

SAVED BY A RATTLER.

A "SNAKE STORY" OF THE WHIRLPOOL RAPIDS.

It is a Good One, But Perhaps a Little Foulful, Though All Who Know Mr. Hurry Say It is True—Navigation on a Log.

"Andrew," the reporter said, "did you ever know of a person who had navigated the Whirlpool in safety?"

"Yes," said the old man. "Who was it?"

"I," was the answer.

This answer did not bring an expression of surprise, because old Andrew Hurry has done a little of everything since he came, sixty-five years ago, to sit down and grow his vine and fig tree within sound of the falling waters of Niagara. He has always been a famous story teller; his yarns have been spun to succeeding generations, and all have had attentive listeners. Some of these tales have been suspiciously Munchausen-like, and had the relator been other than old Andrew, they would have been received with incredulous smiles. But those who know him best are thoroughly impressed with the idea that in the early days of the century he must have chopped down a cherry tree or two since he seems to have been inoculated with the virus of truthfulness. They never think of doubting him; whatever he tells is accepted without thought of the chances that it may be untrue.

Andrew is a unique figure on the frontier; one who is known, respected and admired, especially by his older acquaintances. Strong, straight of figure, and broad-shouldered, he walks the streets today with little to show his 85 years save his white hair and beard. Yet it was before the war of 1812 that Andrew came into being in Canada, and there, among his sturdy Scotch kinsfolk, lived until it became wise to cross the border. In keeping with his name, he went over in a hurry in the year 1830, and there he has ever since lived. In the Canadian rebellion, of 1838 he stole back to his native land, took part in the uprising, and, when it collapsed, again crossed the river between sundown and sunrise. You may see him any day passing up and down the street, his bonnet on his white head, a gray shawl wrapped about his shoulders in place of a turtin, and a big cane in his hand. All like him; all are glad to hear him talk, and never doubt his veracity. The story of his voyage in the Whirlpool is given therefore as strictly true.

Andrew Hurry has always been a great walker and a tireless hunter. Even in his later years his tramps have extended over the whole frontier, and few care today to attempt the task of tiring him out. So long as there was game to shoot on the river or in the woods he rarely missing going out on a good day, tramping into the surrounding country, his handsome gun upon his shoulder, and an ample game bag by his side. Often he would start, in the long days of summer, before the cock crew, and when his wife came into the kitchen to prepare the morning meal she generally found him sitting in the doorway smoking his Scotch clay, with the newly killed birds on the table hard by. But one morning he did not come back; breakfast was eaten by his wife alone; dinner and supper found Andrew's seat vacant, and it was not until long hours of suspense had slipped by that his heavy familiar tread was heard outside the door. He brought no game this time, even his trusted gun was missing; but he started up the fire in the kitchen stove nevertheless, and proceeded to dry his dripping clothes, while his wife brewed him a stiff glass of hot Scotch.

The Whirlpool lies some miles below the cataract. The river has narrowed, and for seven miles or more rushes impetuously to the level of Ontario. Sometimes the bluffs are devoid of shrubs; again they are covered with a dense forest, which clings to the almost perpendicular sides. The basin of the Whirlpool lies at an angle in the river, a perfect horseshoe in shape, with a diameter of half a mile. The river, rushing faster than a man can run, enters the pool at the upper heel of the horseshoe and strikes across to the further shore. Its exit is past the other heel. But probably more water enters than is seen to go out; possibly there is a subterranean outlet, through which may go the bodies of cattle and men which are seen sometimes in the whirl, and then forever. Around the outer part of the horseshoe flows slowly the current of the river; it has lost its terrific speed, its white foam, its dashing billows. Seemingly it is recovering its breath after its tempestuous passage of the first part of its bed, and is gathering strength for its coming battle with the rocks and edges of the lower stream. Bodies are sometimes seen floating in the stream for months. Great trees and logs circle around the pool for months before they pass out.

The danger in the Whirlpool lies not in any one great suction, but in the countless eddies which are seen all over it. These small whirlpools, like wheels within a wheel, twist about like the spring of a clock toward a centre, where the water seems to be sucked down. These small eddies appear everywhere; they come and go suddenly, and in unexpected places. Then, again, the water will begin to boil, and rush up in great quantities, as though coming from the bottom of the pool. Objects floating in the Whirlpool will suddenly disappear in the vortex of one of the small eddies, and be sucked down into the depths, whence they will be soon expelled by one of the great bubbling springs.

Floating logs will sometimes get into the suction, and be thrown on end until one point projects high in the air. A boat would live but a short time in the Whirlpool, and no man has sufficient strength to swim in it and resist the force which seeks to draw him down.

On a morning in June, 1811, Andrew Hurry started from home before dawn, and with his gun upon his shoulder, pushed out of the village. He had no special plans for his movements. He went up the river, past the old French fort, and made for the lowlands about the mouth of Gill creek. Just as dawn was breaking down the river came last a flight of ducks, not an unusual thing, for wild ducks abound in the Niagara the entire year. But while Andrew watched, another and yet another came down, far out in the stream, and passed beyond the spray of the falls. He thought that never before had he seen so many ducks at once on their way to the feeding grounds at the whirlpool. He knew that if he should go there, his shooting would be of the best. Hurrying to the mouth of the creek, he unfastened a skiff, and soon was pulling strongly toward the Canadian side. Not being on good terms as yet with his old Government, he forsook the roads, and shaped his course through the dense woods which then lined the bank. Arriving at the bank above the Whirlpool, he looked down into the great basin, to find there the ducks he had come so far to meet. They were swimming about close to the shore, keeping well away from the eddies in the pool.

Andrew quickly scrambled down the steep bank, sometimes digging his heels into the earth which lay in the rock crevices or swinging himself along by the branches of the trees. Finally he stood on a ledge of rock some four feet above the water. Below him lay a long log, one end resting on the beach, the other buried far out in the stream. As he watched, peeping through the trees, the sun, now some hours high, poured its heat rays down upon the scene. The bottom of the gorge began to grow stilling; the flicker of the log began to feel the increasing warmth, and air became sultry and oppressive. Suddenly the hunter was startled; the warning whirr of a rattler sounded loud and clear. Andrew usually gave no thought to the snakes, but this time he glanced behind him.

It was well he did, the snake was just springing toward him. Hurry knew it was time to move; he must leap for the water and grasp the log to avoid being swept into the pool. Action and thought came together; as he jumped it seemed as though something moved behind and pushed him. He leaped, but his calculations were astray; instead of landing in the water his feet struck squarely on the top of the slimy, slippery log, whence they promptly flew one to each side, and he came down hard astride and slid. A man cannot come down a greased pole faster than Hurry slipped along. He felt the timber settling beneath his weight and realized that in a moment he should be deep in the water beyond the log. Letting his gun go, he tried in vain to grasp the log. Suddenly he felt a quick jerk from behind; he stopped. Amazed, he turned around; then he was more amazed than before. His coat-tail stood out behind; the curved front teeth of the rattler were fast in its coils, and the log.

"The devil," he cried, using the strongest cuss word the kirk allows. Evidently the snake and he had jumped at precisely the same moment; the reptile had time only to catch the flying coat tail, and had involuntarily followed Andrew onto the log. Then he saw the shore was moving; the log was afloat, and he was off on a voyage such as no man had ever sailed before. He stopped to consider his situation. His ship was staunch; it could not be wrecked; it would float no longer, perhaps, than its captain could live; the quarters were cramped, it is true, and the locker empty, while the cabin carried a passenger, most unwelcome on any ship. Yet he could not but feel some gratitude for the snake; save for it and its flexible tail, Andrew would have navigated the pool as a corpse, instead of being captain of a log. All things considered, he could not consider himself as badly off as he might have been; still, the future contained for him a sufficiency of uncertainty. All day long the log, with its living freight, floated around the Whirlpool, never going within a hundred feet of the shore. Any attempt to swim to the beach was out of the question; the boiling and smoking waters forbade. The snake lay quiet, sometimes lifting its head to look at Andrew or the moving shore, and the captain concluded to allow his brother in misery to sail in peace.

The hot day passed; the night came and slowly ran its course. The deep basin, wrapped in profound darkness, was unutterably still. The spirits of the man and his companion were depressed, and the glimmering of morning light over the eastern heights was welcome to both. The chilly night had stiffened the snake, and it lay half torpid. Andrew pulled off a shoe and slid quickly along the log, determined to end its life. As he extended his hand to strike, the victim lifted his head and gave Andrew a look which was, he declares, the most appealing he ever saw on any face. He drew back his hand, and the life of the passenger was spared.

It was about 10 o'clock on the second morning that the log floated along the northern shore of the Whirlpool. This time it was nearer the bank than it had ever been before, and Andrew hoped that it might catch on some rock and allow him to land. The end of the log beyond the snake was nearest the beach, and Andrew regretted now that he had not killed it; then he might reach the land if the ship struck. Gradually the log drifted nearer and nearer; beyond was a fallen tree, its branches projecting into the pool. It was plain that the log would either strike the leverance might come, or it might pass by within mocking distance. Oh, if the snake were now out of the way, he thought.

The rattler lifted its head; evidently it saw the tree, for it unwound its tail from about the log and crawled slowly and carefully toward the end. Andrew watched it and counted its chances of success. It finally stopped at the extreme end.

Gradually the log came nearer and nearer, until it became evident it would miss the tree by about a foot. The snake took another turn about the log and coiled itself as best it could. Just as it passed the tree it shot itself out, and the upper part of the body caught about a sturdy

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branch, while its tail still clung to the log. As a stout hawser tied between the stern of a ship and the pier tends to swing the bow with the current until the vessel lies broadside to the wharf, so the snake caused the outer end of the log to drift slowly toward the land. Soon Andrew felt the bottom touch his feet, and in a moment more he was on dry land. But, though he was safe, he had some thought for the snake which had saved him. He went toward the tree. The rattler still clung to both tree and log, but it seemed changed in appearance. It was at least ten feet long and of considerable thickness; now it seemed to be at least ten feet long and rather thin. Andrew crept up to it and the problem was solved; the snake had sacrificed itself to save the man, and had resisted the pulling of the log until it had been drawn out twice its length. Its life had paid the penalty of its good work, but Andrew, by the grace of the snake, lived.

Slowly the man climbed the bluff. From the top he looked back; his ship was afloat again, and trailing behind it was a long black string tied to the log. He recognized his former passenger and faithful friend, which gave up its life that the man might live, and he vowed that never again should his hand be raised against a reptile; but he would always remember that fortune came to him because he refused to bruise the serpent's

head with his shoe heel. Andrew started at once for home, and crossed the river some hours later to walk into the presence of his anxious wife. After a time he told his story, and has since repeated it upon sundry and proper occasions. The reporter saw him the other day sitting on his porch, his grandson, a little curly headed child of six upon his knee. He was just finishing the story of the Whirlpool and the snake. "Was it really true, grandpa?" wonderingly asked the child. "Every word, my lad," replied the old man.

A Curious Refusal. A short time ago an employe in a large chemical works in Germany entered one of the departments with a lighted lantern, with the result that an explosion occurred, followed by the bursting of the acid tanks. The man was never seen again, not even the smallest fragment of clothing. He happened to be well insured, but under the circumstances the company refused to pay, on the ground that there was no proof of his death.

The Devil an "Absentee Landlord." An Englishman who, under the guidance of a native Irishman, has recently been admiring the scenery on the other side of St. George's Channel, tells a cor-

respondent of a Manchester paper a good story of Hibernian repute. The visitor and his guide were in a hilly district in the South of Ireland, and the guide pointing to a high hill, said that it was known locally by the name of "The Devil's Table." "Indeed," remarked the Englishman, "the Devil seems to have a good deal of property in these parts." "Yes, sir," rejoined the Irishman, "but he is an absentee landlord, and lives in England."

No Dust on the Work Road. Since the building of the trolley line on the old York road and the reconstruction of the turnpike itself, the residents along the road have been pecculating as to the intentions of the People's Traction Company with regard to allying the dust nuisance this summer. It has been decided to sprinkle the pike, and, commencing next week, a watering wagon will pass over the old York road at frequent intervals from Germantown avenue to Jenkintown, and after it is the intention of the management to extend the territory of the sprinklers to Chestnut Hill.

How a Town Came by its Name. A post-office town in Pennsylvania was strangely named. It is called Aitch, and this is the way it came by that title. There were in that part of Huntingdon

County five prosperous farmers, respectively named Anderson, Isenberg, Taylor, Crum, and Henderson. Each of them wished the town to be named after himself, but they could not come to an agreement; and finally, as a compromise, the first letter from each name was taken and placed together, and thereby originated the odd name Aitch.

A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE. A Patron Nomination may Possibly be Offered to Mr. Coley, of Somerset, Man.

SOMERSET, Man., May 13.—The item which appeared in several Eastern papers to the effect that Mr. Arthur Coley, a well-known farmer of this place, was asked to accept the Patron nomination for the coming elections, but was forced to decline through ill health, is without foundation. It is true that early in 1894 Mr. Coley was severely afflicted with Bright's disease, but was enabled to restore himself to health by a course of Dodd's Kidney Pills, and to the extent of fighting the constituency should the nomination be offered him. He speaks in the highest terms of the remedy which cured him.