

CHAPTER XIII.—1843.

NIAGARA FALLS VISITED—WHAT THE BLIND STUDENTS "SAW" OF IT—TABLE ROCK—STANDING UPON GOAT ISLAND—THE POOR OLD ANIMAL FOR WHICH IT WAS NAMED—STORIES OF THE "OLDEST INHABITANTS"—TELLING ABOUT IT TO THOSE WHO "COULDN'T GO."

WHEN our canal-party had left its boat-home and extended its pilgrimage to the great Niagara Falls, we felt as if one of the great days of our life had come.

"But what could *you* see of the Falls?" some one asks. Much more than you would suppose, dear friend! Seeing is not all done with the optical organs.

Besides, we had in our school learned all about this gigantic plunge of four great lakes one hundred and sixty-four feet, into the rocky gulfs below; we had seen it over and over again with our imaginations; and knew well what was going on (or, rather, off) before us.

*Feeling Niagara Falls.*

As we stood upon Goat Island, and one of our teachers described the Horseshoe Falls and other famous localities in his view, I could almost fancy I heard the morning stars singing together, and the sons of God shouting for joy!

I could imagine those great rocks that had stood for ages, while the river-billows went sweeping over them night and day, summer and winter, through century after century.

I could at that time perceive enough of light and color (although as ever unable to distinguish objects), to appreciate somewhat the opulence of hue that leaped and flowed around us; though of late years, even that power has departed from me, and if I should stand upon the borders of that great tossing precipice to-day, even in the midst of the most brilliant sunshine, I could not get even a fragment of the wonderful chromatic feast.

But I could still hear the trumpet-voice of this king of cataracts, proclaiming the power of the Almighty hand; I could feel the fresh breezes that spring from the bosom of the whirling waters; I could (sweetest thought of all) enjoy the enjoyment of my friends who could see, and listen to their animated descriptions.

Indeed, I sometimes think that blind people see more than their friends who have the power

*Fanny Crosby's Life-Story.*

of vision: for they get descriptions from various points of view, that it is not considered necessary to give to those who can look for themselves.

We wandered all about the different localities, and had everything described to us, until we felt as if we knew the place by heart. We stood upon the great Table Rock—then one of the principal curiosities of the "Falls", but now fallen from its high estate into the gulf below; we lingered by the whirlpool, and imagined ourselves drawn into that mighty vortex. We walked up and down through the streets of the little village, and wondered what our sensations would be if we lived there with that continual peal of thunder in our ears.

Many and interesting incidents were related to us by "the oldest inhabitants"—all of whom, alas! are now in the grave—with the mammoth cataract singing their requiem.

Among the other things told us, was the way "Goat Island" happened to be named. It was after one poor old animal that belonged to a Mr. John Stedman, as long ago as 1779. He placed the poor old fellow there in the summer of that year, and left him alone for a while when autumn came, intending to row over and get him (there was no bridge then) "before snow flew." But, alas, for the poor

*Telling Schoolmates About It.*

goat!—winter set in early that year, navigation to and from the main shore was impossible, and the animal died of starvation or exposure—taking his pay for the sacrifice in giving his name, or the name of his species, for centuries to come, to the world-renowned island. It has been given other titles temporarily, and was very prettily marked on one of the maps, "Iris Island"; but people generally have always been loyal to the poor old quadruped who died there in the winter of 1779-80, and continue to call it Goat Island.

They told us so many stories of accidents, rescues, suicides, and other incidents almost as wonderful as the Falls themselves, that we were well-nigh bewildered; and it took many weeks of our quiet and systematic school-life in New York to straighten everything out in our minds. It required much longer for us to satisfy all the curiosity of those of our schoolmates who had not been so fortunate as to go with us. There was no envy expressed—only delight that we were able to enjoy so much, and genuine pleasure that they could participate, even if indirectly, in the pleasures of the trip.