

THE NIAGARA REGION IN HISTORY.

By Peter A. Porter.



THE OLD STONE CHIMNEY AT
NIAGARA, BUILT IN 1750.

IN 1764 Sir William Johnson, commander of the English forces in the Niagara region, supplementing the treaty of the preceding year between England and France, assembled all the Indian warriors of that region, some 2000 in number, comprising chiefly the hostile Senecas, at Fort Niagara, and acquired from them, for the English Crown, together with other territory, a strip of land, four miles

wide, on each bank of the Niagara river (the islands being excepted) from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The Senecas also ceded to him, personally, at this time, "as proof of their regard and of their knowledge of the trouble which he had had with them from time to time," all the islands in the Niagara river, and he, in turn, as compelled by the military law of that period, ceded them to his Sovereign.

It is of the territory included in the above two grants, a region now popularly known as "the Niagara frontier," that the writer proposes to treat. And a famed and famous territory it is, for it would be difficult to find anywhere else an equal area of country (36 miles long and 8 miles broad, besides the islands) around which cluster so many, so important and such varied associations as one finds there.

Through its centre flows the grand Niagara river, between whose banks the waters of four great lakes,—the watershed of almost half a continent,—find their way to the ocean; and through the centre of the deepest channel of this river runs the boundary line between

the two great nations of North America. In it are located the Falls of Niagara, the ideal waterfall of the universe; in it are found the two government parks or reservations, established, respectively, by the State of New York and the province of Ontario, in order that the immediate surroundings of Niagara might be preserved, as nearly as possible, in their natural state and be forever free to all mankind. In it one meets with many and wondrous aspects of natural scenery; in it one finds geologic records, laid bare along the river's chasm by the force of the water thousands of years ago, and which hold so high a place in that science, that among its classifications the name Niagara is applied to one of the groups. In it are found botanic specimens of beauty and rarity, and it is stated that on Goat Island, embracing 80 acres, are to be found a greater number of species and flora than can be found in an equal area anywhere else. In it are to be found, also, the development of hydraulic enterprises which are regarded as stupendous even in this age of marvels; while as to places noted for historic interest, one may truly say that it is all historic ground.

Within sight of the spray of the Falls the red men, in ages long gone by, lived, held their councils, waged their inhuman warfares and offered up their human sacrifices. To this Niagara region long ago came the adventurous French traders, the forerunners of the "coureurs de bois," believed to have been the first white men who ever gazed upon the Falls, though the name of the man to whom that honour belongs, and the exact date at which he saw them will probably forever remain unknown.

Across Niagara's rapid stream went several of the early missionaries of the