

The Three Sisters, or Moss Islands.

Opposite page 125.

CHAPTER XV.

Wedding tourists at the Falls—Bridges to the Moss Islands—Railway at the ferry—List of persons who have been carried over the Falls—Other accidents.

FOR many years Niagara has been a favorite resort for bridal tourists, who in a crowd of strangers can be so excessively proper that every one else can see how charmingly improper they are.

The three fine, graceful bridges which unite Goat Island with the three smaller islands—the Moss Islands, or the Three Sisters—lying south of it were built in 1858. They opened up a new and attractive feature of the locality, with which all visitors are charmed. Those who have been on them will remember what a broken, wild, tangled mass of rocks, wood, and vines they are. Nothing on Onalaska's wildest shore could be more thoroughly primitive.

A rude path with steps cut in the slope of the bank was for several years the only way of getting down to the water's edge at the ferry. In 1825 several flights of stairs were erected, with good paths between, which made the task quite safe and easy. The double railway-track at the ferry was completed in 1845. When the necessary excavations were nearly finished, and people were told the object of it, the scheme met no approval from those

conservative persons who have no faith in new things. The idea of a railway "to go by water" was not considered a brilliant one. Indeed, the greater number shrugged their shoulders at the thought of riding down *that* hill. But as soon as the lumber cars were started for the convenience of the workmen, and people saw how expeditious and easy was the trip, it was difficult to keep them off the cars. Hundreds of thousands of passengers have ridden in them without accident or injury. The motive power is a reaction water-wheel set in a deep pit, and as all the machinery is concealed, it has quite the appearance of a self-working apparatus. There is alongside of the railroad a straight stair-way of two hundred and ninety steps, for those who prefer to use it.

The number of victims whom carelessness or folly has sent over the Falls is large, and, it may be believed, is quite independent of the Indian tradition that the great cataract demands a yearly sacrifice of two human victims.

OVER THE FALLS.

In 1810 the boat *Independence*, laden with salt, filled and sunk while crossing to Chippewa. The captain and two of the crew went over the Falls. One of the crew clung to a large oar, and was saved by a small boat from Chippewa.

1821 Two men in a scow were driven down the current by the wind, and went over the Falls.

1825 Two men in a boat from Grand Island went over.

— Three men went over in three different canoes.

1841 Two men, engaged in smuggling, were upset in the current; one went over. One was found dead on Grass Island.

— Two men who were carrying sand in a scow were drawn into the current and went over.

1847 A lad of fourteen undertook to row across on a Sunday morning, and went over.

1848 In August, a man in a boat passed under the Goat Island Bridge, within ten feet of the shore; he asked of persons on the bridge, "Can I be saved?" Soon after the boat upset, and he went over, feet foremost, struck on the rocks below, and was never seen afterward.

— A little boy and girl were playing in a skiff, which swung off the shore; the mother waded into the water and rescued the girl. The boy, sitting in the bottom of the skiff, with a hand on each side, went over.

1870 A lady from Chicago, said to be deranged, threw herself from Goat Island Bridge, and went over.

1871 In June three men, unacquainted with the river, hired a boat to cross, were drawn into the rapids and went over.

— In July two men in a boat went over.

1873 Friday, July 4th, a young man and woman, and a boy twelve years of age, brother of the latter, hired a boat in Chippewa, ostensibly for a sail

on the river. Not understanding the currents, they were drawn into the rapids and carried over the Horseshoe Fall. The bodies were not recovered. It was afterward ascertained that the young man had taken \$500 from his father, in Ohio; had come to Chippewa to meet the young woman, who was from Toronto, to whom he was married on the day preceding their death.

- 1874 September 19th, a young man connected with the Mohawk Institute, at Brantford, Canada—whether as student or instructor was not known—walked deliberately into the rapids above Table Rock, and was carried over the precipice, never to be seen again.
- 1875 September 8th, Captain John Jones—at that time marine surveyor for a New York insurance company—jumped into the rapids below Goat Island Bridge, and went over the cliff, before the eyes of many excursionists. Ill-health was supposed to be the cause. The body was not found.
- 1877 March 5th, Mr. G. Homer Stone, aged twenty-four, a school-teacher, living near Geneva, N. Y., leaped into the rapids, near the upper end of Prospect Park, and was carried over the Falls. The body was not recovered.
- July 1st, three men went out in a sail-boat from Connor's Island, during a high wind and very rough water. Attempting a starboard tack, in order to reach Gill Creek Island, the boat was

upset, and two of them—after the three had tried in vain to right the boat, and found it difficult to keep their hold—abandoned it and tried to swim ashore; but, owing to the rough sea and their wet and heavy clothing, they were soon exhausted, and went to the bottom. The third man, divesting himself of everything except his pantaloons, determined to swim for the nearest land the down-floating boat should pass. Fortunately, a large boat, manned by three sturdy oarsmen, coming up the river, rescued him, after he had become nearly exhausted. Three days after the accident one of the bodies was found near Grass Island, above the Falls, and the other, two days later, in the Whirlpool below.

- 1877 October 16th, the discovery in the morning of several articles of female apparel on a flat rock, near the site of the old stone tower, and close to the brink of the Falls, led to investigation, which developed the fact that Miss Schofield, a young woman from Woodstock, in Canada, while suffering from a sudden attack of brain fever, had thrown herself into the rapids, and gone over the Horseshoe Fall. She was a skillful telegrapher, and had some local literary reputation. Her body was never recovered.
- 1878 April 1st, John and Patrick Reilley, brothers, started from Port Day, above the Falls, to row across to Chippewa. One of them, being under the influence of liquor, refused to row steadily and

quarreled with his brother, thus preventing him from rowing. They were drawn over the Canadian side of the Horseshoe Fall about four o'clock in the afternoon. They were both skillful rowers, and well acquainted with the river, which they had crossed and recrossed many times. Their bodies were recovered several weeks later.

1878 April 6th, a young man, nineteen years of age, from Woodstock, Canada, a member of the Queen's Own, a volunteer regiment, which had attended a recent military review at Montreal, was on his return home, and crossed from Chippewa to Navy Island to visit friends who kept small boats on both sides of the river. After finishing his visit, he declined to accept the assistance of a young relative in recrossing the river, and started alone. The result was that, not understanding the force of the treacherous current, he was carried into the great rapids and went over the Horseshoe Fall. His body was found, two days afterward, below the ferry.

1879 June 21st, the names of Monsieur and Madame Rolland were registered at one of the hotels, where they spent a night, but took their meals at a restaurant kept by a Frenchman, because Monsieur R. could not, as he said, speak English. The following morning they went to the Moss Islands. While near the lower end of the outer island, so the husband claimed, madame took a cup from him to get a drink of water

from the rapids, and, while his attention was diverted for a moment, he heard a splash in the water, and on looking round, saw that his wife had fallen into the rapids. She went over the Horseshoe Fall. He showed great distress and every demonstration of sorrow. Nevertheless, he left the next day for New York, after giving his address to the restaurant-keeper, who, a few days afterward, sent word to him that the body had been recovered. Monsieur R. sent thirty dollars to pay expenses of burial, and sailed for France. Those who have seen the place where, according to his story, madame fell in, are skeptical on that point.

1881 February 23d, a stranger named Doyle threw himself into the rapids from Prospect Park, and was carried over the American Fall. A body found some days after in the river below, claimed by friends to be his, was identified by a coroner's jury as that of a man named Rowell, whose body had been found some days before in the river, near the ferry, with a bullet through the head. It was never ascertained whether it was a suicide or an assassination.

— July 12th, the body of a woman was found floating below the Falls, having evidently come from the river above. Some female wearing apparel found on the shore of the rapids, below Goat Island Bridge, it was supposed belonged to the suicide.

1881 Dr. H. and Mrs. S., of good birth, education, and social position, loved not wisely but too well. Exposure was certain and near. They met at Niagara, July 14th, and went over the Falls together.

— September 5th, a man from Toronto plunged into the rapids at Table Rock, and went over. In a letter to a Toronto paper, he stated that domestic trouble was the impelling motive.

BELOW THE FALLS.

In 1841 A number of British soldiers, stationed at Drummondville, attempted to swim across the rapids at the ferry at different times. None succeeded, and two were drowned.

1842 A British soldier attempted to lower himself down the bank, opposite Barnett's Museum, in order to escape to the American shore. The rope broke, and he was killed by the fall.

1844 In August, a gentleman was washed under the great Fall, from a rock on which he had stepped, against the remonstrances of the guide. He was drowned.

1846 In August, a gentleman fell forty feet from a rock near the Cave of the Winds, and was instantly killed.

1875 August 9th, two young women and three young men, residents of the village, went through the Cave of the Winds, as they had often done

1875 before, to enjoy the exhilarating bath. One of the young women, Miss P., stepped into one of the eddying pools lying a little outside of the usual track, and one of the young men, Mr. P., thinking she might find the current stronger than she anticipated, followed her, and while seeking a sure footing for himself to guard against accident, the young lady lost her balance and fell into the current. Mr. P. endeavored to seize her bathing-dress, but not succeeding, sprang at once into the current, and both went over a ledge some eight feet high, at the foot of which Miss P. rose to her feet in an eddy, and sought support by leaning against a large rock lying adjacent to it. When Mr. P. rose to the surface he swam to her, and thinking they would be safer in an opening among smaller rocks on the opposite side of the eddy, he put his arm round her, and both made a desperate effort to reach the desired shelter. But the current proved too strong, and bore them both out into the river; Mr. P. swimming on his back, and supporting Miss P. with his right arm, while her right hand rested upon his shoulder. Suddenly they became separated. Miss P., apparently concluding that both could not be saved, disengaged herself from him, and immediately sank below the surface. Instantly her heroic friend plunged after her. A cloud of spray covered the troubled waters for a moment, and when it

passed nothing could be seen of the unfortunate pair. The treacherous under-currents bore them to their doom. Both bodies were recovered a few days afterward from the Whirlpool.

1877 August 31st, Dr. Louis M. Stein registered at the International Hotel. The following day, after riding to different points on the American side of the Falls, he alighted at the upper Suspension Bridge, and inviting a young bootblack to accompany him, he started across the bridge, talking rather incoherently on the way. When near the Canadian end he stopped, took from his pocket a roll of bills, gave the boy a dollar note, and returned the others to his pocket. He then started back, and when near the center of the bridge dropped his hand-bag and shawl, seized the boy, saying with an oath, "You have got to come, too!" and attempted to climb over the railing. The boy successfully resisted, but the man got over and dropped from one of the wire stays into the river, one hundred and ninety feet below. He was probably killed instantly, and the body floated down the river, from which it was taken some ten days afterward and delivered to a son, who arrived from New York city.

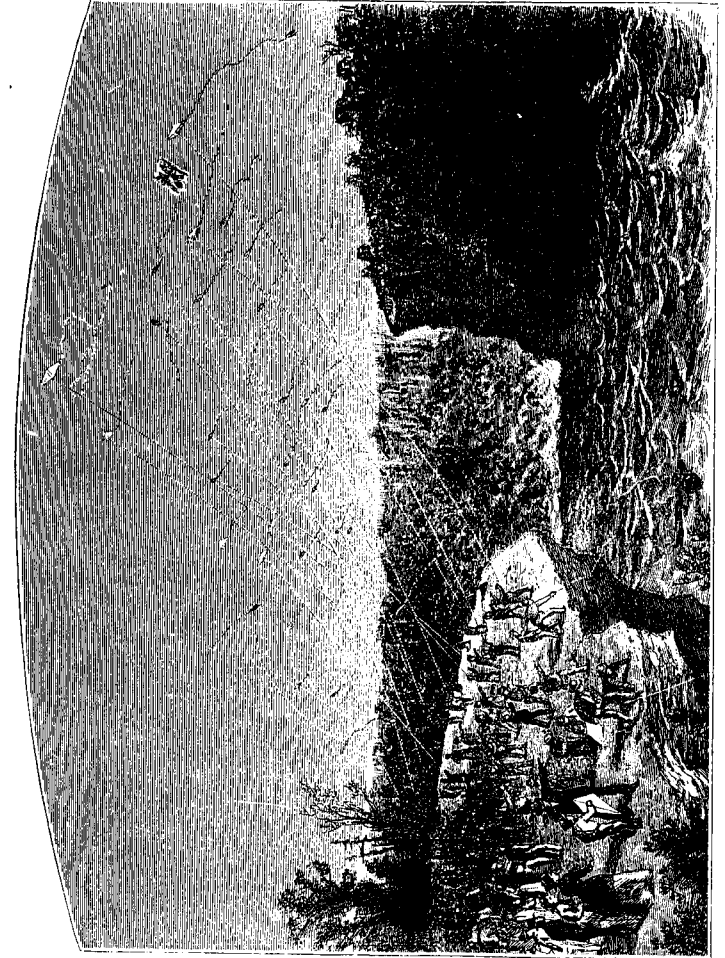
— December 25th, a man from Chatauqua County, N. Y., suffering from ill-health and misfortune, jumped from the new Suspension Bridge, and was never seen again.

The narrowest escape at the Falls was that of the man who, in January, 1852, fell from the Tower Bridge into the rapids, and was caught between two rocks just on the brink of the precipice, whence he was rescued, nearly exhausted, by means of a rope.

In 1874, Mr. William McCullough, while at work painting the small bridge between the first and second Moss Islands, missed his footing and fell into the middle of the channel; he was carried down about fifty rods, and, going over a ledge into more quiet water, got on his feet and waded to a small rock projecting above the water, upon which he seated himself to collect his senses and await results. After several vain efforts to get a rope to him, Mr. Thomas Conroy, a guide, then connected with the Cave of the Winds, who had in the previous autumn conducted Professor Tyndall up to Tyndall's Rock, put on a pair of felt shoes, and, holding to an inch rope, picked his way with an alpen-stock, from a point a short distance up-stream, through favoring eddies and pools to McCullough. After a short rest, he put the rope around McCullough, under his arms, and winding the end around his own right arm, the two started shoreward. On reaching the deep water near the shore, both were taken off their feet, and, as the people pulled vigorously at the rope, their heads went under for a short distance, but they were safely landed. A contribution was taken up for Conroy's benefit, and Professor Tyndall, on hearing of the rescue, sent him a five-pound note.

In view of the fact that nearly every year persons are drawn into the rapids and carried over the Falls, a New

York journalist suggested a most extraordinary method of saving them. He proposed that a cable should be stretched across the rapids, above the Falls, strong enough to arrest boats, and to which persons in danger might cling until rescued. But this kind and ingenious person forgot that old canal-boats, rafts of logs, and large trunks of trees, with roots attached, would be troublesome things to hold at anchor. As well hope to stay an Alpine avalanche with pipe-stems.



Opposite page 137.

How the Suspension Bridge was Begun.