

CHAPTER III.

VESSELS SENT OVER THE FALLS—SCHOONER MICHIGAN—
SCHOONER SUPERIOR—SHIP DETROIT—SUBLIME SPECTA-
CLE—ADVENTUROUS DARING—DANGER AND RESCUE OF
CHAPIN—OF ALLEN—THE MEED OF MERIT.

“Let the name of the Hero swell high in the song,
And his deeds of destruction the chorus prolong :
A fame born of carnage, and reeking with blood,
Though man deem it glory, is treason to God ;
And though honours on earth may the victor await,
Can he hang his red laurels on heaven's holy gate ?
No — the doors of that world where no evil can come,
Are never unbarred at the beat of the drum ;
But he whose exertions a single life save,
Is greater than he who gives thousands a grave.”



THREE vessels, have, at as many different periods, been sent over the Falls, to gratify the curiosity of visitors, of whom large numbers were on each occasion, attracted by the novelty of the spectacle. The Michigan, a condemned schooner, was sent over, in 1827. A bison, a bear, and a number of other animals, were put on board, to make the passage. When all was ready, on the appointed day, she was towed into the rapids, and cast loose. Without sustaining any serious injury, she passed the first

ledge. At the second, she was less fortunate : her masts went by the board. Some alarm was now manifested by the passengers, and Bruin, deeming a longer stay impolitic, left the vessel, and made for the Canada shore, which he reached in safety. At the last ledge, she was much broken up, and in a wrecked and water-logged condition, reached the precipice, and fell to pieces down the cataract. Except the bear, and a goose or two, none of the animals escaped. About fifteen thousand spectators were present.

In 1829, the schooner Superior was despatched on the same voyage. The dictates of humanity were remembered on this occasion, and no lives were sacrificed for the sake of amusement. The vessel lodged on the rocks, where she lay for several days, and finally went down in the night — piecemeal, it is presumed.

The ship Detroit, before alluded to, was sent down last season. Thousands of people assembled to see her go over the cataract, but were disappointed, as she grounded on the rocks, near the last ledge, — which she was dismasted in descending, — where a part of her hull still remains. A staunch vessel, of smaller size, might, perhaps, reach the brink, unbroken ; but large, and especially, old and weak ones, like this, and the two

preceding, could not by any possibility. It was absurd to expect it.

Sublime, indeed, would be the spectacle of a noble vessel careering down the rapids, and plunging from the cataract's verge at one fearful leap, to the abyss beneath ; but far more sublime must have been the scenes mentioned below, in which man boldly breasted the storm of rapids, and the fear of death, in a frail skiff to rescue an unfortunate fellow-creature from a doom of horror. Such heroism must not pass unrecorded, nor the meed of praise be withheld.

The humane and adventurous daring of a man by the name of Robinson, a resident at the Falls, has been shown in two instances, which deserve to be mentioned. In the summer of 1839, two men were at work on the bridge to Bath Island : one of them, a Mr. Chapin, carelessly let the end of a plank touch the water, by which it was whirled under the bridge, and he thrown into the stream above. He was swept down by the torrent, and his destruction seemed inevitable. By great good fortune, however, he succeeded in reaching a small island — now called by his name — in the midst of the rapids, and not far from the cataract. His condition now appeared hopeless enough — but Robinson thought otherwise. A boat was procured

from the ferry, and taken to Bath Island, from which he embarked for the rescue of Chapin, which he succeeded in effecting, though at the most imminent risk of his own life.

In August, 1841, a Mr. Allen, crossing from Chippewa, to the American side, in a skiff, had the ill luck to break an oar, when his boat became unmanageable, and was soon drawn into the rapids. In descending the ledge, the boat filled and upset ; he was thrown out, but providentially, reached the outermost of the Three Sister islands. His situation was now indeed deplorable, and any one but Robinson, would have deemed it hopeless. He failed in the first attempt to rescue Allen, but not disheartened, renewed his efforts on the following day, and again proved successful in saving the life of a fellow-being.

The most consummate skill, in the management of his boat, courage, presence of mind, and physical energy were required in both these instances, and JOEL R. ROBINSON, has won for himself, by the possession, and humane exercise of this rare combination of good qualities, a name that will live, linked with the memory of his deeds, till the Falls cease to be admired, and — to flow.