

CHAPTER II.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS — DIRECTIONS — PROSPECT POINT —
 VIEW ON CANADA SIDE — VIEWS ON THE AMERICAN SIDE —
 PROSPECT PLACE — AMERICAN FALL — WARE'S OBSERVATO-
 RY — BRIDGE TO BATH ISLAND — TOLL HOUSE — MR. JACOBS
 — MASTODON TOOTH — SHIP AND BRIG ISLANDS — LOVER'S
 RETREAT — POPPING THE QUESTION.

"I saw its waters plunge to yawning caves,
 Where danced the floating Iris on their waves;
 Then, further off, on the green moss divide
 In streamlets foaming still, the sheeted tide,
 Shrouding the flowery sod with network frail,
 Spread and contract by turns its waving veil,
 And filling all the glade with voice and spray,
 Sweep in its tides of quivering light away!
 I saw them mount, and roll, and downward glide,
 And loved to dream bewildered by their side!"



E WILL suppose that the traveller has reached the village of Niagara Falls, selected his temporary home, secured his room, attended to the safe deposite of his luggage; and is now anxious and impatient to visit the grand cataract, and see the wonderful scenes, about which so much has been said and written, but which he is now, for the first time, about to behold. Is it so, reader? — Well, we are ready to conduct you. On leaving your hotel, turn to the left, and con-

tinue down Main-street, till, passing the massive foundation of the Niagara Falls Hotel, and turning around it to the left, the depot of the Buffalo and Niagara Falls Rail-Road is before you. Proceed directly on by the depot, and diagonally through the grove of trees beyond it, inclining to the right, and keeping along the brow of the upper bank or ridge, to the river. Having reached this spot, you are now at Prospect Point, and the object of your eager curiosity is at hand.

You stand upon the brow of the precipice, and the cataract is before you. Heavens, what a scene! The river rolls by in the sunlight like a ruffled sea of silver, two hundred feet beneath the cliff from which you look down, bounded on either side by huge frowning walls of limestone, crested by smiling villages, fair fields, and clustering forest trees, stretching away in the distance. The agitated and heaving abyss, the clouds of rising spray, the flashing snowy sheets hanging between sea and sky, the dark cliffs and islands that bound and divide them, the ocean of tumbling waters that seem sporting above and beyond the precipice, and come dancing over the cataract to the music of its everlasting roar, together form a scene, compared to which the ruins of Balbec or Palmyra, the Pyramids of Egypt, or

the temples of Greece and Rome, are but the toys and foot-balls of time.

The best view of the Falls, on the American side, is from this point. Table Rock, the Horse-shoe Fall, Iris Island, the Central Fall, the American Fall, the rapids and islands above, and the abyss and river below, are all within sight; but of the Horse-shoe Fall the view is distant and partial. In fact, there is no complete view of the cataract on the American side. From the opposite shore only, can Niagara be seen, in all its parts, and in all its sublime majesty, at a single glance. But that one view, grand and overwhelming as it confessedly is, is almost the only one on the Canada shore. There are, it is true, many modifications of it, dependant upon the points from which it is observed; but it is still the same in all its leading features, and has a strange oneness about it, that awes even more than it interests. The eye and the mind, pained by its transcendant vastness and sublimity, can scarcely dwell long upon it, without some interval of repose.

On the American side, on the contrary, while there is no one view of the cataract so grand and perfect, there are many of different parts, each exceedingly beautiful and impressive; and such

a variety of river and forest scenery, that the attention is diverted from one object to another, — something new and fresh is presented at every turn, the eye is delighted, and the mind excited by a constant succession of pleasing and august appearances, — and thus a delicious interest is kept up, which seems to wile away the hours; and while lovely and striking images are fast crowding upon the eye and mind, they are both, as it were, refreshed and renovated by novelty and change.

From Prospect Point, having looked at the glorious scene as long as you choose, advance to the very brink of the cataract, at Prospect Place. Here, standing on a projecting crag, and holding by the dwarf cedars that fringe it, you can look directly down at the awful depth, the huge blocks of stone, the rock-dashed spray and foam, the shivering sheet, and the heaving abyss, and up at the Falls, and particularly the American cascade, of which you have a capital view, though not the best.

The American Fall is characterized by an irregularity that gives it a wild and singular beauty. The outline is far projecting and deeply indented, yet with no very abrupt transitions, and certainly no monotonous parallels. The water flows over it

in a broad billowy stream, and is thrown out by craggy points in a hundred places, so that it passes down in a glorious snow-white drapery, wreathing into graceful fleecy folds, and possessing so much variety with so complete a unity, that it not only awes but delights, and you almost forget its immensity in the contemplation of its beauty. Near the shore, where the water is shallow, the stream ripples along pure and clear as chrystal, and falls from the brink in a shower of sparkling brilliancy. Large rocks lay piled up at the foot of the precipice, where it is evident they have fallen from the dizzy height, and the descending torrent dashing against them, flashes up in foam and spray. The river below rolls away to the right, like an emerald sea caressing the sunbeams, till it is lost to the view in its deep and devious course; and the bold bank rises opposite, black, ragged, and impending, with the Clifton House sitting in swan-like whiteness on its fearful summit, like Hesper on the gloomy brow of night.

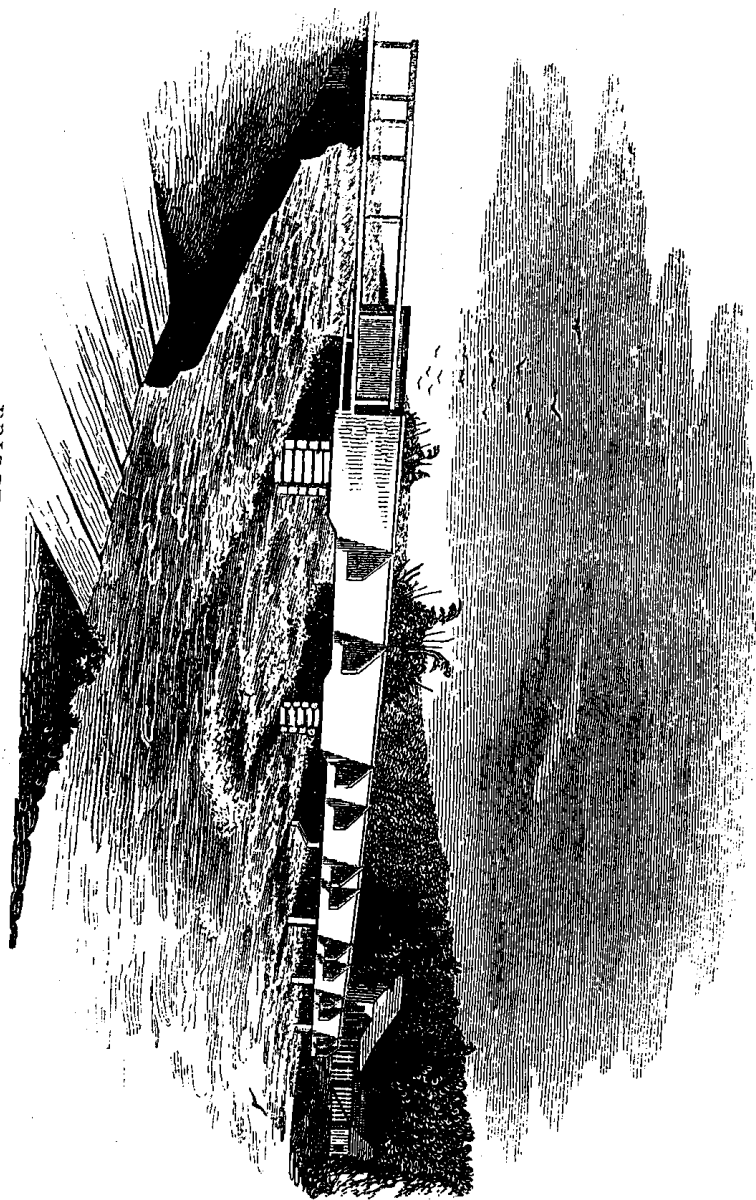
Mr. Ware, a very clever and intelligent man, has an observatory on the ferry house, scarce a dozen steps from Prospect Place, where you have a fine view of the same scenes, from a more elevated position. He has also canes, refreshments,

and many other articles for sale, and is entitled to a generous share of patronage.

Having looked at the Falls as long as you desire, from these places, pass up the river along its shore, feasting your eyes upon the wild waters, and the splendid scenery of banks and islands, till you reach the bridge leading from the American shore to Bath Island—from which you have a magnificent view of the rapids, dashing and foaming beneath and around you. The water drives along with such immense velocity and force, that one can scarcely conceive how this bridge could have been built. Only sixty-four rods above the cataract, and in the very rush and whirl of the mad torrent, it is no wonder that strangers inquire with an eager curiosity how it was possible to construct it in so dangerous and difficult a place. The *modus operandi* was this:—

An abutment of proper size and solidity was first made; then two large and long timbers were projected far over it, the hinder ends of which were firmly secured by piling on tons of weight. Upon these timbers planks were then laid, and a temporary bridge thus formed, from the extremity of which large stones were let down into the stream, till the pile rose above the water, when a

BRIDGE TO BATH ISLAND.



firm pier was built around it, by framing timbers together, sinking them, and filling up with stone. This pier and the abutment were then joined by a section of the permanent bridge, firmly and strongly built. The long timbers were then again thrust forward, and a second pier made, and united to the first, by another section of the bridge. Proceeding in this manner from pier to pier, the whole bridge was finally constructed, and a safe and easy communication established to Bath Island. By the same process, Bath Island was connected with Iris Island, by a similar bridge, and the object accomplished — Iris Island being now united to the main land, and rendered accessible to all.

The first bridge to Iris Island was built by General Whitney, in 1817. It was some distance farther up the stream, and was carried away by the ice, in the spring of the following year. The present one was erected the ensuing summer, by the brothers Porter, who are entitled to great credit for their enterprise and ingenuity in designing and executing a work of such magnitude and utility. The whole extent of bridge is forty-four rods, — twenty-eight rods to Bath Island, and thence sixteen rods to Iris Island, — the cost about sixteen hundred dollars. In 1839 the whole bridge was thoroughly examined and repaired, and is

now in a most secure, substantial, and perfect condition.

At Bath Island register your name, and pay the toll, twenty-five cents, which will give you a right to pass and repass as often as you choose during the year, without further charge. The toll-house is kept by the worthy and accommodating Mr. Jacobs, who has collected quite a little museum of curiosities of different kinds, and will be happy to dispose of canes, specimens, bead-work, etc. of which, with refreshments, he keeps a large assortment for sale.

Among the curiosities to be seen here, is a molar tooth of the mastodon, which was found near the rail-road depot, thirteen and a half feet below the surface of the earth. It is in good preservation — the enamel nearly perfect — and but little worn. How it came in the place where it was discovered, is a mystery. It must have been there many ages, as evinced by the depth from which it was exhumed, and the firm texture of the strata in which it was embedded. The huge animal to whom it once belonged, was doubtless young, and probably died while on a visit to the cataract; — but this is mere speculation. We do not know that any similar fossil remains, have ever before been found in this vicinity.

Ship and Brig Islands, — so called, because their shape, and the inclination of several trees, gave them a fancied resemblance to such vessels, — lie just above Bath Island, with which the former is connected by a foot-bridge, which though slight, and seemingly frail, is perfectly safe. A gate adjoining the toll-house, opens upon the path leading directly to it.

These beautiful islands are among the most lovely retreats of earth. Sleeping quietly in the midst of the wild mad rapids, of which they command most excellent views; covered with a luxuriant forest growth of vines and trees, forming delightful arbours, carpeted with grass, moss, and flowers, canopied by the thickly clustering foliage, and provided with comfortable, though rustic seats, they seem sacred to innocence, affection, and friendship; — like the love-spots of life, looking rapturously through a sea of care and trouble. Pity that the bridge uniting these two sweet little islands, was destroyed, — it should be rebuilt without delay.

Ship Island has sometimes been called the "Lover's Retreat," and certainly a more appropriate name could scarcely be found, in the whole catalogue of cognomens, as any one will confess who pays a visit to its endearing seclusions. Of

all places in the world, it seems the best for that delicate and difficult task — “POPPING THE QUESTION,” — for a lady could hardly say “no” with the rapids rolling and roaring around her, and the very genius of the place seeming to whisper “it is not good to be alone.” But the reader is perchance no lover, and as he is impatient, we hasten on to Iris Island.

