

## CHAPTER III.

IRIS ISLAND—NAMES, INITIALS AND DATES ON THE TREES  
—THE HOG'S BACK—CENTRAL FALL—PROSPECT ISLAND—  
VIEW OF THE AMERICAN FALL—OTHER ISLANDS—PROFILES  
ON THE ROCK—RAINBOW—TERRAPIN BRIDGE AND ROCKS  
—HORSE-SHOE FALL—PROSPECT TOWER.

“Bright Isle! to the waves that are dashing around,  
To the mad-leaping torrents that wildly resound,  
Thy fame and thy beauty, thy costume and crown,  
Thy gem-spangled robe, and thy name of renown,  
Thou dost owe—and the glory that hallows thy form,  
Thus born of the rock, wave, and air battle-storm,  
Exalts thee above all the isles of the sea,  
By the terrible splendors reflected on thee;  
Yet the grandeur it gives is allied to decay,  
And 'tis gnawing thy life with its foam-teeth away.”



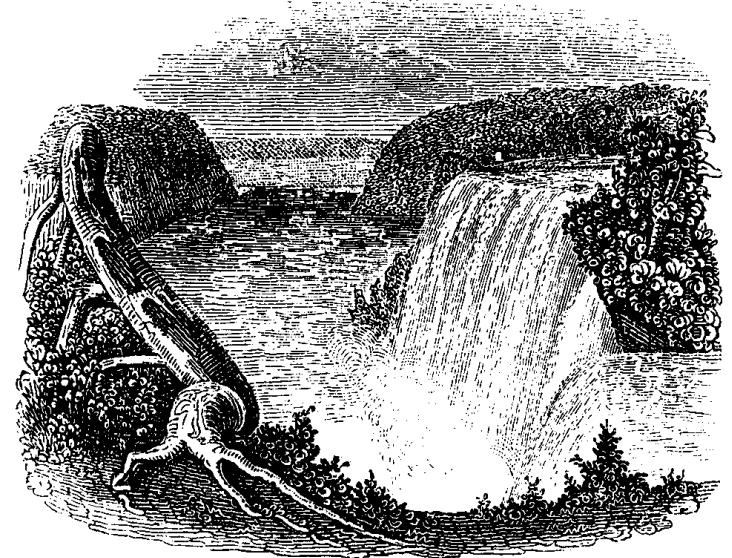
IRIS ISLAND, commencing at the head of the rapids, extends to the precipice, of which, as before stated, it forms a part. It is about half a mile in length, eighty rods wide, and contains over sixty acres of arable land. It is sometimes called “Goat Island,” and obtained that appellation from the following circumstance. A Mr. Steadman, then resident at Schlosser, in 1770 placed a variety of animals upon it, and among others a number of goats. Of these, a bearded patriarch was the only one who survived

the severity of winter, and he remained for a long time its sole occupant. Its more appropriate name of "Iris Island" is derived from the beautiful rainbows always to be seen from it in sunny weather. A portion of the Island has been cleared off, and a garden enclosed, in which there are some excellent fruit trees, a variety of plants and flowers, and a fish pond. The major part is still, however, covered with a fine forest growth, which is held sacred from the stroke of the spoiler — and through the dense foliage of which, the rays of the sun find it in many places, almost impossible to penetrate. It is cool, shady, and pleasant; and is the object of unceasing admiration. Comfortable seats are placed at the most important points, where the visiter can sit at ease, and luxuriate in the beautiful and sublime scenes presented to his view.

The trunks, and even high branches of the trees, are covered with names, initials, and dates; some fresh to appearance, and others almost obliterated by time, decay, and the growing bark. Most persons desire to leave some memorial of their visit, as a souvenance to others, in return perhaps, for the pleasure they have derived from a like remembrance.

The earliest date to any name yet found upon the

trees, which may be considered authentic, is said to be 1769. There are some professedly earlier, but they are supposed to have been dated back from an impulse of puerile vanity. Near the cataract, on the American side, there are names chiselled upon the rocks, bearing date 1711, 1726, 1745, and later, which are believed to be genuine.



VIEW FROM HOG'S BACK.

Upon leaving the bridge from Bath Island, turn to the right, and pass along the bank of Iris Island to the Hog's Back, — a narrow ridge so named from its shape — at its lowest extremity.

From this point, you have a fine view of the Central Fall, the American Fall, the river below, and the picturesque scenery through which it flows. At the farthest point of the stream you see a small white spot like a speck of foam: it is the commencement of the Whirlpool rapids, and is nearly two miles distant.

The Central Fall is formed by a small portion of the river — cut off by Prospect Island from the American branch, — which rolls in a clear, beautiful and sparkling volume to the precipice, where it bounds away, like a gladsome and fearless thing, in a smooth and almost unbroken sheet. You gaze upon it with delight, and descending to the verge of the abyss, if your limbs be steady and your nerves firm, you may see its chrystal and snowy column fall far down, till it loses itself in the mists that curl up from its base. It is behind this cascade, and under the rock upon which you stand, that the Cave of the Winds, of which an account will be presently given, is situated. The Central Fall — called also from its shape, the Crescent Fall, — is about twenty yards in width, and the descent is greater than at any other part of the cataract.

Prospect — or Luna — Island, is a lovely sequestered spot, embowered with trees, where the

eagles were wont to build their nests, ere the foot of man had profaned its holiness. A commodious bridge conducts you to this pretty little island, where the American Fall is seen to better advantage than from any other elevated point. The view is indeed magnificent. The broad stream plunges down the precipice at your very feet, and the mighty cascade in all its majesty and glory stretches out before you. See its varied outline, its leaping voluted columns, in colour white as an angel's robe; its whole snowy front flashing down, and hiding, as if too bright and pure for earth, in the foam and spray of the abyss beneath. You will not soon forget the grandeur and beauty of that scene.

There are several other islands near, which might easily be rendered accessible, and which the pilgrim of curiosity would be delighted to visit. But now he can only admire them at a distance, and retrace his steps to Iris Island.

From the Hog's Back, a singular phenomenon is presented to view. It is that of three profile figures of the human face, upon the rock under the edge of the American Fall, so fully and clearly defined, that one can scarcely believe them to be the work of chance, and not of the sculptor's art. They are of gigantic size, but well-proportioned,



THE THREE PROFILES.

and are situated as shown in the engraving above. The first, or upper one represents a negro; the

next, a young and well-favoured man, of the European race, and the lowest, an elderly and spectacled personage of the same descent. They appear to be of the male sex, and the features of each are singularly well defined. They were first observed last season, and are now regarded with no little interest. This strange trio certainly exhibit a very remarkable coincidence of casualties.

Having concluded your observation of the views and curiosities seen from this point, pass up along the bank to the British Fall. If it is yet early in the day, and the wind should happen to be up the river, the beautiful rainbow that smiled upon your gaze from the American Fall, now walks by your side, measuring its march by your own pace. When you stop, it stops; when you start, it starts also. If you run, it keeps up with you; if you linger, it waits. Like a guardian angel, it seems to watch your movements, whispering ever Faith, Hope, Heaven; and giving back your glances of regard. But you cannot lure it far away from the Falls;—it seems to woo your worship to God's most glorious work, and to melt away in despair when you leave it behind; but when you return, it starts up to welcome you, and seems to delight in your presence.

Pursuing your way along the bank with the

rainbow for a companion, you have a noble view of the basin, the Horse-shoe Fall, and the rapids above. The vastness, the majesty of this cascade almost fatigue the mind, in its effort to grasp that which seems to defy calculation. You hasten to Terrapin Bridge,\* to the rocks at its extremity, and stand, with the fall, the thunder, the spray, and the abyss at your feet. And what are you?—an atom in the midst of immensity; a breath of time on the brow of Eternity. How awful is the scene! You look up, and a tempest-tortured flood seems gushing from the far-off skies, rolling over the distant horizon, and coming with a lightning-like speed, and a whirlwind-like roar down the steep declivity, and then leaping at one fearful plunge from the bright world of the upper air, to the unimagined depths of the cloud-concealed profundity. There is no relaxation of the force, no depletion of the volume. Billow urges billow, torrent presses torrent, column crowds on column, and the vast mass that has fallen leaves not the less to descend, nor seems the more to fill up the chasm. The rapids, the cascade, the abyss, the foam, the spray, and the thunder; and

\* This bridge was built by Gen. Whitney in 1827. It needs repairing sadly.



also the velocity, the intumescence, and the agitation, are all objects of separate and combined wonder and admiration.

The curve of the British Fall has now little resemblance to a horse-shoe, but something the shape of a figure 5,—without the horizontal dash at the top,—the point or lower extremity, resting on Table Rock. Near the Canada shore, the water falls in fleecy, snow-like masses, white, feathery, and shifting. But from thence to the Terrapin Rocks,—over three-fourths of the whole distance—it rolls down in one deep unbroken volume, grand, solemn, and appalling. The immense breadth of this Fall, the vast quantity of water poured down the precipice, the ocean of rapids above, the foaming sea below, the eternal-curling clouds of spray, and the deep hoarse thunder pealing ever up, produce by their conjoined effect, such an impression of power, energy, and majesty, that the mind recoils from its contemplation, and the soul, filled with awe, bows itself in reverent humility, feeling the Omnipotent presence. God is here made so manifest, by the wonderful display of His Almighty power, that disbelief vanishes, pride sinks abashed, and the conviction of the heart and soul is—How great is God! how insignificant am I!—He is omnipotent;

I am nothing ! The cataract seems a consecrated place, surrounded and filled with the majesty, and glory, and power of the Eternal ; and the spot on which you stand sacred to his service. Fear, awe, and reverence are emotions which this sublime scene never fails to inspire. The God of the Universe is felt to be almost visibly present ; and the haughtiest of Earth's haughty ones, here tremble and adore.

From the Prospect Tower, — a round stone building, forty-five feet high, ascended by winding stairs, which was erected in 1833 by Judge Porter, — you have a magnificent view of the great Fall, the chasm, the rapids, Table Rock, and the surrounding scenery. You can look down into the very hollow and midst of the vast cascade, and almost see the elemental chaos, where the mist, the spray, the foam and thunder of the cataract have birth. Majesty, grandeur, sublimity, and beauty, — the glorious garniture of God, — are here spread out before you.

When you have wondered and admired as long as you choose from these places, ascend the bank, rest a while, and return back to the Biddle Staircase, which you passed on your way hither from the Hog's Back.