

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

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HERE could hardly have been a much happier man in the world than young Hugh Ravelston when he reached Niagara on his way to Quebec.

He was a young Londoner, who was just beginning to make his way at the bar, and he was now going out to Quebec to marry the girl whom he loved. She was an English girl, but her father had long been living in Quebec, and had made a fortune there; and he was a dear old friend of Hugh Ravelston's father and mother. Naturally he made visits to London pretty often, and brought his two daughters with him when they grew up. Hugh Ravelston fell in love with the younger, and she fell in love with him, and everything was satisfactorily arranged, and they were to be married with the gladsome consent of both families, with only the proviso that Hugh and Marie should, if possible, go out every long vacation to spend a few days in Quebec.

This was Hugh's first visit to the United States or Canada. He went by New York, but naturally did not stay very long there. His soul was already in Quebec. But he acted on the advice of many of his friends when he consented to absent himself, as Hamlet says, from felicity a while—at least so long as to break his journey and spend one night and part of one day at Niagara, in order to have a look at the falls and the rapids. He reached Niagara rather early one evening, and took up his quarters on the American side of the river. He went out before dinner and had a good look at the falls from both the American and the Canadian side.

I entertain no idea of giving a long description, or indeed any description, of the falls of Niagara or of the rapids, or of the various islands that are such delightful spots on which to spend an hour of enchantment. No, I entreat my readers not to be alarmed. We have already descriptions more than enough; and then, those who live in London or come up to London at any time can go and have a look at the Niagara exhibition, which I do not say is quite as good as the real thing, but which I will positively say is ever so much better than any description of the real thing that I could hope to give. But on the remote possibility of there actually being persons who have never seen the real Niagara, or the painted and built up Niagara, or read any description of Niagara, it will be enough for the purposes of this sketch of a thrilling event in a man's life if they will picture to themselves

a vast body of water falling in two great separate cataracts, and two or three smaller shoots, down, down between steep and sometimes almost sheer clayey and rocky banks—a huge river, in fact, suddenly finding itself on the edge of a tremendous precipice, and having no choice but to plunge with its whole body and bulk of water over the precipice and down. This it does with a thunder which man's artillery can not rival, and a foam that the wind blows far and wide into clouds.

Hugh Ravelston walked back to his hotel and across the great suspension bridge, which, for all its bulk, seems to sway and shiver over the rapids. He had his dinner, and he wrote, of course, to the girl in Quebec. And then the moon began to shine, and the night looked tempting, and he thought it would be delightful to see the falls under such new conditions. He crossed again to the Canadian side, and he sauntered along, smoking a cigar, past the great hotel, the Clifton House, and on until he came in front of one of the little museums where they sell photographs and Indian curiosities and all manner of memorials and relics of the place. He went into one of these and got into some talk with a very fine old fellow who kept it, and I hope is keeping it still. The owner of the little museum was quite an independent man in his way, and he held on to the museum rather to have something to do than for the sake of making mouey; and, indeed, if you were at all an agreeable customer, or rather an agreeable personage, whether you became a customer or not, the chances were many to one that you were presently invited to smoke a very excellent cigar—not perhaps was there even wanting a taste of some irreproachable Bourbon.

Hugh questioned him about his experiences and recollections of the place. "Oh, yes, surely; it was wonderfully changed; it was changing every day." The whole shape of the falls on the Canadian side had changed, and not within so very long a time. On the other side, too. Why, the famous Terrapin tower, which stood out on its rock and used to be an object of curiosity to all visitors not many years ago—there are lots of photographs of the falls still lying about here and there with the Terrapin tower in them—and where was the Terrapin tower now? Swept away by a sudden rush of the river one wild night. Why, the door of that museum used to be far removed from the edge of the fall at one time, and see how near, comparatively near, it was now. Some fine day, perhaps, they should have a further warning, and then the museum would have to be moved farther back so as to be out of danger. But that wouldn't be in his time, he fancied. Learned people and scientists, and men of that sort, actually said the time would come when the rush of the river would wear away all the high ground and