CHAPTER VII

HIC HABITABO, QUONIAM ELEGI EAM

AS we have seen, the last documentary evidence at Niagara University of Father Lynch's residence at the Barrens is May 27th, 1855. The earliest documentary evidence of his residence in Buffalo is February 1st, 1856: a receipt shows that he had on some previous date opened a charge account with "Neff & Co." for hardware delivered to "St. Mary's Seminary." He had already begun; the seminary was a recognized institution. So his arrival was between those two dates. He may have been here in time for the dedication of the new Cathedral and the launching of the new diocesan paper: both events occurred in June, 1855. And he, possibly, was in time for the laying of the corner stone of the new Franciscan monastery at Ellicottville, August 23rd, 1856. Possibly he was present at the latter ceremony. But in all probability his advent was in September, 1855. In any event, the Diamond Jubilee of Niagara University was due either in the last months of 1930; or, at the latest, in the first month of 1931.

With an empty purse he came from a place where the coffers were empty to a Bishop who spent his time giving clothing and coin to the poor. In fact, the latter seemed a specialist in giving away shirts. We have seen how in 1841 he had peeled the shirt off himself to give it to the future Bishop of Texas. Well, shortly before Father Lynch's coming to Buffalo, the Bishop stood at the door of his residence talking with a beggar. After a few minutes he called to the housekeeper, "Mary, will you please go up to my room and get a shirt for this gentleman at the door?" Mary went and returned with the news that "There are no more shirts: you gave the last one away yesterday." How could a Bishop who couldn't save a shirt hope to start a seminary? But Father Lynch understood: he himself would get the money. He would go about the country taking up collections, preaching the needs of the priesthood of Buffalo; he would give missions, retreats; preach at devotions of the Forty Hours; and all the offerings for his labors would be spent for the training of young men for the diocese of his bishop. All he wanted was a chance to work—and a place at Niagara Falls! God would do the rest. The dreams of boyhood and youth at last to be realized! He would not only see the Falls; he would live near them! And soon the vesper chant of young Levites would mingle with the eternal undertone of nature's grandest organ!

But now we see a somewhat different Father Lynch. When he felt the responsibility of the whole undertaking resting on his shoulders he began to see the wisdom of the Provincial's caution. You cannot build seminaries on enthusiasm. And of what use was the permission to build when you had neither men nor money? But the Provincial had promised him a man just as soon as possible. Meanwhile, he must work and pray, pray and work—and maybe go see Niagara Falls! Maybe it would be a good idea to give his first mission there? But the very first time he had a chance to see the Falls he said to himself, "No! When God wishes me to see them, I'll go." He would not listen to the thought. He was engaged now in a supernatural work: he must use supernatural means; and the safest supernatural means is to conquer self. The thought of going thither often returned. He could go and return for a few dollars. What are a few dollars! No, not much; but a sacrifice made for God is infinitely more. Still, didn't he need legitimate recreation? Yes, but he needed the spirit of self-sacrifice most. However, he might be able to work better if he had but just one good look at them. Would they not thrill him to greater endeavor and even greater sacrifice another day? Perhaps; but if he were soon to instill self-sacrifice into hearts of young men on priesthood bent, he must learn more and more, day after day, to sacrifice his every wish. I cannot give what I have not.

If I am to give to others the spirit of sacrifice, I must get it first myself. Thus the contest with self would continue at intervals for some hours; till at last he would shake his finger at himself and say, "John Lynch, NO! When God wishes you to see them, your work will bring you thither!"

It was the first time that he came into intimate daily contact with Bishop Timon; and from him he learned much of the spirit of self-denial. He could understand why twelve years previously the Roman confreres had begged the Pope not to allow the Generalship of the Community, after Father Nozo's retirement, to be settled by the votes of the delegates from the provinces throughout the world; but to appoint for the office the American priest, John Timon. And he could understand, too, Father Timon's quick retort that the priests of his province were perfectly satisfied with the prevalent means of election. He well knew that the prevalent means would insure a Frenchman for the position. Father Lynch with the example of a man like that ever before him could well learn to bide his time. Meanwhile, he would give the retreat to the Buffalo priests; and after that, would continue his work in preparation for the seminary.

But there came the day when he approached the Bishop with, "When will we make the start at Niagara Falls?" But the Bishop replied that it was not to be at the Falls; land there was too scarce and too dear. He had a place in mind not so far from the city, on the shore of the Lake. And so at the end of 1855 or the beginning of 1856, they adjourned to the plot on the Lake; and the priest proceeded to fit the place for the students. But he just knows that this place will never do! On April 1st (Father Lynch must have noted well the date) the Bishop signs over these hundred acres to "St. Mary's Seminary," on Lake Shore Road. In return for which St. Mary's Seminary is to educate three seminarians for the diocese. Within five months the Bishop sees that it was an "April Fool" move to locate there, and so informs the priest. "We'll go to Niagara Falls?" asked the priest. "No," said the Bishop "but nearer the city." The diocese owned a property that had been used to house orphans. The orphans had been removed to a better locality. The seminarians would replace the orphans. And on November 21st, the feast of the Presentation, they moved into their new quarters. The Provincial sent Father John Monaghan to assist him. They had six pupils.

To Father Lynch it seemed lack of economy to have two teachers for six pupils; so he constituted Father Monaghan the faculty, and himself to be President Peripatetic—one that would keep going about the country working for the upkeep of the faculty, the sustenance of fifty percent of the enrollment, and the equipment of the institution. He would give missions and retreats anywhere, everywhere; and all the offerings from whatever source would help swell the treasury. Both the Faculty and the President must be severely economical in provisions, clothing, transportation. But they met a great difficulty in the matter of overcoats. They had but one between them. Naturally, that coat was of but one size, while they were of two sizes—two distinct and unrelated forms of architecture. Father Monaghan was a sort of a renaissance basilica type, and Father Lynch resembled a Queen Anne bungalow. The coat must have belonged originally to the former; for, had it belonged to the latter, the former could not have worn it, except, possibly, as a vest. Since the portly Father Monaghan could wear it, Father Lynch could use it as a wigwam. Nevertheless, he did use it; and donning it for his peregrinations, would tell the Faculty to sit upon the stool by the hearth, and warm his shins "till my return;" or not to eat too heartily after sawing wood, or shoveling coal and snow, or after soiling his wardrobe with the sifting of ashes. Thus they lived till the boys had gone home for the Christmas holidays.

One evening after Christmas the President called a meeting of the Faculty, and addressed "him" somewhat thus: "Gentleman: it being so far quite a mild winter and whereas, besides, it being vacation, I move that it be spread upon the minutes of this meeting that both the President and the Faculty deserve a little trip. Let's go to Niagara Falls tomorrow. Not simply for the sake of seeing the Falls, mind you. Oh, no: let it not be so mentioned in the streets of Ascalon! But for the purpose of prospecting for a real seminary in a real location. I've been talking it over with the Bishop; and at last he has come to see that this place will not do. The Bishop with all his other drains upon his exchequer cannot finance the place. We'll have to take over the whole thing. There are three trains a day to Niagara. We'll take the first train.—Whose turn is it for the overcoat?"

And on that portentous December day two priests and an overcoat alighted from the train at First and Falls Street, then the terminal. The sun was quite warm. History does not record on whose shoulders hung the overcoat; but we fancy it draped the Herculean shoulders of Father Monaghan, for his companion could so easily get wrapped up in his enthusiasm. The boom of the waters told them that the Falls was hardly a quarter mile away. The constant, solemn thunder awakened in the mind of one the memory of a little boy in Ireland: "he would see those Falls some day!" That day was now. Here grown to manhood he stood on Prospect Point and could touch the waters with a cane. 'Twas a thrilling moment! What were his thoughts?

What a picture of life is this Niagara! Not a mile above the Falls, and the river is calm—calm as the conscience of a saint, or as the plains of Acadia on a summer morn when pealing Mass bells bade the flowers of the fields to bend their heads in prayer, and bade the simple peasants to hurry to their God upon the altars. Then war wakens on the waters, as oftentimes it awakens a nation's anger. The waters start into sudden action, stung to fury as they leap over the causeways, and dash against the rocks. There they recoil and gather strength; and charging over boulders, they become a mighty army of white-capped cavalry on milk-white steeds that speed on the wings of the wind down the steep to the Valley of Thunder. And the cavaliers, their vizors up, their faces pale as their helmets, dig their rowels into their foam-girt chargers and leap upon the foe. They break ranks, and while some charge onward still, others backward turn, and form again, and forward plunge in battle cries deep-throated. Above the islands' first defences they pause for a moment's consultation; then charge the flanks unto the rear, where breast to breast they clash again, and war among themselves; and in their anger they leap full mountains high. And when they fall, they crash in mightiest disorder and flee unto the precipice to leap from the goading of the army in the rear. But when they meet upon the brink, they seemingly lose heart, and will not take the awful plunge. They run from side to side among the rocks, and swirl and twist in giddy agitation, and reel unto the center where their enemies behind them catch them on their foamy javelins and pitch them o'er edge. Their curses rise in raging spray far, far above the battlefield,

As down the deep
Their comrades leap
Ten million times a day!

And the sun comes out, and wreathes their wrath with rainbows; and at night the patient moon smiles upon their warring, and builds a lunar arch of triumph, and bids them pass beneath. It vainly tries to kiss their angry eyes to sleep, to hush their deep-toned hatreds—as the strifes of men so oft are vainly sun-tipped by God's graces, moon-kissed by His love.

Down there on the river, but a few rods from the Falls, it is as calm almost as the Lake above. But underneath that calm is a hell of water struggling for the light. A million hosts are climbing on one another's shoulders, and at every effort are mounting higher, higher as they are carried further and further away. A half mile from where the waters leap from the gleam to the gloom, they spring from the gloom to the gleam, but still rush frightened onwards, and dash into a rounded bay where they dance the dance of death again in a whirling gulf of phantasy and fury, and twist the necks of their comrades, and shout as a myriad of fiends. Soon they will whirl free again and swing with but little lessening force around the curves and boulder buttresses, strike against the banks, rebound once more into the ranks in the rear; then all together dash into the channel's midstream, and gnash their white teeth in fury:

All the while in reckless fury,
Jumping, dashing, hurdling, crouching!
Never weary with their striving!
White with rage, and green with envy:
White as the gulls that soar high above them,
White as the gulls that perch on the helmets,
Shrieking in ears of the hoary-locked warriors,
Laughing, deriding the contests of cavalry!
Ever the weaker are trodden by stronger;
Strongest are trodden by those from behind.
Fierce they rush adown the river
To the distant bridge that stretches,
Like a spider's filmy weaving,
From the sleepy little village
To the battle heights of Brock.
There they slacken, lest they waken
From their peaceful dreams the people;
Meek as children, slow as ancients,
On they go as babies creeping
To the arms of mothers waiting,
Till they reach Ontario's bosom
Where they wearied fall to sleep.

The lives of men are as that river—as loud, as woeful and as wild; as beautiful, as happy and as still. They rise to great heights, and sink to great depths—to thunderous depths of misery, pain and sin they fall. Some sinful lives are as calm as the waters below the Cataract. After a leap into sin, they wear a countenance as serene as the heavens, while their hearts are the homes of whirlpools and whirlwinds. But the undercurrents of their lives can be hidden only for a while. The boiling waters of the depths must fight their way upwards, and betray the secrets, and scorch the face with the horrible traces of sin.

The priests pointed across the chasm to a hill in Canada, opposite the Falls. Somewhere over there, a hundred and seventy-eight years ago, Father Hennepin had said his first Mass in the region. No cathedral had ever heard so wonderful a choir sing the Gloria in Excelsis! 'Twas as the voice of many waters before the throne! What an ideal place it now would be for a seminary. A seminary with Niagara Falls in its front yard! But that point was outside not only their province, but outside their country. If a soothsayer should have stood by their sides, and should have tapped the smaller priest on the elbow, and have said, "In three years and one month you shall be a bishop in that region! That hill will be in your diocese! In fourteen years you will be the first Archbishop of Toronto!" their loud laughs would have drowned almost the booming of the Falls. But so it came to pass: the facts of manhood became stranger than the fancies of boyhood. One of the first acts of the new Bishop would be the buying of that hill for the Sisters of Loretto to erect thereon a college for girls. If he did not build a seminary aside the Falls, he did build a college opposite it, and a seminary on its Gorge. We do not doubt that if the decision had been left but to his wish alone, he would have transferred his cathedral to the present site of Loretto. Perhaps, he often sighed and said, "When Pius IX in '48 had to flee from the revolutionists why did he not come to that hill opposite the Falls rather than to the heights of Gaeta overlooking the Mediterranean? The green-white waters are more beautiful than the blue sheen of the sea, and a great deal safer. No enemy could get unto the waters and live; and if he did, he could not climb the wall, unless he were a spider. Humanly speaking, isn't it too bad that the Pope has to live in Rome while there's a spot so beautiful as the Falls? What a superb site for St. Peter's would be that height opposite the Falls! And besides, the Falls are older than Michelangelo's Basilica; older than the Eternal City. Why, when Romulus and Remus were nestling with the wolf in the marshes of the Tiber, the Falls was chanting the requiem of ages dead and gone. When David fluted to his sheep upon the hills of Bethlehem; when Abraham was lifting his sword above his beloved boy; when Cain stood gazing into the glazed eyes of the dead shepherd; when Adam and Eve walked in innocence and talked to Omniscience that whispered in the evening breezes, the Falls with its misted white locks upon its brow,

> '*Like a sentinel old and gray,*
> *Watching the centuries passing away,*'

was, in its hoary age, singing the songs of its youth,—when 'the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the face of the waters;' when God said, 'Let there be light,' and light was made; 'Let dry land appear,' and it was done. What a glorious place for a seminary! What a glorious place for a seminary!"

The more prosaic Father Monaghan might interrupt with "Wake up! What do we do next?"

"Why, buy some land, of course. That's why we came, wasn't it? Since the site yonder is out of the question, we must scout around this side. I see now we on this side must not buy too near the Falls. Look how the wind blows the mist, and fastens it as ice upon the trees. This is a fairyland of crystal forests! The sun glints from a million shattered mirrors! But we wish not a house ice-coated. We must seek higher land and further away." So they would turn from the fantastic fairyland of woods and water to an unromantic cabman who spat unrhythmic amber juices:

> *A cascade by a river's brim*
> *A noisy cascade was to him;*
> "*And it was nothing more.*"

No, he didn't know "nothin'" about anyone with land for sale; but he would inquire. He would drive around till he found something. "Just jump in."

In those days a cabman at the Falls had the reputation of imagining that "his wheels rotate" were more precious far than real estate, and of charging accordingly. Here were two "innocents abroad" taking the most unconventional way of applying to a cabman for news regarding real estate, while the woods were filled with land sharks. These two "babes in the woods" must be protected! He would chaperone them; would drive them around all day; and would keep them in the sun as much as possible, since only one had an overcoat. Well, 'twas all the same to him, so long as his fares had the price of the journey.

After some inquiries the cabbie learned that there was land for sale three miles up Portage Road along the river—the Vedder Farm; right above the Devil's Hole. Father Lynch wished to see the Satanic rendezvous, anyway. So off they trotted, the "innocent" with the overcoat chatting, and the other chattering. They paused to cast a shuddering glance down the dark Hole. It was early afternoon. Winter had stripped the foliage from the trees that lined the ledges to the midnight darkness almost three hundred feet below. But the sun was just in the right position to shoot rays through the rift that splits the rock all the way down to the water's edge. It bespangled the northern ledges with angry dragons' eyes that blinked and shifted as the wind through the rift shook the branches of the trees. Well had the Indians considered it the home of the devils. To such a place Macbeth's midnight witches should have come. Down on that ledge by the cave's mouth that opens wide like the jaws of a dragon one could almost see them hobbling around their spluttering cauldron; one could almost mistake the crackling of the sapless trees for the crackling of the faggots, and the shrill wind for their raucous Hymn of Hate, which was heard centuries before on the Scottish heath:

"Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog."

To the imaginative priest would be re-enacted the massacre of ninety-three years before: Indians yelling and shooting; horses neighing and rearing; wagons, men and horses all pell-mell tumbling over the cliff; a man on horseback dashing down the road while bullets whistled; a boy, dropping his drum, doing a running jump into blackness, then hanging by his belt from a tree half way down; and in the quiet following, bodies lying on the road in the most grotesque postures with blood flowing freely from scalpless heads. Would be re-enacted too, the scene of a year after when the Commandant at the Fort, Sir William Johnson, called a council of all the Indians of the Six Nations: he would not have a repetition of such treachery. He had demanded from the Senecas, in reparation of the tragedy, a strip of land on each side of the river. They would compromise by granting land on one side. No compromises: "Both sides!"—"Oh, of course,—yes; both sides." But they had not the least intention of granting any side. So he called a council of all the Indians under the English flag; and would make provisions clear to them all that a repetition of the events of the Devil's Hole would mean the extinction of the race. And thus the delegates from far-off Hudson Bay, from the Mississippi and the Arkansas, Quebec, and Nova Scotia slipped into their canoes and pointed them towards Fort Niagara. Two thousand and sixty of them soon squatted there in the summer sun; all were there except the Senecas. They were rather bashful in presenting themselves before such a heap-big assembly. Possibly they remembered what their fathers had told them of another great council seventy-seven years previously: how the Frenchmen had first invited them to a feast and then to the galleys of France. But when Sir William sent word to them that unless they would come, he would go to them, and annihilate them, they came and smoked the pipe of peace with the others. There would be no more wars between the Red Man and the White Man—provided the white man's blood was English blood.

While Father Lynch would relate to Father Monaghan all the blood-curdling history that the Devil's Hole represented, the latter, doubtless, would dig his hands deeper into his pockets, stand first on one foot, then on the other, and gape, "Yeah!—Now what do we do?"—"Oh, yes! We must see if we can buy some land. That the Vedder farm up there? That's the Half Way House, is it? Well, let's go; see what we can do."

They continued north along Portage Road on ground gradually rising; and on their left the river gradually falling. On the crest of the hill they passed the Half Way House to the right. Business seemed none too brisk. Immediately beyond the tavern they crossed a ravine that began away in the distance to the right, and gradually dug its way deeper and deeper on its way to the river. What little water it contained there was frozen; but the cabbie said that in the spring and summer it made quite a large creek. On the detour road that ran in back of the tavern another bridge spanned it. "That's where the railroad used to be," would be the information from the driver, "till five years ago. New York Central bought up the right of way three years ago, but never laid no tracks. No, the Central didn't build those tracks of the road that comes out into the Gorge above the Devil's Hole: another company built it; finished it two years ago, and ran trains; but took them off last year. Then the Central bought up that road, too. Wouldn't be surprised if they ran trains again next summer after the spring thaw is finished its work. You see, the thaw loosens tons of solid rock on the ledges and they fall and tear up the tracks. If the rock hit a train 'twould smash it like a match box; and if a train hit a rock it might roll down into the river, maybe. You bet it's dangerous: rocks fall any time; but especially in the spring thaw.—There's the Vedder farm. Over there to the right."

They had passed over the abandoned railroad bed, and saw a simple little farm house. In the house they were informed that Mr. Vedder did not live there: kept a meat and provision store down town. No, he did not own the tavern; the De Veaux estate owned that; Mr. De Veaux himself had bought it and had added it to his other land almost six years ago; but Mr. Vedder did own the land immediately north of the tavern on this side of the road, but not all the land on this side of the road between the farm house and the tavern; a strip on this side of the road, too, belonged to the De Veaux estate. If the gentlemen would step with him, the farmer would explain the lay of the land.

So the three would walk quite a distance to the rear of the farm house to a tree, southeast of the house, and would give an explanation something like this: "Stand at this tree, and look north, facing Lewiston. From a point on the river bank, north of the farm house, draw a line running east for a mile about: there's your northern boundary. From a point on the river bank, south of the farm house, draw a line east to this tree, and there's part of your southern boundary. Now turn around and face the tavern. See that tree over there on the highway? That tree is just about on a line with the northern side of the tavern. Well, draw a line from that tree along the northern side of the tavern, east as far as your first line went: there's the other part of your southern boundary. Draw a line from this tree to that tree by the roadside near the tavern, and you have the southeastern boundary. The northern boundary line runs from the river about a mile back. The first part of the southern boundary line runs from the river to this tree; the second part from that tree near the tavern east as far as your northern line runs. This second part of the southern line would be a mile long if it began at the river, instead of at that tree by the highway. In other words, the De Veaux estate on the other side of the highway owns all the land up as far as our southern boundary line; and on this side of the highway owns land that forms sort of a right-angled triangle whose base would be the highway, whose altitude would be the section of our southern line from the highway to this tree, and whose hypothenuse would extend from this tree to the tree near the tavern. About one hundred and eleven acres in all, less the two strips of land that the New York Central owns of the abandoned roadbed in front of the farm house and the road that runs down the ledge in the Gorge: making it about one hundred and ten acres. Mr. Vedder is asking $75.00 an acre."

The property was superbly situated for a seminary; the land was, from all reports, capable of growing anything from potatoes to pantaloons; the cows were sleek even in winter, and that meant good pastures in summer; springs and lakes were abundant. It was situated in the best fruit growing districts of the country; apples and cherries were as

> "*Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks*
> *In Vallombrosa.*"

Only one thing was lacking: the farm house was too small for even his little crowd of boys, and he could not afford to build immediately. He must get some place where he could house the boys temporarily, and build as soon as possible. Now, that Half Way House would be just the thing for a beginning. But it was not for sale. However, the De Veaux estate might be induced to sell. He would go in and look around.

The tavern facing the road was of red brick, two stories and an attic. The gabled roof did not run up to a point, but about three quarters way up, suddenly stopped and formed a surface almost flat. The barroom occupied the width of the northern end of the building on the first floor. Back of the barroom was the bowling alley, a two-storied frame building, running at right angles. A chimney stuck its red head through the shingled roof at the barroom end, announcing the fact, "I have three hearths below: one by the bar, and two for the two rooms above." Two chimneys on the northern side of the bowling alley similarly announced that not only the alley could be heated, but that at least four of the five rooms reserved for guests above the alley also. A large barn stood about where now stands St. Vincent's Hall. The entrance into the house was midway between two windows facing the road. Once inside the entrance, you had the choice of three doors: one right in front of you that led into the kitchen; one to the right that led into the "parlor" (now a part of the Treasurer's Office); and one to the left that led into the bar (now a part of the Seminarians' Parlor.) Back of the "parlor" was a sitting room. Back of the bar was the entrance into the bowling alley. Four rooms on the first floor; five or six on the second; and space for at least two large rooms in the attic.

The whole scheme flashed through the mind of Father Lynch: The "parlor," sitting room, and the five rooms on the second floor will make the sleeping quarters for seven priests—when they come. In the meantime, these unoccupied quarters can be given to boys, two in a room. The attic can take care of ten boys. The rooms above the alley can take care of ten more. The loft of the barn can take care of twenty easily. Split the alley in half lengthwise: have the northern half for a chapel, and the southern half (as much as you need) for a refectory. What you do not need, make into rooms for boys. The barroom will be the sacristy. The ground floor of the barn can serve as a study hall, recreation hall, bake house—and anything you want. Priests can teach in their bedrooms, or in any vacant room they can find. Why, there is room for fifty boys here, who won't mind inconvenience till we can build. It all seemed very simple: he would take both properties—if he could get them.

They went out, crossed the road to the land overlooking the river. In the genial afternoon's sun that caressed the snows on the plains of Canada, they stood and dreamed into the canyon now gleaming here, now veiled there in the purple shadows. The white sea gulls shrieking through the purple shadows lent a weirdness to the roar of the white-capped rapids. From the height of almost four hundred feet they could catch now and again the sight of an Indian, seemingly no bigger than his head, standing on the rocks at the water's edge, intent on spearing his fish. The gaunt trees on the Canadian bank, almost a mile away, were like big bushes painted upon the western sky. Down there to the right was Lewiston bridge that seemed as though a giant spider had woven his web in the darkness of the Canadian embankment and had flung his filament across to the sun-tipped rocks. Brock's monument shooting up from shadows to catch the gleaming was as a shaft hanging in mid-air. Here was a scene as superb as the Falls—as superb, and a great deal drier. One would at first imagine that a strip of land between two inland seas would of necessity be somewhat damp; but here the air was as light, as clear and as crisp almost as the Texas prairies. The reason is because the height is almost four hundred feet above the river; and the Gorge, acting as a funnel, sucks all the dampness and shoots it to the surface of the lower lake.

Some fifty feet below, the unused railroad squirmed like a snake along the rock, rounding curves, dipping ever deeper towards the water till it glided into a tunnel for a moment; but when it emerged, it was hidden from view. It was a perilous descent for a train; any moment a twenty ton boulder might descend to distort the tracks, or obstruct the road, or smash the train to splinters. The next year Father Lynch would bless that railway, and pray the Lord to avert all accidents. And as a matter of fact (explain it as you will) in all the seventy-five years of traffic there no life has yet been lost. The surveyors say it was a most wonderful feat of engineering: the pious, it was a most wonderful blessing.

But what would those two priests have said, had someone then told them that thirty-eight years hence electric cars, not on a ledge of rock, but at the very brink of the river would race the rapids almost all the way from the cataract, past Mount Eagle Ridge, to Lewiston? That to the gazer on the heights those cars would seem as paper toys blown by the breeze? And that at night the cars which skim atop the Canadian ridge would blink as fireflies? However, on this December afternoon only the triumphs of steam were sung—and the triumphs of God who had made the Gorge, who had given such power to man. For, speak as you will, no one can stand where those two priests stood, and forget God. Even though you be an atheist you must perforce think of Him. Maybe your thoughts may urge you to deny Him; but you cannot ignore Him.

Father Lynch knew well the theories of the geologists. He knew well that a hundred and seventy-eight years previously, on another December afternoon, when another priest, Father Hennepin, first gazed upon the Falls, they did not then form as in 1856 an interrogation point turned backwards, the straight line resting on the American bank, and the curve touching Canada. To Father Hennepin gazing from the opposite shore they formed a line quite straight. Well-nigh two centuries of water passing over the ledge had worn the rock away. Geologists and paleontologists have come to the Gorge and have examined almost every inch of the fossil-lined strata from the Cataract to Ontario's lake. Sometimes they have hung almost on finger tips to study the ossified remains of leaf, or fish or fowl. They have compared the rate of recedence of the Cataract, with the depth and the length of the Gorge, and have checked up the deductions with what their science tells them of the ages of the different strata, and of the ages of the fossilized remains; and they all agree that ages and ages ago the Cataract leaped, not where now it leaps, but seven miles further north—by the present site of Lewiston. They all agree that since then every moment the waters' teeth have been gnashing at the rocks, gnawing a gorge southward to Lake Erie. So far they have eaten one third of the distance. Let their insatiate hunger continue twice as long as it has, and the waters of Lake Erie will form a cataract at Buffalo.

But where will Buffalo then be? The waters have so far done but one third their task—after working how long? Compute or guess with your scientist, and your computation or guess will be anything between 40,000 and 400,000 year.s What are a few aeons among scientific friends? Take, however, the more modest and more modern guess—40,000. When the Cataract was booming over the ledge at the present site of Lewiston, 40,000 years ago, what was happening in the annals of eternity? Was it while the Falls were there that the Son of God saw "Lucifer fall like lightning"? Who can tell? When our first parent talked with God in the evening breezes of Eden were the Falls at a place half way between Lewiston and the point whereon these two priests stood? When the pigmy laborers of Babel were building their tower to the stars, were the Falls at Mount Eagle Ridge? When Saul was flinging his javelins at David, were the angry waters flinging their glistening spears over the cataract near the entrance of yonder Whirlpool? What scientist will tell us in no terms of uncertainty?

And what thoughts of eternity spring from these thoughts of time! Had the Creator 40,000 years ago pointed to the cataract, and had He said to that proud fallen spirit, "When these soft waters shall have eaten through this hard rock a channel a half-mile wide, a quarter-mile deep and seven miles long, thy punishment for thy sin shall cease," every moment of these 40,000 years Lucifer would have gazed and have measured the erosion of the rock, and in each moment would have found a gleam of happiness; every inch would bring him nearer to freedom. Today he should be with his God. And even today if God should say, "Not now; but when these waters shall have eaten twice as far as now they have, then Heaven shall be thine!" his coming term of punishment would have within it something almost heavenly—it would have hope. But when Erie's waters shall lip the cataract at Buffalo his eternity of punishment will be but beginning.

What infinite tons of water have plunged over the precipice since the day they first began! Take that smallest drop of water that springs with the spray from yonder rock. What is it compared with the thousands of tons around it? Yet, scientists tell us that the amount of molecules composing that drop numbers two sextillions. Set the two billions of earth's inhabitants today to work, counting those molecules at the rate of three molecules a second, and the task will take them ten thousand years. When they have finished their task, remind them that each molecule has an atom of oxygen: "Count them." Ten thousand more years shall go before they shall have finished. Remind them again that each drop has two atoms of hydrogen. Before they shall finish counting the constituents of a single drop of water forty thousand years shall have gone,—the probable life of the Falls. And if each atom has a galaxy of millions of electrons, what incomprehensible figures we have reached! How many drops of water have plunged through the Gorge in a day—in forty thousand years? Multiply your counters a million times; lengthen their labors for ages; and after all is done, you are still in the finite. No one can gaze upon Niagara Gorge without thinking of the Infinite, and the Infinite is God.

Possibly, Father Monaghan said to his companion, "Well, if you are going to stay here and count the molecules, I'm going home where it is warmer."

And Father Lynch: "Say, do you remember what Newman published a year and a half ago in his third volume, third chapter of the 'Historical Sketches,' on the ideal site of a university? He quoted first from Anthony Wood: 'A good and pleasant site where there is a wholesome and temperate constitution of the air composed with water, springs or wells, woods and pleasant fields.' And then from Huber: 'Here and there primeval elms and oaks . . . gardens, meadows and fields, villages, cottages, farm houses, and country seats in motley mixture. In the midst rises a mass of mighty buildings, the general character of which varies between convent, palace and castle.' And Newman concludes with his own words: 'It is situated in a beautiful bay, and near a romantic region . . . A flourishing university which for a while had to struggle with fortune; but which, when its first founders and servants were dead and gone, had successors far exceeding their anxieties . . . All speaking one tongue, all owning one faith, all eager for one large, true wisdom; and thence, when their stay is over, going back again to carry all over the earth peace to men of good will.' Why did not Newman know of this spot? Here are the air, the temperature, the fields, waters, the villages, cottages and farms; the very oaks and elms. Yonder lake is the bay; and what region more romantic in its history? And there is no more beautiful river in the world than what we see before us, 'Niagara, thou child of many lakes, and sire of one.' We have everything but the University, and we'll put that here."

All that Christmas week he had been concluding his vespers with Psalm 131, "Memento, Domine, David." It was written in the time of David: his throne still subsisted; the ark had not been lost to Israel forever. The King had taken an oath, and had begged God to punish him if, before he had found a tabernacle for the Lord, he should rest in his bed, or give sleep to his eyes or rest to his head. The unknown author begs God to remember that oath of David, to remember his mildness, and his intentions; and to protect him and all his priests. As Father Lynch years afterwards related, that psalm was singing a refrain through his brain that day. On the bank of the river he said out loud: "Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi. Hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam."—"This is my rest forever and ever! Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it!"

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