

ON BLONDIN'S BACK.

HARRY COLCORD, artist, now of Chicago, ran away from home and went to sea. Before he got through with his adventures he rode across Niagara Falls three times on the back of Blondin on a tight rope. He says he would not do it again, but that he did not suffer from fear. One can readily believe him. In his deep gray eye there is a suggestion of self-control, and in his slight, lithe figure of strength and reserve physical force which his gentle voice and his easy, courteous manner fails to entirely conceal. He is an artist as artists go, and paints tolerable pictures.

"In the year 1858," he said, "I joined Blondin in Boston. He was of the Francona troupe, including Martinetti and the famous Ravels. I was their scenic artist, and painted scenes with a white-wash brush. We disbanded in Cincinnati, and there it occurred to Blondin to cross Niagara on a tight rope, and I went to the Falls with him. We had no end of trouble getting the necessary permits to extend the ropes. Blondin only spoke but little English; that was one difficulty, but finally we succeeded in getting them from Porter, who owned the American side, and the rest was easy. Blondin wanted to carry the rope from Terrapin Tower and across to Davis's Hotel, which would have led over Horsehoe Falls, through the mist and the spray of the great cataract. They objected, because Blondin was sure to fall, they said. The spray would keep his rope damp, and I, who had engaged to go on his back, was very glad of it. Finally we stretched the rope from White's pleasure ground across to the Clifton House. Not far away from the place there is now a suspension bridge. There was 2,000 feet of the rope. It was of Manila, three inches in diameter, made in a New York ropewalk. In two pieces. Blondin joined them with a long splice which, when the rope was extended, was in the centre of the span. It took us nearly five months to stretch the rope and to get guy lines in place.

"It was 250 feet above water at its lowest point, which was 50 feet below the highest—in other words, there was a grade of 50 feet in 1,000 feet. There were 75,000 feet of guy lines altogether. Each of them was weighted with a ten-pound sand bag to drop them out of the way of his balance pole, and in putting them up Blondin crossed a score of times. At last we were ready to make the first ascension; that was what we called it. Before I went over he made several public ascensions. It was advertised through the papers that I was to ride on his back, and I was the subject of all kinds of attacks and criticisms. I was ready to back out, except Blondin began to taunt me, and I got into that corner of pride and vain-gloriousness which I could not escape from. Meantime Blondin had coached me as to what I should do. I was to put my weight on his shoulders by my arms, and clasp his body about with my legs. But I could not put my weight on his legs; that would encumber his movement. I had to keep all the weight on his shoulders. In July, 1860 we went across. I took my place on Blondin's back, and he began the descent from the Canadian side on the rope. By reason of the fact that I had to bear my weight on his shoulders, and had to use my arms and with main strength to support myself, frequent rests were necessary. I told Blondin when I wanted to rest, and then I dropped down on the rope on one foot and waited till my arms were relieved, when I would spring up again, using only my arms to lift and hold myself in place. There was a great crowd there. I did not see them at first. I do not remember what I thought. From my place on Blondin's back I could look out to the other shore and see below me the stunted pines thrusting their sharp points up from the edge of the foaming water ready to split us if we fell. I remember, too, that I was anxious to get over, and I recall, too, that the great rope before us made swings from side to side. We afterwards knew that the rope swung forty feet at the centre, and I felt the necessity of preserving my self-possession, and I did it.

"There was a forty feet length between the guy on one side and those of the other that it was impossible to make steady. It was the middle span. Below us 250 feet roared the river, and over it we swung from side to side, still moving on steadily, however. Blondin never trembled. When we had gone about ten feet on this middle span somebody on the American side pulled the outer guy line. We afterwards found out it was done intentionally, and the rope was stopped in its swing. Blondin stopped, and his pole went from side to side in a vain effort to enable him to secure his balance. At one time it was up and down on the right side, at another time up and down on the left, and I recall now with wonder that I was only curious to know whether he would succeed in getting control of himself or not. I didn't feel any fear. Failing in getting his balance, he started to run across the horrible span, and we safely reached the point where the guy rope came out from the American shore. Then to steady himself Blondin put his foot on the guy rope and tried to stop, but the guy line broke and with a dash of speed he ran swiftly twenty-five feet further to the next point, where the guys met the main rope. There he recovered his balance, and whispered rather than said: 'Descendez, vous.' The perspiration stood out on his neck and shoulders in great beads, and we balanced ourselves on the swaying rope. Presently he said, 'Allons,' and I raised myself to his shoulders and we went on in safety and without incident toward the shore.

"It was not until we landed that I appreciated what had been done. Then it occurred to me that the feat could never be accomplished, and my indignation mastered any reactionary feeling of fear. You see, many thousand dollars were bet upon the ability of Blondin to carry a man over, and human cupidity stops at no sacrifice. Then there were the congratulations and the praise of pluck and the rest of it, so that in my foolish boyish elation I forgot everything else. I do remember as we approached the shore the wonderful tableau of the 100,000 people who stood gazing at us. Thousands of them turned their faces away, or half turning, cast glances over their shoulders at us. I remember their white faces, their strained positions of anxiety—women who stared, white and motionless, and men who wept, and as we drew near the bank the crowd surged toward

us, and Blondin stopped, fearing they would push each other over the precipice. Then the crowd was still again, and with a quick run we came to the shore and sprang to the ground. I remember one man seizing me in his arms and saying, 'Thank God, this thing is over!' From the other side there was a cheer, and then we were thrown into a carriage and drawn to the International Hotel by the people.

"I crossed again, twice, the last time under the patronage of the Prince of Wales. He congratulated us personally, and gave us each a purse of £100. N. P. Willis was present, and wrote a wonderful sketch of the affair. Tom Hyer, the prize fighter, was there, also, and he grabbed me up and shook me, and looked at me through the tears that fell so rapidly as to almost blind him."

"What was your weight then, Mr. Colcord?"

"One hundred and thirty pounds."

"And Blondin's?"

"One hundred and thirty-five."

"Would you do it again?"

"Not for all the wealth of the world."

CONFIDENCE WELL PLACED

EVEN the English papers (says the *Nation*) admit that the discussion in the House of Commons on the University question forebodes an early settlement of that matter on lines satisfactory to the Irish party. Says the *Standard*, the leading organ of the Government:—

"It was a memorable event in the history of the Nationalist movement when the bishops placed the cause of denominational education in the hands of the Parliamentary party. Last night's proceedings will enable Mr. Parnell to report that they did not repose confidence in him in vain. Conciliation is the watchword of Lord Carnarvon, and in no department of policy is concession so simple a thing as in the matter of University education. There are no vested interests of any importance to protest against spoliation. Nor is there any awkward body of political sentiment to block the way. Religious education is an old article of the Conservative faith; and, as everyone knows, to rule Ireland according to Irish ideas is an accepted Liberal principle. The road thus being open to change, it only remains to know that the existing state of things is not a success. Unhappily, the material for such demonstration is at hand. . . . Once it was possible to obtain degrees without residence at any one of the three State-endowed institutions, the principal inducement to Catholic parents to send their sons to the Queen's Colleges disappeared; but they still have one advantage over their Catholic rivals. They receive a yearly subvention from the State, or, rather, they are almost wholly maintained at the State expense. The staff of teachers and the apparatus for teaching are, of course, better than in the voluntary seminaries, and there are scholarships from State funds to boot. This being said, no further reason need be assigned for the objection made last night from the Home Rule benches to the 'Vote of twelve thousand six hundred and twenty-eight pounds for the Queen's Colleges, Ireland.' Why spend money on secular institutions which the Church denounces and the people dislike? Why not rather grant a subvention to the Catholic University, where, under ecclesiastical auspices, the children of good Catholics may receive the sort of education of which alone their consciences approve? Colonel Colthurst suggested that six thousand pounds might do as a beginning. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in explaining why he could not accede to the request held out hopes which go far beyond the scope of this modest suggestion. Next session, if the Ministry is a Ministry still, they will make a proposal. Meanwhile Sir M. H. Beach will only say that, in his opinion, it was not right or possible, in these days of irreligion, that the State should endeavour to discourage religious education. The bishops will know what meaning to put on these words. Mr. Trevelyan has told them that he was in favour of giving Ireland absolute control over its own education. The Conservative leader makes an offer nearly as good. It will be a question of settling which party is to have the granting of the gift."

Truly the bishops made no mistake when they entrusted the management of the Irish education question in all its branches to Mr. Parnell and the Irish party.

A writer in the *London Times* says:—"Mr. Charles Stewart Parnell descends from 'bold Norfolk's Earl de Brotherton,' son of Edward I. and Marshall of England, as well as from that Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, whom Bolingbroke challenged to mortal combat, and whom Richard II. banished for life. Another of Mr. Parnell's ancestors is John Howard, the 'Jockey of Norfolk,' first of the actual line of the Dukes of Norfolk, who was slain at Bosworth and duly attainted by the victorious party."

The Italian savant Narducci has just laid before the *Accademia dei Lincei* a number of documents showing that Pope Sixtus V. and the Republic of Venice were at one time negotiating for the piercing of the Isthmus of Suez; a plan which was only abandoned for fear lest the difference in the level of the two seas would quickly cause the traffic to be impeded by the sand.—*Court Journal*.

Berlin, Aug. 8th.—The article in the *North German Gazette* attacking France, in connection with the advice of the *Paris Temps* that French cavalry on the frontier be reinforced, has seriously affected the Berlin and Frankfurt bourses. It is supposed in official circles that the object of the article is to prepare the public for a large increase in the military budget. All the German newspapers, following the *Gazette*, dwell upon the fact that the approach of the French and Russians toward each other is coincident with the increasing goodwill between England and Germany. The rector of the University of Berlin, at the celebration yesterday in honour of the founder, Frederick William, toasted the health of Emperor William in the following words: "Long live peace. Should, however, the arrogance of our neighbours pass from daring words into daring deeds, they will learn that the old spirit still lives."