NIAGARA RIVER
FROM LAKE TO LAKE.

Original Etchings
by Amos W. Sangster.

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REMARQUE EDITION.
LIMITED TO 1,000 COPIES.

NIAGARA RIVER AND FALLS.
FROM LAKE ERIE
TO LAKE ONTARIO.

GUARANTEE.
To Whom It May Concern:
The Engravings of this work are printed by
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drawings.

The Publisher.
INDEX
To Section 10
NIAGARA RIVER FROM LAKE TO LAKE

Vignette No. 94 Under the Cliff.
" 95 From Fort Massasauga.
" 96 Glimpse of Lake Ontario.
" 97 Entrance to Fort Massasauga.
" 98 From Fort George.
" 99 Fort Massasauga - From Fort Niagara.
" 100 Old Landing. Fort Niagara.
" 101 Bank below Youngstown.
" 102 A Bit of Niagara.
" 103 Ruined Dock at Fort Massasauga.

Plate 45 Brooks Monument from River Road near Niagara.
" 46 Under the Bank near Paradise Grove.
" 47 A Relic of Fort George Niagara.
" 49 Fort Niagara.
" 50 Lake Ontario.
TO NIAGARA.

God of the mountain-height and rolling flood!
What majesty and might and grandeur soar
In one unceasing hymn of praise to Thee.
From out the turmoil of NIAGARA'S surge!

Roll on, proud terrorist, with sweep sublime;
Whose merest touch is as the lusty throes
Of a whole race of giants, waking from
A trance of passion, strengthening while they slept.
The massive oak that has withstood the blasts
Of centuries, is but a fragile wreath,
A giant's toy, in thy relentless grasp;
And man, whose pride would over-awe the world,
Is but a paltry bubble, in thy hand,
That passes into nothingness and death.

The crash and wrecks of worlds, the sway supreme
Of nation over nation, and the rise
And fall of mighty empires,—what are these
Compared with thee, who seest the ages pass,
As in a glass; thou art the Merlin dread
That beckons them to their eternal rest,
And lulls them into silence with thy psalm.

The ce nt ur ies lie buried at thy feet,
And all their shrouded hosts rise up to pay
The ir c re at  magician homage. Thy dread voice
Is as the thunder mid the Alpine hills,
And every sun-flash from thine angry brow
Seems like the awful lightning of thy wrath.

The children of to-day will have grown old;
Their children's children, from the ample scroll
And record where man's generations trace
Their autographs, shall all have passed away
And been forgotten; but thy trumpet tones,
Deep, and sonorous, then as now, shall make
Of the heart of man a solemn fane of praise.

AND now, with such imperfect memoranda in our hands as we have been able from
point to point to jot down of its long succession of pleasant surprises and enchantments,
we have passed, with still unwearied interest, below the ledge of the Great Cataract, and
may contemplate with revived enthusiasm the attractive and bold scenery of the wild deep
canyon through which the still beautiful stream glides on towards its next terrific catastrophe,
before it tranquilly disappears in the placid bosom of Ontario.

A pleasant thought will occur to the visitor here, as he turns to take a last glance at
the wide spread curtain of green and sparkling water slowly descending behind him, ever
unrolling but never unrolled,—and that is, that future explorers of these scenes of wonder
and delight, will be allowed to ramble and dream here under much more favorable and
comfortable circumstances than have heretofore been possible to their really much tried and
imperceptibly persecuted predecessors. No more ticket stands and toll-gates; no more un­
needed and misleading guides; no more deceiving hackmen; no more unsightly obstructions;
no more paper and wood mills; no more paltry curiosity pedlers; all things and sights, in a
word, of a disagreeable nature, all intrusive nuisances, have by concurrent authority of the
Commissioners in charge, been swept, at one fell swoop, from the entire Reservation; and so, at last, nature and order have recovered possession of this most lovely of earth's many lovely spots. This is a grand improvement, judiciously conceived and skillfully consummated, for which its projectors, on both sides the River, will be long gratefully remembered. The pleasure and contentment produced by this fine result, are so welcome and harmonizing, that even "the soft impeachment," not infrequently uttered, of "why was it not done before," is lulled to silence by the prevailing voice of universal eulogy and commendation.

The general plan was originally devised by Lord Dufferin, at the time he was Governor-General of Canada, and was submitted by him, as a project for urgent consideration, to the Ontario Society of Artists, in the fall of 1878. Late in the following month he communicated his plan to the authorities of the State of New York, in a letter to Governor Robinson, by whom it was brought in due form, to the consideration of the State Legislature, in January, 1879. The result of all this was the appointment of a Commission to consider and report upon the proposition. As it contemplated the purchase by the State of about 115 acres of land bordering upon the River, both above and below the Cataract, the project encountered serious and very determined, and, in fact, ill-natured, opposition; notwithstanding which, the honor of first taking practical steps towards its triumphant realization belongs to the Legislature and people of the State of New York; though the hearty co-operation, for their own side of the River, of our equally interested Canadian neighbors, was not long delayed. It is the declared intention of the Commissioners so to distribute the designed improvements, that people who come to the place to seek the quiet enjoyment to be secured through the unembarrassed and leisurely contemplation of its most marked and distinctive features of beauty, shall now find them in harmonious relationship with the more general attractions of the surrounding natural scenery, so much of which has heretofore been either hidden from observation, or disfigured by incongruities and blemishes that ought to have been excluded long ago.

From either bank of this deep and sharply-cut canyon, and from any point upon its craggy walls, the bold and picturesque beauty of the lower channel of the River is finely seen. Its solid quarry-like precipices are well in view for a long distance, rising to heights varying from two hundred to over two hundred and fifty feet in perpendicular elevation above the green surface of the slowly eddying water, that curls around the massive boulders that lie gathered in scattered heaps along the base of the cliffs. The scenery of this lower portion of the River is everywhere of the most enchanting description; and the beauty of this alone, would draw here its crowds of admirers were there no grand Cataract to constitute the River's chief attraction. One curious effect of the condition of the water, as seen from above, is here to
be noticed, and that is, its compact, solid, glacier-like appearance; due to the enormous lateral compression to which it is subjected, its great depth, and the majesty and unity of its motion, as it forces itself onward, "cribbed and confined" as it is, between the gradually approaching walls of its contracted bed. From the margin of these cliffs will also be noticed, by the most casual observer, unmistakable evidence, graven upon the rocks with a clearness of meaning that precludes all possibility of misinterpretation, that for a distance of at least seven miles, certainly as far down towards the Ontario level as the high hills and bold bluffs that form so conspicuous a feature in the grand panorama visible from the heights of Lewiston, the water of the River, starting from the glacier-scratched ridges of the once submerged and ice-covered escarpments of the ancient plateau, has excavated, with the effective co-operation of frost and ice, its present deeply cut channel, back from the rocky barrier that once stretched across the southern extremity of Lake Ontario, and only a few miles from it, up to the present position of the Cataract's ledge; a distance of over seven miles. Working its slow way, little by little and year by year, through compact beds of rigid and tenacious rock, which vary in depth from two to three hundred feet, and have an average lateral width of one thousand, the swift flowing water aided by its wintry allies, has cracked and hammered into fragments, and ground and rolled into gravel and mud, and afterwards removed, the entire solid contents of this deep and imposing canyon. And the same tireless and irresistible agencies are still doing their allotted work; but neither the era of its final consummation, nor the resulting consequence of its complete accomplishment, can, at the present hour, with any confidence, be predicted. There is a reasonable probability that as the remaining portion of the excavation, wherever it may terminate, will be carried on upon a much shallower scale, it will be completed in considerably less time than has been occupied in bringing the Cataract from the ancient ridge at Lewiston to the cliffs of Goat Island. And how long that has taken, is naturally enough the inquiry of every reflecting observer of the existing phenomena. This is a question all obtainable answers to which must still be considered as only hypothetical and provisional. The reply made to it by the practical and clear-headed farmer of Lundy's Lane, that it was "upwards of a good while," will undoubtedly be regarded by many as a correct and sufficient answer; about as near, in fact, as we can just now come to it; though there are a host of dissatisfied and curious investigators who are still striving with hammer and measuring rod, to reach a more accurate count of the silent centuries that have come and vanished since this gigantic excavation was begun. Estimations of the number of years this work has probably required for its accomplishment, are numerous and conflicting. The evidences and data relied upon may seem
reasonable enough, but the essential element of accuracy seems to be wanting in them all. So many fallacies and unsustained guesses have so far entangled the controversy, that it will, no doubt, for a long time yet, be found impossible to harmonize existing assumptions and discrepancies into anything like a consistent conclusion. These estimates, with many lesser differences inter se, vary nominally, from a period of thirty thousand years,—a theory which may be rejected, notwithstanding its high sanction, as manifestly excessive,—to the more probable one of ten thousand, which may be regarded as the shortest period, fairly in accord with all the generally accepted facts, that could with reasonable probability be assigned to so grand and extensive a piece of work; a work that has been dependent, throughout its slow progress, upon agencies as deliberate in their processes as they have been conditional in their effectiveness. But all these theories are impugned by the weight they allow to mere conjectures; and the best supported of them carry us no nearer the true measure of the time employed in the recession of the Niagara Cataract, than the cautious judgment of the honest yeoman, that “it has been upwards of a good while,” or the fine apostrophic inspiration of the poet Brainard, uttered over sixty years ago, whose words have a higher and more scientific significance, where he proclaims, addressing the Niagara;—

“Thy flood shall chronicle the ages back,
And notch the centuries in the eternal rock.”

So Daniel Webster, impressed with the evidence that surrounded him of the long duration and apparent uniform character of the retrogression of the Cataract’s channel, exclaims, while “paying homage to this stupendous work of Nature;”—“and there the grand spectacle has stood for centuries, and its unwavering thunder existed before there were human ears to hear it.” How far back in the occult chronology of the globe that would carry us, will long be a topic of conjecture and hypothesis, quite as much so as the equally contested, but locally more interesting question concerning the probable duration of Niagara. But while the differences in the determinations of the time comprised in the epoch of this “notched chronicle,” are expressed in terms of thousands of years, accuracy of result is not even approximately to be looked for. The question is fascinating, as one of curiosity and speculation, but it is hardly one of chronological importance. Whether we allow it to have taken fifty, or only ten, or any other probable number of milleniums, well attested coeval phenomena, the duration of which can be more unmistakably demonstrated, could be easily pointed out, to justify even the longest period that might reasonably be assumed to be indicated by the not easily to be refuted testimony of the rocks.
The next event of any especial surprise in the adventurous career of our famous River, is its rush through the lower rapids, which is immediately connected with its terrific dash across the ragged edge of the gyrating, but comparatively little agitated waters, that fill the deep hollow, long ago excavated by the Cataract, in the angle of the Canadian walls of the canyon, and well known, popularly, though not with strict appropriateness, as the Whirlpool. The River, with its high picturesque and massive walls of water-worn rock, makes at this point an abrupt rectangular turn to the right, and the deep basin of this curious pool lies directly in the angle. The place is remarkable and phenomenally attractive, but in its own right has little claim to its popular designation; which, in fact, it would seem to owe to its close association with the boiling and spouting Rapids that sweep in such tempestuous disorder through the greatly contracted canyon, immediately above it; the leaping breakers dash violently across the crested margin of the less disturbed surface of the pool, properly so called, and the whole wild scene, whether viewed from the over-hanging cliffs, or from the spray-wet rocks at their base, is one of picturesque and unrivalled magnificence. But the ocean-like agitation of the water, is not that of the whirlpool vortex, but of the rapids that dash into it and fly past its more quiet surface with such impetuous and inconceivable velocity. The pool, has a whirling motion of its own, imparted to it by the impinging and skirting surges of the on-speeding rapids; but the motion, though continuous, and irresistibly powerful, is comparatively slow, massive, and eddy-like; its astonishing energy being chiefly exerted beneath the surface, far down in the depths of the basin; out of which it is capable of hurling with ease huge logs and other submerged objects, driven into it by the descending Rapids, which plunge past and over it, with the volume and velocity of the Cataract itself. But for the immense volume of water, by which this concealed riparian gulf is kept con-
continuously filled to overflowing, there would be seen here, owing to its great depth and the immense quantity of water constantly pouring into it, a cataract of really gigantic force and dimensions; in every feature excepting its width. The sudden angular bend in the River's course, that embraces the semi-circular gorge of the Whirlpool, occurs about two miles below the Cataract; just preceding its tremendous deflection at this point, the River finds itself compressed, by the nearer approach of its imposing walls, to its narrowest width. By this enormous compression the water is heaved up and constantly sustained, by the lateral pressure, in a central surf-like ridge, over twenty feet in height, which entirely conceals for some distance, from either side, the opposite marginal strand of the River. This confused and huddled pile of billows is by its own weight urged onward with terrific vehemence and in the wildest disorder, constituting a spectacle unique in its novelty and of impressive sublimity. The over-shadowing rocks rise to a perpendicular elevation of over three hundred feet, while the width of the turbulent water is contracted to five hundred. Escaping in haggard disorder from the frantic riot of the demoralized waters of the Whirlpool Rapids, the reconstructed River, with the vigor of its youth renewed, now flows on without much further disturbance, through a lovely and gently meandering high-banked ravine, crowned with lofty trees, and decked with shrubs and pendent vines, till it emerges from its confinement and glides joyously into the welcoming waters of Lake Ontario; where its brief and chequered existence, as the Niagara River, is finally terminated.

Why the River bears the name “Niagara,” and by whom and at what time it was so first named, cannot be stated with historical accuracy. It appears to be pretty certain, however, that this name was not the one by which it was known by any native dwellers on the lands lying in its neighborhood, at the earliest period of its discovery by European travellers; as far back, that is, as the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is known also, that a tribe of northern Indians once resided on the banks of the River, who called themselves the “O-ny-a-ga-ra,” or, as some have it, the “On-guia-a-ra,” or something like this; for the name is spelled in a great variety of ways, whether as an aboriginal tribal name, or as applied to the Cataract. The application of the name to the River and Fall was doubtless made by the missionaries and early white explorers; previous to which it was simply referred to as “The Chute d’ Eau,” or great Waterfall, as on the map accompanying the account of Champlain’s travels in 1613, and also in some of the “Relations” of the Jesuit missionaries. On Sanson’s map of Canada, made in 1659, it is called the “Ongiara Sault,” and the same spelling is seen on Ducrèux’s map, printed in 1660, where is shown the place of “The Ongiara Cataractes.” The geographer De Norville, in 1687, makes use of the present spelling, but it is not certain that he was the first to do so. English writers, says Mr. O. H. Marshall, were not uniform in their method of spelling the name, until about the middle of the last century. Difference in accent also occurs, as in Goldsmith’s line,

“And Niagara stuns with thundering sound.”
TO NIAGARA.

Rapt and amazed, midst scenes of rarest loveliness,
Stand I alone, entranced, in awe and ecstasy
Gazing in silence o'er the cliffs precipitous,
Whence, with united front, thy waters ponderous
Tranquilly take their giant leap, Niagara!

Forward declining, wreathed in conscious majesty,
Shimmering spray and jewelled drop, tossed back from thee,
Wave pressed to wave in serried ranks, as, steadily,
Man against man, sweeps on a line of infantry,—
Into the vortex rolls thy flood intrepidly.

In the fierce rapids, many a sharp rock, secretly,
Under thy foaming current lay in wait for thee,
Gashing and tearing thy rent bottom wantonly;
Loveliest of Rivers, sad and dire similitude,
So in life's breakers strives man's heart with destiny.

Tossed in the raging stream by waves impetuous,—
Glimmer of hope and youthful dreams desiring it,—
So have we seen,—ah River wild and beautiful,
Art thou not here of "fortune's buffetings" typical?—
Under life's chaos sink heart-broke humanity.

Hither and thither whirled in eddies infinite,
Leaping in lambent jets and cascades showerly,
Over the sunken rocks poorest thou unceasingly,—
So in life's drift and swirl man writhe defiantly,
Only in wrecks, at last, to end, disastrously.

Cometh a change to Life and River, presently;
Out of its perils Life emerges, jubilant,
E'en as thy waters seek in calm serenity,
Under this arched and rainbow brooded canopy,
Torrent immortal, rest an instant in thine agony.

Haste is there none, but eagerness and promptitude;
Frivolous things are cast aside disdainfully;
Nothing the brink can pass but heaven-sent purity;
As on thy emerald crown, we see, Niagara,
Naught but the gem-like gleams from the blue sky o'er thee.

Out of the far off past emerging regally,
Stateliness in step, thy grandest one now daring thee,—
Architect fine and subtle, never loitering.
Minute by minute, frost and whirlwind aiding thee,
Toilet thou dainty, thine own highway channeling.

Onward proud River!—many a voiceless century
Into the shadowy past had vanished recordless,
Did not the lines and chinks of thy shrewd shaping,
Scarring the polished tablets of thy cenotaph,
Tell us the mystic story of thy genesis.

Jas. W. Ward.