

“When I felt how near to my Creator I was standing, the first effect, and the enduring one, instant and lasting, of the tremendous spectacle was peace;—peace of mind, tranquillity, calm recollections of the dead, great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness; nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart as an image of beauty, to remain there, changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat, for ever.

“I think in every quiet season now—Still do those waters roll and leap, and roar and tumble, all day long. Still are the rainbows spanning them a hundred feet below. Still, when the sun is on them, do they shine and glow like molten gold. Still, when the day is gloomy, do they fall like snow, or seem to crumble away like the front of a great chalk cliff, or roll down the rock like dense white smoke. But always does the mighty stream appear to die as it comes down, and always from its unfathomable grave arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid, which has haunted this place with the same dread solemnity since darkness brooded on the deep, and that first flood before the Deluge—light—came rushing on creation at the word of God!”

The roar of Niagara is sometimes audible at Toronto, a distance of six-and-forty miles. It is often the scene of fatal accidents and tragic catastrophes, even of suicides; though it is difficult, perhaps, to imagine that man should commit self-destruction in the presence of so overpowering a manifestation of the divine power.

A story is told of an Indian, whose canoe had through some unfortunate mischance been entangled in the vortex of the current, springing to his feet when he found his fate inevitable, brandishing his spear, and chanting aloud his death-song, as he swept on to death! A similar anecdote was recently recorded in the newspapers: the Indian, with the stoical composure of his race, threw himself down in his canoe, as if courting slumber, and so quietly passed away. Neither he nor his boat was ever seen again.

Chateaubriand's description of the cataract is characterized by his usual eloquence:—

“From Lake Erie to the Fall,” he says, “the river continues its descent down a rapid slope, and, at the point of its descent, it is less a river than a sea, whose torrents force themselves into the yawning jaws of the gulf. The cataract divides itself into two branches, and curves like a horse-shoe. Between the falls an island projects, hollowed underneath, and impending, with all its trees, over the chaos of billows. The mass of the river which precipitates itself southward is rounded like a vast cylinder, then unrolls like a sheet of snow, and shines in the sun with all its colours; the volume which pours eastward descends in a horrible gloom; it may be compared to a column of water of the Deluge. A thousand rainbows curve and cross each other in the abyss. The wave striking the shattered rock is dashed back in whirling foam, which soars far above the forests, like the smoke-wreaths of a vast conflagration. Pines, wild walnut-trees, and rocks like phantoms, embellish the scene. Eagles, drawn down by the current of air, descend, revolving, to the bottom of the gulf; and carcajous suspend themselves by their long tails to the end of a drooping branch to snatch from the abyss the disfigured carcasses of the bears and elands.”