REMARQUE EDITION.
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NIAGARA
RIVER AND FALLS.

FROM LAKE ERIE

TO LAKE ONTARIO.

GUARANTEE.
To Whom it May Concern:
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by Mr. J. H. Daniels, Boston, Mass, direct
from the copper plates.
Etched by Amos W. Sangster from his own
drawings.

THE PUBLISHER.
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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 memorial[s 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 arborial 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-cregs 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 barrier 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 sig-
nally successful, of mineral and territorial
wealth, and the subjugation of the confiding
and defenseless inhabitants. Following in the
wake of these intrepid adventurers, we dis-
cover 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 tra-
ders and explorers, and armed troops.

It was under such prudential necessity
as this, that at length Fort Erie 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 '764; 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 anecdotally, 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 con-
struction 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, sur-
rounded 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 recon-
oiniring 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 manoeuvre, 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 Catarract, 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 artillery, 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 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."