

CHAPTER VI.

REMARKS AND ADVICE—GOOD COUNSEL—PUBLIC GARDEN—
ROAD DOWN THE BANK—INDIAN LADDER—POINT VIEW—
MINERAL SPRING—VIEW OF THE CATARACT—WHIRLPOOL
RAPIDS—WHIRLPOOL LODGE—WHIRLPOOL—BODIES—DE-
SCENT—VARIED ASPECT—RAFT IN THE WHIRLPOOL—
DEVIL'S HOLE—HEWLETT'S CELLAR—LEWISTON HEIGHTS.

"It seemed some mountain, rent and riven,
A channel for the stream had given;
So high the cliffs of limestone gray,
Hung beetling o'er the torrent's way,
Yielding, along their rugged base,
A flinty footpath's niggard space,
Where he who winds 'twixt rock and wave,
May hear the headlong torrent rave,
And chafe, in madness and in pride,
'Gainst rocks that wall its prisoned tide."



YOU HAVE now seen the Falls from the principal points of observation, and the beautiful scenery immediately around them. If you remain any time, and you should for several days at least; you will view them again and again, and find them grow in your estimation at every succeeding visit. People who come to see the Falls, run hurriedly around them for a few hours, and then away, can form little idea of their real magnitude and sublimity. Those

who remain longest, invariably admire them most. It requires time to realize their wonderful beauty and grandeur. • There is so much to observe, that the mind becomes confused, and cannot, but upon repeated examination form a correct judgement.

Besides the cataract itself, there are various objects in the vicinity, which you will desire to see, and which few are content to forego the pleasure of beholding. To these I shall now direct your attention. I should advise you to pass down on the American side to Lewiston, and return on the Canada shore. You can, in this way, visit all the points of interest, with most economy of time and trouble. Conveyances are to be had on either side, upon reasonable terms; and a line of Omnibuses run hourly from the village of Niagara Falls, to the Mineral Spring, Whirlpool, and Devil's Hole. But the walk along the bank of the river is most delightful, and views of beautiful and romantic scenery present themselves at almost every step. For females and invalids, it would perhaps be too fatiguing; but many ladies walk to the Whirlpool, and all who can, are advised to do so. The scenery along the river bank is every where grand and picturesque, and no part of it should be lost, if it can be avoided.

A few rods below the American Fall is the

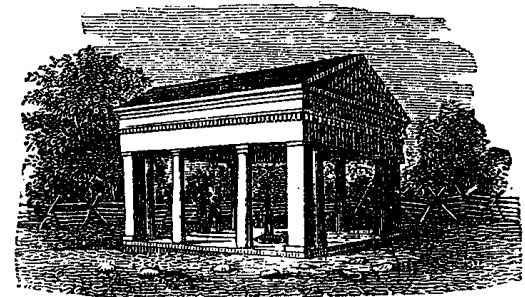
Public Garden of which we have before spoken ; where a beautiful summer-house, almost on the brow of the precipice, and commanding a noble view of the cataract, occupies the precise spot where Abbott, the Hermit of the Falls, for a long time lived, in a hut erected by himself.

About eighty rods further, and you come to an excavation, where a good deal of earth and stone has been removed. It is the commencement of a carriage-road down the bank, which was begun some fourteen or fifteen years ago, but soon after discontinued. In 1836, it was again commenced by Mr. Rathbun, and would have been soon completed, but for the unfortunate issue of his affairs.

Just below, there is a notch in the bank, near a fine spring, at which the Indian Ladder, as it was called, stood. This ladder, which was merely a large cedar tree, resting against the rock, was the most ancient means of descending to the base of the cliff, and thence attaining the foot of the cascade. The limbs, and a few notches cut into the trunk itself, were all there was to cling to ; and the last person known to have descended it, — a daring hunter, by the name of Brooks, who ventured down in pursuit of game, — fell before he reached the bottom, and suffered severe contusion.

Point View, so called from the splendid view of the chasm, river, and cataract, which it affords, is about three fourths of a mile below the ferry. Standing here, you can look directly down two hundred feet at the broad stream, flowing smoothly by, and at the towering banks by which it is environed. The view of the cataract, though distant is most magnificent, and one that you will not be likely soon to forget.

The Mineral Spring is about one and a fourth miles beyond Point View, a few rods from the river, and is sheltered and shaded by a pretty and graceful open building of Grecian architecture,



MINERAL SPRING.

erected by Mr. Rathbun. The water wells up between the rocks, and is collected in a stone basin ; — it is strongly impregnated with sulphur, contains also lime and magnesia, and is said to be

quite similar to that of Harrowgate, England. From the road, a short distance beyond this spring, the first view of the Falls is obtained by persons coming from the direction of Lockport or Lewiston. It is extremely beautiful, and is that with which Capt. Hall was so much pleased.

Some eighty or one hundred rods below the Mineral Spring, commence the Whirlpool rapids; and from this point, to that singular phenomenon, every foot of the way possesses a strong and exciting interest. Walled in by those giant banks, from which it makes one dizzy to look down, the river, as if angered to fury by the restraint they impose upon it, rushes along wild, impetuous, and uncontrollable; and pours its raging floods into that mad sea of agitation, the Maelstrom of Niagara.

The Whirlpool is three miles from the Falls, and about one hundred rods from the main road, where a house of entertainment, called the Whirlpool Lodge, has been erected by Mr. Wheeler, who is also proprietor of the grounds in rear, through which the visiter must pass. A small fee is paid here, for the privilege of entering these embowered walks, and for the use of the steps down the bank.

Having reached the American Cliff, upon whose

lofty brow a beautiful summer-house stands—another proof of the enterprise and taste of Mr. Rathbun—pause and behold:—the Whirlpool is before and far below you, spread out like a little sea, tossed and agitated, and shut in on every side by towering and tree-crowned banks. This vast basin is in form nearly circular, and has, beyond doubt, been hollowed out by the action of the water; probably, when the cataract in its upward progress from Lewiston heights, had reached this point, and for a time halted in its amazing march.

The river here, makes an acute angle in its course, turning abruptly off to the right, behind the cliff upon which you stand. The furious torrent comes thundering and foaming into this great basin; and its currents, kept away from the place of egress by the mighty rocks upon which the cliff rests, are forced, by their prodigious impulsion, quite across the mouth of the outlet; and, meeting the opposite bank, are again diverted from their course; and, curving inward, are carried round and round the basin, till they are drawn down in the centre, driven subterraneously far forward, and finally ejected at the opening below, where they boil up, and bound away in frightful and tremendous plunges.

Nothing that has life, floats upon this chaos of

convulsions; but huge timbers, and sometimes dead bodies, are drawn into its vortex, and carried round in ceaseless gyrations for days, and even weeks, before they escape from its convolving currents, and whirling eddies. Two British soldiers, in attempting to desert, by swimming the river, were last season drowned, and hurried into the Whirlpool, where their swollen disfigured bodies remained for a number of days, objects of loathing and disgust, — now floating motionless along, and anon, with a horrible seeming animation, diving, emerging, leaping, and as it were, playing with the foaming surges, and conflicting waves.

From the height whereon you stand, but little of the terrible agitation, and wild intumescence of the Whirlpool, can be perceived by the unassisted eye. The little sticks — as they appear to be — which you observe whirling and tossing about, are in reality, large pieces of timber; as by the aid of an object glass, you will become convinced; and be also enabled to realize something more of the grandeur and commotion of this strange and fearful sea of imprisoned, but rebellious and still raging floods.

By a long and tortuous declivity of rude steps, you descend to the base of the cliff, and from the

level rocks below, observe the wild rush and whirl of the mad waters. The rapids above, and at the entrance of the Whirlpool, are terribly grand and striking. The huge surges leap and plunge with prodigious force and velocity; and their impulsion is so great, that the whole mass is heaved up at the centre of this mighty maelstrom, to an elevation of not less than twelve feet above its outer surface.

Passing round to the right, you come to the outlet of this tumultuous sea, and behold a scene of surpassing grandeur. Two black and frowning cliffs, scarcely thirty rods apart, rear their huge and giant forms to a height of nearly three hundred feet; and there stand, terrible and impending — the mountain-sized, rock-armed guardians of this maelstrom-portal. The escaping torrents, crowding through the narrow passage, and hurrying down the slope, rush forward with such inconceivable rapidity and force, that the middle of the gushing volume is raised much higher than the side next you, which is smooth and glassy, but incredibly swift; and the bounding surges leap away in sublime plunges of eight to ten feet high. These rapids are seen to much better advantage from the opposite side, as they are nearest to that shore, and indeed dash along the huge rocks by

which it is lined, in their curvetting and uncontrollable course.

Nothing that comes down the river, can escape being drawn into the Whirlpool, as the current is carried quite across the outlet, and turned up by the opposing bank. Wave urges wave, current accelerates current, billow chases billow, and there they revolve round and round, till, swallowed in one place, ejected in another, contending here, and separating there, parting, reposing, meeting, mingling, eddying, plunging, they are at last engorged in the deep bowels of the abyss, forced far under the superincumbent mass, and finally vomited forth at the narrow outlet, whence they hasten away in the mad rapture of new-found freedom, to seek repose in the quiet bosom of the distant lake.

It is utterly impossible to describe the Whirlpool, so as to give any adequate idea of its grandeur and sublimity. Beauty it has none, — it is fearful — terrible! There is not a winning feature about it. It is solemn, awful, impressive; and, as a great natural curiosity, second only to the mighty cataract of Niagara.

A visit to the Whirlpool should never be omitted. It is in all respects, totally different from every thing about the Falls. A vast unity of

factions and warring energies, shut in and imprisoned by massy and cloud-reaching barriers, having no relation or likeness to aught else in the material world; it is alone in its solemn strangeness, and touches no chord of human sympathy. The only emotions it excites, are unmitigated astonishment, and inexplicable awe; — such, at least, was its effect upon the writer.

The same cause that makes the waters in the basin below the Falls, rise sometimes so quickly, and to such a height, — contraction of the channel — produces a similar effect in this. A heavy wind down the lake, raising the river one or two feet, causes it to rise there, from fifteen to twenty feet, and in the Whirlpool to nearly the same height. At such a time, when it has received the tribute of destruction; and planks, timbers, trees, and it may be boats, and dead bodies, are caught and enveloped in its tremendous toils, it is seen in its most sublime and awful aspect, and seems, in its wild delight, a living but imprisoned desolation, sporting with, while it rends its prey, and yet wearing a savage solemnity of countenance, in the highest degree hideous and appalling. At a lower stage of water, its currents, cavities, eddies, and gyrations, are more distinctly marked, and the view though less striking, is perhaps more

impressive. Seen at any time, and seen aright, it cannot fail to excite astonishment, and fill the soul with awe.

A large raft of timber escaped a few years since, from its fastenings above the Falls, and was precipitated over the cataract. The disjoined logs were speedily hurried to the Whirlpool, in which they remained for a number of weeks. It then presented a scene, as those who beheld it relate, of intense and startling interest. Scattered about in every direction, they were to be seen in all attitudes, and from listless inanity, to a wonderful life-likeness. Some were floating on the glassy surface, others riding the gentle swells, some careering over the rolling billows, and again others leaping, wrestling, crashing, plunging, flying, following, retreating, pursuing, shooting up high in the air, diving far down in the deep, hiding here, and starting up there, as if a mad forest of trees, riding these infernal surges, held here a wild inebriate revel; — or rather, as if the mob of waters, seizing these immense weapons, waged intestine war, and fought one another, — flood threshing flood, and surge goading surge with these Titanic war-clubs, now mingling in the horrid melee of strife, now thrown far apart, and again rushing together, implacable, vindictive,

and unrelenting. It must have been a strange and fearful scene!

Enormous blocks of limestone lie scattered and coacervated at the foot of those two tremendous cliffs, showing that a wilder warfare than that of contending currents, has been here at some time waged — a war of elements, a contest between rock and flood, — the mighty cataract and the eternal hills being parties in the strife. The strait is much narrower at this point, than at any other of its whole course; and the place seems, from this circumstance, the best adapted for the construction of a suspension bridge. Who will give himself to wealth and fame by the erection of so desirable a work?

Half a mile below the Whirlpool, there is a deep, dark cove, or chasm, in the rocky bank, called the Devil's Hole, which, from its own gloomy grandeur, and the historical associations connected with it, is an object of no inconsiderable interest, and of much resort. One of the most wild, rugged, high, and massy cliffs in the world, rises above it, bleak, bare and projecting, from which a noble view of the river and gulf is presented. A stream, called Bloody Run, usually small, and often dry, in the summer, but swollen to a torrent size in the fall and spring, pours its

dark waters down this fearful chasm, and over the vast rocks that form its bed, to the river below.



DEVIL'S HOLE FROM BELOW.

The road passes close by this cove, or hole, and an old saw-mill stands upon the brink of the precipice.

By a long, tedious, difficult, but not dangerous route, starting from the top of the bank, about

twenty rods below the Devil's Hole,* winding your way down and around the precipice, you descend into this frightful gulf, clamber down and over huge moss-covered rocks, fallen trees, and accumulated rubbish, that almost bar the passage, and toil on to the river side. Unless you do this, you can form but a very faint and imperfect conception of the wild and savage grandeur of the place, into whose dark rock-shut, forest-hidden recesses not a ray of sunlight has ever forced its way. An air of sullen sublimity pervades its gloom; and when in its shadowy depths, you seem cut off from the world, and confined in the prison-house of terror. It is akin to the cataract and the whirlpool, in the awe it inspires; but has not a single feature in common with the one or the other. It is a wild, dark, savage, gloomy cavern; and its exploration should not be omitted. To appearances, it is a fit place for a demon-dwelling; and hence, probably, derives its name. It is memorable as the scene of a tragic event, elsewhere to be narrated, which occurred during the old French war, and was of a strange and bloody character.

* The remains of an old flight of steps are still at the Devil's Hole, but so much broken and decayed as to be unserviceable.

From a hill, not far hence, an extensive and splendid prospect opens to the view. You can see Queenston Heights, Brock's Monument, the plains and villages below, the whole remaining course of the river, the American and English forts, the spreading lake, and the far off hills and forests fading away in the distance beyond. There is hardly in the world, a more beautiful and picturesque landscape, than is here presented to your observation; nor one which exhibits a greater variety of interesting and pleasing objects.

About two and a half, or perhaps, three miles from the Devil's Hole, there is a singular cavity in the rock, some ten or fifteen feet below the top of the bank, which is worth examination, and is known by the name of Hewlett's Cellar. It is of a triangular shape, as regards both its level and altitude — pointed at the top and back. The walls and floor are of solid limestone, and it appears to have been formed by the breaking out of two immense pieces of rock: — how this could have been done, seems from the shape and situation of the cave, almost inexplicable.

Less than a mile from this cave, terminates abruptly the mountain-plain, through which Niagara has cut its deep and devious channel, for more than two leagues; and the gorge from which the

river here emerges, presents a grand and striking aspect. Rising on either side, to a height of nearly four hundred feet, the steep banks stand like huge and solemn sentinels, guarding the narrow gateway — their tree-crowned summits nodding defiance to all below. The view from the heights is very comprehensive in its extent, embracing plains, villages, river, forts, and lake; and a broad prospect still beyond, bounded only by, and blending with the distant horizon. Descending the heights, you are soon at Lewiston, which lies in the valley just below.

If you have taken our advice, and walked from the Falls, along the bank of the river to this place, you will probably spend the night here, and pass up, on the opposite side, in the morning. If, on the contrary, you come by carriage conveyance, you will have time to dine, and return to the Falls on the other shore; or to visit Fort Niagara, and get back before dark. In any event, you will patronize 'mine host' of the Frontier House — a portly rosy-looking, good-humoured scion of the 'fast-anchored isle,' who is specially recommended, and who will take every pains to recommend himself, to your favour. I leave you to your good cheer, and a sweet repose. *Bon soir* ———.