

At the head of the lake, some eight miles from Montreal, are the Lachine rapids. They are a total fall, in a course of two miles, of about forty-two feet. They are navigable only in one direction, and in that but for rafts and steamboats.

The waters of the St. Lawrence, after passing these rapids, are separated by a cluster of islands, terminating in one of larger dimensions called Nun's Island. This island extends eastward to within a mile of the Victoria Bridge. From thence to a point opposite the city of Montreal, there is a bank called the "Middle Shoals," which divides the river into two channels. Upon this bank lie innumerable boulders, some just showing themselves above the surface of the water, and rendering navigation among them impossible, except in small row-boats or canoes. This condition of the river proved seriously inconvenient in the construction of the bridge, as it was necessary, in order to convey materials from one part of the bridge to another, to pass down one channel for nearly a mile, and then return by a second, stemming a current of some seven to eight miles per hour.

The bed of the river, at the point selected for the construction of the works, consists of a solid rock, called by Sir William Logan, F.R.S., the provincial geologist, "Utica slate." Near the shores, say for some 1900 feet on the north side and 600 feet on the south side, this rock is perfectly free from any deposit excepting large boulders. Towards the centre of the river it is covered with shale, quicksand, clay, and, on the surface, with a kind of hard pan, composed of boulders, gravel, and clay intermixed, almost as hard as the rock itself. The distance from the bed of the river to the solid rock is, in some instances, from twelve to fourteen feet. The boulders which had to be removed varied in weight from one to twenty tons.

The scenery at the point at which the bridge is thus constructed, if not grand, is far from uninteresting. On the one shore lies the City of Montreal, on a sloping site, the towers of its Cathedral and numerous church spires adding continually to the picturesque appearance of its white, well-built houses, which are frequently well placed amid shrubberies and gardens. On the other side of the river a range of blue hills forms a bold and agreeable background to the somewhat low surface of the shores nearer to the river. The whole character of the scenery is agreeable and English; and, reversing the position, and looking at the bridge from the ground over Montreal itself, few scenes can be fairer than the noble river which rushes through the valley, crossed as it now is by the stupendous work which may be described without exaggeration as one of the "Wonders of the World."