



PUTTING MRS. TAYLOR, THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF A TRIP OVER NIAGARA FALLS, INTO HER BARREL.

### NIAGARA—THE SCENE OF PERILOUS FEATS.

BY ORRIN E. DUNLAP.

NIAGARA stands unrivaled the world over as the scene of the most daring feats known. In all cases the motive prompting those who so wantonly risked and often met death has been a desire either for money or for notoriety.

It was the late Sam Patch who first traveled to Niagara to perform an unusual feat and thereby win fame and fortune. He worked in a mill just above Pawtucket Falls, Rhode Island. There he used to bathe with his companions and engage in high jumping. They dove down from a bridge into a deep pool, and not satisfied with this, they sought greater heights and leaped from the roof of the mill near by. It was here that Sam Patch developed his ambition and ability. An early business venture failing, he began accepting engagements about the country to jump from

high places. In September, 1829, he found himself one of a big crowd attracted to Niagara Falls to witness the sending over the cataract of the condemned brig "Michigan," cruelly loaded with terror-stricken wild animals. Sam Patch was inspired to profit by the excitement that prevailed, and accordingly, he built a wooden tower, ninety feet high, at the water's edge at the foot of the Biddle Stairway on Goat Island. From a platform on top of this structure he leaped safely into the waters of the lower Niagara River. His career closed soon afterward, however, with a leap in Rochester which cost him his life.

Thirty years after, Monsieur Blondin, a Frenchman, appeared at Niagara with his business agent, Harry Colcord, and announced his intention of crossing the gorge on a tight rope stretched from Goat Island

[1902]

large class of giant cruisers—the “West Virginia,” “Nebraska,” “California,” “Maryland,” “Colorado” et cetera. The “Brooklyn” in her trials made nearly twenty-two knots. The new ships are intended to be twenty-two-knot ships.

The Japanese have attained, it is believed, the same success with their cruisers as with their battle-ships. Five Japanese armored cruisers were launched in 1898 and 1899, built in all portions of the world.

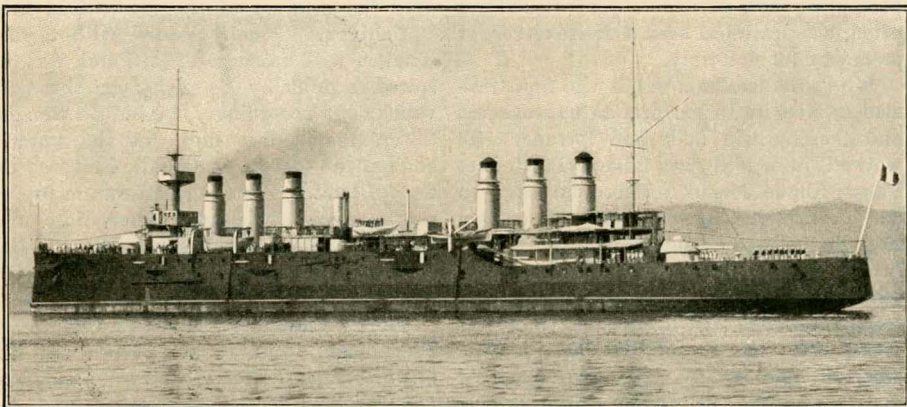
On the whole, commerce must still dread the fast merchant-ships to be employed against their sisters.

Great Britain is very strong in destroyers, formerly called torpedo-boat-destroyers, and now recognized as valuable general assistants to a fleet. The Russians are now building them much faster than we are, and it is the point in which as regards its program of 1901 our Admiralty is most open to censure. The public have turned against destroyers on account of recent accidents to some and the weakness revealed in the “Crane,” “Vulture” and others. The weakness must be corrected, even with slight loss of speed; but there is no possibility of ceasing to build the type.

The French fleet has rapidly developed its building of submarines and submersible ships. French ironclads and French cruisers cost far more to build than do our ships—a result of the French policy of protection; and in some degree we must recognize the fact that in building submarine ships, which are cheap, the French are accepting the position of permanent inferiority at sea. They are a weapon of the weaker power. To the weaker power they

are most valuable; and the stronger power cannot deal with this danger by building submarines, and has not yet developed any other method of meeting it. That the submarine will be a valuable engine of attack against our fleets on the high seas or at a distance from port, is improbable. It is certain that it makes close blockade of ports impossible, and watching dangerous; and it therefore hampers us in our operations as the superior naval power.

In this article I have dealt exclusively with that which is tangible, the material of the fleets. The more important point of the men behind the guns is indefinite and intangible. Each nation can but hope, and do its best in training. As regards the revelations of history and of the eyes of intelligent observers with regard to the natural value of the personnel of the different fleets, it may be taken as the general view of the best-informed that the British, Germans and French are admirable as regards both officers and men; that the American officers and the Japanese men leave nothing to be desired; and that the Russians and Italians are somewhat inferior; that the men of the American fleet vary a good deal, but that the best are admirable; and that the officers of Japan are still to some extent an unknown quantity, although in their war with China they did well. The French and Germans are able with ease to fill their fleets. With us that process is more difficult; and the manning of the entire British fleet with competent and trained officers and men for a great naval war against a coalition is a matter which gives anxiety to all our patriots.



THE FRENCH ARMORED CRUISER “JEANNE D'ARC.”

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HAZLETT AND SARAH ALLEN AND THE CASK IN WHICH THEY WENT TOGETHER THROUGH THE RAPIDS.

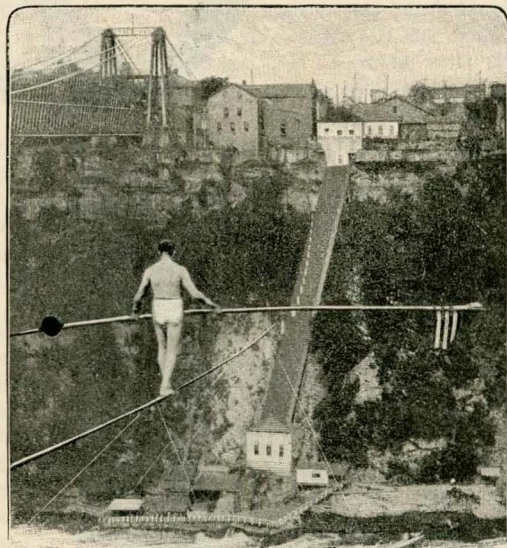
to the Canadian bank. At first the press viewed the plan with suspicion, but Blondin soon gained the popular confidence by daily walking up and down the guys of the old railway suspension-bridge, carelessly puffing at a cigar. In June, 1859, he stretched his rope midway between the falls and Whirlpool Rapids, at a place known as White's Pleasure Grounds. A seven-eighths-inch rope was first carried across the gorge, and when the cable arrived, on June 22, 1859, all was in readiness to place it. This cable was about one thousand three hundred feet long, and with it came fully thirty thousand feet of rope for guys. On June 23d, when the big cable had been drawn to within two hundred feet of the Canadian bank, it was feared that the small rope first stretched would not be strong enough to land it; but to the astonishment of all, Blondin tied a rope to his body and walked out on the small rope and attached another rope to the cable.

Each day it seemed as though Blondin became more fearless, and the news of his doings greatly excited the locality.

It was arranged that Blondin's first public performance should be given on June 30, 1859. Previous to the river trip on the cable, he gave a performance on a rope in the Pleasure Grounds. He danced, turned over and over, leaped backward ten to fifteen feet, and bounded high in air, showing astonishing skill.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when he started out on the cable from the American side. When about one hundred feet out he sat down, lay on his back, stood on one foot, and then resumed his journey. At intervals of about one hundred and fifty feet he repeated this performance, until he reached the middle of the river. Then the steamer "Maid of the Mist" came up the river, her flags flying and loaded down with passengers.

Blondin dropped a cord to the deck and pulled up a bottle, from which he took a long draft. He then leaped to his feet without touching his hands to the



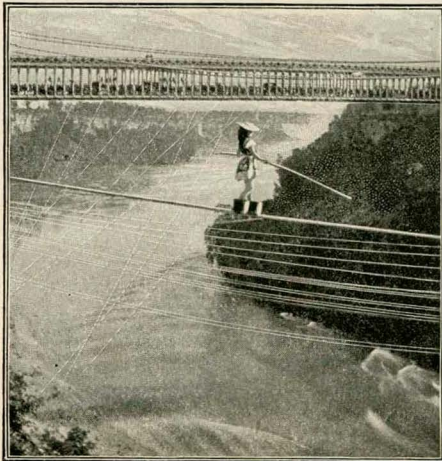
STEVE PEERE CROSSING NIAGARA GORGE.

cable, and continued his walk to the Canadian cliff. He was on the rope eighteen minutes, and as he landed the gorge rang with cheers. In half an hour he returned across the rope to the American side in seven minutes, including a stop in the center to view the falls. The balance-pole he carried was about thirty-eight feet long and weighed forty-five pounds. While an admission-fee was charged to the Pleasure Ground, Blondin's principal source of compensation was through collections taken up among the crowds on the river bank. His first trip was witnessed by thousands of people who had traveled long distances to see him.

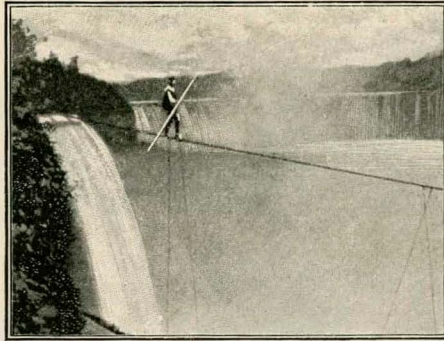
Blondin's second performance was given on July 4th of the same year in the presence of a still larger crowd, and this time he walked with a sack over his head and body, his legs and feet being free. On July 14, 1859, the Hon. Millard Fillmore witnessed his performance. On this occasion Blondin stopped in the center of the cable, and at a signal from the steamer "Maid of the Mist" in the river below, he held out his hat, and Captain Travis, a famous pistol-shot, sent a



BLONDIN.



MARIA SPELTERINA CROSSING THE GORGE WITH BASKETS ON HER FEET.



BALLENI ON HIS CABLE.

bullet through the rim of it, after which the hat was lowered to the steamer's deck. After crossing to Canada,

Blondin returned, dressed as a monkey, and trundled a wheelbarrow over the rope. On Wednesday, August 3, 1859, Blondin, before the largest crowd of that year, made a trip over the rope in less than six minutes, taking time to stand on his head. On his fifth trip Blondin carried Harry Colcord on his back. Colcord weighed one hundred and forty-five pounds, and that portion of the trip over the center where there were no guys was especially thrilling. On landing, both Blondin and Colcord were carried on the shoulders of the crowd to a carriage. On August 31, 1859, Blondin gave his first night performance. At each end of the rope locomotive headlights were placed to give illumination. On his pole he carried colored lights, and when in the center these lights gave out, leaving him in darkness. Those close by the cable felt for the vibration, which told them he was safe as they felt his careful tread. Blondin closed the season by crossing with baskets on his feet and shackles on his body. On returning from Canada he carried a table and a chair. When a third of the way across, he attempted to seat himself on the chair, but it slipped and tumbled into the river. Blondin, however, recovered his

balance and regaled himself with champagne and cake while sitting on the rope.

Blondin's fame was now so well established that everybody was eager to see him. The townspeople of Niagara liked his performances because they attracted crowds, filled the hotels and helped trade. In 1860 Blondin stretched his rope across the gorge below the railway suspension-bridges, right over the Whirlpool Rapids. This was in the village of Niagara City and the Niagara Falls people were quite angry, for in those days there was no little jealousy between the rival villages, which have since been merged into cityhood. Accordingly he returned the following year, and his first feat was crossing the rope backward. Next he walked blindfolded. On July 4th he performed on a rope suspended from his cable. On September 8th, the presence of the Prince of Wales, now King Edward, inspired his greatest daring and he carried Colcord across on his back and also walked over on stilts.

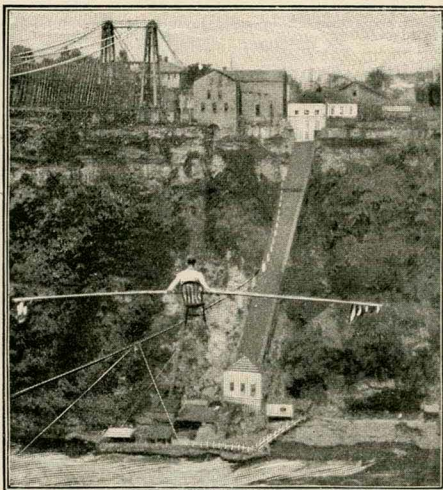
While the name of Blondin will ever be associated with the Niagara gorge, many others have sought fame there in the performance of feats equally brilliant. But his was the first success, and it is well known



MAUD WILLARD, WHO WAS SUFFOCATED IN HER BARREL IN THE RAPIDS.

that the world never gives as much appreciation to those who follow. Even while Blondin was drawing crowds in Niagara City in 1860, he was confronted by a rival named Signor Farini, who stretched his rope across the gorge near the outlet of the hydraulic canal. While Blondin walked on a tight rope, people were amazed at Farini, who always had his rope very slack. Farini gave many performances, and he aimed to surpass Blondin, walking with his feet in a sack, while Blondin had left his free. On August 29, 1860, Farini carried Rowland McMullen over the cable on his back, but Colcord lives where McMullen is forgotten. On September 5th Farini while on the cable washed ladies' handkerchiefs in water drawn up from the river far below.

On August 6, 1888, Blondin revisited Niagara, the place that made him famous. In the years he had been abroad, others had sought to do what he had done. In July and August, 1865, Harry Leslie, styled "the American Blondin," crossed the gorge on a cable over the rapids. In August, 1873, Signor Balleni stretched a



A DANGEROUS SEAT IN MID-AIR.



BALLENI IN MID-AIR OVER THE RAPIDS.

cable from Prospect Park to a point on the Canadian side, and made his first crossing on August 25, 1873. Balleni embellished his performance by dropping from the cable to the river by means of a rubber rope, and one day while fastening his balance-pole preparatory to this leap, he lost it in the river, but managed with difficulty to reach land again.

On Saturday afternoon, July 8, 1876, Signorina Maria Spelterina crossed the Niagara gorge on a two-and-one-fourth-inch rope stretched over the rapids below the railway suspension-bridge. She is the only woman who has the credit of such a performance. Her crossing with baskets on her feet was startling, and she also walked with ankles and wrists manacled. In those days Niagara was far more popular with Southerners than it is to-day, and the Southern society that gathered there set the pace for all pleasures and encouraged the performance of these hair-raising feats.

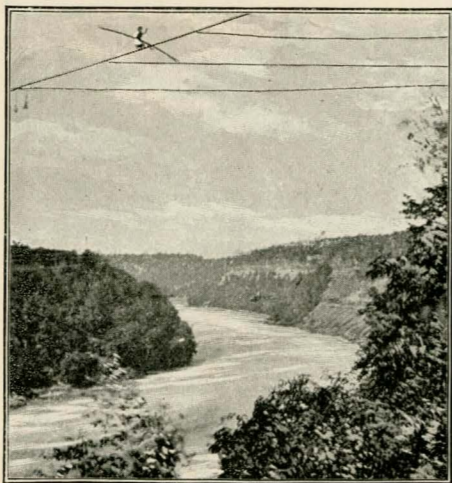
Among those who had helped Signor Balleni erect his cable in 1873 was a painter named Steve Peere, who lived in Drummondville, Ontario. One day Peere secured Balleni's pole and fearlessly ran out on the cable. The jealousy of Balleni was aroused to such a pitch that he was caught in the act of trying to cut the cable.

One strand had already been severed, and a couple of strokes would have sent Peere to instant death. This incident closed Balleni's career at Niagara. Peere, however, was destined to make his mark, for a few years later he crossed the gorge on a cable only three-quarters of an inch in diameter, a mere thread compared with the rope that Blondin and others had used. Then, too, its surface was hard and slippery. Three days after this feat Peere was found dead on the river bank under the Canadian end of the cable, and it has always been supposed that he had tried to walk the cable at night, with his boots on, while intoxicated.

Not discouraged by Peere's fate, Samuel John Dixon, of Toronto, made two trips across the same narrow path of steel.

Clifford M. Calverley, James E. Hardy and J. F. Jenkins have also crossings of the gorge to their credit. Hardy is said to have been the youngest man to perform the feat; while Jenkins crossed on a velocipede arrangement, his balance-pole being carried under his feet.

It is hard to tell whether those who have done wonderful things in the air or those who have sought fame in the water have created the greater sensation at Niagara. It is not recorded that anybody has ever lost his life in walking across the gorge on a rope or wire, for Peere's death was more



MARIA SPELTERINA KNEELING ON HER CABLE.

24

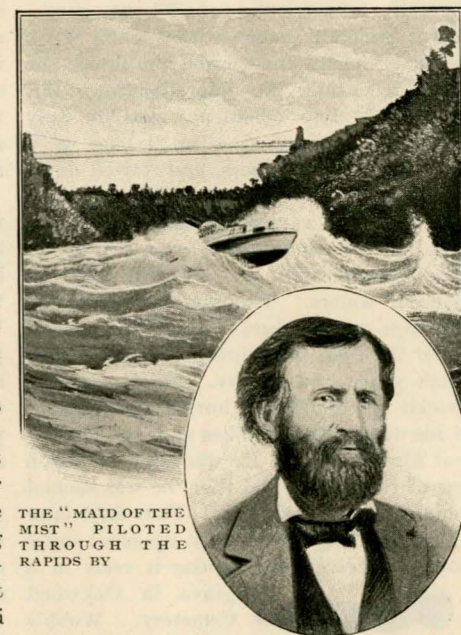


PETER NISSEN'S "FOOL-KILLER" CASTING OFF FOR A TRIP THROUGH THE RAPIDS.

in the nature of a tumble from the cliff, but many lives have been lost in braving the tumultuous waters of the cañon of Niagara.

The lower Niagara River was generally believed to be unnavigable between the falls and Lewiston until 1861. The steamer "Maid of the Mist" was then heavily mortgaged, and Captain Robinson reckoned he wasn't going to have her tied up, if running her to a Canadian port could avert it. Accordingly, on the afternoon of June 6th, with only his two associates MacIntyre and Jones aboard, Robinson gave the signal to go ahead, but to the surprise of those who saw the boat her bow was directed right toward the rapids instead of toward the falls. Under full steam the little steamer sped down the river and dashed into the waves. She plunged through the rolling whitecaps with a rush, but lost her smokestack as the huge waves swept her deck. The voyage was fierce, but short, and in a few minutes the boat was in the whirlpool. She answered to her rudder, and turning her nose out of the outlet, Robinson soon had her speeding toward the peaceful waters five miles below. Practically uninjured, the boat landed at the wharf at Queenston, and Robinson was a hero.

Nearly a quarter of a century passed before a human being again voluntarily defied the fury of the Whirlpool Rapids, and when this time came, the waters dashed his life out as though angered at the victory that



THE "MAID OF THE MIST" PILOTED THROUGH THE RAPIDS BY

CAPT. JOEL ROBINSON.

25



MARTHA WAGENFUHRER AFTER A SUCCESSFUL BARREL TRIP THROUGH THE RAPIDS.

Robinson had won. In 1883 Capt. Matthew Webb, a famous English swimmer, left his home and crossed the ocean to battle with the powerful currents in the Niagara gorge. It was generally believed that when Webb reached Niagara and viewed the rapids, he would reconsider his determination. But he did not lose confidence, and on July 24, 1883, he entered a small boat, with Jack McCloy at the oars, and started down the river. When yet several hundred feet from the rapids, he leaped from the boat, and with nothing on but a pair of red trunks, swam with all his skill into the foaming waters. Thousands were on the cliff-tops and bridges. As Webb passed under the suspension-bridge, he swam with much grace and beauty. Right into the crested waves he was hurled as the force of his own strong strokes and the current sent him forward. He was seen to pass a few of the swells, and then he was sucked under by a mighty wave. Four days later his lifeless body was picked up seven miles down the river, and to-day it rests in a



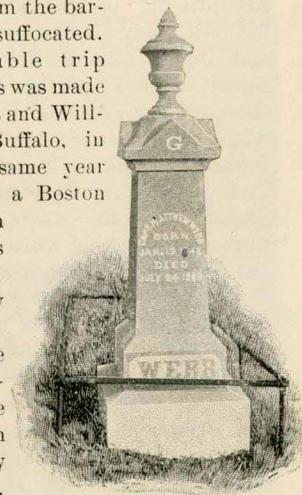
A BIT OF BLONDIN'S CABLE. mistake was in fail-

ing to recognize that even if he could have battled with the swirling currents, the air-charged waters of the gorge and rapids lacked the buoyancy necessary to support him.

The fate that befell Webb, instead of discouraging others, inspired them to emulation. Among those who aspired to make the trip was Carlisle D. Graham, a Philadelphia cooper. Many jokes were cracked at Graham's expense when in 1886 he announced that he would make a barrel in which he would go through the rapids. In due time Graham, true to his word, appeared at Niagara with a barrel in which he could stand, so weighted that it would float nearly upright. Not only did he go through the Whirlpool Rapids, but he was swept through the entire gorge to Lewiston, the trip occupying thirty-five minutes. Then he announced that on his next trip he would have his head out of the top of the barrel in full view of the people. This venture left him very little hearing, for a big wave gave him a deafening slap on the side of the head. Graham made a third and a fourth trip that summer, and then for twelve years he prudently rested on his laurels, watching all that was done in a sensational way at Niagara. Last summer scored his fifth trip through the rapids, and nearly ended his life, for he was caught in an eddy, where he was held over twenty minutes. The day was very warm, and when Graham finally reached the whirlpool and was taken from the barrel he was nearly suffocated.

The first double trip through the rapids was made by George Hazlett and William Potts, of Buffalo, in 1886. In the same year W. J. Kendall, a Boston policeman, swam through the rapids to the whirlpool, protected only by a life-preserver.

Up to this time the thirst for notoriety in the rapids had been confined wholly to the sterner sex, but in the late



WEBB'S GRAVE.



PETER NISSEN.

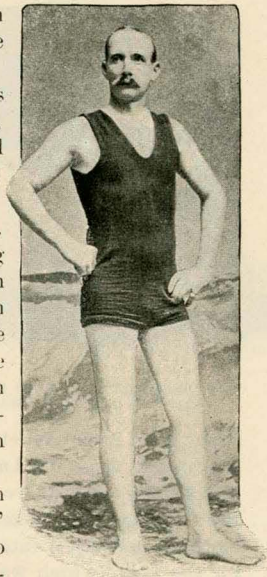
fall of 1886 Miss Sadie Allen, in company with George Hazlett, made a barrel trip through the rapids.

For over fourteen years after this there was a cessation of barrel trips, and in the mean time men who had ideas about making life-saving boats came to the front. Charles A. Percy, of Niagara Falls, was the first. His boat was seventeen feet long and had a beam of four feet ten inches. At each end there was an air-chamber, and ensconced in one of these air-chambers Percy made three trips through the rapids in 1887, on one of which he was ac-

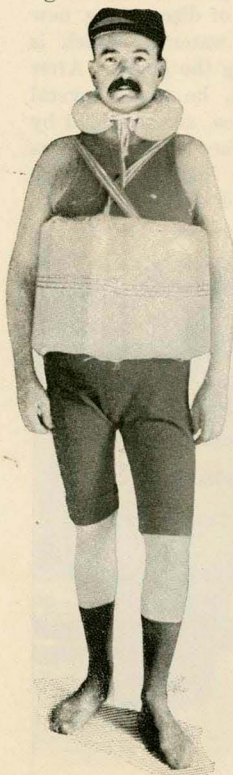
companied by William Dittrick. His last voyage was very rough and he lost his boat.

The next man to bring a boat to Niagara was Robert William Flack, of Syracuse. He surrounded his craft, the "Phantom," with mystery. It had a filling, he said, that he expected to patent, and he was confident that it would prove a great money-maker. Flack early met Percy, and the two entered into an agreement to have a race through the gorge in the boats they had made. But as Percy

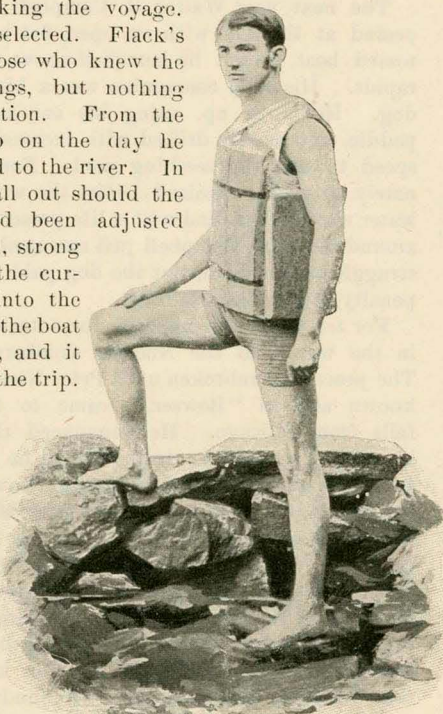
had been through the rapids and inspired confidence in his boat—this was following his first trip—Flack must first inspire equal confidence in his boat by making the voyage. July 4, 1888, was the date selected. Flack's craft was very light and those who knew the rapids had their misgivings, but nothing could alter his determination. From the same hotel left by Webb on the day he went to death, Flack walked to the river. In order that he might not fall out should the boat capsize, a harness had been adjusted about his waist. With bold, strong strokes he pulled out into the current and headed straight into the rapids. The waves tossed the boat as though it were a shell, and it was capsized three times in the trip. Never has a crowd that assembled on the Niagara cliffs witnessed such a fearful tragedy. As the boat was about to enter the whirlpool, it was raised high in the air by a huge wave and then dashed down bottom-side up. Poor Flack was beneath it, and for over an hour this boat, designed to save the lives of others, floated there, rolling and whirling about



CAPTAIN WEBB.



CHARLES D. GRAHAM  
DRESSED TO SWIM  
THE RAPIDS.



W. J. KENDALL, WHO SUCCESSFULLY MADE  
THE SAME PERILOUS TRIP.





THE DOG THAT SURVIVED MAUD WILLARD'S FATAL TRIP THROUGH THE RAPIDS IN A BARREL.

in the great river pocket. Percy, witnessing the tragedy from the American side, jumped into a buggy and drove to the whirlpool on the Canadian side, where, throwing off his clothing, he leaped into the river and swam for the boat, which was now approaching the shore. When it was righted, the lifeless body of Flack was taken from the harness rigging. The secret filling was excelsior and shavings.

The next year Walter G. Campbell appeared at the falls with an open flat-bottomed boat, which he launched above the rapids. His only companion was a black dog. He stood up, using his oar as a paddle, and boldly drifted with increasing speed toward the seething pool. Fortunately, the boat capsized before the worst water was reached, and with a life-preserver around his waist, Campbell just managed to struggle to the shore, but the dog paid the penalty of his master's folly.

For ten years the appetite for notoriety in the waters of the Niagara slumbered. The peace was unbroken until Peter Nissen, known also as "Bowser," came to the falls from Chicago. He announced that he was on a vacation, during which he intended to amuse himself by going through the rapids in a boat he brought with him. With the exception of a cockpit in the center, it was decked over. There were air-compartments at each end and also at the sides of the cockpit. A new feature in rapids navigation was that to the keel there was fastened by iron straps an iron keel that weighed one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. He intended to establish a boat service through the rapids, he said.

On July 9, 1900, Nissen made one of the prettiest rapids trips ever seen. It was after four o'clock when the "Pool Killer" appeared on the river in tow of a rowboat. After being cast adrift, it was caught in an eddy on the Canadian side and had to be started again. It was close to five o'clock when the boat finally entered the rapids. It rode the waves magnificently. Frequently the foaming waters dashed clear over it, but it did not capsize. Reaching the whirlpool, Nissen floated for an hour before his boat was caught by men from the shore. The following day the boat was sent out of the pool, and in the trip down the river the rocks tore away the iron keel and rudder, also a small propeller-wheel which he had intended to operate.

Nissen rebuilt his boat and turned it into the smallest steamboat afloat. About a ton of iron was fitted to the wooden keel. When he came to Niagara Falls, in the summer of 1901, he announced his intention of taking soundings close up to the Horseshoe Fall in hope of discovering new facts about the great waterfall which is credited with excavating the gorge. After his boat was launched, he made several trips near the Horseshoe, accompanied by a young man named James Rich, who was tied on the deck of the boat for fear the wash of the river would sweep him away.



MRS. TAYLOR AND THE BARREL IN WHICH SHE MADE HER TRIP OVER THE FALLS.

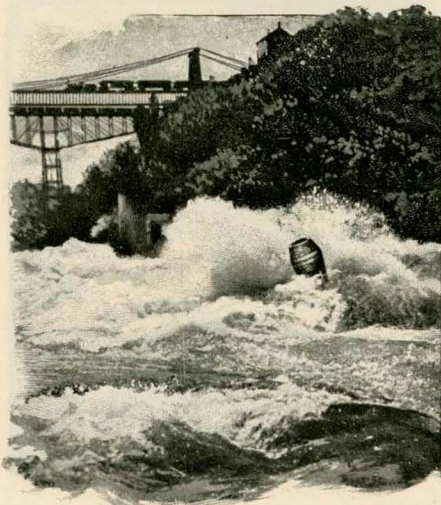
Rich had several narrow escapes, but he stuck to the boat. Nissen gained no important facts by his alleged soundings in the vicinity of the falls, but hoped that he might have better luck in the whirlpool.

On Saturday afternoon, October 12, 1901, in the presence of the largest crowd that ever assembled to witness such a performance, Nissen made his second trip through the rapids. His craft, though a steamboat, had no steam up when going through the gorge. It simply floated like a log, and when it approached the rapids Nissen concealed himself under the deck. The smokestack was carried away by the first waves, but the opening had been covered in anticipation of such an occurrence. The boat entered the whirlpool safely, but the propeller and rudder were carried away by striking driftwood. Some days later, Nissen and Rich again boarded the steamer to take soundings of the pool. But soon the rudder gave out, and the craft was drifting helplessly in the maelstrom. Hour after hour they whirled around, prisoners on the seething water. As the afternoon waned and the shadows of the stern, silent cliffs crept across the water, the men grew more and more desperate. They had kept up steam on the boat, and this made it very hot under deck, and not daring to leave the hatch open, they nearly suffocated. They were at the mercy of the currents, and any moment might be sucked out of the outlet and carried down the river over the route where Nissen's boat had been wrecked the year before.

About five o'clock that afternoon, the



A FAVORITE FEAT OF S. J. DICKSON.



GRAHAM'S BARREL PLUNGING THROUGH THE RAPIDS.

boat floated quite close to the Canadian side. Rich had told Nissen that should opportunity offer he would leap to the shore. Closer and closer the current swept the boat. Rich leaped and landed on a rock, but before Nissen could follow the boat was fifty feet from shore. Night had settled before Nissen could jump to the rocks. The boat is supposed to have sunk in the whirlpool.

The fact that Graham had five times successfully voyaged through the Whirlpool Rapids in a barrel led others to adopt this craft in 1901. The first to follow Graham last summer was Martha E. Wagenfuhrer, the wife of a professional wrestler. She selected Friday, September 6th, as the date of her trip, possibly with the hope that she might have a President of the United States in her audience, for that was the day President McKinley last visited Niagara. Quite a crowd collected, for she was the first woman to try the feat alone. She was resuscitated after being in the rapids over an hour.

Following Graham's barrel trip on July 14, 1901, he arranged to give a double performance with Maud Willard. It was planned that Miss Willard should make the barrel trip, and Graham would await her coming through the rapids at the whirlpool on the American side. If the barrel and its occupant were swept out of the pool, Graham was to swim out and go to



THE LAST SEEN OF CAPTAIN WEBB ALIVE.

Lewiston with it; if not, he was to go alone.

At 3.53 P.M. the barrel, with Miss Willard and her pet dog, were in tow of a small boat pulling out in the current. The barrel was set adrift in the middle of the river, and it shot right into the rapids. It received the usual tossing, and in four minutes was floating across the whirlpool. It was quickly seen by those who knew the pool that the currents were running in an unusual manner. Instead of being carried toward the Canadian shore, where many were ready to capture it, the barrel floated well toward the center, and round and round it swept. On the American shore Graham and others watched the barrel. At 4:58 o'clock it was sucked into a deep whirl, and two minutes later it sank from sight, drawn down into the depths of the whirlpool by the mighty forces at work there. It was a startling spectacle for the hundreds on the banks to witness, and all wondered if the barrel and its human occupant were gone forever. Soon the barrel jumped far out of the water as it was hurled up by the current, some hundreds of feet distant from where it had gone down, but it resumed its course with the current, drifting far out from the reach of those on shore.

It had not been long in sight before it was observed that it listed to one side, and those who had seen other barrel trips felt that something unusual had taken place

inside the craft they were watching. Hopeful that the men on the Canadian side would capture the barrel, Graham, in order to give the moving-picture machine an opportunity to record his swim, was forced to leap into the water before sunset, and while the barrel was still floating in the pool he started for Lewiston. His swim was a success, and he has the credit of being the only person who has swum from the pool to Lewiston. When Graham returned up the gorge, he found the barrel and Miss Willard still imprisoned on the revolving waters of the wonderful pool.

Hour after hour passed, darkness fell, and the roar of the whirlpool came with a solemn sound to the men on shore. Huge bonfires were built for warmth and illumination. Messengers were sent to Niagara Falls to have the searchlight car of the electric line sent down the gorge, that the waters of the whirlpool might be fully illuminated. This was done, and after a while the great beam of white light shot across the waters from the American to the Canadian side. Now and then the tossing barrel could be seen, tumbling and rolling about on the waves and current. Nine o'clock came, and the girl had been imprisoned in the barrel over five hours. All knew the craft had air-holes, but how had Miss Willard stood the terrible strain, knowing that night had come?

About 9:20 o'clock that night, an old river hand, standing about one of the bonfires, looked out on the waters of the pool and observed a piece of wood drifting in toward shore—a sure sign that the currents were changing. Within a short time the barrel hove in sight within the light of the fire, and men swam out and caught it. When the manhole cover was removed, the little dog leaped joyously out, but



BLONDIN WITHOUT A BALANCING-POLE.

Miss Willard was limp and lifeless. Possibly, if the dog had not been in the barrel, there would have been more air for Miss Willard, and she might have lived. She was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, and before many days her mother was placed in a grave at her side. It had been Miss Willard's hope that she might earn money to give her mother a pleasant home in her declining years.

During all these years of sensational feats at Niagara, until the summer of 1901 nobody ever voluntarily tried to go over the falls and live. At least two men tried to pretend to make the trip, but without success. When Mrs. Taylor arrived at the falls with a barrel, residents smiled at her statement that she would make the falls trip. Dropping a barrel and a human occupant over the Horseshoe Fall could have but one result, all agreed. But Mrs. Taylor was persistent. The fact that there was a trip through three-quarters of a mile of rapids above the fall before the frightful precipice was reached did not deter her.

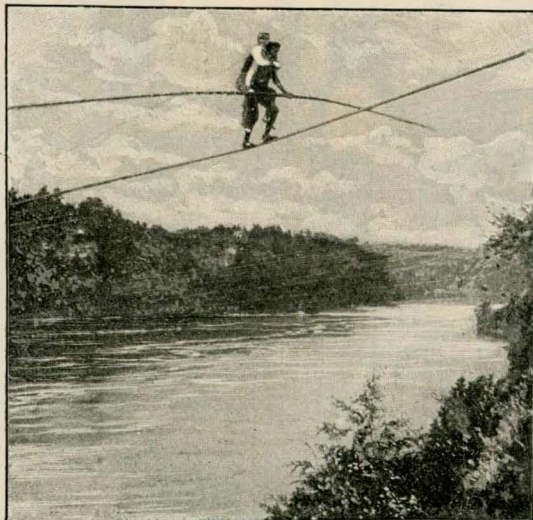
On Sunday, October 20th, and again on the following Wednesday, the waiting crowds were disappointed. Owing to a high wind, the barrel could not be towed into the current. People became skeptical, but the next day Mrs. Taylor was true to her word. Starting out from Port Day, a mile above the falls, she was rowed to Grass Island. There she was strapped in



MRS. TAYLOR ON EMERGING FROM THE BARREL IN WHICH SHE WENT OVER THE FALLS.

the barrel and towed far out in the Canadian current. Just before the start, the craft was pumped full of air. Fastened to the bottom was a blacksmith's anvil weighing about one hundred pounds to keep the barrel upright in the water.

When within two hundred yards of the Canadian shore, one of the boatmen rapped on the barrel with his oar. This was the signal to Mrs. Taylor that she was to be cast adrift, and a minute later, at 4:05 o'clock, the line was cut. With all speed the boat hurried out of the dangerous current, while the barrel in which was Mrs. Taylor sped on toward the great Horseshoe. All who have viewed Niagara know the wild nature of the waters above the falls. Reef after reef extends from shore to shore, over which the tumbling torrent flows in splendid fury. It is a spectacle that delights the artist's eye, but one to strike terror to the heart of any would-be navigator. There is a descent of fifty-five feet in these whitened waves before the fall is reached, and through them Mrs. Taylor and her



BLONDIN CARRYING HARRY COLCORD ACROSS THE GORGE.

barrel shot. Tumbling, rolling, now and then it lingered under the foaming waters at the foot of a reef, but, reappearing, was swept on toward that awful brink over which no human being had passed and lived.

After the barrel came in sight, plunging down the rapids, little was said by the thousands gathered at every point whence the broad surface of the river could be seen. Each eye was strained to catch the movements of the small dark object tossing on the white-capped waves far out on the river. The last reef was passed. There was nothing but smooth, clear water now between the barrel and the brink of the Horseshoe. It felt the suction of the fall. Faster, faster it moved, swinging round toward the Canadian side as it was pulled forward by the terrific force of the rushing waters. Just a moment it was visible on the brink, then with lightning-like rapidity it dropped, a distance of one hundred and sixty-five feet, into the seething, foam-lashed waters of the lower river. This broke the tremendous tension of the crowd, and every one made a wild rush to the edge of the high banks where the gorge could be seen. Before many of them got in position, the barrel had reappeared on the surface of the lower river and was

floating downstream. It was caught in an eddy on the Canadian side and swung back between the wash of two eddies. It floated there for some minutes before it was caught, at 4:40, having passed over the fall at 4:23. The barrel was landed on a rock. The cover of the manhole was torn off, and when Mrs. Taylor raised her hand to wave to those about, a mighty cheer went up that told the multitude on the cliff that the Falls of Niagara had been conquered—and by a woman. It was necessary to saw a portion of the head of the barrel away to get Mrs. Taylor out. When this was done, she crossed a plank to land, bruised and shocked, but little injured.

The woman who performed this remarkable feat gave her age as forty-three years, stating that the day of her performance was her birthday. She had had a varied experience in life, and admitted that she was in desperate need of money when she journeyed to Niagara. Her performance has cast a shadow on the feats of all previous rapids navigators, and now it is expected that the falls and not the rapids will be the scene of sensational feats to be performed by desperate men and women of the future.



THE WRECK OF PETER NISSEN'S BOAT.