The memory of the age in which these people lived or perished, has passed away, and tradition is silent concerning their history or fate. That Niagara was held in a great degree sacred by the Aborigines is certain; and that some of them believed the home of the Great Spirit to be here, is unquestioned. Probably, Iris Island was, from these circumstances, a consecrated spot, where great and good men, who were loved and honoured while living, were permitted to repose when dead; and where also, the fair and innocent, who were cut down in the greenness of youth, and the bloom of beauty, were allowed to bear them company. But this is mere supposition, for nothing is or can be known of the persons here buried, or the time of their interment, except that it must have been ages ago. This is proved, by the condition of the bones, and the ignorance of all the neighbouring Indian tribes upon the subject. It is quite likely that the remains of many others are still resting in this holy burial-place, whose solemn dirge is sung by the cataract, and whose quiet sleep will be broken only by the Archangel’s trump, at the end of time.

Having made the circuit of the Island, return to your hotel, dine, rest, and then pay a visit to the neighbouring dominions of the British Queen.

CHAPTER V.

“Not in the pomp of temples made with hands, Nor where in pride the sculptured marble stands—
Where pillared aisles their laborous lines display,
And painted casements mock the imprisoned day,
Or the broad column swells—we worship Thee,
Spirit Almighty!—but in this vast shrine,
Where Nature bids her elder glories shine,
Fit emblems of thine own eternity,
Lonely, and wild, and vast! O, is not here
A temple meet for worship?”

AVING refreshed yourself by rest and food, you set out on a visit to Canada, to see the magnificent and sublime views of the Falls, which that side alone presents. At Prospect Point again delight your eyes with the glorious scene that first met your gaze, and then pass on to the Ferry Stair-case, which you descend. It would seem almost impossible, without this convenience, to get down the precipice; but the feat has been accomplished in several instances,
by both gentlemen and ladies. The passage was, however, exceedingly difficult and dangerous, and the public is much indebted to Judge Porter for the present safe and commodious means of descent. These stairs were erected by that gentleman, in 1825, who has also the right of ferry below. From the foot of the first or upper flight of steps, an interesting view of the Falls is presented, which cannot fail to exact a tribute of admiration. From the bottom of the Stairs, pass up along the sloping bank, to the American Fall, of which you have an excellent view; and where, if the wind is up the river, you may creep down the rocks, and pass some distance under the sheet, without being much incommode by the spray.

Two caves were discovered in 1825, by a Mr. Catlin of Lockport, one of which bears his name, and is unique. They are about three-fourths of a mile below the ferry, at the base of the cliff. The passage to them is from the foot of the ferry staircase, and along the top of the sloping bank at the bottom of the precipice; and, though not very dangerous, is quite rough and fatiguing. You can go by water with less exertion, but at some expense. The principal cave, and that which is by far the most curious, is a round hollow in the centre of a large and nearly spherical rock, formed by a deposit of calcareous tufa, from the drippings of lime-water springs, which gush out of the rocks in several places at and near the cave. The cavity is about six feet in diameter, and may be entered by a circular aperture, scarcely large enough to admit a medium sized man; — this opening is about four feet from the bottom of the rock. When first discovered, the cave was lined with stalactites, many of them very beautiful; but they have all been long since removed. A fine spring sparkles along the bottom of the cavity.

The other cave, sometimes called the Giant Cave, is beyond, though near Catlin’s, and some distance above it in the rocks; by the disruption of large masses of which it is supposed to have been formed. It is somewhat difficult of access, but will repay the toil of climbing. A large niche in the precipice shelters the entrance to it, and a lovely spring ripples over its limestone floor. Mineral specimens, some very fine, may be picked up in the vicinity of these caves, and among others, moss in every stage of petrifaction, which presents an extremely curious and interesting appearance, even to the unlearned in the science of stones and fossils. A visit to these caves, will amply reward the trouble of getting to them; but they should not be examined to the
exclusion of any view of the cataract, or of other and more remarkable scenes and objects hereafter to be noted, as they are of comparatively small importance. They are mentioned in this connection, because the route to them commences from the ferry stairs; and now, whenever you choose to go and see them, you will know whence to start, and what direction to pursue.

Returning from the American Fall to the Stairs, and winding down the sloping bank, you are soon at the Landing. The ferry on this side is kept by Mr. S. L. Ware, who takes every pains to oblige and accommodate visitors, and whose observatory at the head of the stairs, we have before had occasion to notice. The boats used for ferrage are large, staunch, and commodious, and are propelled by the sinewy arms of a single person. Not the slightest danger is to be apprehended, and the passage is effected in from four to seven minutes,—the distance across being seventy-six rods. The charge is reasonable: only eighteen and three-fourths cents from May to November, or twenty-five cents from November to May.

Taking your seat in the stern of the boat, the ferry-man pushes off, and you are afloat on the bosom of the abyss. The eddies curl around you, and the currents are swift; but the strong limbs of the sturdy rower force the bark along with rapidity, and almost before you are aware of it, you find yourself in the middle of the stream, and the boat riding gracefully over the heavy swells. What a scene now courts your eager gaze! The mighty cataract in all its sublimity and immensity is above and before you!

You are in the nave of a vast temple, whose walls are the eternal hills, corniced with crags, ornamented with a fret-work of trees, shrubs, flowers, and foliage; whose dome is the blue heaven; and whose altar is the mighty cataract, draped with hangings of green and snow; from the unseen base of which clouds of incense are ascending to the skies, and bearing up the solemn peal of its mist-hidden thunder-toned organ. The floor is of emerald and alabaster; elements are the ministers, and you a worshipper. This temple was the work of Nature, and to the God of Nature erected. Human hands could not lift even a corner of its veil; human art could not equal the smallest of its marvels; human eyes could not penetrate the least of its mysteries!

A vast semicircle of cataracts stretches around you, forming a scene of surpassing splendor and sublimity. Huge and massy walls of rock are on either side, and the shivering skiff in which you
sit, floats upon the surface of a sea, fathomless, convulsed, and immeasurable. Endless torrents, bursting as it were from the opened heavens, leap from the brow of the tremendous precipice, plunge headlong down the terrific height, and lash the deep profound, in to which they are hurled, to foam and madness. The sonorous breathings of the tortured abyss roll up and reverberate in thunder-peals; and air and earth tremble at the shock of the contending floods. Dense clouds of spray, rolling and curling up in shapeless and ever-varying forms, conceal the meeting of the waters, and majestically soar aloft, heaven-borne on the wings of the wind. The sun, shedding resplendent splendors upon the glorious scene, seems girdled with a radiant halo by the rising mists; and rainbows, broken into fragments by the shifting vapours, appear and vanish, dazzle and dissolve, on every side, in quick and magic succession.

Lost in the contemplation of such sublimity and magnificence, the moments fly unnoted, and the Landing is before you, where the red-vestured sentinels of Queen Victoria are seen pacing back and forth their accustomed promenade. If an American, you will probably endeavour to convey by your appearance and looks, a very definite idea of your Nation’s independence,—if a Briton, your stature will no doubt increase a full inch. At all events, you will pass on up the bank, by a fine carriage-road, which was constructed, at a cost of about five thousand dollars, by Messrs. Street and Clarke, and completed in the year 1827. In return for the expense incurred, by the formation of this road, the government of Upper Canada gave those gentlemen the sole right of ferry for twenty-one years. It is a very smooth and pleasant way, and the ascent is quite gradual.

From the top of the bank, and along it toward Table Rock, but at no one particular point, the best and grandest of all upper views of the Falls is presented. The eye here, grasps at a glance, the whole mighty measure of the cataract; and Niagara in all its beauty and glory, in all its majesty and immensity, is spanned by a single look. It is before you, revealed in all its grandeur and extent, in all its splendor and sublimity. You stand entranced and spell-bound. Amazement and admiration are in your gaze; awe and reverence in your soul. It is a scene to linger on, and long you linger, turning often away to rest the eye, and relieve the mind, and as often recurring to it with increased wonder and interest. But at length, you pass on, with it still in your eye and mind, to Table Rock; which, passing the Camera
Obscura, and the Museum, at length you reach. The view of the Horse-shoe Fall from this point, is indeed magnificent.

No wonder that the scene from Table Rock has been lauded and extolled. No wonder that it has been the ultima thule of many a long and weary pilgrimage. It is all that has been said of it, and infinitely more:—words cannot convey an idea of its unearthly sublimity and grandeur. The sea of rapids leaping and tossing above; the vast breadth and depth of the raging stream; the impetuous rush of the ocean-torrent; the awful plunge of the prodigious volume; the tremendous concussion, heard and felt, but not seen from the covering mists, that envelope and hide the crushing appulsion of the meeting masses; the pointed spear-shaped jets that shoot far up from the convulsed bosom of the heaving and surging abyss; the multitudinous whirling, shifting, convolvoling clouds of spray and vapour, that roll heavily up and load the unresting air; the dark, threatening cliffs, that shut in the vexed and foam-covered accumulation of floods, in the angry gulf below; the resplendent glories shed over all by the burning sun, tinting with gorgeous colours the sheet, the stream, and the spray, wreathing with rainbow-hues the fleecy and emerald robes of the

to Niagara Falls.

grand cascade, and arching the fearful chasm with a zone of brightness and beauty; the wild hoarse roar of the mad rapids, and the deep booming thunders of the cloud-compelling cataract—these, and a thousand other collateral and subordinate features, combine to form a scene which appalls and confounds the observer, while it attracts and rivets his wrapt and eager gaze. God of Omnipotence! this wonder is Thy work; the very ground is holy with Thy presence! This you feel—must feel—though, perhaps, you do not speak it. Crowding emotions swell the bosom; thoughts that defy utterance, fill the mind. The power and presence of the Almighty seem fearfully manifest. You gaze, and tremble as you gaze!

Table Rock is on the same level with the Fall, and is a continuation of the ledge or strata from which the torrent-flood is precipitated. It projects over the bank, and beyond the curve of the cascade to a considerable distance, and from this circumstance, derives its name; having, in some respects, a tabular aspect. Creep to the edge and look down,—the sensation is awful. There is nothing but the invisible and imponderable air between the thin leaf-like crag which supports you, and the massy blocks of limestone that lay
concevered more than one hundred feet beneath, where they have fallen from the dizzy elevation whence you look, and been rent and scattered by the shock. There is a strange and indefinable fascination in the terrible depth that confronts you,

"Charming the eye with dread;"

and it requires an effort to withdraw from that horrible verge of danger and death.

Table Rock was formerly of much greater extent than it is at present; large portions of the cliff having at different times been broken off, and dashed to pieces by the fall. In 1818, an immense mass,—one hundred and sixty feet in length, and from thirty to forty feet broad,—was torn from the brow of the bank, hurled down the steep, and shattered to fragments at the foot of the precipice. The disruption took place about midnight, and the shock of its fall startled and awoke the inhabitants for miles around, by whom it was mistaken for that of an earthquake. In the years 1828 and '29, other smaller portions of the rock fell; and a deep fissure, which cannot but be observed, embracing within its circumference an enormous mass of rock, shows that at no very distant date a similar catastrophe may be expected.

The old building and machinery upon Table
Rock, were erected for the purpose of forcing water up the high bank to the City of the Falls, for domestic and other uses. The project was found to be impracticable, and was therefore abandoned.

The shape or outline of the British Fall, is undergoing almost constant change, from the disruption of large portions of the ledge or cliff, by which it is produced.* In 1678 it was nearly straight across. Since that time, it has become deeply indented, and has at different periods, taken different forms of curvature, from one of which, it derived the name of Horse-shoe.

It is worthy of note that the outline of this cascade assumes a different shape to the eye, at every point from which it is seen.† Consequently, it is presented in a new and striking aspect at every change of place; and as many fine views are obtained as there are separate stations from which to observe. From the Clifton House, the Pavilion Hotel, and the Barracks, it appears under forms having but slight similitude to each other,

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* In 1828 several large pieces fell, one of them nearly half an acre in extent.
† The same is true, though in a less degree, of the American Fall.
—varying from concave to square, and from square to triangular,—but all extremely interesting;—the view from the former is, however, immeasurably the most grand and superb.

After having sufficiently examined and admired the scene from Table Rock, you return along the plank pathway to the rooms of Mr. Starkey, where there is a Stair-case down the bank, and where you will procure proper apparel and a guide to Termination Rock, which is behind the great sheet. Provided with these essential requisites, you descend a long flight of spiral stairs, erected some years since by Mr. Forsyth, from the foot of which, taking the path to the right, you soon arrive at the misty, spray-washed entrance to the cavern, which it is your purpose to explore. Here you pause, to enjoy a most sublime view of the cataract, and particularly of the Horse-shoe Fall, which comes thundering down, above and before you, stretching far away to the left in its huge and awful proportions. Another, and, in some respects, a better view of the same grand spectacle, is seen from the river-margin, to which you descend.

From this point, more than any other, you appear to realize the vast height of the precipice, and the prodigious weight and impulsion of the torrent.
It seems a god-hurled flood, and you an insect-atom, scarce beyond its rush. Tremendous in its force, immense in its extent, appalling in its sublimity, the vast cascade confounds and terrifies you, while it hags your gaze with a charm you can neither comprehend nor break. A dread indefinable divinity is in and upon it, which compels your adoration of Him who piled the rock, and heaved the flood that made Niagara, and made it speak of Him, through every sense of power and beauty, to mind and soul. There is a godness in the scene, that is felt in every fibre, but cannot be expressed,—that infinitely expands the soul, which is yet too small to grasp its dim outline even,—that crowds the mind with august thoughts and emotions, which struggle for utterance, but which the heart only can tell to its Creator in the silent eloquence of worship.

Of all views of Niagara, this is the most impressive; and, were there no other, it would seem inexplicable from whence these unintermitted and immeasurable floods could proceed, which appear literally to fall from the heavens. From this scene, tearing yourself away, you regain the top of the sloping bank, and, impatient to attain the penetralia of Nature's hidden mysteries, essay the passage behind the sheet. The winds howl around you;—the spray dashes in your face with blinding and almost suffocating force. You can scarcely see, scarcely breathe; but the supporting hand of the guide, and his encouraging voice, sustain and re-assure you. With hasty but careful steps you press on, and are in a moment more, at your journey's end, and can both see and breathe more freely. The spray still showers upon you, but with diminished force and density; and you look around, above, below. What a fearful place! what an imposing scene! Unutterable awe is the first, and for some seconds, the only emotion.

You stand upon a narrow ledge, scarce three feet wide, and gaze with intense interest up ninety feet at the meeting arches of rock and water; and down seventy feet at a steep precipice, and a flashing sheet, which are lost to view in the rising mists. You see the mighty torrent roll off the cliff above your head, and plunge with a lightning rapidity, down the dark profound. You cannot see the strife between fall and flood—the mad melee of many waters;—but you hear the sound of the battling elements, and you feel that the struggle is terrific. Such sights! such sounds!—The eye aches; the ear is pained. But there is a dreadful fascination in the place:—the eye looks...
eagerly, though it aches; and the ear is pleased with that which pains it.

An inviting extent of cavern, dim, misty, and indefinable, is before you. You long to explore it, and advance a step, when the guide, catching your arm, assures you that you stand upon the extremity of Termination Rock, and that, though it is possible to make your way a few feet farther, the attempt would be at the hazard of your life. Reluctantly you abandon the hope of diving still deeper into the shadowy recesses of that terribly attractive cavern; and survey with a closer scrutiny the vaulted hall; in which you stand. Ragged, impending, and seamed with fissures, the arching rock above you appears to be on the point of crumbling beneath the weight of the superincumbent flood. Massy fragments, held by no visible support, seem almost in the act of falling; and you can hardly persuade yourself, that danger is not imminent, and destruction at hand. But the reflection, that thousands and thousands of persons have passed under them, back and forth, with impunity, inspires you with courage; and you scan, but with a throbbing pulse and a heaving bosom, the wonders and glories by which you are surrounded.

The living deluge that bursts from the trembling crag far above you, and, flashing by, is scarcely seen, ere it thunders up from the gulf below, seems to make an eternal present of both past and future, by its lightning rush and ceaseless flow. Omnipotence mingling infinites, dashing down the flood, lifting the spray, and swelling the sound, pervades the place with His presence, and deepens the awe it inspires. But any attempt to describe the sights, sounds, or sensations, produced by this transcendant scene, must be vain, and worse than vain; and I leave you “amid these vast and eternal workings of gigantic nature,” to commune with Him, “whom Nature’s self obeys,” and remain or emerge at will.

Drenched and dripping, you at last come forth, bearing upon your mind and memory, an impression that no time or change can ever erase; and with solemn step and thoughtful mien, ascend the stairs, and resume your ordinary dress. Register your name, receive a certificate that you have been to Termination Rock, pay the customary charge, and then, if you choose, rest yourself, and partake of some refreshment. Mr. Starkey, who keeps this establishment, is attentive to the wishes of his guests, and has a fine cabinet of minerals and other curiosities, which is worthy of notice.

Returning to the ferry, stop at the Museum as
you pass, and examine Mr. Barnett's admirable collection of natural and artificial curiosities. A splendid view of the Falls may also be enjoyed from the piazza of the Museum; and Mr. Barnett, who is both intelligent and polite, will do all in his power to render your visit agreeable. At the Camera Obscura, make a short pause, to see the miniature and moving Niagara, animated and life-like, which that instrument presents.

From thence, return to the ferry,—which, on the Canada side, is kept by Mr. Shultersburgh, a civil and obliging man, careful and attentive to his business, and experienced in all that relates to his vocation,—and, while crossing the river, enjoy again the glorious view of basin, cliff, and cataract, in that solemn temple, which seems filled with the Eternal presence, its liquid floor quaking beneath His Omnipotent tread. From this sublime sanctuary, having offered up the incense of an awe-awakened praise to Him whose habitation if on earth, is here,—return to your hotel, recruit your physical energies with rest and food, and ponder upon the mighty and magnificent scenes you have beheld.

In the evening, make another visit to Iris Island, which you will find even more interesting and agreeable in the sweet moonlight, than in the broad glare of day,—and catch, if you can, a glimpse of the lunar bow. There is a witching loveliness about this island in the soft obscurity of evening, that cannot fail to please; and a solemn grandeur in the cataract at night, that commands reverence. Then, too, imagination holds her undisputed sway;—but the half-concealment that shrouds every object, confines her to the task of filling up the shadowy outline of the vast indistinct, that is every where around. It seems a spirit-land, and gigantic forms of inessential grace and beauty float before the vision, upon the atmosphere of fancy. Hushed is the voice of mirth, silent the tongue of conviviality. The Actual blends with the Ideal; contemplation rules the hour, and the place; and a subdued, but not dismal, melancholy pervades every brow and bosom. No sound is heard, but the choral chant of the elements; no sentiment breathed, but such as befits the spot, and the season. The Genius of Niagara, hovering near, spreads his misty pinions over all things; and the whole scene is hallowed by the invisible presence of Deity.

End the day by reflecting upon what you have seen and felt; and looking over your Guide-book, to determine where you will go next. And so, good night;—I know your slumbers will be sweet.