

[The *Niagara* is that world-famous cataract which pours the waters of Lake Erie into Lake Ontario. More correctly may it be said to convey the superfluous waters of four great lakes—or, rather, inland seas—which, after gathering in a channel thirty-three miles long—a channel extending from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario—suddenly hurl themselves in one mighty flood, and with a roar like that of thunder among the mountains, over the brink of a huge precipice, falling beneath in a mass of foam and spray, irradiated with shifting iris-hues.

The cataract itself is divided into two unequal portions by the intervention of Goat Island, which has a façade nearly one thousand feet in breadth. The fall on the Canadian side of the river, called the *Horseshoe Fall* from its shape, is 2000 feet broad and 149 feet 9 inches high. The reader who has seen the Thames at Erith has to imagine, therefore, that it is suddenly precipitated over a wall of rock only fifty feet lower than the Monument, if he would form an idea of the magnitude of this astonishing cataract. The American fall is 1140 feet broad and 164 feet high. The former, however, altogether exceeds the latter in sublimity. With such impetuous fury does the boiling flood fling itself over the precipice, that, in striking the stream below, it forms an arch, whose span is several feet distant from the base of the rock; and, consequently, the traveller may pass between the rock and the curving waters as through a vaulted gallery of crystal!

The amount of water rolling over these falls has been estimated at 670,250 tons per minute.

We have spoken of the sublimity of the scene. A traveller, not wont to indulge in exaggeration of language, describes his impressions thus:—*

“So entirely,” he says, “was I unprepared for the enormous volume of water, that, in the weakness of my comprehension and inability to grasp the scene, I was unwilling to turn my aching eyes from the glorious spectacle, apprehending it could only endure for a season, and that the overwhelming rush of water must speedily cease. But as I gazed with trembling anxiety, and marked no change beyond the masses of spray-clouds, swayed by the wind across the mighty sheet, which ever retained its sublime proportions, the truth began to force itself upon me, that for thousands of years the waters had been falling, by day and by night, at all times and seasons, ever sounding, in a voice which once heard can never be forgotten, the praise of Him who bade them flow. Here, indeed, may be felt the beauty of the words in our canticle, ‘O ye seas and floods, bless ye the Lord; praise him, and magnify him for ever!’ And it was probably with feelings of deep awe that the Indians of olden time, worshipping the Great Spirit, gave the peculiarly appropriate name of O-Ni-au-ga-rah, ‘The Thunder of Waters,’ to this matchless scene. It is indeed eloquent ‘as with the voice of a great multitude, the voice of many waters, the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!’”

Mr. Charles Dickens’s description does even fuller justice to the glories of Niagara:—†

* [C. R. Weld, “Vacation Tour in United States and Canada.”]

† [Charles Dickens, “American Notes.”]