of the pioneer occupation of this portion of the country. On the western shore of the Lagoon, at the mouth of the Creek from which it derives its name, and a short distance below Navy Island, we note the manufacturing village of Chippewa, where our Gen. Scott won his epaulettes in the memorable struggle between the British and American forces in 1814, as before related. Nearly opposite, on the eastern shore, lies in poetic and dreamy repose, the unambitious little village of La Salle, whose name, of which more will be said in our next, like the fair face of the pretty maid in the story, is its fortune, which is not in riches, but in honor—and also its *raison d'être*.

Diagonally opposite Navy Island, on the American shore, lies what little there is now to be seen of what was once a place of some service to the early scouts and settlers along the then heavily wooded margin of the River, and known as Schlosser's store-house and dock, a landing-place for fishermen, and for ferry-boats crossing the River from Grand Island and the Canadian shore. It is a place of slight importance, mentionable now chiefly as the meeting ground for the Fenian bandits, on the occasion of the Navy Island fiasco before alluded to, and a hiding-place for supplies.



