



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

Bryant, William Cullen

New York, 1874

A Glance At The Northwest.

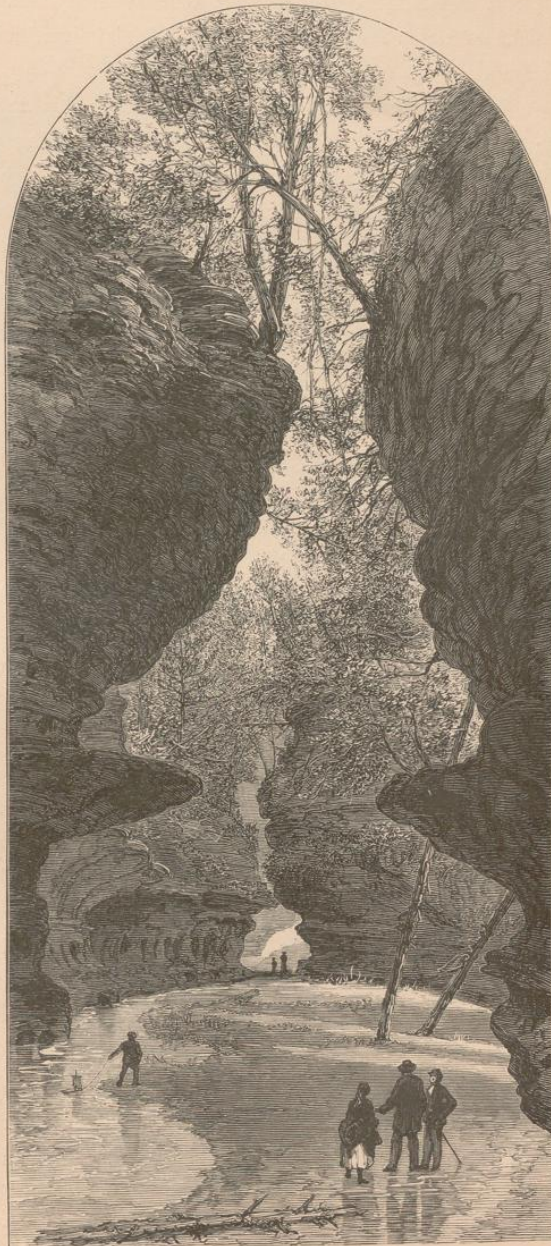
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A GLANCE AT THE NORTHWEST.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALFRED R. WAUD.

WISCONSIN people are generally quiet about the beauties of their State, and submissively listen to a great deal of random talk about lone backwoods and prairie-wastes, that people who have not been there ignorantly diffuse. But if, perchance, when you are planning a summer's vacation, you should feel weary of the more frequented routes of travel, you cannot do better than devote a week or longer to a journey that includes many more picturesque features than these backwoods and prairie-wastes. Go round the great lakes, for instance; break the voyage at one of the lake-ports—say Manitowoc, or Sheboygan—and find your way to the Wisconsin River by the Central Wisconsin Railway.

The guide-books and gazetteers have very little to say on the subject. The most that you will learn from them is, that the natural feature peculiar to the State is the uniformity of its elevation and the shape of its surface, which is neither mountainous, nor flat, nor hilly, but gently undulating; that the river Wisconsin has its entire course within the State, and

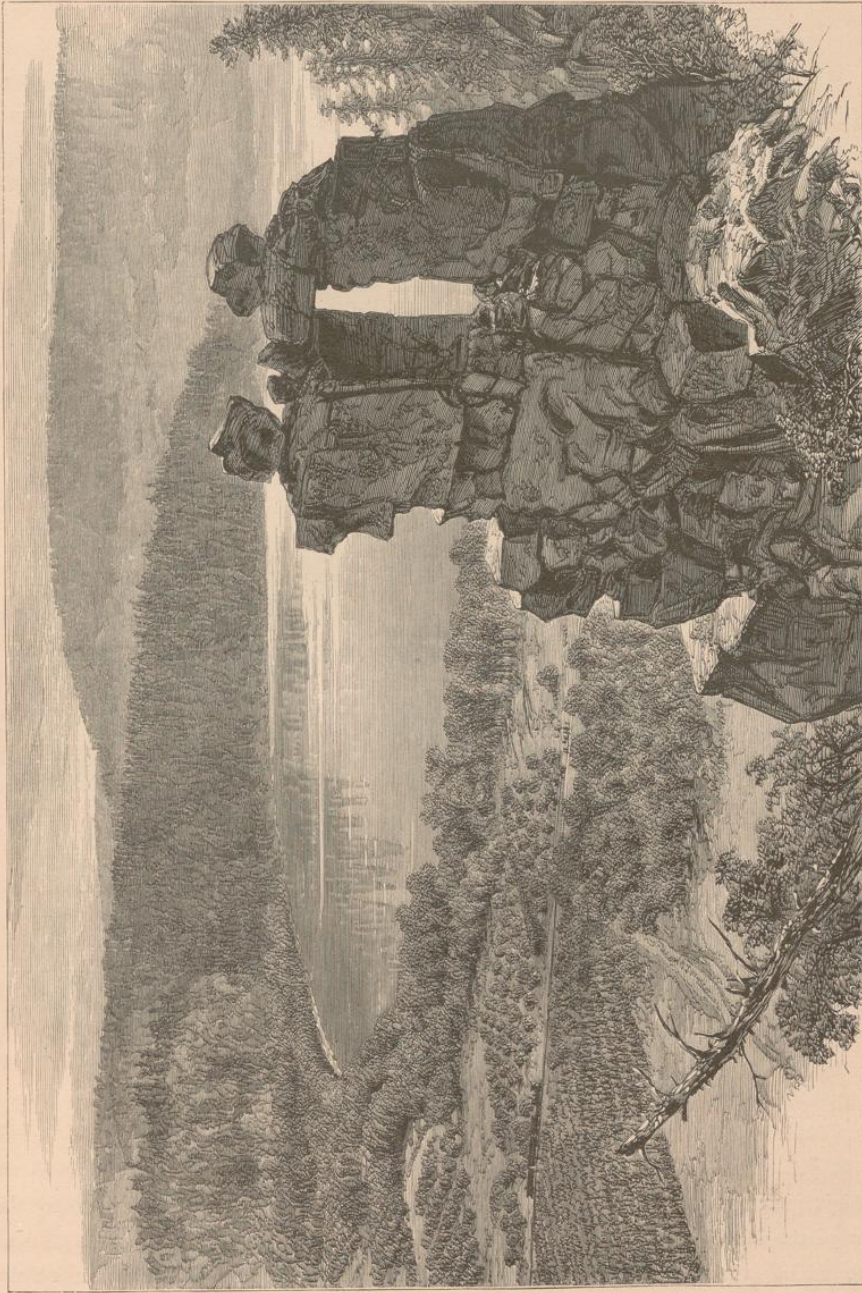


In Rood's Glen.

that it flows centrally, and enters the Mississippi, on its eastern border; that the only notable hills in the State are a range to the west of the river, which still do not deserve the name of mountains; that woodland is abundant, and especially increases in thickness near Green Bay, although it is diversified with rolling prairie, marsh, and swamp.

But there is much besides to be seen in this neglected State, and you will do well to pick out your own route, or select the rambling one that we followed last autumn. Near Kilbourn City, a sluggish little town, about half-way between the source and the mouth of the Wisconsin River, touched by the Lacrosse branch of the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, you will find Rood's Glen, a bit of scenery that will vividly recall to your memory Havana and Watkins Glens, the structure of which it resembles very closely, as will be seen in our artist's sketch. It is deep-set between walls of soft-looking limestone and moist earth, fissured and wrinkled into many ledges and terraces, which are so near together in some parts as to almost form a cavern. The bottom is smooth and sandy, covered with a shallow pool, which reflects the bright greenery of the trees and grass that are twisted and interlocked into a natural arch overhead. Some leafy boughs start out from the moss, their stalks interlaced in closest union; and, as they sway and rustle in the breeze, the cool blue of the sky and rifts of fleecy cloud are also mirrored in the silver pool, with the sombre green of the mossy recesses, the brown shadow of the walls, and the lighter, fresher shades of the grass and foliage. It is a beautiful spot, where you may rest in sweet idleness for hours, listening to the cadenced trickling of the spring as it blends with the fluttering of the leaves and the chorus of birds in the fields around.

And not many miles from this unheard-of city of Kilbourn are other scenes, not less picturesque. In Barraboo County, in a basin for the most part walled in with abrupt hills, reposes the Devil's Lake, a sheet of water as pretty as its name is repellent. It is of no great extent, not more than one and a half mile in length; and it does not figure in the maps. But it is a gem of Nature; and, in the autumn, the contrast of its still, emerald-green waters with the rich colors of the foliage, and the weird forms of its gray rocks, is inexpressibly lovely. Its origin was, without doubt, volcanic, the surrounding cliffs bearing evidences of the action of great heat as well as of frost. Round about, too, are many extraordinary forms, a description of which would fill a long and interesting chapter. The Devil's Door-way, of which we give an illustration, is characteristic; and from its portals we obtain an excellent view of a portion of the lake, and the serene vale of Kirkwood, with its orchards, and the vineyards that are already celebrated for their wine. Beyond these are wide reaches of hill and forest, thick with a dusky growth of spruce, pine, birch, oak, and aspen, extending to the water's edge, and abounding with deer and other game. Cleopatra's Needle is another of the curious monuments of Nature's freaks to which we have alluded. It is an isolated column of rock, nearly sixty



DEVIL'S DOOR-WAY, DEVIL'S LAKE, WISCONSIN



Cleopatra's Needle, Devil's Lake, Wisconsin.

feet high, piercing a surrounding bosket at a point where the cliffs are sheer to the bosom of the lake.

Regaining the river, we travel southward, in the track of the railroad part of the way, passing Lone Rock, a dot of an island in the mid-stream. It is nearly circular in form, with an area of not many square yards; and its sides have a streaky, corrugated

appearance. A score or so of thin, repressed pine-trees do their best to shield its barrenness and be friendly; but it will not be comforted, and stands out bleakly, the current lapping and eddying sadly at its feet. At another point of the river the boundary rocks counterfeit the stems of four or five steamboats moored together, with their several tiers of galleries, one above another; and, as we approach the Dalles near the mouth, there are two isolated rocks on the river-bank—one of them closely resembling a cobbler's awl, and the other slightly suggesting the same unromantic article. Hereabout the stream



Lone Rock, Wisconsin River.

straggles through a desolate, wild, melancholy reach of flat land, with low-lying forests of timber around; and the general inclination of the scenery to look like something artificial is again manifest in an opposite rock, the outlines of which hint at the paddle-box of a steamer. In the Dalles we pass through six miles of enchanting beauty. The word (pronounced *dälz*), which has become very common in the West, is of French origin, and means "a trough." Hence it is bestowed on this part of the river, which passes between hills of solid limestone, from thirty to one hundred feet high. The forms are among the most picturesque that we have yet seen. Some of the rocks rise sharply from

the water, and extend outward near their summits, so as to form a sort of shelter for the luxuriant grass that crops out in slender, wavy blades from the shoals. Others are perpendicular from their base to the table-land above, which is richly verdant with grass, and evergreen shrubs and trees. Here there is a narrow slope, bringing leafy boughs to the water's edge; and yonder a shadowy inlet, its entrance hidden by a curtain of delicately colored, seemingly luminous leaves. The shadows on the water are of exquisitely varied hues and forms. The sky, the clouds, the leaves, are mingled on the unruffled



Steamboat Rock, Wisconsin River.

surface, save where the massive rock intervenes. At the Jaws we move from one spot which we think the most lovely to another that excels, and on through inexhaustible beauties, in a state of unalloyed rapture. There is as much "life" in the Dalles as the most sociable of tourists could desire. On fine days in the summer the water is skimmed by pleasure-barges and row-boats, filled with gayly-dressed people from neighboring towns; and at all times lumber-rafts are descending slowly to the Mississippi, manned by half-savage, outlandish fellows, thoroughly picturesque in aspect, if nothing else. The rocks



STAND ROCK, ON THE WISCONSIN RIVER.

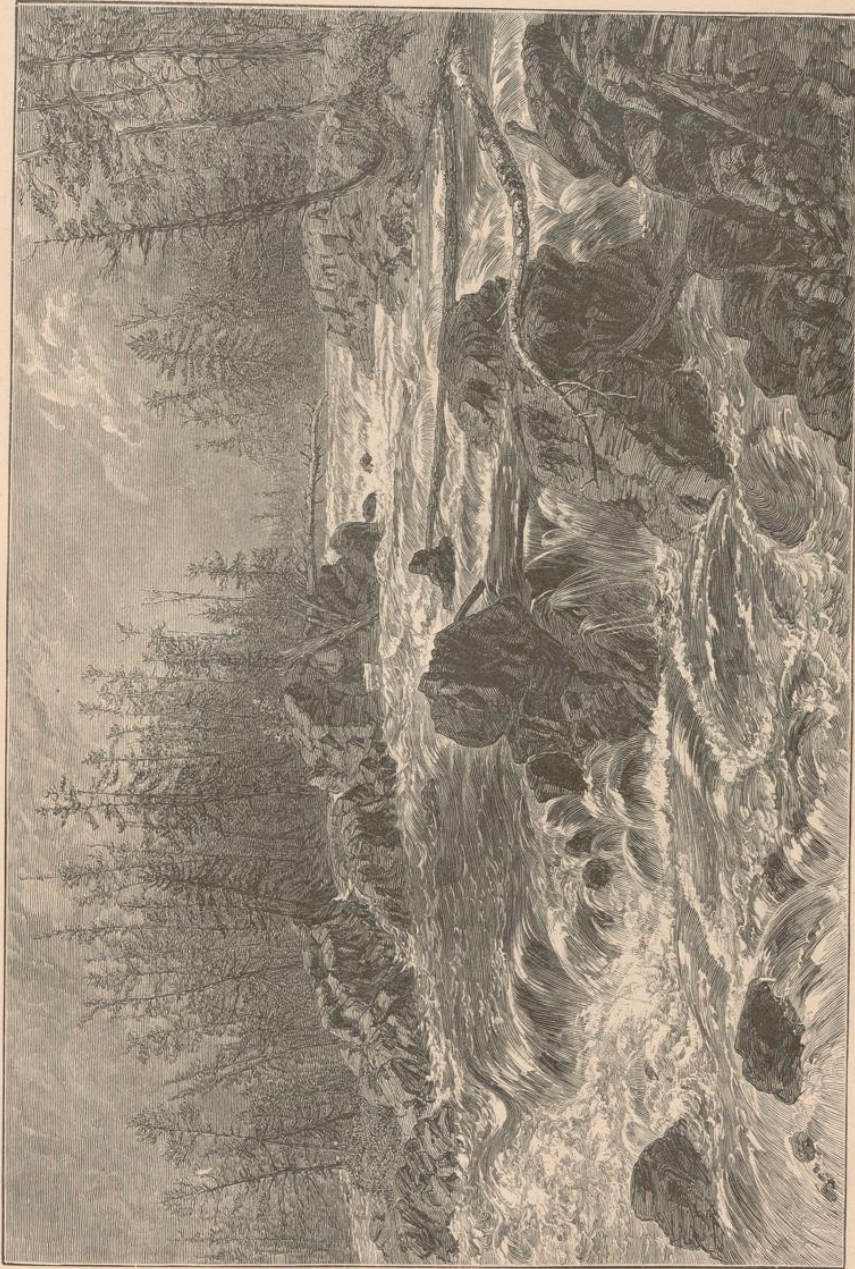
echo the laughter and songs of the pleasure-seekers, who pause to cheer us as we paddle farther down the stream toward the great river of the Southwest.

Scattered over the plains of Wisconsin are found curious earthworks of fantastic and extraordinary forms, relics of a race that inhabited Wisconsin centuries ago. At Aztalan, in Jefferson County, there is an ancient fortification, five hundred and fifty yards



Dalles of the Wisconsin, "The Jaws."

long, two hundred and seventy-five yards wide, with walls four or five feet high. There are also numerous water-falls to be seen—the Chippewa, Big Bull, Grandfather Bull, and the St. Croix—all of them interesting and accessible; besides, Pentwell Peak, an oval mass of rock, three hundred feet wide, two hundred feet high, and nine hundred feet long; and Fortification Rock, a picturesque stroke of Nature, which towers one hundred



THE DALLES OF THE ST. LOUIS.

feet high, and on one side is a sheer precipice, while on the other an easy descent is made to the plain by a series of natural terraces.

From Wisconsin we run northward to the thriving town of Duluth and the St. Louis River, and visit the Dalles of the St. Louis, which are better known, but not more beautiful, than other places we have already seen in our tour. The sentiment of the scene is not inspiring; Nature is harsh, rugged, and sombre, tearing her way in a water-course four miles long, with a descent of four hundred feet. The banks are formed

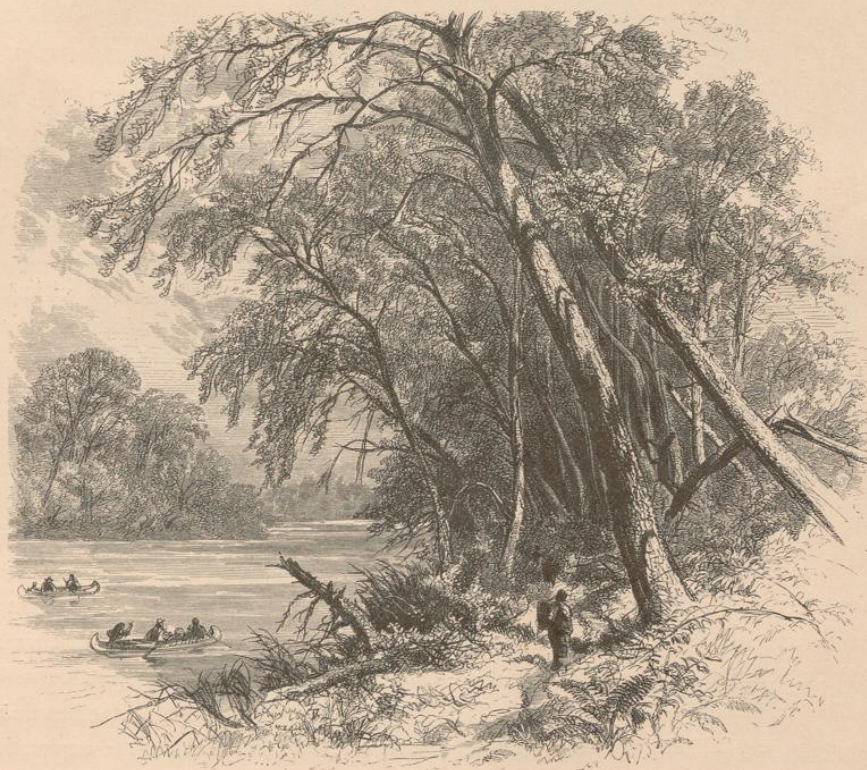


Red River, Dakota.

of cold, gray slate-rocks, clad with an ample growth of bleak pine, and twisted, split, and torn into the wildest of shapes. Through the dismal channel thus bordered the current surges with terrific force, leaping and eddying, and uttering a savage roar that the neighboring hills sullenly reverberate. Here and there an immense boulder opposes and is nearly hidden by the seething, hissing, foamy waves, which dance and struggle around and over it, sometimes submerging it, and then, exhausted, falling into a quieter pace. Occasionally the spray leaps over the banks, and forms a silver thread of a rivulet, which trickles over the stones until its little stream tumbles into the unsparing current again,

and is lost. This continuous rapid of four miles is a grand, deeply impressive sight; but on a stormy day, when great white clouds are rolling downward, and the wind adds its voice to that of the turbulent waters, we shiver and sigh involuntarily as we contemplate it.

From Minnesota we cross to the Red River of the North, in Dakota—a stream with an evil reputation for its sadness and loneliness. The names of its surroundings are far from encouraging—such as Thief River, Snake River, and Devil's Lake—but some of the scenery has a quiet, pastoral character, as will be seen in the accompanying sketches. The water is muddy and sluggish, and within Minnesota alone is navigable four hundred miles, for vessels of three feet draught, four months in the year. The banks are comparatively low, and are luxuriantly grassy and woody. There are "bits" of secluded landscape that transport us to New England, but we are soon recalled by a glimpse of an Indian trail through the grass, a canoe toiling against the stream, and a clump of decaying trees in withered, uncared-for desolation.



Indian Trail, Bank of Red River.