NIAGARA RIVER
FROM LAKE TO LAKE.

Original Etchings
By Amos W. Sangster.

Remarque Copy.
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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the copper plates.

Etched by Amos W. Sturgis from his own
drawings.

The Publisher.
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It was at Schlosser's ferry-landing, already referred to, that the small American steamboat called the Caroline, was cut loose from her moorings, one December night, some fifty years ago, by a daring party of Canadian militia, and sent blazing down the River, as contraband of war; an act that seemed to be excused, but not easily justified, on the ground that the boat had invaded Canadian waters for illegal purposes; being employed as a carrier of insurrectionary supplies and reinforcements to parties in avowed rebellion against the Canadian Government. The store-house and ferry that many years before these occurrences existed at this place, though called by the same name, should not be confounded with Fort Schlosser, which was an English stockaded post standing on the River-bank nearly a mile below the ferry. This Fort, so called, was erected in 1760, by Capt. Jos. Schlosser, on the site of a previously existing entrenchment, known as "Fort du Portage," which had been built by the French, in 1750, and was maintained there by them, with a small garrison, until 1759, when, being threatened with an attack by the British troops under Sir Wm. Johnson, who had just captured Fort Niagara, they destroyed all their works by fire, and crossed to the other side of the River. The conspicuous architectural object that still stands near the site of the Fort
as it has stood now for over a hundred and twenty-five years—an enduring memento of the military occupation of this part of the River—and popularly known as “the old stone chimney,”—was also built by the French troops: but not as a part of their defensive stockade or Fort; it was attached to their storehouse and barrack buildings, and these were placed some distance below the stockade. This chimney was so substantially constructed, that it passed through the fire unharmed, so that the English troops, when they rebuilt the Fort, utilized it as a part of their own storehouse. Fort and barracks, and all else that stood upon the place, have long since vanished, but this storm and time defying shaft still stands, a sturdy and impressive monument, a sombre and silent monitor of the vicissitudes that impend the stratagems and schemes of wily man.

Tonawanda, the little Island, in fact as well as in name, is scarcely distinguishable, as seen from the River, or from the banks of its imposing opposite neighbor, from the mainland, so narrow is the little stream that gives it, after many years of patient struggle with sedge and sand, its present insular character. In the pristine days of its unshorn and wild-wood seclusion and beauty, when it was but a vine-fringed knoll of clustering trees and blooming shrubs, a mere leaf-clad, bird-tenanted islet, floating on the green current of the always beautiful River—it was truly an object of acknowledged beauty, and much coveted as a place of residence. For which purpose, indeed, it has been many times owned by several admirers, and as many times held purchaseable “with a little money.” This was the untrimmed little fairy ground over which Nathaniel P. Willis, the dainty editor of the New York Mirror, “sighed,”—as he had often sighed over many another denied felicity and evasive illusion of life—to think that so “charming a paradise,” it was possible, if only, alas, the “little money” demanded for it could be conveniently had, to “buy for one’s own.” “One’s own” it has been at several periods since his day, and so is, happily, at the present time.

Pecuniary enticements and business speculations as a matter of course soon intruded upon the seclusion of even so concealed and lovely a nook as this; and “a little money” has proved, as in many another case, more than a match for the mere romantic fancy for a green and bosky bit of the ancient forest; for though it has had several owners since it came into possession of the State, the Island has never been long occupied by any one of them as a place of residence; for which, in truth, it was at first, with all its wild and tangled beauty, but very ill suited. It has upon its eastern extremity, sheltered by a fine girdle of forest trees, a substantially constructed brick mansion, ample in its dimensions and solidly and tastefully finished interiorly. This house was erected, for his own residence, by Stephen White Esq. of Salem Mass. who took possession of it in 1836, but sold it, after
Mr. White's removal from his pleasant ancestral home in the old puritan town of his birth, and so far from the cultivated and sympathizing circle of his family and friends, to the sequestered solitude of this lonely hermitage, was not wholly inexplicable. Mr. White was the nephew and principal legatee of Capt. Joseph White, an old and respected citizen of Salem, who, one December night, was murdered in his sleep, in the most stealthy, cowardly and deliberately planned manner. In this cruel deed Mr. White, through the machinations and secret plottings of the really guilty parties in the crime, was wrongfully, but openly, implicated. It is true he was at once exculpated from even the least suspicion of any complicity in the horrible affair. But the appalling reality of the awful event hung like an evil shadow over the home of his youth, and over his own heart, and in a few years he fled from its depressing influences, finding enjoyment and rest in this quiet and tranquil retreat. But here, too, time has since wrought its capricious changes. With the reservation of the charming open park immediately connected, at its upper end, with the now much enlarged and tastefully refashioned "White Mansion," the residence of Mr. T. S. Fassett, its present owner, Tonawanda Island, shorn of many of its ancient attractions, is chiefly notable now for the convenience it affords for extensive business enterprises of which it is to be an important centre, and its superior dock-yards and general shipping facilities, which are still in course of extension, in connection with the immense lumber trade that displays at this point so remarkably successful a development, and holds out so brilliant a prospect for the future. The narrow channel that separates the Island from the main land is crossed by an iron swing-bridge, erected by the New York Central Railroad Co. to facilitate the receipt and delivery of its large amount of freight, chiefly of timber and its manufactured products, to and from the docks and present and projected warehouses and wood-working mills of this busy entrepot. The business occupations that already animate the solitudes of the Island are mainly extensions of those previously described as so energetically carried on in the adjoining town; in view of all which it can hardly pass without our special wonder, that while our generous River pours annually down this natural water-way, the lavish waste of hundreds of millions of tons of free water, the power derived at second hand, and at greater cost, from the burning of the products of mother earth, which must be brought to the works from a long distance, should be preferred by those who are likely to have, prospectively, such unlimited occasion to use it.

The course of our wayward Niagara is not a straight one; in its short run of thirty-six miles, from its head at Buffalo, to its junction with Lake Ontario, at Fort Niagara, it describes a very much curved line. On the American side, from Black Rock to the village of La Salle
at the mouth of Cayuga Creek, though pursuing generally a northerly bearing, it is bent in the shape of the letter S; from La Salle it flows westwardly in a pretty direct course to the horse-shoe escarpment, from which point, after its tremendous plunge, it makes a sharp right-angled turn to the north, in which direction it continues, with only some slight deviations, until it glides gently into Lake Ontario, having descended 360 feet below its height at the level of its out-flow from the foot of Lake Erie; 160 feet of which it makes, in one sweep, one-third of a mile in extent from cliff to cliff, at a single leap.

Opposite Grand Island, on the northern shore of the River, at the mouth of the languid Cayuga Creek, and about four miles below Tonawanda, lies, in hidden and poetic repose, the dreamy and unobtrusive little hamlet of La Salle; an oft-mentioned place, whose importance, which is not at first view very apparent, aside from the blooming prettiness of its semi-insular position, and its fine broad water views, consists mainly in its historical associations with the past, and its present prominence as a trading point for fruit dealers. Its local activities, even in this speciality, being of an intermittent character, may not be very conspicuous to its piscatorial and squirrel-hunting visitors, but it is nevertheless the central mart and depot for the productions of the long and splendid series of peach-orchards, strawberry beds, and vineyards, that stretch in almost uninterrupted sequence along the River bank, covering nearly the whole of the broad level plateau that stretches from this point on the American shore to the Falls. Several thousand acres of this fertile region, within the perpetual hearing of the deep thunder-tones of the mighty cataract, are under remunerative cultivation, directed by practical fruit growers, and the territory occupied with this important industry is annually enlarging. In fact the Niagara lands, on both sides of the River, in this arenaeuse section of its course, is largely in possession of cultivators engaged in this extensive and now successfully established enterprise. At the annual periods of maturity, the busy scenes presented, in these fruitful fields, in connection with the gathering, basketing, and making preparations for shipping to market, of their immense produce, are curiously animated and entertaining.

The name of this "insignificant locality," as Mr. Marshall calls it, pertinently enough, in his lucid and elegant sketch of the distinguished explorer after whom it is called—more to the honor of the place itself, than to the world-renowned adventurer for whom the compliment was intended,—is derived from that of Robert Cavelier de La Salle, who, while still a young man only twenty-three years of age, came to Canada, from the city of Rouen, early in the summer of 1666, to try his fortunes as an explorer in the vast and then untraversed wilderness of the New World. The French at this period, were rapidly extending their possessions along the northern shore of the St. Lawrence, and the Religious Community of
St. Sulpice had established their Seminary on their own lands in a clearing on an island near the Canadian shore, which became in time, the nucleus of the City of Montreal. One of the priests at the Seminary was Cavelier's brother, and with him, naturally, he first made his home. The general purpose of his adventurous expedition was the exploration of the western parts of the American continent, in the visionary, but seriously conceived expectation of discovering a new and shorter overland route to China. Without doubt, the hopeful prospect of possible territorial acquisitions, to his own profit, as well as that of his country, formed an equally persuasive allure through all his subsequent and amazing adventures. It may well excite our special wonder, that a gay young courtier, liberally educated, gentle mannered, accustomed to the brilliant society of a polished French city, and surrounded with the luxuries and refinements of a home of ease and opulence, should voluntarily relinquish an existence of so much contentment and promise, and expose himself to the perils and privations of a homeless life amongst the savages of the primeval wilderness. La Salle was loyal, civilly and religiously; to his King and to his church; but he was of a positive and independent spirit, and early learned to decide upon any proposed course of action for himself. He dreaded and distrusted the Jesuits, who were at this time actively spreading their nets far and wide over the region the exploration of which he was preparing, at so much personal sacrifice, to undertake; and quite aware that the chief maxim of this crafty fraternity was that of rule or ruin, he warily kept aloof from them; at the same time, though not a zealot, he was devoted to his religion and promoted in many ways its temporal interests. It is impossible to give here even a brief outline of the extraordinary and romantic career of this intrepid and sagacious discoverer. His story, glowing with the spirit of heroism and adventure, has already been told in the fascinating compilations, drawn from original documents, of the indefatigable French antiquarian, Pierre Margry, and after him, by Dr. Parkman, the accomplished American historian; and again in the briefer and charming narrative, by the late O. H. Marshall Esq. of Buffalo, concerning La Salle's long association with the Seneca Indians. But the whole Niagara and Ontario region, from the St. Lawrence to the most western of the great Central Lakes, was in a sense La Salle's own ground. He traversed it east and west, and far to the northwest, on foot and in canoes, literally living with the savages in the depths of the dark forests. He was the first, and in sailing vessels of his own construction, to attempt the perilous navigation of the Niagara River and Lake Erie, and was familiar with the forest paths and Indian trails on both sides of these waters for many hundreds of miles; so that his name is inseparably connected with the early chronicles of the whole of the vast territory stretching from the St. Lawrence to
the Illinois River, and thence to the Ohio and the Mississippi, and could not consistently be
passed over with a mere mention. La Salle, in the language of one of his companions,
"was one of the grandest men of his age; of admirable energy, and capable of undertaking
every sort of discovery;" and he not only undertook, but accomplished a great many, and
all of them of the highest importance to his own country and to America. His courage
and power of endurance, were amazing. He conceived his plans with judgment and sagacity,
and prosecuted them with unflinching resolution. He was not always right in his convictions,
it is true, and he sometimes acted without accurate information, while the rigidity of his
discipline and his natural reserve, and apparent sternness of manner, often repelled from him
those whose counsel and co-operation might have been serviceable to him. But he was a
man of great self-reliance, and of unimpeachable integrity. His written history, as Gayarre
notes, "is so much like romance, that it is likely to be classed as such by posterity." But
the existing records of his ingenious but hazardous enterprises are already so abundant and
authentic, both in his own letters and despatches, and in the corroborating testimony of his
contemporaries, that the brilliant gleams of romance that illuminate his marvellous career are
seen to be only the radiant after-glow of the almost inconceivable reality.

He was always in motion, and he always moved with a purpose. He was given to no
manner of frivolity, and never lost an hour in idleness. Seven times he crossed the ocean;
and in the intervals of these tedious but necessary voyages to and from France, he journeyed
thousands of miles, often several hundreds of miles at a time, across the plains and through
the wilderesses of this then unknown land; much of the time on foot, sometimes for many
weary weeks alone, plodding on, insufficiently clad, with a will that no discouragements could
relax, almost destitute of food, through the snows and storms of winter, and often delayed
and enfeebled by sickness and hunger, sometimes only reaching his goal at last in a state of complete exhaustion, with his feet wound with rags, his hair matted and tangled, and his clothes torn to shreds. The untimely end of a life so laborious and so serviceable to his country, was pitiful enough. On his last return from France, with a larger number of men than ever accompanied him before, he descended the Atlantic coast to the Gulf of Mexico, which he entered with the intention of reaching the mouth of the Mississippi, and so confirming the great discovery he had previously made of this great outlet, by descending the River. But he was ignorant of the features and landmarks of this part of the American coast, and the sailing masters of his ships, miscalculating their longitude, he lost his reckoning, and passed the mouth of the River without knowing it. After a tedious and vexatious search for its recovery, which only ended in disappointment and disaster, he landed his men several hundred miles west of its true position. He continued the search by land; but after many weeks of exposure in the swamps and slimy marshes of an unknown shore, enduring unparalleled suffering and privation, he determined, with a few companions, leaving what remained of his men in temporary barracks, to return, on foot, unprovisioned and scantily clad, to his fort on Lake Ontario. It was the last desperate hope of relief, for himself and the wretched colony he was to leave behind him. But it was a hope never to be fulfilled. Owing to a mutiny in his small camp, he was shot, on the eve of his departure, by a concealed conspirator. His emaciated body, well-nigh stripped of its tattered garments, was thrown aside and abandoned to the wild beasts of the cane-brakes. And so ended a most valuable, eventful, and honored life; for without question, as Dr. Parkman justly says, this was “one of the most remarkable explorers whose names live in history.” A man, writes Monette, “whom no misfortune could daunt, and no peril could alarm; a martyr to the cause of truth, and to the welfare of his Country.” And yet he was treacherously “left to die a murdered exile, after suffering in mental anxiety and physical toil, more than a thousand deaths.” And this little village, nestling in the grove on Niagara’s banks, where he laid the keel of his Griffin-prowed schooner, and that so airily vaunts his name, more to its own honor than to his, is his only monument, in all the grand region over so much of which he was once Lord and Governor.