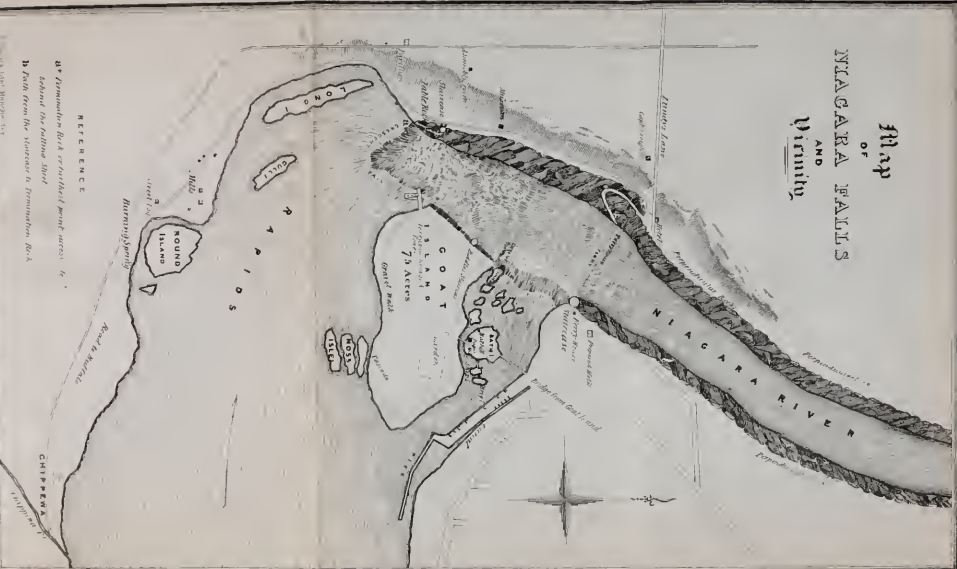




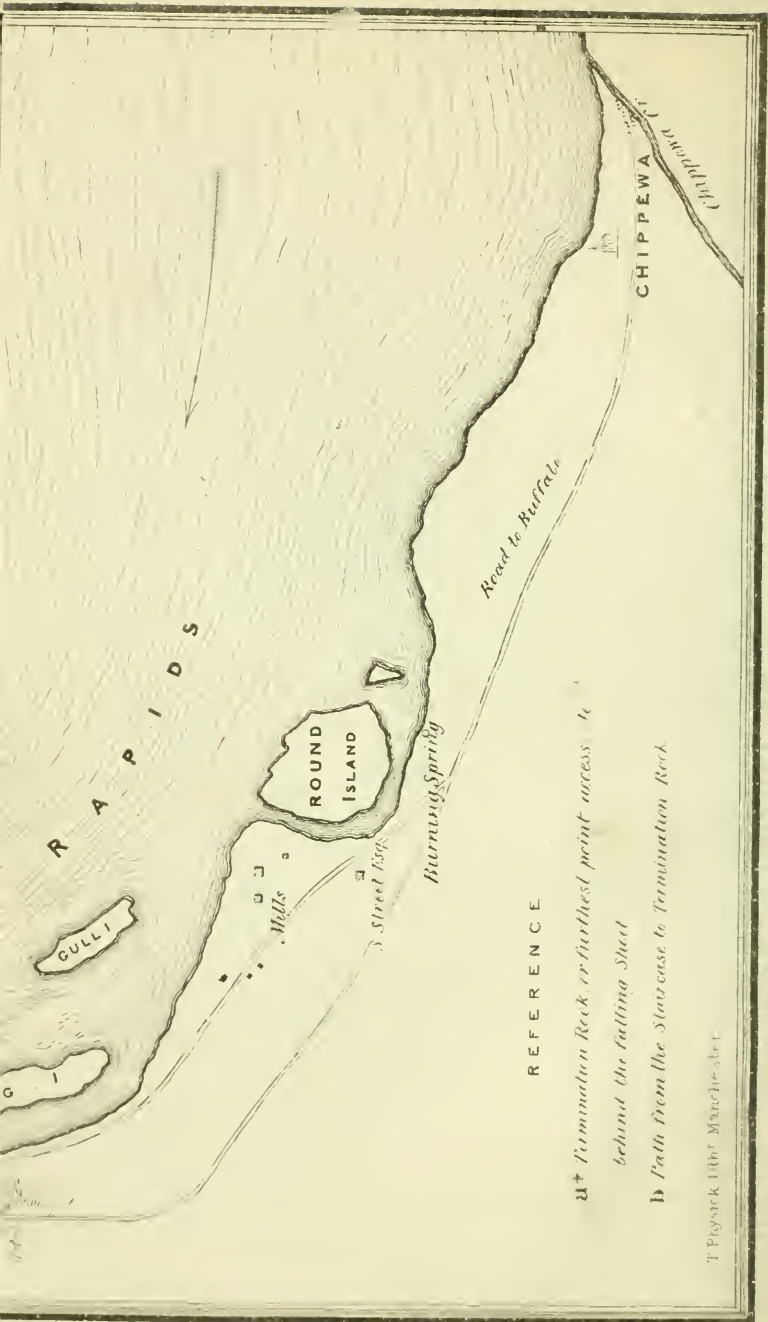
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Map OF NIAGARA FALLS AND Vicinity



REFERENCE

- A* Formation Park or railroad point across to about the table steel
- B Path from the staircase to Formation Park



REFERENCE

a+ Termination Rock, or furthest point access to

behind the falling Sheet

b Path from the Staircase to Termination Rock

FOUR DAYS

AT

NIAGARA FALLS,

IN

NORTH AMERICA.

BY W. FLEMING, M. D.

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With the respectful com.
of the author

EXTRACT FROM A JOURNAL.

BUFFALO.

June 29th, 1835.

AT three o'clock, P. M. I proceeded by railroad to the ferry of the Niagara river, at Black Rock. This road runs under a line of dark compact limestone quarries, which, judging from the fossils I collected in the neighbourhood, must belong to the Silurian group.*

The ferry-boat, in which we had to stem the tremendous current of the river, was large enough to convey carriages: the paddles were worked by a horizontal wheel, turned by four horses, forming a horse-tread-wheel.

* Since the above was written, this country has been examined by several of the State geologists, among whom, I believe, some difference of opinion exists. I find the following remark in Mr. Hall's report:—"I consider the rocks of this district as belonging to the old red sandstone and the Carboniferous group, and to be above the Silurian system of Mr. Murchison.

The outlet of the lake Erie, which is the head of the Niagara river, being not more than two-thirds of a mile wide, must necessarily be of great depth, and has a force of current which is positively alarming. The bows of our boat were directed towards the lake, and against the stream: when launched, from the influence of the shore, I felt as if we were at the mercy of the turbulent waters around us. We were evidently carried at a great rate in a direction contrary to that in which we steered. I looked astern at the waters, which, gradually expanding, became tranquil as they receded; and their bright smooth course in the distance, looked almost inviting to explore the apparent solitude, of the sky-bound forest which they penetrated. The colour of the waters formed a contrast with that, of the uninterrupted dark foliage covering a flat country, without one object to break the level line of the horizon, giving to the course of those waters, an appearance of relief; I could easily have imagined the whole river an embanked high road, leading across some boundless marsh. Our vessel staggered under us, as she breasted the ever-

flowing, impetuous lake stream, which, notwithstanding, soon landed us in safety at Waterloo, in Canada.

Once more I set my foot on British ground, and the reiterated question, "What do you think of us upon the whole?" ceased, for a time, to be put to me by every stranger. I was too late for the coach which runs from Waterloo to The Falls, but a New York gentleman, who had engaged a private conveyance, kindly accommodated me.

The road runs close along the banks of the river; there is no protection, and the soil being clay, or marl, washed perpetually by the water, is constantly slipping. The river soon attains a very considerable width—in some places, I was assured, a width of eight miles; thus constantly enlarging upon the eye, as the *pilgrim* advances, it serves, in some measure, to raise his expectation of the magnificence of its fall. I felt much excited, and that excitement increased to an almost painful degree; even the pelting of a storm which overtook us, did not confine me within the shelter of our coach. How often did I attempt, in vain, to descry some proof that

I was really approaching the high altar of Nature's worshippers !

Having crossed a creek, which I had understood was within eight or ten miles of The Falls, I thrust myself once more through the open side of our stage, and, not without emotion, beheld ascending in two columns, what Mrs. Butler has so beautifully characterized as "The everlasting incense of the waters." Their appearance resembled that of smoke; and, elsewhere, I should have regarded them as traces of the backwoodsman in the forest. At the same moment I heard a soft deep murmur;—it was the never-failing voice of The Falls which stole upon my ear.

The road diverges from the river before approaching the village of Chippaway; an uninteresting drive of three or four miles farther, brought us to the "Pavilion." To the observer, from this elevated position, The Falls, both British and American, with part of the rapids, suddenly reveal themselves. Though not the finest view that may be obtained, yet it impressed me beyond all expectation. I had sensations of delight such as I never before experienced, and gave evi-

dence of them by exclamations, such as I believe never before escaped me. I hurried down before dark to the "Table Rock," and returned with a confused head, a full heart, and a subdued spirit. In the evening I sat down with my journal before me; I strove to express what I felt, but could not; the scene I had beheld, had taken full possession of my faculties. After retiring to rest, the last thought in my mind, like the last sound to my ear, was of Niagara.

June 30th.

I started early to make *the* tour. I proceeded to the staircase which leads to Termination Rock, behind the falling sheet of water. I stripped completely, and, habited in the ordinary dress, viz.—thick woollen stockings drawers and shirt, a large loose oil-skin gown with a band round the waist, oil-skin cap, and shoes provided for the purpose, I proceeded with a mere child for my guide. The moment the visitor leaves the shelter of the staircase, he is met by a current of air, which, with the drippings of the accumulated spray from the rocks suspended over his path,

is no unfitting preparation for what he has to encounter. The spray soon becomes so thick as to be disconcerting, and the blast so violent, as to affect the respiration. My eyes dimly discovered, through a medium, half air, half water, a black line, which I supposed was the path I should pursue. At the same time, my ears were stunned, by the roar of the cataract. Understanding that, as I advanced, a comparative calm would succeed this storm, I pushed resolutely on, opposed by an almost overpowering gust of wind and spray; but all my expectations of relief proved vain. I had long been gasping for breath, and I was now in a state of positive suffocation. Though I had advanced some distance behind the sheet of water, I was compelled immediately, or rather instantly, to return, making my exit much more speedily than I made my entrance. How humiliating the sensation which my retreat occasioned me;—the violence of the blast hurrying me, and the torrent pattering upon my broad oil-skinned back, felt and sounded as if I was driven out for cowardice, lashed by a thousand hands, and hissed at by a thousand tongues.

After resuming my ordinary dress, I proceeded to the ferry. On the British side of the river, a carriage road has been formed to the water's edge. On the American side, the ascent is made by steep wooden steps only. A commanding view of a part of the rapids is obtained from the bridge leading from Manchester to Goat Island. My *Guide* pointed out this bridge as an illustration of the talents of American engineers, who could thus lay permanent foundations amidst such a "war of elements."

Nature and art have contributed to make Goat Island a fitting residence for a poet. There are points from which he may view each separate feature of the whole cataract, or at the Terrapin* Bridge he may suspend

* What is called the Terrapin Bridge, is a large and very long beam of wood, placed on the American side, across a part of the bed of the river, where very little water flows, and extending, until the farther end projects beyond the margin of the Horse-shoe Fall. This beam is secured to the bank of the river. A slight hand-rail enables a person to walk to its extremity. It was by means of a rope tied to the rail at this extremity of the bridge, that Abbott used frequently to descend for amusement, or excitement, and hang, like a spider from its thread, over the awful gulf beneath him.

The following account of Abbott is taken from *Parson's Guide to Niagara Falls* :—

A young Englishman, named Francis Abbott, of respectable connexions, either through misfortune or a morbid state of mind, which made him desire seclusion, took up his residence on Goat Island, and in the neighbourhood of

himself over a Hell of Waters. He may take a trackless path in the forest, listening to the

the Falls, for two years; and became so fascinated with the solitude, and infatuated with the scenery, that no inducement could divert his thoughts, or draw him from the spot, where he acquired the name of the "Hermit of Niagara Falls."

He arrived on foot in June, 1829, dressed in a loose gown or cloak of a chocolate colour, carrying under his arm a roll of blankets, a flute, a portfolio, and a large book; which constituted the whole of his baggage. He took up his abode, in the first instance, in the small inn of Ebenezer Kelly, on the American side, stipulating that the room he occupied should be exclusively his own, and that certain parts of his cooking only should be done by his host. He then repaired to the library, where he gave his name, and borrowed some books and music books, and purchased a violin; the following day he again visited the library, expatiated largely, with great ease and ability, on the beautiful scenery of the Falls, and declared his intention of remaining at least a week; for "a traveller might as well," he said, "examine in detail the various museums and curiosities of Paris, as become acquainted with the splendid scenery of Niagara in the same space of time." On a subsequent visit he declared his intention of staying at least a month, perhaps six. Shortly after he determined on fixing his abode on Goat Island, and was desirous of erecting a hut, in which he might live quite secluded; the proprietor of the island not thinking proper to grant this request, he occupied a small room in the only house, being occasionally furnished with bread and milk by the family, but more generally providing and always cooking his own food. During the second winter of his seclusion, the family removed, and to the few persons with whom he held communion, he expressed great satisfaction at being able to live alone.

For some time he enjoyed this seclusion; but another family having entered the house, he quitted the island, and built himself a small cottage on the main shore, about thirty rods below the great Fall. On the 10th of June, 1831, he was seen to bathe twice, and was observed by the ferryman to enter the water a third time about two o'clock in the afternoon; his clothes remaining for some hours where he had deposited them, an alarm was created, and an ineffectual search was made for him. On the 21st, his body was taken out of the river at Fort Niagara, and was decently interred

sound of what he no longer sees; through tastefully arranged pleasure grounds on one side, he may meander along the bank of the smooth proudly swelling river, or from the lawn of the other, watch its angry course, fretting and foaming, as if impatient to fulfil the glory of its destination. The most striking view of the whole cataract is, in my

in the burial ground near the Falls. When his cottage was examined, his dog was found guarding the door, and was with difficulty removed; his cat occupied his bed; his guitar, violin, flutes, music books, and portfolio, were scattered around in confusion; but not a single written paper of any kind was found (although he was known to compose much) to throw the least light on this extraordinary character. He was a person of highly cultivated mind and manners, a master of languages, deeply read in the arts and sciences, and performed on various musical instruments with great taste; his drawings were also very spirited. He had travelled over Europe and many parts of the East, and possessed great colloquial powers when inclined to be sociable; but at times he would desire not to be spoken to, and communicated his wishes on a slate; sometimes for three or four months together he would go unshaved, with no covering on his head, and his body enveloped in a blanket; shunning all, and seeking the deepest solitude. His age was not more than twenty-eight, his person well made, and his features handsome.

Many spots on Goat Island are consecrated to his memory; at the upper end he established his walk, which became hard trod and well beaten; between the island and Moss Island was his favourite retreat for bathing; here he resorted at all seasons of the year, even in the coldest weather, when ice was on the river; on the bridge to the Terrapin Rocks, it was his daily practice to walk for hours, from one extremity to the other, with a quick pace; sometimes he would let himself down at the end of the projecting timber, and hang under it by his hands and feet over the terrific precipice, for fifteen minutes at a time, and in the wildest hours of the night he was often found walking in the most dangerous places near the Falls.

opinion, from the Table Rock: it surpasses *that* from the river's edge, because it includes the Rapids. The height too of The Falls impresses the beholder much more strongly when viewed from above, than from below.

A magnificent, distant view is obtained from the British ferry. I spent the afternoon at the Table Rock.

In the country surrounding Niagara Falls, and for a considerable distance in some directions,* Silurian rocks are extensively, though not exclusively, developed: their strata are rarely dislocated or disturbed, but almost horizontal, dipping very slightly to the south east. The Falls have a height of perhaps 170 feet. The mass of waters, descending with so great a force, has the effect upon the lowest stratum, of reducing it to a fissile or slaty structure, which contributes to its rapid disintegration. This stratum is, in fact, a very compact shale, and before its exposure to atmospheric or other causes, is scarcely distinguishable, by its physical characters, from the limestone. The debris is soon carried away by the waters, leaving the

* See Note, page 1.



NIAGARA

upper beds of limestone hanging over the cavities left by the destruction of the shale bed beneath them. This is not the case behind the falling waters only, but also at the sides of the channel cut by the river. The Table Rock is the overhanging portion of the uppermost stratum on the British side, close to the falling sheet of water. The same cause which, through countless ages, has occasioned the recession of The Falls, from Queenston to their present locality, is still in action; the upper limestone strata being undermined and left without support, have portions constantly falling; within a recent period, immense blocks have been precipitated from this rock into the river course below, and the remainder must, ere long, share the same fate. A crack, running from edge to edge, including about six feet in width of the rock, exists at this moment. Frequently I lay down at full length, crawling forwards, and taking care to keep my body at a right angle to the edge of the rock, until I could stretch my head over the precipice. Two things struck me as wonderfully beautiful;—first, the mar-

gin of the falling sheet of water near me, which was like a stream of large diamonds; secondly, and in a still higher degree, the part of the great fall, which I presume comes from the course of the river, and where the falling body of water is supposed to be *very, very* deep. The water here is sea green, and it has quite a smooth surface throughout the course of its precipitation; thus, differing from every other part of the white range of The Falls. While this portion is descending, is seen the white foam, produced at the deepest part of the falling sheet, gradually bubbling through the stream, marbling the whole volume in the most fantastic forms, as seen through some depths of the body of water, and as it reaches the *cauldron* below, bursting into one white mass of surf and spray. I had not the good fortune to see the sun's rays refracted; but I was told that three distinct rainbows are not unfrequently visible over this portion of The Falls. The rapids have an imposing effect, and when viewed in connexion with the Falls contribute essentially to render them what, I believe, they are,—“The first wonder of the world.” A computa-

tion, (though indisputably an erroneous one,) has been made, that this cataract requires to form it, nearly half the fresh water on the globe. After an absence, I never re-approached it, without experiencing the most powerful emotions. How grateful to my feelings were some of the verses with which my memory supplied me at the time, addressed, by Klopstock, "To the Omnipresent God." One verse, peculiarly consonant with those feelings at the moments to which I have alluded, I cannot withhold:—

Ich hebe mein Aug ' auf, und seh
Und siehe der Herr ist überall!
Sonne, euch, und O Erden, euch Monde der Erden.
Erfüllet, rings um mich, des Unendlichen Gegenwart!*

It is related of Rollin, the author of the ancient history, that he could never suffer himself to read the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy, in any position, save on his bended knees. Do I misjudge my fellow men in believing, that few can approach the

* I am indebted to my friend, Mr. CHARLES SWAIN, for the following beautiful English versification:—

Upwards I lift my gaze, and everywhere—
Through time, through space, and all immensity,
Do I behold the presence of the Lord!
O ye suns, O earths, and ye moons of the earths,
Around me with the fulness of the Infinite,
How boundlessly the universe o'erflows!

Falls of Niagara for a first time, without feelings in some degree akin to those, recorded of the ancient historian.

July 1st.

I set out in good time, along the cliffs, to the whirlpool. This task, it is not easy to accomplish. I was, however, amply rewarded for my toil. The scenery along the banks of the river is little varied, but the monotony is occasionally relieved by the rapids, which present themselves in the river's course. I found a boulder of granite, containing six cubic yards at least. I saw many black squirrels, and picked up some land shells, mostly the *Helix albolabris*. On approaching the whirlpool, I was obliged to leave the cliffs, and thus lost myself in the woods. After some exertion, I found my way to a farm house. This house occupied a large space of ground, being of one story only, and was almost surrounded by a terrace, six or eight feet wide, the roof of which projecting from the house, was supported upon pillars. The occupants were Irish, who had passed one

winter only in Canada. They expressed themselves as being quite contented and happy; and though the winter had been cold, they had passed it very pleasantly. Pressingly, they invited me to partake of their good cheer, viz. bread, butter, cheese, and milk, which I did with a freedom in which I would not have indulged, had I entertained the slightest idea that I should not be allowed to pay for my entertainment. All my offers of money *were not coyly, but peremptorily rejected.*

“In all my wanderings round this world of care,”

I was never, so far as I could judge, a more welcome guest. They sped me on my way, and directed me to my destination. They shall ever have the stranger's grateful remembrance!

The whirlpool is in a complete basin, or crater, into which the river pours itself, pursuing its course at less than a right angle from its entrance. Much nearer the river's mouth, than the centre of the basin, is the central point of the whirlpool. The surface reminded me of the section of a nautilus; curled radii, or rather septæ of ever breaking waves

diverge, in all directions, from the centre. Judging from the wood I saw floating, the portions of the surface unaffected by the whirl, appear to be governed by under currents; another indication is, that the appearance which I have already described as so beautiful, at the horse-shoe fall, presents itself here.

I returned to Niagara Falls by the high road, making a detour, to that part of Lundy Lane, celebrated as the site of one of the most severely contested battles between the Americans and English. After dinner I again attempted the passage to the Termination Rock. I had now learned the mode of easy access. It is, to keep the head deeply bent upon the chest. Having encountered, in this position, the thickest of the spray and the greatest violence of the blast, the visitor is enabled to pause and look around. Except for the black rock against which he leans, and the spot upon which he stands, he is within a globe of water. It has not, however, the common appearance of water, nor of a grey mist, neither is there ordinary light or shade, nor a grotto of diamonds, nor

the roar of a tempestuous ocean, yet of all these I was reminded. Though I lingered, yet I almost feared to stay.

A respectable young farmer who accompanied my guide, exclaimed, on emerging into the open air,—“ Every man that goes there should thank God when he comes back alive. I would not take nothing—no nothing for this stone,” alluding to a small piece of rock which he had brought from the extremity. The passing behind the sheet of water is an appalling, but not dangerous undertaking, and would be accomplished by all who visit The Falls, if they could know the delight it would afford them. I may safely say they would experience sensations such as no other existing combination of causes could excite.

July 2nd.

At half-past five o'clock, I rode down to the ferry and crossed to Goat Island, for the purpose of exploring The Cave, and bidding The Terrapin, adieu. I found that the account in my guide book was false in stating that “the cave is accessible.” As to

the trickling sheet, or detached portion of the American Fall, a child may safely pass behind it. No object which attracted my attention at this visit appeared new to me. This was my warning for departure from the neighbourhood, having previously resolved to quit the scene before the vividness of my impressions should be impaired by familiarity.

It was not without regret that, on setting out for Brock's monument,

“ I cast a longing, lingering look behind,”

and sighed my farewell.

Before I had advanced far, all my attention was arrested, by a break in the forest, or a turn in the road, affording a sudden burst of the music of The Falls. As that music died away, and I awoke to impressions from the objects immediately around me, I found myself revolving in my mind those sentences of Holy Writ—“ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters,” “ The ¹glōry ²ōf ³Gōd thundereth.”

Having left The Falls of Niagara, I asked myself—Have they disappointed me? Have they equalled my expectations?

From the moment that, in breathless expectation, I caught a first glimpse of the cloud that marked their being, to the moment I quitted them, I had sensations such as I never before experienced; a fulness of delight, and yet, whilst gazing upon them, a feeling somewhat allied to vacancy of thought. Was it that my ordinary ideas were at once discarded as unfit associates for those, resulting from the sensations, which crowded upon me, and for which I could find no analogies? I was as an infant just placed in a new world, my senses busied in receiving impressions totally new, and my memory supplying none for just comparison. In my rambles there was ever a something which acted as a restraint on my tongue, and a check upon my steps. When the giddy laugh of strangers burst upon my ear, I felt at the moment as if they were guilty of sacrilege, and, even upon reflection, I could not withhold from them my contempt. I could not pause, without some ejaculation escaping from my lips; such as, Great God! how wonderful—how passing wonder, He who made them such!

Let those who have derived their ideas of

power from the volcano and the hurricane; who have been familiar with floods, and bred amidst the roar of cannon, unite them all within *natural* limits, and they may certainly form a more terrific combination, but none so enchantingly impressive as that received from The Falls of Niagara. If, as Hamilton has observed, a man go expecting to see "the Atlantic ocean pouring out of the moon," he will find no such thing; and if he say, as my neighbour at dinner this day said to me, "I have seen many water-falls, and *this* is only larger; and I don't see why a mere matter of size should throw people into such ecstasy," I should place him on a level with the brute. In my opinion, a man who feels disappointed on seeing Niagara, would best consult his own interest, by not whispering the fact even to a friend; I should consider the expression of disappointment *merely* as a proof that he, himself, had a head without judgment, and a heart without feeling.

To the sound of these Falls may perhaps be attributed no small share of the effect produced by them upon the mind. It differs from every other I ever heard. Of the Falls

of Terni, Tivoli, and Trenton, I can speak from personal experience. They produce no impression upon the beholder, which can give birth to conceptions at all analogous to those suggested by the gigantic Niagara. The greatest artificial sound with which I am acquainted, *that* of the explosion of artillery, is of a nature which impresses the hearer with the idea of utter exhaustion in the power which produces it; but I never listened to the sound of Niagara, without the impression, that an inexhaustible power was in action, which, unless restrained and subdued, must instantly annihilate me. The thunder, in a tropical region, is most awful and grand, yet, unlike the power in action at Niagara, the sound increases and dies away upon the ear, as it approaches or recedes. It is thus constantly associated in our minds with place, a limited idea. Probably the sound of a tempestuous ocean bears a closer resemblance; but *this* strikes us by pulses, which, in human exertions, imply a period of rest. For these or other reasons (perhaps merely our greater familiarity with them,) they affect us less than the roar of Niagara,

which is the same every moment, to-day, yesterday, and (so far as man is concerned,) for ever.

Finally, the emotion produced in me by the sight and sound of these Falls has exceeded any I ever before received from natural objects, excepting perhaps that derived from a glance into the crater of Ætna. I feel at this moment as if raised a degree in the scale of intelligence, by having beheld what the native Indian of these forests might have justly termed, “The *track* of his Creator !”

Should any reader of these lines visit hereafter the neighbourhood of Niagara, I should strongly recommend him to make his first approach to The Falls, alone, and to select an hour when he is not likely to be interrupted by strangers. Little do I know of the workings of the human heart, if he do not return with strengthened convictions of the omnipotence and omnipresence of the great Creator.

