

# **SUMMER ON THE LAKES, IN 1843**

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Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 by S. M. Fuller

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**S. M. FULLER**

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LAKES, IN 1843**



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*Charles S. Francis*

SUMMER ON THE LAKES,

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IN 1843.

BY

S. M. FULLER.

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## SUMMER ON THE LAKES.

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SUMMER days of busy leisure,  
Long summer days of dear-bought pleasure,  
You have done your teaching well ;  
Had the scholar means to tell  
How grew the vine of bitter-sweet,  
What made the path for truant feet,  
Winter nights would quickly pass,  
Gazing on the magic glass  
O'er which the new-world shadows pass ;  
But, in fault of wizard spell,  
Moderns their tale can only tell  
In dull words, with a poor reed  
Breaking at each time of need.  
But those to whom a hint suffices  
Mottoes find for all devices,  
See the knights behind their shields,  
Through dried grasses, blooming fields.

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TO A FRIEND.

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SOME dried grass-tufts from the wide flowery plain,  
A muscle shell from the lone fairy shore,  
Some antlers from tall woods which never more  
To the wild deer a safe retreat can yield,  
An eagle's feather which adorned a Brave,  
Well-nigh the last of his despairing band,  
For such slight gifts wilt thou extend thy hand  
When weary hours a brief refreshment crave?  
I give you what I can, not what I would,  
If my small drinking-cup would hold a flood,  
As Scandinavia sung those must contain  
With which the giants' gods may entertain;  
In our dwarf day we drain few drops, and soon must  
thirst again.



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## CHAPTER I.

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Niagara, June 10, 1843.

SINCE you are to share with me such foot-notes as may be made on the pages of my life during this summer's wanderings, I should not be quite silent as to this magnificent prologue to the, as yet, unknown drama. Yet I, like others, have little to say where the spectacle is, for once, great enough to fill the whole life, and supersede thought, giving us only its own presence. "It is good to be here," is the best as the simplest expression that occurs to the mind.

We have been here eight days, and I am quite willing to go away. So great a sight soon satisfies, making us content with itself, and with what is less than itself. Our desires, once realized, haunt us again less readily. Having "lived one day" we would depart, and become worthy to live another.

We have not been fortunate in weather, for there cannot be too much, or too warm sunlight for this scene, and the skies have been lowering, with cold, unkind winds. My nerves, too much braced up by such an atmosphere, do not well bear the continual stress of sight and sound. For here there is no escape from the weight of a perpetual creation; all other forms and motions come and go, the tide rises

and recedes, the wind, at its mightiest, moves in gales and gusts, but here is really an incessant, an indefatigable motion. Awake or asleep, there is no escape, still this rushing round you and through you. It is in this way I have most felt the grandeur—somewhat eternal, if not infinite.

At times a secondary music rises; the cataract seems to seize its own rhythm and sing it over again, so that the ear and soul are roused by a double vibration. This is some effect of the wind, causing echoes to the thundering anthem. It is very sublime, giving the effect of a spiritual repetition through all the spheres.

When I first came I felt nothing but a quiet satisfaction. I found that drawings, the panorama, &c. had given me a clear notion of the position and proportions of all objects here; I knew where to look for everything, and everything looked as I thought it would.

Long ago, I was looking from a hill-side with a friend at one of the finest sunsets that ever enriched this world. A little cow-boy, trudging along, wondered what we could be gazing at. After spying about some time, he found it could only be the sunset, and looking, too, a moment, he said approvingly "that sun looks well enough;" a speech worthy of Shakspeare's Cloten, or the infant Mercury, up to everything from the cradle, as you please to take it.

Even such a familiarity, worthy of Jonathan, our national hero, in a prince's palace, or "stumping" as he boasts to have done, "up the Vatican stairs, into the Pope's presence, in my old boots," I felt

here ; it looks really *well enough*, I felt, and was inclined, as you suggested, to give my approbation as to the one object in the world that would not disappoint.

✓ But all great expression, which, on a superficial survey, seems so easy as well as so simple, furnishes, after a while, to the faithful observer its own standard by which to appreciate it. Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got, at last, a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence. The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. I felt that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe. I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force, with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, images, such as never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks ; again and again this illusion recurred, and even after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.

As picture, the Falls can only be seen from the British side. There they are seen in their veils, and at sufficient distance to appreciate the magical effects of these, and the light and shade. From the boat,