

of Wales, came to Niagara Falls for the first and only time in his life. His tour of this country had been one continued ovation, and where was he more warmly received than here? Everything that ingenuity could devise and money carry out was done for his amusement. Of all the diversions provided for him the one with which the prince expressed himself best pleased and which he said he thought even more wonderful than the falls themselves, was a marvellous exhibition of skill and daring given expressly for him on September 15, 1860, by two famous rope dancers—an American and a Frenchman both long since dead—upon a tight rope stretched across the Niagara river midway between the suspension bridge and the falls at a height of 190 feet above the frightful whirlpool rapids.

Of the two men who hazarded their lives that day for a prince's amusement, M. Blondin the Frenchman, was the first to attempt the feat. This rope or cable was 1,000 feet in length, and in the middle of his passage across it he stopped, and after a profound obeisance to the prince, which the latter courteously returned, he proceeded to perform a variety of feats, such as turning somersaults, hanging head downward by his feet and partaking of refreshments which he drew up with a cord from the little steamer "Maid Of The Mist" floating beneath him.

But though Blondin came of a family of French rope dancers, and had been bred up to rope dancing from his earliest years, his feats were fully equalled and even excelled by those of an American named Hunt, who, under the fanciful appellation of "Sig Farini," also gave a special exhibition before the prince of Wales that same day, performing on a cable stretched across the falls at a point so much wider than Blondin's that it was 1,800 feet in length, all the same feats that the Frenchman had done and others even greater, for whereas Blondin had carried across on his back a man weighing 145 pounds, Hunt carried a man weighing 155 pounds across and back again, thus traversing nearly four times the distance walked by Blondin, as the latter's cable was only half the length of Hunt's. Hunt also walked forward and backward across his cable and stood on his head while enveloped in a sack, and performed many other feats more difficult and hazardous than any Blondin ever attempted, yet Hunt was only a grocery clerk and had never thought of rope walking till a few weeks previous, when Blondin's fame had fired him with a desire to emulate it.

These performances in the presence of the nations royal guest created intense excitement and enthusiasm throughout this country and England. The special correspondent of the London *Times* stated in his account that the prince had said that he regarded these feats as almost the eighth wonder of the world, and an editorial in the same paper said of Blondin and Hunt "They beat the world in point of reckless daring."

Today, while recalling, in company with the oldest inhabitant, these and other memories of that long gone visit of the prince of Wales, we fell to talking about other marvelous feats that had been performed and attempted in connection with the world's great cataract. From time immemorial these

falls seem to have possessed some strange, mysterious fascination that has lured men to seek glory or death in their seething waters.

After Blondin and Hunt had made a world-wide reputation by their performances before the prince of Wales, there came a host of imitators, and rope walking across Niagara Falls has been made so common as to be of little note. Harry Leslie, P. S. Peer, and many others including one lady—Maria Spelterini, an Italian by birth—have successfully performed here nearly all the feats of Hunt and Blondin.

SWIMMING FEATS.

The first recorded attempt to cross the Niagara by swimming through the rapids was made by John Purden, native of Queenstown, Canada, who on August 22, 1860, endeavored to swim over and was drowned. C. D. Graham, now keeping a saloon here, has passed through the rapids from the suspension bridge to Lewiston in a barrel three times, the dates of his ventures being July 11, 1886, August 10th of the same year, and June 15, 1887. On the second of these occasions he made the passage with his head projecting from the barrel, a rubber collar which extended from its top, being tightly laced about his neck to keep out the water. Though nearly dead when picked up and brought to shore, the proper administration of restoratives soon revived him.

The barrel used was a peculiar kind, invented and built by Graham himself. It was between six and seven feet in length and smaller at one end than the other. Inside of this cask was slung a hammock in which the bold navigator reclined while making the voyage, and thus avoided brusing.

On August 8, 1886, two young men named Potts and Haslett passed through the rapids together in a barrel similar to Graham's. Haslett and a young woman named 'Sadie Allen repeated this feat on November 22, 1887. Though not killed both were much the worse for wear when they landed. Miss Allen who is now living on Carroll street in Buffalo has never fully recovered from the effects of the trip, and probably never will. She says that not all the money in the world could tempt her to make another such voyage.

CAPT. B. WEBB.

The boldest feat ever attempted at Niagara Falls since Purden made his daring effort to swim the rapids in 1860 as mentioned above, was that which resulted in the death of that noted English swimmer, Captain Webb, who on July 24, 1883, endeavored to swim through the rapids, and whose dead body was found four days later about a mile and a half below Lewiston. William Kendall, a Boston policeman, successfully floated through the rapids with the aid of a life preserver on Aug. 22, 1886, but James Scott, who had attempted the same feat on Aug. 19th of that year was drowned. Lawrence M. Donovan, the daring bridge jumper, who subsequently met his death in England, jumped from the new suspension bridge into the Niagara River, a distance of 190 feet, on Nov. 7, 1886, and came up unhurt.

The only living thing that is known to have passed successfully over Niagara Falls, unaided by a beer keg or any other artificial contrivance, is a large setter dog, named Grouse, belonging to Charles Alexander Percy, a young

wagon-maker of Suspension Bridge, a village about two miles from the Falls. Walking with his master on the little bridge leading to Goat Island, Grouse saw a piece of driftwood, leaped into the water after it and was carried over the cataract. Never expecting to see his dog, again, Percy's delight may be imagined when five days later back came Grouse, a sadly bruised and battered dog, but still retaining sufficient strength to wag his tail. He is still living in the prime of noble doghood, but many of the scars, lumps and indentations resulting from his cataract experience, may be seen and felt upon his body today.

This successful passage by his dog filled Percy with a desire to win Niagara glory for himself. He resolved to make an attempt to pass through the rapids in an open boat. He constructed a craft pointed at both extremities, seventeen feet long, four feet nine inches beam, and having at either end an air-tight compartment six feet six inches in length and four feet in depth. The center space of the boat between these two compartments was occupied by a sliding seat.

In this craft Percy has three times passed successfully through the rapids. He went through the upper rapids from the old "Maid of the Mist" landing to the whirlpool a distance of two miles, which he covered in three minutes, on Sunday, Aug. 28, 1887, and on Sunday, Sept. 25th of the same year, he passed through the lower rapids from the whirlpool to Lewiston, a distance of four and a half miles, in eight minutes. He made these voyages in one of the air-tight compartments already described, opening a small bull's eye in the door to breathe when the boat was above water, and closing it when she was submerged.

Robert Flack, on July 4, 1883, tried to pass through the rapids in a boat without air-tight compartments, believing he could row through the rapids strapped to a thwart. The remorseless waves battered him to death, his dead body remained fastened to the fatal seat. His attempt was made to demonstrate the utility of his craft—invented and constructed by himself—as a life-boat in large seas.

GEOFFREY WILLISTON CHRISTINE.

OUR STOCKHOLM LETTER.

STOCKHOLM, May 27.—[Special].—*Die Koelnische Zeitung*, the prominent German paper, published recently an article on the numerical strength of the Swedish army and navy, which probably will be read with interest as it shows that old Sweden is a formidable foe even nowadays, and at least ought to be able to advantageously conduct a war of defense. The paper says: "As has been formerly stated, the population of Sweden is manifesting an extraordinary interest in the increase of the army and navy, and it was without doubt on account of this public opinion that the riksdag, which was summoned to extra session the last months of the previous year, passed the new army bill by a very large majority. As a consequence Sweden in a few years will be capable of mobilizing about 200,000 soldiers."

"At present the efforts of the Swedish government are aimed at the reorganization of the navy, and for this purpose the riksdag will probably again be