

In Niagara's Maelstrom—and Escapes Alive!

Edwin Denney's Unparalleled Adventure in Niagara's

"Funnel of Death" and the Almost Miraculous Way in Which He Was Rescued.

BY THOMAS B. SHERMAN.

NIAGARA has been cheated at last. For the first time in the known history of the world's mightiest cataract a human being has been swept into the clutches of its dreaded whirlpool and come out alive. Adventurers, cranks and stray swimmers who knew no better have been sucked into that vortex before. Sometimes the victim was dashed to an instant death. Sometimes he was played with for hours and then, being wrung to a lifeless rag by the heat of the waters, was tossed about in the spuming caldron for many days before being finally cast upon the rocks or disgorged into some submarine crevice.

It has remained for a 16-year-old boy—Edwin S. Denney of the city of Niagara Falls—to feel the clutch of the maelstrom and live to tell about it. His recent adventure was an accident; at least it was with no idea of trying conclusions with Niagara's strength that he wandered farther out than the boys who were swimming with him. But the thing that kept him alive was his own clear-headedness and his ability to follow instructions that were shouted to him from the shore.

The seduction of giant forces and deep distances has led many a man to his doom despite all of the protective influences of his nature and his normal life. The death that lurks in grandeur establishes an easy affinity with a man of adventurous spirit and even the most timorous hug-the-hearth is not entirely free from it. It is no uncommon sight to see some drab little man pushing himself by main force and against all his common fears, to peer over the edge of one of those Niagara precipices.

He could not actually jeopardize his life, but the mere proximity of this roaring, swirling death satisfies some remote aspiration toward splendor. It's his humble gesture of defiance.

Fiction Tale Absorbing.

The psychological tug keeps even unadventurous men continuously skirting the edge of danger, and is aptly illustrated in Poe's short story, "A Descent Into the Maelstrom." The Norwegian fishermen knew that at the ebb and the flow of the tides the Moskoe-strom was of such a depth and such a fury that ships had been swallowed up and ground to pieces as if they had been pasteboard boxes. Yet these commonplace Norwegian fishermen would each day run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-strom by crossing over the channel between Moskoe and Lofoden at the slack in the morning and returning at the slack in the evening.

Sometimes they would be a few minutes late or a few minutes early and their hearts would beat high with terror. Yet they continued to make the trip, though they could never allow themselves more than 15 minutes' leeway. Then one day the fishermen's watch was wrong. The story of how their little smack was caught in this gargantuan vortex, how it slipped in gradual and terrifying revolutions down the whirlpool's ebony sides and was finally and miraculously cast up again, is one of the most absorbing tales of fiction.

The story of Edwin Denney is a striking parallel. He and his companions knew the danger of Niagara. They had lived near the falls all of their lives and the innumerable disasters that had befallen visitors and daredevil adventurers were familiar stories in their lives. Yet they chose to go in bathing, against the orders of the police, near the old Maid of the Mist landing rather than seek other and less troubled waters.

The most of the boys who were in the group that accompanied Denney into the water were on their guard against the current. They kept to that section of the water above the steel arch bridge and did not venture far from shore. Denney, however, was swimming in circles, and gradu-

ally got out a little farther than the rest.

Relaxing for a few moments after a vigorous 50-yard sprint and under the impression that he had turned his course toward the shore, Denney turned over on his back and started floating. In less than two minutes he realized that he had been carried out into the middle of the river.

The boy now knew that he was in the grip of the current and began struggling against its force and shouting for help at the same time. His efforts against the surge of the water were less than nothing. His cries, however, were heard and taken up by his companions. One of them yelled to him advising him to catch a log, others rushed for the police and the gorge crew, others ran down stream with the current and followed Denney with their eyes as he passed from the comparative stillness of the waters above the steel arch bridge into the rushing currents that led to the whirlpool rapids.

Denney by now had lunged at a log that was floating by and by a stroke of luck managed to hook an arm over it. Still beating desperately with his feet and with one hand he was swept on toward the whirlpool. To Denney came the conviction that he was lost. He recalled in vivid flashes how Captain Webb, a skilled swimmer who once swam the English channel, had gone down in the current, how man after man had through design or by accident been taken into the whirlpool and thrown out again with the life gone from him. There was something so grim, implacable and heedless about this whirlpool!

But Denney, though he felt he was lost, kept up the struggle with all his might.

Helpless watchers on the banks saw him clinging to his log and bobbing up and down in the innumerable tiny vortices that rotated toward the lower river. But when those on the banks arrived at the great eddy which encircles the whirlpool they saw the boy and the log still together, swimming 'round and 'round in the current.

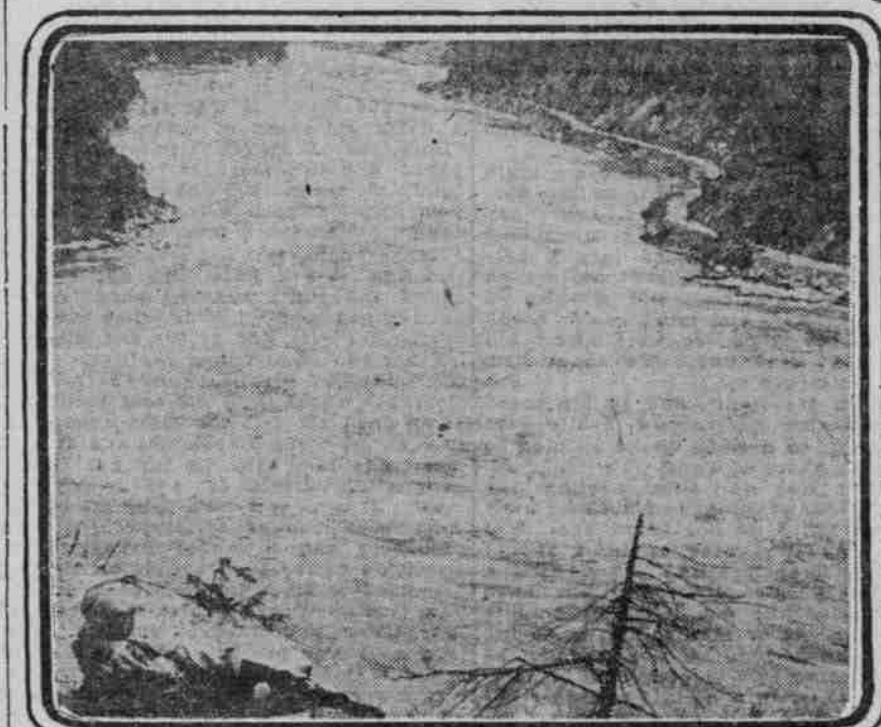
Presently a rescue party from the gorge barn, under the direction of Superintendent William Piper, came up.

They were reinforced shortly after by a squad of police from headquarters. Denney, they saw, was being drawn toward the inner whirl of the maelstrom. He was still struggling. One of the rescuers shouted to the

boy to quit his efforts to swim. He immediately stopped and turning over rested himself against the log, but still kept his right hand free. His eyes were now toward the shore. A rope was cast into the water. Denney reached for it, but when it was almost in his grasp, the current jerked him away and once more he was spinning in the whirlpool.

Several men climbed closer and made another cast with the rope. It landed true this time. Denney, as if making a quick calculation, let himself go from the log and lunged with both hands for the rope. A shout went up when it was seen that he had caught it.

"When Those on the Banks Arrived at the Great Eddy They Saw the Boy and the Log Still Together, Swinging 'Round and 'Round in the Current."



The Treacherous Current of Niagara River Leading to the Whirlpool in Which Denney Was Caught.

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and passionate in dumb show, shook, but never overbalanced her. "I've done my best," I told him at the end. "But . . . but . . . Tell her," he stammered. "Blanca! . . . I waited for a moment and then slipped away. Forgetful of my presence or indifferent to it, Gaunt was beginning to speak and to gesticulate in a way of which he would not care afterward to be reminded, and, as he raved in this conscious delirium, I could not look at his twisted, damp face nor at Blanca's fascinated and terror-stricken eyes. As I hurried out of earshot I wondered for a moment whether I did well in leaving them with no one to check this lay stream of primitive, pent desire; I hurried on when I had taken time to realize that neither I nor any one else could reason or wrestle with a man in Gaunt's mood until he had overwhelmed the girl's resistance or allowed himself to be convinced by it.

When I returned to the darkening studio he was alone, sprawling on the divan as though his arms and legs had broken their union with his body and gasping for breath like a man who has run to a standstill. As my footsteps rang out on the

The rescuers now began to play the rope in slowly. Denney was keeping himself perfectly inert save for a slight movement with his feet necessary to keep afloat. In a few moments he was drawn to shore. After being given nourishment he was sent to his home, where the news of what was happening to him had been kept from his people.

The toll that Niagara takes either from professional daredevils or from visitors who meet with accidents is almost calculably the same from year to year, despite the efforts of the reservation police.

Captain Webb, the noted English swimmer, was considered to have more than a fair chance for his life



Edwin S. Denney, the 16-Year-Old Boy Who Miraculously Escaped After Being Caught in the Whirlpool.

when he announced that he was going to swim through the rapids. But by the time he reached the whirlpool he was so battered up that it made short work of him. He jumped in just opposite the Maid of

Copyright, Underwood & Underwood. Daniel Dixon Crossing Niagara Rapids on a Rope, Emulating the Famous Blondin, Who First Performed This Stunt.

the Mist landing, was carried swiftly downstream and disappeared in the whirlpool. His body was never recovered.

As Captain Webb had previously swum the English Channel and was perfectly at home in water, his death in the whirlpool discouraged other professional swimmers, although several have since gone through the rapids in a barrel, to be fished out, however, before reaching the whirlpool.

The tight-rope walkers were among the first stunt performers to use the falls as a setting. Blondin, the equilibrist, stretched a rope across the American Falls and walked back and forth many times with his balancing pole. One day when Blondin was overreaching the placing of his rope a photographer named Dixon from Toronto happened to be crossing the railway bridge.

"That's no great trick. I could do that," he told a friend. The friend scoffed, but when Dixon returned from the photographers' convention he was attending he made good his boast by crossing several times.

One of the earliest tales of tragedy connected with the Falls is that of the little girl from Buffalo. She, with her parents and a number of others, had been viewing the scenery from Luna Island, which stands directly on the brink of the Falls near Goat Island. As they were about to leave, a young man picked up the little girl and said jokingly, "I am going to throw you in." Under a sudden impulse of fear the child jumped from his arms into the river.

Without hesitating a moment the young man sprang after her, but only to share her fate. Both were swept over the falls. The next afternoon their bodies were found in the Cave of the Winds.

Avery's rock is named after a man who in attempting to cross the river was swept against this rock and hanging on all night and the next day while rescuers were trying to save him, was finally swept over the falls.

"I used to say, 'He and I had no quarrel; and, though at first he suspected me as Gaunt's friend, I overcame his hostility with more genuine sympathy.' 'In time, my friend. . . . We know what girls are. . . ."

And then, with troubled eyes and his face drawn into its perpetual scowl, Antonio—if that was indeed his name—would generalize about women and I would counsel patience and give him what encouragement I could. If I found this difficult at all times, it became impossible on the day when he told me that Blanca had disappeared; though neither dead nor spirited away, she was no longer at home, and it was unsafe to ask her mother what had become of her.

My unhappy friend fancied for a

A DAUGHTER OF PAN BY STEPHEN McKENNA

(Continued From Page 5.)

"I understood. He told me yesterday."

"Well he wants to know what you say to it."

Her answer reminded me of a phrase that Gaunt had once used in praise of her—"sublime common sense."

"It's impossible, absurd!" I sometimes wonder whether, to the hour of his death, Marshall Gaunt believed that I was keeping my word and arguing, not in his interests, heaven knows, but loyally and honorably on his behalf, in the terms of my brief. Blanca talked for ten minutes, I should say, letting trickle the short phrases and broken sentences of one who had never been trained to think coherently or to express herself coherently. A dozen times, from a dozen different starting places, she came back to her unpromising statement that it was impossible, absurd for such a man to marry such a girl as she was; they would be miserable; they had nothing in common but their love; luxury of dress and living had no power to tempt her into forgetting this insuperable bar; the urgency of Gaunt, vehement in unintelligible English

and passionate in dumb show, shook, but never overbalanced her. "I've done my best," I told him at the end.

"But . . . but . . . Tell her," he stammered. "Blanca! . . . I waited for a moment and then slipped away. Forgetful of my presence or indifferent to it, Gaunt was beginning to speak and to gesticulate in a way of which he would not care afterward to be reminded, and, as he raved in this conscious delirium, I could not look at his twisted, damp face nor at Blanca's fascinated and terror-stricken eyes. As I hurried out of earshot I wondered for a moment whether I did well in leaving them with no one to check this lay stream of primitive, pent desire; I hurried on when I had taken time to realize that neither I nor any one else could reason or wrestle with a man in Gaunt's mood until he had overwhelmed the girl's resistance or allowed himself to be convinced by it.

When I returned to the darkening studio he was alone, sprawling on the divan as though his arms and legs had broken their union with his body and gasping for breath like a man who has run to a standstill. As my footsteps rang out on the

tilled floor he raised his head eagerly and then let it fall with a groan. "Something to drink! Water! Anything!" he panted. "Where is she?"

"I've not seen her," I answered. "I must talk to her; she doesn't understand. . . . I won't let her go. . . . She must! . . ."

I attempted a remonstrance; but before I could finish it he had stumbled to his feet and staggered out of the studio, knocking from my hand the glass of water that I was bringing him. Whether he found her or not I never inquired; whether in a long week of hungry prowling he ever caught another glimpse of her I do not know; for most of the day and night he was absent, and, though we took our meals together, it was in silence.

The end came one night when I observed him making prodigious efforts to recover his old ironical manner; and in the course of dinner he informed me that he was returning to England.

"It must be painful for you to part with so charming a guest," he added, "but I must steel myself against your most frantic efforts to retain me." "I'm sorry to lose you," I said, "but I won't pretend that a complete

change isn't the best thing in the world for you. In the autumn, perhaps."

"Please God, I shan't be alive in the autumn," he interrupted. "Though I told him not to talk nonsense, I was sufficiently concerned for his health and sanity to come over in the summer and spend a couple of months in London. Though perhaps I flatter myself. I believe that when one of his now recurrent attacks of melancholia threatened to master him I was the means of pulling him up on the brink of suicide, and when I left he had settled down to at least a slower method of self-destruction by excessive work and somewhat excessive drinking. In time I hoped he would recover enough of his old indifference to dispense with even these aids to oblivion, but illness attacked a weakened constitution and a broken moral resistance, and he flickered out like a rushlight, as I have already suggested, before he had given himself time to struggle against death."

That he made no reference to Blanca hardly surprised me, though I was glad to be spared questions which would only have elicited that my prophecy was being fulfilled. Her passion for Gaunt, held in check and

mastered by the shrewd knowledge that she could never make him a suitable wife, was unhappily not killed when she ran away from his importunity nor even when he said goodbye to Italy. As I had predicted, her mind was unsettled, for a time at least she could think of no one else; and her obsession was most pathetic in that her old sweetheart, from association with her tragedy, was the man of all men whom she refused even to meet.

"In time. . . ."

I used to say, "He and I had no quarrel; and, though at first he suspected me as Gaunt's friend, I overcame his hostility with more genuine sympathy." "In time, my friend. . . . We know what girls are. . . ."

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time that Gaunt had somehow swooped through the night air and borne her away in his talons, but I could tell him with confidence that he need fear no rivalry from a man who replied to an invitation from me by saying, with less than his usual irony or polish, that he might indeed come to stay with me in Campitello—life was so uncertain that only a fool would prophesy or bind himself by oaths—but that he would both prophesy and swear that he would go sooner to the remotest pit of hell than return for an hour to the shadows and memories of my studio.

I never saw Blanca again. Before long, as Antonio discontinued his calls, I ceased even to hear of her, and, if Gaunt at his death had left her anything, I should have been puzzled to trace her. He, himself, and all that chapter of his life were fading out of mind, when I received a letter in which Sidney Macabridge, an English collector whom I had known by name for many years, asked whether he might come and see my pictures.

"We have a bond," he added. "In our poor friend Marshall Gaunt. He gave me a letter of introduction to you, but I have had no opportunity

(Concluded on Page 7.)