POETRY
OF
NIAGARA
"Vexaria: the thorn of the tears of God."

To my friend Frank Drake,
with the warm regards of
M. J. Hitchcock.
Jan. 9th.
WHERE Niagara's starry spray
Frozen on the cliff appears,
Like a giant's starting tears.

Moore
GENERAL VIEW — MOONLIGHT.
Poetry
of
NIAGARA

"Niagara! wonder of this western world,
And half the world beside! hail beauteous queen
Of cataracts!" An angel who had been
O'er heaven and earth, spoke thus, his bright
wings furled,
And knelt to Nature first, on this wild cliff unseen.

Maria Brooks

Compiled by
Myron T. Pritchard

BOSTON
LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY
THE first effect—the enduring one—of the tremendous spectacle of Ni-
agara was peace—peace of mind, tranquility, calm recollections of the dead,
great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness; nothing of gloom or terror. Ni-
agara was at once stamped upon my heart, an image of beauty, to remain there
changeless and indelibly until its pulses cease to beat forever.

Charles Dickens
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Falls of Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Niagara Falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Falls,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat Island,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nymph of Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Above the Cataract,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara Below the Cataract,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cataract Isle,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Leap of Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Pickering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Whirlpool of Niagara River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on a Sabbath Morning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Hill Todd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara in Spring,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William C. Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Dean Howells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Houghton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis G. Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara’s Everlasting Voice,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Rodman Drake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General View — Moonlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General View from New Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect Point — Moonlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Shoe Falls from below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Falls from below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Falls from Goat Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Shoe Falls, Canada. Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave of the Winds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Shoe Falls from Goat Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapids above the Falls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Whirlpool Rapids — looking down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Falls from Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View from Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospect Point — Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cave of the Winds — Rock of Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlpool Rapids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE FALLS OF NIAGARA

The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain,
While I look upward to thee. It would seem
As if God poured thee from his hollow hand,
And hung his bow upon thine awful front;
And spoke in that loud voice, which seemed to him
Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake,
The sound of many waters; and had bade
Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
And notch His centuries in the eternal rocks.
Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we,
That hear the question of that voice sublime?
Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet, by thy thundering side?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In this short life, to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to Him
Who drowned a world, and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains? — a light wave,
That breaks, and whispers of its Maker's might.

John Gardner Calkins Brainard
HERE at the chasm’s edge behold her lean
Trembling as, ’neath the charm,
A wild bird lifts no wing to ’scape from harm;
Her very soul drawn to the glittering green,
Smooth, lustrous, awful, lovely curve of peril;
While far below the bending sea of beryl
Thunder and tumult — whence a billowy spray
Enclouds the day.

What dream is hers? no dream hath wrought that spell!
The long waves rise and sink;
Pity that virgin soul on passion's brink,
Confronting Fate—swift, unescapable,—
Fate, which of nature, is the intent and core,
And dark and strong as the steep river's pour,
Cruel as love, and wild as love's first kiss!
Ah, God! the abyss!

R. W. Gilder
GENERAL VIEW FROM NEW BRIDGE.
LOW on forever, in thy glorious robe

Of terror and of beauty. Yea, flow on

Unfathoméd and resistless. God hath set

His rainbow on thy forehead; and the cloud Mantled around thy feet. And He doth give

Thy voice of thunder power to speak of Him

Eternally,—bidding the lip of man

Keep silence—and upon thy rocky altar pour

Incense of awe-struck praise.

Ah! who can dare

To lift the insect-trump of earthly hope,

Or love, or sorrow, mid the peal sublime
Of thy tremendous hymn? Even Ocean shrinks
Back from thy brotherhood, and all his waves
Retire abashed. For he doth sometimes seem
To sleep like a spent labourer, and recall
His wearied billows from their vexing play,
And lull them to a cradle calm; but thou
With everlasting, undecaying tide,
Dost rest not, night or day. The morning stars,
When first they sang o'er young creation's birth,
Heard thy deep anthem; and those wrecking fires,
That wait the archangel's signal to dissolve
This solid earth, shall find Jehovah's name
Graven, as with a thousand diamond spears
On thine unending volume.
   Every leaf,
That lifts itself within thy wide domain,
Doth gather greenness from thy living spray,
Yet tremble at the baptism. Lo!—yon birds
Do boldly venture near, and bathe their wing
Amid thy mist and foam. 'Tis meet for them
To touch thy garment's hem, and lightly stir
The snowy leaflets of thy vapour-wreath,
For they may sport unharmed amid the cloud,
Poetry of Niagara

Or listen at the echoing gate of Heaven,
Without reproof. But, as for us, it seems
Scarce lawful, with our broken tones, to speak
Familiarly of thee. Methinks, to tint
Thy glorious features with our pencil's point,
Or woo thee to the tablet of a song,
Were profanation.

Thou dost make the soul
A wondering witness of thy majesty,
But as it presses with delirious joy
To pierce thy vestibule, dost chain its step,
And tame its rapture with the humbling view
Of its own nothingness, bidding it stand
In the dread presence of the Invisible,
As if to answer to its God through thee.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney
NIAGARA FALLS

There's nothing great or bright, thou glorious Fall!
Thou mayest not to the fancy's sense recall,
The thunder-riven cloud, the lightning's leap,
The stirring of the chambers of the deep;
Earth's emerald green, and many tinted dyes,
The fleecy whiteness of the upper skies;
The tread of armies thickening as they come,
The boom of cannon and the beat of drum;
The brow of beauty and the form of grace,
The passion and the prowess of our race;
The song of Homer in its loftiest hour,
The unresisted sweep of human power;
Britannia’s trident on the azure sea,
America’s young shout of Liberty!
Oh! may the waves which madden in thy deep
There spend their rage nor climb the encircling steep;
And till the conflict of thy surges cease,
The nations on thy banks repose in peace.

Lord Morpeth
THE NIAGARA FALL

Is the boom of the fall with a heavy pour,
Solemn and slow as a thunder cloud,
Majestic as the vast ocean's roar,
Through the green trees round its singing crowd;
And the light is as green as the emerald grass,
Or the wide-leaved plants in the wet morass.

It sounds over all, and the rushing storms
Cannot wrinkle its temples, or wave its hair.
It dwells alone in the pride of its form,
A lonely thing in the populous air.
From the hanging cliffs it whirs away,
All seasons through, all the livelong day.

William Ellery Channing
PROSPECT POINT—MOONLIGHT.
THOUGH the dusk has extinguished the green
And the glow of the down-falling silver,
In my heart I prefer this subdued,
Cathedral-like gloom on the water:
When the fancy capriciously wills,
Nor loves to define or distinguish,
As a dream which enchants us with fear;
And scarce throbs the heart unaffrighted.

With a colour and voice of its own
I behold this wondrous creature
Move as a living thing.
And joyous with joy Titanic,
Its brothers in sandstone are locked,
Yet from their graves speak to it.
It sings to them as it moves,
And the hills and uplands re-echo,
The sunshine kindles its scales,
And they gleam with opal and sapphire.
It uplifts its tawny mane,
With its undulations of silver,
And tosses through showers of foam,
Its flanks seamed with shadow and sunshine.
Like the life of man is its course,
Born far in some cloudy sierra,
Dimpled and wayward and small,
O'erleaped by the swerving roebuck;
But enlarging with mighty growth,
And wearing wide lakes for its bracelets,
It moves, the king of streams,
As man wears the crown of his manhood.
It shouts to the loving fields,
Which toss to it flowers and perfume;
It eddies and winds round its isles,
And its kisses thrill them with rapture;
Till it fights in its strength and o'er-
comes
The rocks which would bar its progress.
The earth hears its cries of rage,
As it tramples them in its rushing,
Leaping, exultant above
And smiting them in derision;
Till at length, its life fulfilled,
Sublime in majestic calmness,
It submits to death, and falls
With a beauty it wins in dying,
Still, wan, prone, till curtains of foam en-
close it,
To arise a spirit of mist,
And return to the Heaven it came from.

As deepens the night, all is changed,
And the joy of my dream is extinguished:
I hear but a measureless prayer,
As of multitudes wailing in anguish;
I see but one fluttering plunge,
As if angels were falling from Heaven.
Indistinctly, at times, I behold
Cuthullin and Ossian's old heroes
Look at me with eyes sad with tears,
And a summons to follow their flying,
Absorbed in wild, eerie rout,
Of wind-swept and desolate spectres.
As deepens the night, a clear cry
At times cleaves the boom of the waters;
Comes with it a terrible sense
Of suffering extreme and forever.
The beautiful rainbow is dead,
And gone are the birds that sang through it.
The incense so mounting is now
A stifling, sulphurous vapour.
The abyss is the hell of the lost, 
Hopeless falling to fires everlasting.

Thomas Gold Appleton
SPLENDOUR supreme of constant majesty,
Of towering passion, overpowering charm,
At last, mine eyes behold thee as thou art—
In all the lightness of thy moving grace;
In all the whiteness of thy soaring spray;
In all the brightness of thy might!

At last,
Mine ears drink in thy voice miraculous,
O plunging mountain full of thunder-songs
Defiant or triumphant, echoing aye
Through vasts of day and night!
HORSE SHOE FALLS FROM BELOW.
O Shape beyond
All wingèd imagery of magic words
Most musical, by ancient bards bequeathed
To spell the hearts of ever-coming men,
At last, I grasp, I clasp thee; and my soul,
Struck speechless in thy Cavern of the Winds,
Breathlessly burns with sharp, voluptuous ache
To dash herself against thy torrent breast
And join the awful Angels of thy fall
Perpetual on the crags of Agony —
Victorious Agony of glorious doom!

O perilous bridge 'mid gusts of dazzling pearl,
Or where a diamond storm enshrouds the way.
Thou seem'st like Life a span 'twixt Day and Night;
For tho' eternal rainbows crown the rocks, Halos of Hope, charmed circles of high Faith,
Commanding entrance through the chasms of Doubt,
To deeps of nobler knowledge and soul-strength,
Yet all this beauty overwhelms the mind
By clash of contrast with our littleness.

So, Heart of Mine,
Oh! Heart of All, stand up and take the sun!
Seize, for 'tis thine, thy sovereignty of Light!
Night with her pale Infinitude of Stars,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Poetry of Niagara</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Nor Ocean, nor the Mountains, nor e'en Thou,
Niagara, with all thy loveliness,
Can match, in possibilities of growth
To Power, to Beauty, to Sublimity,
That noblest Mystery, the Soul of Man.

Henry Austin
NIAGARA

PROUD swaying pendant of a crystal chain,
On fair Columbia’s rich and bounteous breast,
With beaded lakes that necklace-like retain
Heaven’s stainless blue with golden sunlight blest!
What other land can boast a gem so bright!
With colors born of sun and driven spray—
A brooch of glory, amulet of might,
Where all the irised beauties softly stray.
Ay, more — God’s living voice, Niagara, thou!

32
Proclaiming wide the anthem of the free;
The starry sky the crown upon thy brow,
Thy ceaseless chant a song of Liberty.
But this thy birthright, this thy sweetest dower,
Yon arching rainbow—Love still spanning Power.

Wallace Bruce
NIAGARA

REMENDOUS torrent! for an instant hush
The terrors of thy voice, and cast aside
Those wide-involving shadows, that my eyes
May see the fearful beauty of thy face!
I am not all unworthy of thy sight;
For from my very boyhood have I loved,
Shunning the meaner track of common minds,
To look on Nature in her loftier moods.
At the fierce rushing of the hurricane,
At the near bursting of the thunderbolt,
I have been touched with joy; and when the sea,
Lashed by the wind, hath rocked my bark, and showed
AMERICAN FALLS FROM BELOW.
Its yawning caves beneath me, I have loved
Its dangers and the wrath of elements.
But never yet the madness of the sea
Hath moved me as thy grandeur moves me now.

Thou flowest on in quiet, till thy waves
Grow broken midst the rocks; thy current then
Shoots onward like the irresistible course
Of Destiny. Ah, terribly they rage—
The hoarse and rapid whirlpools there!
My brain
Grows wild, my senses wander, as I gaze
Upon the hurrying waters; and my sight
Vainly would follow, as towards the verge
Sweeps the wide torrent. Waves innumerable
Meet there and madden—waves innumerable
Urge on and overtake the waves before,
And disappear in thunder and in foam.
They reach, they leap the barrier—the abyss
Swallows insatiable the sinking waves.
A thousand rainbows arch them, and the woods
Are deafened with the roar. The violent shock
Shatters to vapour the descending sheets.
A cloudy whirlwind fills the gulf, and heaves
The mighty pyramid of circling mist
To Heaven. The solitary hunter near
Pauses with terror in the forest shades.
Poetry of Niagara

What seeks thy restless eye? Why are not here,
About the joys of this abyss, the palms—
Ah, the delicious palms—that on the plains
Of my own native Cuba spring and spread
Their thickly foliaged summits to the sun,
And, in the breathings of the ocean air,
Wave soft beneath the heaven's unspotted blue?

But no, Niagara—thy forest pines
Are fitter coronal for thee. The palm,
The effeminate myrtle, and frail rose may grow
In gardens, and give out their fragrance there,
Unmanning him who breathes it. Thine it is
To do a nobler office. Generous minds
Behold thee, and are moved, and learn to rise
Above earth's frivolous pleasures; they partake
Thy grandeur, at the utterance of thy name.

Jose Maria Heredia
NIAGARA

WHAT wild convulsion in the ages past
Shook thee to such immeasurable unrest,
Oh, mad Niagara? Did the huge crest
Of some black mountain, splintered by a blast
From Heaven down-bolted, leave these fissures vast
Whence rush thy waters? Or was ocean pressed
From its storm-beaten shores, to dash thy breast
And hurl out rage from thee, while Time shall last?
Rage on, imperial mystery, that thou art;
Poetry of Niagara

Chance, in theazoic age, with wonders rise,
At mandate of the gods, from out earth’s heart,
In embryo doomed to everlasting strife,
Thou sprang’st defiant, thundering to thy part,
Magnificent and terrible, as Life.

Rage on, for giant raging thou may’st show,
Through veins that interlace the land,
thy power,
And with thy foaming passion, bring to flower
The genius of man; may’st writhing go
Like a colossal serpent, to and fro,
Winding through ribs of steel that massive tower,
And so imprisoned, strike the zenith hour
When science shall supremest secret know:
I liken thee to soul wherein is pent
Divinest madness, that song surging keeps,
’Till by unconquerable forces rent,
To mighty music it majestic sweeps.
As the great Odyssey blind Homer sent
Crashing sublimely down eternal steeps.

C. E. Whiton-Stone
NIAGARA FALLS

O Niagara! down the depth profound
Plunges thy broad and mighty gleaming flood,
Fed by vast lakes, in symbol union bound.
On Table Rock, now fall’n, in youth I stood
Gazing on all the scene in rapt’rous mood.
There, at my level, the majestic stream
O’er long curv’d cliff, with ample plenitude,
Begins its stoop in reg’lar bending gleam;
Then falls till shape is lost in foam and misty steam.

Perched on thin leaf of overhanging rock,

42
AMERICAN FALLS FROM GOAT ISLAND.
I venture to the edge and look below;  
I see the eddying depth; and feel the shock,  
The shore all trembling at the earthquake blow.  
Ah, what if sudden dizziness should grow,  
As, at Passaic cliff, in her who fell?  
Or what if shock my foothold ledge o'er-throw,  
And to abyss I sink with loosen'd shell?  
The solitary fate no tongue could tell.

But though no brother man with me did stand,  
Yet God was there who scooped the basin wide  
And poured the flood out from his hollow hand,  
Yet God was there, whose voice on ev'ry side

43
Issued in thunders from the angry tide,
Yet God was there, the cloud-built arch to rear,
With mingled hues of beauteous brightness dyed,
Symbol once caused o'er wider flood t' appear,
Blest pledge of earth's escape from destiny severe.

Stand here, mortal presumptuous! and say—
While ear is stunn'd with torrent's ceaseless roar,
And solid rocks do tremble with dismay—
Cannot God's hand the flood of vengeance pour,
To sweep the proud, where they will boast no more?
Let warring tribes this voice of thunder hear,
And hush their rage, lest whirlpool wrath devour!
Christian! the bow of promise shines forth clear,
And thou mayst smile secure, when earth shall quake with fear.

William Allen
I stood within a vision's spell;
I saw, I heard. The liquid thunder
Went pouring to its foaming hell,
And it fell,
Ever, ever fell,
Into that invisible abyss that opened under.

I stood upon a speck of ground;
Before me fell a stormy ocean.
I was like a captive bound;
And around
A universe of sound
Troubled the heavens with ever-quivering motion.

Down, down forever—down, down forever,
HORSE SHOE FALLS, CANADA, WINTER.
Poetry of Niagara

Something falling, falling, falling,
Up, up forever—up, up forever,
Resting never,
Boiling up forever,
Steam-clouds shot up with thunder-bursts appalling.

A tone that since the birth of man
Was never for a moment broken,
A word that since the world began,
And waters ran,
Hath spoken still to man—
Of God and of Eternity hath spoken.

And in that vision, as it passed,
Was gathered terror, beauty, power;
And still, when all has fled, too fast,
And I at last
Dream of the dreamy past,
My heart is full when lingering on that hour.

Anonymous
HAS aught like this descended, since
the fountains
Of the Great Deep broke up, in cataracts hurled,
And climbing lofty hills, eternal mountains,
Poured wave on wave above a buried world?

Yon tides are raging, as when storms have striven,
And the vexed seas, awaking from their sleep,
Are rough with foam, and Neptune's flocks are driven
In myriads o'er the green and azure deep.
Ere yet they fall, mark (where that mighty current
Comes like an army from its mountain home)
How fiercely yon wild steeds amid the torrent,
With their dark flanks, and manes and crests of foam,

Speed to their doom—yet in the awful centre,
Where the wild waves rush madliest to the steep,
Just ere that white unfathomed gulf they enter,
Rear back in horror from the headlong leap;

Then, maddening, plunge—a thousand more succeeding

50
Sweep onward, troop on troop, again to urge
The same fierce flight, as rapid and unheeding—
Again to pause in terror on the verge.

Oft to an eye half closed, as if in solving
Some mighty, mystic problem—half it seems
Like some vast crystal wheel, ever revolving,
Whose motion, earth's—whose axle, earth's extremes.

We gaze and gaze, half lost in dreamy pleasure;
On all that slow majestic wave reveals,
While Fancy idly, vainly strives to measure.
How vast the cavern which its veil conceals.

Whence come ye, O wild waters? by what scenes
Of Majesty and Beauty have ye flowed,
In the wide continent that intervenes,
Ere yet ye mingle in this common road?

The Mountain King, upon his rocky throne,
Laves his broad feet amid your rushing streams,
And many a vale of loveliness unknown
Is softly mirrored in their crystal gleams.

They come—from haunts a thousand leagues away,
From ancient mounds, with deserts wide between,
CAVE OF THE WINDS.
Cliffs, whose tall summits catch the parting day,
And prairies blooming in eternal green;

Yet the bright valley, and the flower-lit meadow,
And the drear waste of wilderness, all past—
Like that strange Life, of which thou art the shadow,
Must take the inevitable plunge at last.

Whither we know not—but above the wave
A gentle, white-robed spirit sorrowing stands,
Type of the rising from that darker grave,
Which waits the wanderer from Life's weary lands.
How long these wondrous forms, these colors splendid,
Their glory o'er the wilderness have thrown!
How long that mighty anthem has ascended
To Him who wakened its eternal tone!

That everlasting utterance thou shalt raise,
A thousand ages ended, still the same,
When this poor heart, that fain would add its praise,
Has mouldered to the nothing whence it came.

When the white dwellings of man's busy brood,
Now reared in myriads o'er the peopled plain,
Like snows have vanished, and the ancient wood
    Shall echo to the eagle's shriek again.

And all the restless crowds that now rejoice,
    And toil and traffic, in their eager moods,
Shall pass—and nothing save thine awful voice
    Shall break the hush of these vast solitudes.

Henry Howard Brownell
NIAGARA

DESCRIBE Niagara! Ah, who shall dare
Attempt the indescribable, and train
Thought’s fragile wing to skim the heavy air,
Wet with the cataract’s incessant rain?
The glowing “muse of fire” invoked in vain
By Shakespeare, who shall hope from Heaven to win?
And “burning words” alone become the strain,
Which to the mind would bring the awful din
Where seas in thunder fall, and eddying oceans spin.
Long had the savage on thy glorious shroud,
Fringed with vast foam-wreaths, gaz'd with stoic eye
And deemed that on thy rising rainbow cloud
The wings of the Great Spirit hovered nigh;
And, as he marked the solemn woods reply
In echoes to thy rolling thunder tone,
He heard His voice upon the breeze go by,
And his heart bowed—for to the heart alone
God speaking through His works, makes what he utters known.

But ages passed away—and to the West Came Europe's sons to seek for fame or gold;
And one, perchance, more daring than the rest,
Lured by the chase or by strange stories told
By Indian guide of oceans downward rolled,
Felt on his throbbing ear thy far-off roar,
Then sped the mighty wonder to behold,
Thy voice around him and thy cloud before,
Till breathless — trembling — rapt — he trod thy foaming shore.

Upward he gazed to where with furious hiss
The waters spurn the precipice and leap
Into the vexed and indistinct abyss,
Where Rage and Tumult ceaseless battle keep,
Filling with roar monotonous and deep,
The wearied echo;—there he fixed his gaze,
Like one entranced who fears to break his sleep,
Lest the wild vision fade that sleep doth raise,
All thought locked up and chained in stern and strange amaze.

Till, slowly rallying from the first surprise,
Thought from its magic prison breaks at last—
The gazer from the foam-whirl lifts his eyes,
And scans the whole arena wild and vast;
From point to point his eager glances cast,
Take by degrees thy wide circumference in,
And as his speechless wonder slowly passed.
Delight succeeded, deep, intense and keen,
Heart, soul and sense absorbed in that unrivalled scene.

Then through his mind like lightning flashed the thought,
Once o'er the Patriarch's soul in Bethel thrown,
"Sure, God is with me, and I knew it not;
I see His power in yon majestic zone
Of mighty waters, and its thunder tone
Brings to my ear His voice—and deeply felt
And almost seen His presence reigns alone."

Then meekly by the rock the wanderer knelt,
Feeling in awe and love his heart's full fountain melt.

And long with shaded eye and bended head
He prayed before the Temple's wondrous veil,
While from its foot, in ceaseless eddies spread,
The mist-cloud rose, like incense, on the gale;
And half he deemed that on its pinion frail
His prayers, upborne, would blessed acceptance know,
He rose with gladdened eye and heart to hail
Mercy's fair type and seal, the rainbow's glow
Spanning with calm embrace the troubled scene below.

And when the westering daybeam warned him back,
Lingering he stood, as spellbound by the strain,
And oft he started on his homeward track,
And oft returned, one parting glance to gain;
And twilight had usurped its fitful reign
Ere to thy foam his last farewell he bade,
Then like an arrow, o'er the woody plain,
Homeward he hurried through the deepening shade,
Again in dreams to view thy wonders round him spread.

And oft alone, and oft with friends, he came
To scan thy charms and worship at thy shrine,
And feel again devotion's hallowed flame
Blaze in thy presence, fanned with breath divine:
And oft from morning until day's decline
He sat and mused beside thee, for his eye
Saw nowhere majesty and grace like thine:
And in his soul thy mighty minstrelsy
Woke stern and glorious thoughts and visions wild and high.

In silence long forgot the wanderer sleeps:
But still as when thou met'st his startled gaze,
Thy glorious scene the heart in wonder steeps
Of him who seeks thee in these later days:
Sublime in simple grandeur! Art can raise
Poetry of Niagara

No rival to thy throne, nor words convey
Thine image to the mind, though noblest lays
Have vied in thy description. Day by day
Thy roar shall speak of God till nature fade away.

I. H. Clinch
HORSE SHOE FALLS FROM GOAT ISLAND.
GOAT ISLAND

PEACE and perpetual quiet are around,
Upon the erect and dusky file of stems,
Sustaining yon far roof, expelling sound,
Through which the sky sparkles (a rain of gems
Lost in the forest’s depth of shade), the sun
At times doth shoot an arrow of pure gold,
Flecking majestic trunks with hues of dun,
Veining their barks with silver, and betraying
Secret initials tied in true love knots;
Of hearts no longer through green alleys straying,
But stifled in the world's distasteful grots.
The silence is monastic, save in spots
Where heaves a glimmer of uncertain light,
And rich wild tones enchant the woodland night.

Thomas Gold Appleton
NYMPH OF NIAGARA

NYMPH of Niagara! Sprite of the mist!
With a wild magic my brow thou hast kissed;
I am thy slave, and my mistress art thou,
For thy wild kiss of magic is still on my brow.

I feel it as first when I knelt before thee,
With thy emerald robe flowing brightly and free,
Fringed with the spray-pearls and floating in mist,
Thus 't was my brow with wild magic you kissed.

1 Written immediately after leaving the Falls.
2 The water in the centre of the great fall is intensely green and of gem-like brilliancy.
Thine am I still, and I'll never forget
The moment the spell on my spirit was set;
Thy chain but a foam-wreath, yet stronger by far
Than the manacle, steel-wrought, for captive of war.

For the steel it will rust, and the war will be o'er,
And the manacled captives be free as before;
While the foam-wreath will bind me forever to thee;
I love the enslavement and would not be free!

Nymph of Niagara! play with the breeze,
Sport with the fawns 'mid the old forest trees;
Blush into rainbows at kiss of the sun,
From the gleam of his dawn till his bright
course be run.

I'll not be jealous, for pure is thy sport-
ing,
Heaven-born is all that around thee is
courting;
Still will I love thee, sweet Sprite of the
mist,
As first when my brow with wild magic
you kissed!

Samuel Lover
NIAGARA ABOVE THE CATARACT

River of banks and woods and waters green,
With all of beauty to attract the eye,
Why leaps my heart, as past thy shores we fly?
Art thou not quiet as an infant’s dream,
Pure as its thoughts, unruffled as its brow
When circled by its mother’s arms in sleep,
While o’er it she doth still her vigil keep?
Then wherefore leaps my heart so wildly now?
Hark to that roar, deep as the thunder’s tone,
And in the distance see the sun's last ray
Falling on clouds of never-ceasing spray.
   In its wild beatings is my heart alone?
Thou glidest on to meet that battling flood,
   Fearless as warrior to the field of blood!

Clara J. Moore
NIAGARA BELOW THE CATARACT.

WITHIN a temple's towering walls
I stand—
A temple vast; the heaven is its dome.
No corniced crag was hewn by human hand,
Nor by it wrought the tracery of foam;
The inlaid floor of emerald and pearl
Heaves at the hidden organ's thunderous peal,
While round and up the clouds of incense curl,
Shrouding the chancel where the billows kneel.
Ah! bow your heads. It is a fitting place
For solemn thought, for deep and earnest prayer;
For here the finger of our God I trace,
Beneath, above, around me, everywhere;
He hollowed out this grand and mighty nave,
And robed his altar with the ocean wave!

Clara J. Moore
The Cataract Isle

I WANDERED through the ancient wood
That crowns the cataract isle.
I heard the roaring of the flood
And saw its wild, fierce smile.

Through tall tree-tops the sunshine flecked
The huge trunks and the ground;
And the pomp of fullest summer decked
The island all around.

And winding paths led all along
Where friends and lovers strayed;
And voices rose with laugh and song
From sheltered nooks of shade.
RAPIDS ABOVE THE FALLS.
Through opening forest vistas whirled
The rapids' foamy flash,
As they boiled along and plunged and swirled,
And neared the last long dash.

I crept to the island's outer verge,
Where the grand, broad river fell—
Fell sheer down mid foam and surge,
In a white and blinding hell!

The steady rainbow gayly shone
Above the precipice;
And a deep, low tone of a thunder-groan
Rolled up from the drear abyss.

And all the day sprang up the spray,
Where the broad, white sheets were poured,
And fell around in showery play,
And upward curled and soared.
And all the night those sheets of white
Gleamed through the spectral mist,
When o'er the isle the broad moonlight
The wintry foam-flakes kissed.

Mirrored within thy dreamy thought,
I see it, feel it all—
That island with sweet visions fraught,
That awful waterfall.

With sun-flecked trees, and birds, and
flowers,
The Isle of Life is fair:
But one deep voice thrills through its
hours,
One spectral form is there!

A power no mortal can resist,
Rolling forever on—
A floating cloud, a shadowy mist,
Eternal undertone!
And through the sunny vistas gleam
The fate, the solemn smile;
Life is Niagara's rushing stream,
Its dreams—that peaceful isle!

C. P. Cranch
THE LEAP OF NIAGARA

ROAR loud, ye winds! ye awful thunders peal!
And instant rouse them from their fatal sleep,
Ere (cruel chance) they sink amid the deep,
Whose secrets Death permits not to reveal.

They wake! O heavens! What now avails their zeal?
Precipitous their maddening course they keep;
And reeling now they make the shuddering leap,
Down-dashed ’mid watery worlds with all their weal!
And thus are they forgot! Not such the fate
Of that immortal maid — enchantress sweet —
Who from Lucadia's rock (provoked by Hate)
Plunged fearless in the waves that round it beat.

Her name the sighing winds still breathe around,
And Sappho, all the mournful caves resound.

Henry Pickering
THE WHIRLPOOL OF NIAGARA RIVER VIEWED ON A SABBATH MORNING

"T was a Sabbath of the Soul";
I heard the distant cataract roll
Its choral anthem high,
Whilst from the forest's deep repose
A breath of mingled fragrance rose,
Like incense to the sky

Its azure dome was o'er my head,
The green leaves started at my tread,
As if disturbed in prayer;
'T was nature's worship — we alone
Could jar its harp-strings — not a tone
But breathed in concert there.
GREAT WHIRLPOOL RAPIDS – LOOKING DOWN.
I saw, below my verdant seat,
The swift Niagara at my feet,
    As in a prison bound;
A rocky bed, with graceful bend
And narrow outlets at each end,
    Encircled it around.

While the proud rapids seem to pause
Indignantly to view the cause
    Of their unwont delay—
In solemn majesty, they turned,
Lingering, as if themselves they spurned,
    In durance thus to stay.

In circling eddies round and round,
I saw the careless driftwood bound,
    And watched it on its way,
Borne gayly on the rapids’ crest,
Till on the water-giant’s breast,
    The passive victim lay.
Within the whirlpool's false embrace,
Condemned with never-ceasing pace
Their aimless course to run,
Without a hope or goal in view,
An endless journey to pursue,
Beginning, never done.

Yet viewlessly those links confine,
Brighter than diamond sparks they shine,
And merrily they flow,
Whilst each fair shore stands smiling by,
And still the dancing waters fly,
To music, as they go.

And then I felt like one who dreams,
And all his airy visions deems
Realities of life;
The senseless logs like men were seen,—
Poetry of Niagara

A metamorphosis, I ween,
Not much with truth at strife.

For is not human life a stream,
Whose rapids (cares and pleasures) seem
To us but infant's play,
Till, into passion's current hurled,
Amid its restless vortex whirled,
We chase the hours away?

What are the chains the hands have wrought?
The strongest chain is made of thought,
The poet said of yore;
Spellbound by habit, thus we see,
The ocean of eternity,
Yet seek its bliss no more.

O would we nature's lessons read,
And draw our pure, exalted creed
From her celestial lore,
All earth would then be hallowed ground,
In every stream some virtue found
The spirit’s woes to cure.

Susan Hill Todd
NIAGARA IN SPRING

Oh, could I gaze forever on thy face,
Unwearied still, thou matchless waterfall,
Whose twining spells of majesty and grace
My ardent sense bewilder and enthrall!

In all my moods thy charms' puissant sway
Enforce my will their master-spell to own;
My heart leaps at thy voice—or grave or gay—
And every chord is vibrant to thy tone.

So many years I have come back to stand,
With reverent awe, before thy glorious shrine—
So close and long thy lineaments I’ve scanned—
It seemed thou should’st grow something less divine.

I know thy face, its shifting glooms and smiles,
As cloud or sun upon thy bosom lies;
Thy wrathful guise, thy witching rainbow wiles
Can wake no more for me the sweet surprise.

I know thy voice—its terror and its glee
Have in my ear so oft their changes rung;
Nor forest winds nor anthems of the sea
Speak to my soul with more familiar tongue.
My feet have scaled thy storm-scarred battlements,
And pressed the moss most emerald with thy tears;
And still profaned thy lucent caverns, whence
The neophyte comes pale with ghostly fears.

Yet, as the more of God the soul perceives,
And nigher Him is drawn, it worships more;
So, in my heart, its matchless beauty leaves
Constraint, in thine, His grandeur to adore.

Within thy courts I come this vernal day,
Ere Fashion's chimes invite the thoughtless throng;
Almost alone I watch thy curling spray,
And lose my breath to swell thy ceaseless song.
I mark the flowers upon thy marge that blow,
Sweet violets and campanule's white bells;
Their azure shines unblanched, unblushed their snow:
These timid things feel not, as I, thy spells.

And in thy woods the birds heed not thy roar,
Where the brown thrush and painted oriole,
All unabashed, their tides of song out-pour,
As if thy floods in terror did not roll.

They do not know the flowers and birds around,
How wonderful, how grand, how dread thou art!
But I, transfixed by every sight and sound,
Stand worshipping thy Maker, in my heart.

I must go back where tides of commerce flow,
And the dull roar of traffic cleaves the air;
But in my heart sweet memories shall glow,
And to my dreams shall summon visions fair.

Niagara! thou wilt freshen all my thought,
And cool the breath of fevered noons for me!
My days shall lapse with thy remembrance fraught,
Thy voices chant my nights' weird lullaby.
Great torrent, speed thee to the lake and sea,
With tireless smoke of spray and thund'rous roar;
I bless my God for all thy joy to me,
Though I should see thy marvelous face no more.

W. C. Richards
All night long they heard in the houses beside the shore,
Heard, or seemed to hear, through the multitudinous roar,
Out of the hell of the rapids as 't were a lost soul's cries,—
Heard and could not believe; and the morning mocked their eyes,
Showing where wildest and fiercest the waters leaped and ran
Raving round him and past, the visage of a man
Clinging, or seeming to cling, to the trunk of a tree that, caught
Fast in the rocks below, scarce out of the surges rauht.
Poetry of Niagara

Was it a life, could it be, to yon slender hope that clung?
Shrill, above all the tumult, the answering terror rung.

II.

Under the weltering rapids a boat from the bridge is drowned,
Over the rocks the lines of another are tangled and wound;
And the long, fateful hours of the morning have wasted soon,
As it had been in some blessed trance, and now it is noon.
Hurry, now with the raft! But O, build it strong and staunch,
And to the lines and treacherous rocks look well as you launch!
AMERICAN FALLS FROM CANADA.
Over the foamy tops of the waves, and their foam-sprent sides,
Over the hidden reefs, and through the embattled tides,
Onward rushes the raft, with many a lurch and leap,—
Lord! if it strike him loose, from the hold he scarce can keep!
No! through all peril unharmed, it reaches him harmless at last,
And to its proven strength he lashes his weakness fast.
Now, for the shore? But steady, steady, my men, and slow;
Taut, now, the quivering lines; now slack; and so, let her go!
Thronging the shores around stand the pitying multitude;
Wan as his own are their looks, and a nightmare seems to brood.
Poetry of Niagara

Heavy upon them, and heavy the silence hangs on all,
Save for the rapids’ plunge, and the thunder of the fall.
But on a sudden thrills from the people still and pale,
Chorusing his unheard despair, a desperate wail:
Caught on a lurking point of rock, it sways and swings,
Sport of the pitiless waters, the raft to which he clings.

III.

All the long afternoon it idly swings and sways:
And on the shore the crowd lifts up its hands and prays:
Lifts to Heaven and wrings the hands so helpless to save,
Prays for the mercy of God on him whom the rock and the wave
Battle for, fettered betwixt them, and who, amidst their strife,
Struggles to help his helpers, and fights so hard for his life,—
Tugging at rope and at reef, while men weep and women swoon.
Priceless second by second, so wastes the afternoon,
And it is sunset now; and another boat and the last
Down to him from the bridge through the rapids has safely passed.

IV.

Wild through the crowd comes flying a man that nothing can stay,
Maddening against the gate that is locked
athwart his way.

"No! we keep the bridge for them that
can help him. You,
Tell us, who are you?" "His brother!"
"God help you both! Pass through."

Wild, with wide arms of imploring, he
calls aloud to him,
Unto the face of his brother, scarce seen in
the distance dim;

But in the roar of the rapids his fluttering
words are lost
As in a wind of autumn the leaves of au-
tumn are tossed.

And from the bridge he sees his brother
sever the rope

Holding him to the raft, and rise secure
in his hope;

Sees all as in a dream the terrible page-
antry,—

96
Poetry of Niagara

Populous shores, the woods, the sky, the birds flying free;
Sees, then, the form—that, spent with effort and fasting and fear,
Flings itself feebly and fails of the boat that is lying so near—
Caught in the long-baffled clutch of the rapids, and rolled and hurled
Headlong on the cataract's brink and out of the world.

William Dean Howells
NIAGARA

I.

FORMED when the oceans were fashioned, when all the world was a workshop;

Loud roared the furnace fires, and tall leapt the smoke from volcanoes,

Scooped were round bowls for lakes, and grooves for the sliding of rivers,

Whilst, with a cunning hand, the mountains were linked together.

Then through the daw-dawn, lurid with cloud, and rent by forked lightning,

Stricken by earthquake beneath, above by the rattle of thunder,

Sudden the clamour was pierced by a voice, deep-lunged and portentous—
VIEW FROM CANADA.
Thine, O Niagara, crying: "Now is created completed!"

II.

Millions of cup-like blossoms, brimming with dew and with rain-drops,
Mingle their tributes together to form one slow-trickling brooklet;
Thousands of brooklets and rills, leaping down from their home in the uplands,
Grow to a smooth, blue river, serene, and flowing in silence.

Hundreds of smooth, blue rivers, flashing afar o'er the prairies,
Darkening 'neath forests of pine, deep drowning the reeds in the marshes,
Cleaving with noiseless sledge the rocks red-crusted with copper,
Circle at last to one common goal, the Mighty Sea-Water.

Lo! to the northward outlying, wide glimmers the stretch of the Great Lake, White-capped and sprinkled with foam, that tumbles its bellowing breakers Landward on beaches of sand, and in hiding-holes hollow with thunder, Landward where plovers frequent, with the wolf and the westering bison.

Four such Sea-Waters as this, a chain of green land-bounden oceans, Pour into one their tides, ever yearning to greet the Atlantic, Press to one narrow sluice, and proffering their tribute of silver, Cry as they come: "Receive us, Niagara, Father of Waters!"
Such is the Iroquois god, the symbol of might and of plenty,
Shrine of the untutored brave, subdued by an unfathomed longing,
Seeking in water and wind, still seeking in star-glow and lightning,
Something to kneel to, something to pray to, something to worship.

Here, when the world was wreathed with the scarlet and gold of October,
Here, from far-scattered camps, came the moccasined tribes of the redman,
Left in their tent their bows, forgot their brawls and dissensions,
Ringed thee with peaceful fires, and over their calumets pondered;

Chose from their fairest virgins the fairest and purest among them,
Hollowed a birchen canoe, and fashioned
a seat for the virgin,
Clothed her in white, and set her adrift to
whirl to thy bosom,
Saying: "Receive this our vow, Niagara,
Father of Waters!"

III. THE PILGRIM

Pilgrim I too once came, to tender my
token of homage.
I too once stood on thy wooded banks,
my heart filled with wonder,
I too would render some gift, some tribute
of song and of harp-strings,
But 'neath the roll of thy wheels, my
shepherd's flute was o'ermastered.

Calling, thou seemest to murmur: "Come,
and I will instruct thee!"
Willing I ran, like a palmer of old, with
his pike-staff and wallet,
Willing I lingered long, to go, but to turn
on the morrow,
Coming again and again,—yet only to
doubt thee more deeply.

Idol I found thee, unfeeling, challenging
man but to mock him,
Whispering to one that is weak of voids
that are vast and almighty,
Hinting of things heaven-high to one
not winged like an eagle,
Telling of changeless parts to a leaflet that
reddens to perish;

Ever, as nearer I fared, the mightier, less
merciful found thee,
Till, after listening long, I faltered, forlorn
and disheartened;
Wearied of ceaseless strife, and yearned for some peaceful seclusion,
Where to the chorusing throng both ear and eye might be shuttered;

Hated the turmoil of life, where sounds that are sweetest are strangléd,
And into discord clash those martial measures, that struggling,
Should the din of the dimmest fight, with quavereng echoes,
Nerve the warrior anew, and fire his soul with devotion.

Turning towards far-off fields, I fled, till, stopping to listen,
Only dull undertones told that still thou wert calling and calling;
Wept, and wished it mid-winter, that, muffled in snows of December,
PROSPECT POINT—WINTER.
All the world might be smothered in silence utterly soundless;

Wished like a Druid to hie to some mountain-top shorn and unsheltered,
Where, in their wildest flights, the riotous winds might be stifled,
Finding no hollow reed through which to pipe their bravuras,
Finding no trembling twig on which to twang their lamentings.

Then, as I crost a meadow-land, dight with mallow and daisies,
Heard the low bumble of bees, and the delicate footsteps of robins
That o'er the crispy leaves of the scrub-oak coverts went hopping,
Suddenly—who shall explain it?—faith returned to my bosom;
Suddenly hope revived, the fog from the fens was uplifted,
Lost was the din of life that stormed and roared in the roadways,
Calm were the grassy fields, a lullaby purred through the willows.
And overhead the night was illumined with flickering beacons.

IV.

Often, in later years, allured by thy strange fascination,
Often again have I come, with feet that would not turn backward;
Often knelt at thy feet, and sought with a lover’s persistence,
Whether, beneath thy dolorous fugue, one promise was whispered.
Hope there was none for me; august was the deep diapason,
But 't was the moan of the sea, the growl of the forest unfeeling,
Threat of the sulphurous skies that, when they are fevered and angry,
Volley the world with flame and curse mankind with their laughter.

V. THE UPPER RAPIDS

Still, with the wonder of boyhood, I follow the race of thy Rapids,
Sirens that dance, and allure to destruction—now lurking in shadows,
Skirting the level stillness of pools and the treacherous shallows,
Smiling and dimple-mouthed, coquetting,
—now modest, now forward;
Tenderly chanting, and such the thrall of
the weird incantation,
Thirst it awakes in each listener's soul, a
feverish longing,
Thoughts all-absorbent, a torment that
stings and ever increases,
Burning ambition to push bare-breast to
thy perilous bosom.

Thus, in some midnight obscure, bent
down by the storm of temptation
(So hath the wind, in the beechen wood,
confided the story),
Pine-trees, thrusting their way and tramp-
ling down one another,
Curious, lean and listen, replying in sobs
and in whispers;

Till of the secret possessed, which brings
sure blight to the hearer

108
CAVE OF THE WINDS—ROCK OF AGES.
(So hath the wind, in the beechen wood
confided the story),
Faltering, they stagger brinkward—
clutch at the roots of the grasses,
Cry—a pitiful cry of remorse—and
plunge down in the darkness.

Art thou, all-merciless then—a fiend,
ever fierce for new victims?
Was then the red-man right (as yet it
liveth in legend),
That, ere each twelvemonth circles, still to
thy shrine is allotted
Blood of one human heart, as sacrifice
due and demanded?

Butterflies have I followed, that, leaving
the red-top and clover,
Thinking the wind-harp thy voice, thy
froth the fresh whiteness of daisies,
Ventured too close, grew giddy, and catching cold drops on their pinions,
Balanced—but vainly—and, falling, their scarlet was blotted forever.

VI. THE CATARACT

Still to thy Fall I come near, as unto earth's grandest cathedral,
Forehead uncovered, hands down, with feet that falter beneath me;
Hearing afar, o'er the rustling grass and the rush of the river,
Chorus triumphant, thy trumpet voice, and I tremble with weakness.

Tall above tower and tree looms thy steeple builded of sunshine,
Mystical steeple, white like a cloud, yearning toward Heaven,
Till into cloud-land it drifts, uprolling in hill-tops and headlands, 
Catches the glory of sunset, then pales into rose-tint and purple.

Slowly through gothic aisles, I creep to the steps of thine altar, 
Halfway forgetting thy presence, though still with each step I draw nearer, 
Halfway forgetting thy voice, so far it sends fancy awandering, 
Till, with a sudden ascent, full-face thou standest before me.

Who, upon tiptoes straining, shall snare the fleet course of the comet! 
Who, in bright pigments, shall match the luminous sun-god at mid-day! 
Who shall dare picture in words the turbulent wrath of the tempest!
Seeing, I can but stand still, with finger on lip, and keep silent.

VII.

Lo! drifting toward us approaches a curious tangle of something!
White and untilled it floats, bewitching the sight, and appearing
Like to a birchen canoe, a virgin crouched pallid within it,
Hastening with martyr zeal to solve the unriddled hereafter!

Slower and smoother her flight, until on the precipice pausing,
Just for the space of a breath the dread of the change seems to thrill her;
Crossing herself, and seeming to shudder,
She lifts her eyes to Heaven—
Sudden a mist upwhirls—I see not—but know all is over.

Stoop and explore the void where this vision of fancy hath vanished!
Torrents of green and blue drench down the dizzy escarpment,
Fall into shattered flakes, and merge into fury of snow-squalls;
Crisp, like glaciers, they shatter, then smoke in the whirl of the vortex.

Stoop and look down! and read, if you can, the terrible riddle!
Nay, the secret of death by death’s eyes alone can be fathomed;
But o’er the mystery finished is fluttered the curtain Most Holy,
And on this curtain is set the sign of redemption—a rainbow.
Symbol of hope is this, or merely man's hopeful invention?
Thou hast no answer to that, beyond this dull undertone moaning:
"Man, of all animate things the noblest,
most meanly ignoble,
Smiling only to tempt, and spoiling what-e'er he embraces!"

Is then thy bow we clasp'd as pledge of a promise unfailing,
Naught but a sun-dog ferocious, that, mouthing the mariner's noonday,
Kisses with lying lips the soft-sleeping clouds of midsummer,
Only to taunt him, lulled by the calm, with an ambushed tornado?

Faith in thee have I none! I lift spent eyes, and, despairing,
Set my teeth in defiance. Fate, then, the father of all things!
I but a victim moth, to be snatched by a merciless current,
Dragged by cold eddies down, to be lost and forever forgotten!

Why then this pilgrimage here? God knows no willful self-seeking
Lent us this restless life; and no faint heart or rebellion
Gives us this fear to lie down, and rest in the slumberous dreamland!—
Answer, if answer thou hast! Answer, Niagara! answer!

Weary with waiting, we climb to the hill-tops nearest to Heaven,
Find only floating fogs, and air too meagre to nourish;
Seeking the depths of the sea, we drop our plummets and feel them, 
Draw them in empty, or yellowed with clay, that melts and tells nothing;

Forests we thread, wide prairies unfenced, 
and drenched morasses, 
Strike, with the fervour of youth, to the heart of the tenantless deserts; 
Turn every boulder, still hoping to find beneath them some prophet— 
Find only thistles unsunn’d, green sloth, and passionless creatures.

Youth flitted by us, we faint, then sink in the ruts of our fathers; 
Shift as we may with the old beliefs, and beat on our bosoms; 
Seek less and hunger less keenly, still sorrow for self and for others,
Striving, by travail and tears, life's deeper meaning to strangle;

Drag from sunset to sunset, too fainting to fear for the morrow,
Suffer, complain of our loads, but catch at their withes as they leave us,
Letting the song-birds escape, perceiving not till they've fluttered—
Bitterly weeping then, as we watch them die in the distance.

Struggling, we snatch at straws: call out, expecting no answer;
Pray, but without any faith; grow lag-gard and laugh at our anguish;
Sin, and with wine-cup deadened, scoff at the dread of hereafter—
And, because all seems lost, besiege Death's doorway with gladness.
Better we had not been, for what is the goal of such striving?
Bubbles that glitter perchance, to burst in thin air as they glitter!
Comets that cleave the night, to leave the night but the darker!
Smudge that bursts into flame, but only in smoke to be smothered!

Out of the gifts of our spring, that only is beautiful, counted
With which the day-dawn breaks bud, and dies ere the dewdrops have left it;
Smiles there no healthfuller clime, where forms that are fair never perish,
But, in a life-giving ether, grow fairer with ripening seasons?

Iroquois God, I adore thee, because thou art lasting and mighty,
Turn and gaze at thee, going, as on an all-marvelous vision,  
Dread thee, thou art so serene — but hate thee with hatred most bitter,  
Taunter of all who dabble thy foam, and think to discover.

VIII. THE GORGE

'Neath the abyss lies the valley, a valley of darkness—a hades,  
Where the spent stream, as it strives, seeks only an end to its anguish;  
Who shall its fastnesses fathom, or tell what wrecks they envelop?  
Here 'neath the tides of time, life's remnants await resurrection.

Deep is the way, and weary the way, while lofty above it
Frowns upon either hand, a cliff sheer-shouldered or beetling,
Holding in durance forever the course of the will-broken exile,
Blighting all hope of return, should it pant for the flowering pastures.

But from the brinks lean down a few slender birches and cedars,
Dazed by the depth and the gloom of the channel resounding beneath them;
Here campanulas, too, which lurk wherever is danger,
Stoop with a smile of hope, reflecting the blue of the heavens.

Fleeter still flies the flood, up-heaving its scum at the centre,
Dragging the tides from the shores to leave them a hand-breadth the lower;
While, like a serpent of yellow, the spume crooks down to the Whirlpool, Trails with a zigzagging motion down to the hideous Whirlpool.

IX. THE WHIRLPOOL

Here is the end of all things, of all things another beginning, Here the long valley crooks, and the flight of the river is broken; Round is the cavernous pool, and in at one side leaps the river, Headlong it plunges, despairing, and beats on the bars of its prison;

Beats, and runs wildly from wall to wall, then strives to recover, Beats on another still, and around the circle is carried,
Jostled from shoulder to shoulder, till
losing its galloping motion,
Dizzily round it swirls, and is dragged to-
ward the hideous Whirlpool.

Lofty the rock-walls loom, the narrow
outlet concealing,
Loftier still stoop pines, that shut out the
pity of sunlight;
Whilst above both a shadow, as if from
the wings of a vulture,
Sheds over all below a pall more spectral
than midnight.

Up from the seething witch-pot arises a
sulphurous vapour,
Smoke-clouds slow-winged drift hither
and hence, revealing, now hiding:
Whilst from the hollow depths, that hiss
from some under-world fervour,
Bubble, in torrents black, the refuse of
wreck and corruption.

Round sweeps the horrible maelstrom, and
into the whirl of its vortex
Circle a broken boat, an oar-blade, things
without number;
Striving, they shove one another, and
seem to hurry, impatient
To measure the shadowy will-be, and
seek from their torment a respite.

Logs that have leapt the Falls and swum
unseen 'neath the current,
Here are restored again, and weird is their
resurrection;
Here like straws they are snapt, and
grinding like millstones together,
Chafing and splintering their mates, they
wade in their deepening ruins;
Till, without hope, on tiptoe they rise, 
lips shriveled and speechless, 
Seeing sure fate before them that tightens 
its toils to ensnare them; 
Hollow the hell-hole gapes, and ravenously it receives them—
All that is left is a sigh, and the echoes of 
that are soon strangled.

X. CONCLUSION

This, then, can this be the end? and death 
but a blotting forever?

Turning, a bird was beside me, and striking 
a delicate measure, 
Clearly it whistled—a herald-like strain, 
that challenged a hearer, 
Sung—'t was a broken song—and stopping, far distant, it fluttered.
“Seek within!” was the message, “without is only reflection;
Sinless are nature’s forms, and therefore utterly soulless;
Sin may debase thee, make thee the servant of Fate and of Nature—
But to thy height arise, and thou art of all things creator.

“That alone is august which is gazed upon by the noble,
That alone is gladsome which eyes full of gladness discover;
Night-time is but a name for the darkness man nurtures within him,
Storm but a symbol of sin in a soul that is stained and unshriven.

“Act but thine own true part, as He who created hath purposed,
Then are the waters thine, the winds, all
forces of nature;
Thine too the seasons, their fruits, which
they redden but to surrender,
Thine too the years, and thine all time—
everlasting and fearless.”

George Houghton
Poetry of Niagara

NIAGARA

Here speaks the voice of God—let man be dumb,
Nor with his vain aspiring hither come.
That voice impels the hollow-sounding floods,
And like a presence fills the distant woods.

These groaning rocks the Almighty's finger piled;
For ages here his painted bow has smiled,
Mocking the changes and the chance of time—
Eternal, beautiful, serene, sublime.

Willis G. Clark

127
HOW sweet ’t would be, when all the air,
In moonlight swims along the river,
To couch upon the grass and hear
Niagara’s everlasting voice
Far in the deep blue West away;
That dreamy and poetic noise
We mark not in the glare of day—
Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
When o’er the brink the tide is driven,
As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from Heaven!

Joseph Rodman Drake