

THE EARLY MISSIONARIES ; OR, DISCOVERY OF THE FALLS OF NIAGARA.

By John Galt, Esq.

AMONG the earliest missionaries sent to convert the Indians to the Christian belief, was Joseph Price, a young man who had received directions to penetrate farther into the vast forests which close the continent of America towards the north than had been at that time accomplished. In this hazardous undertaking he was accompanied by Henry Wilmington, who, actuated by the same religious motives, had volunteered to attend him. They had been landed at Boston, then a very small but thriving village, about a month previous, where they made the necessary preparations for their expedition, and recruited themselves after a passage of thirteen weeks from Plymouth, for so long a passage was not uncommon in those times in traversing the Atlantic.

It was a fine morning in the latter end of May when they bade adieu to the inhabitants, by whom they had been hospitably entertained, and accompanied by the good wishes of all, proceeded towards the hitherto unexplored forest.

The buds were now beginning to expand into leaves, and the sun was often darkened by the fast flocks of migratory pigeons, which, when the woods allowed, sometimes flew so close to the ground, that the travellers could beat them down with their sticks. Before sailing from England they had often heard persons who had crossed the Atlantic mention this circumstance, but they suspected them of exaggeration until they witnessed it themselves.

It was their intention to visit a distant tract of country, of which nothing was known except vague reports of sheets of water so immense, that, but for the circumstance of their being fresh, might have led them to suppose they were on an island. These reports were for the most part gathered from the Indians, on whose testimony little reliance could be placed, as none of their informers could speak from their own knowledge.

To aid them in their pursuit, they were provided with compasses and armed with fowling-pieces. They, directing their course towards the place to which most of the Indians alluded, had, it is true, but slight grounds on which to rest their hopes of success ; animated, however, with the desire of fulfilling what they had undertaken, they thought little of the difficulties which might attend it : accordingly, it was without regret that they were now leaving the settled part of the country.

Having travelled several days without seeing any thing worthy of notice, they arrived at the ultimate farm they could expect to meet with before their return. After remaining there for the night, they continued their journey through the forest, which had most likely never been previously trodden by the feet of civilized man. The startled deer frequently crossed their path, and a few birds were the only objects that varied the solitude around.