

Western Travel 1838

Retrospect of Western Travel

Harriet Martineau

1838

PREFACE.

When I finished my late work on Society in America, I had not the most remote idea of writing any thing more on the subject of the New World. I have since been strongly solicited to communicate more of my personal narrative, and of the lighter characteristics of men, and incidents of travel, than it suited my purpose to give in the other work. It has also been represented to me that, as my published book concerns the Americans at least as much as the English, there is room for another which shall supply to the English what the Americans do not want, — a picture of the aspect of the country, and of its men and manners. There seems no reason why such a picture should not be appended to an inquiry into the theory and practice of their society : especially as I believe that I have little to tell which will not strengthen the feelings of respect and kindness with which the people of Great Britain are more and more learning to regard the inhabitants of the Western Republic. I have therefore willingly acceded to the desire of such of my readers as have requested to be presented with my Retrospect of Western Travel.

H. M.

High Road Travelling

“ How far my pen has been fatigued like those of other travellers, in this journey of it—the world most judge—but the traces of it, which are now all set o’vibrating together this moment, tell me it is the most fruitful and busy period of my life ; for, as I had made no convention with my man with the gun as to time—by seizing every handle, of what size or shape soever which chance held out to me in this journey—I was always in company, and with great variety too.”—*Sterne*.

OUR first land travelling, in which we had to take our chance with the world in general, was across the State of New York, My account of what we saw may seem excessively minute in some of its details ; but this style of particularity is not adopted without reasons. While writing my journal, I always endeavoured to bear in mind the rapidity with which civilization advances in America, and the desirableness of recording things precisely in their present state, in order to have materials for comparison some few years hence, when travelling may probably be as unlike what it is now, as a journey from London to Liverpool by the new railroad differs from the same enterprise as undertaken a century and a half ago.

To avoid some of the fatigues and liabilities of common travelling, certain of our shipmates and their friends, and ourselves had made up a party to traverse the State of New York in an “ exclusive extra ;” a stage hired, with the driver, for our own use, to proceed at our own time. Our fellow-travellers were a German and a Dutch gentleman, and the Prussian physician and young South Carolinian whom I have mentioned in the list of our shipmates. We were to meet at the Congress Hall hotel in Albany, on the 6th of October.

On our way from Stockbridge to Albany, we saw a few objects characteristic of the country. While the horses were baiting, we wandered into a graveyard, where the names on

the tombstones were enough to inform any observer what country of the world he was in. One inscription was laudatory of Nelson and Nabby Bullis : another of Amasa and Polly Fielding. Hiram and Keziah were there too. The signs in the American streets are as ludicrous for their confusion of Greek, Roman and Hebrew names as those of Irish towns are for the arbitrary divisions of words. One sees Rudolphus figuring beside Eliakim, and Aristides beside Zerug. I pitied an acquaintance of mine for being named Peleg, till I found he had baptized his two boys Peleg and Seth.—On a table in a little wayside inn, I found Fox's Martyrs ; and against the wall hung a framed sampler, with the following lines worked upon it.

“ Jesus, permit thine awful name to stand
As the first offering of an infant's hand :
And as her fingers o'er the canvas move,
O fill her thoughtful bosom with thy love.
With thy dear children let her bear a part.
And write thy name thyself upon her heart.”

In these small inns the disagreeable practice of rocking in the chair is seen in its excess. In the inn parlour are three or four rocking chairs, in which sit ladies who are vibrating in different directions, and at various velocities, so as to try the head of a stranger almost as severely as the tobacco chewer his stomach. How this lazy and ungraceful indulgence ever became general, I cannot imagine ; but the nation seems so wedded to it, that I see little chance of its being forsaken. When American ladies come to live in Europe, they sometimes send home for a rocking-chair. A common wedding present is a rocking-chair. A beloved pastor has every room in his house furnished with a rocking-chair by his grateful and devoted people. It is well that the gentlemen can be satisfied to sit still, or the world might be treated with the spectacle of the sublime American Senate in a new position ; its fifty-two senators see-sawing in full deliberation, like the wise birds of a rookery in a breeze. If such a thing should ever happen, it will be time for them to leave off laughing at the Shaker worship.

As we approached Greenbush, which lies opposite to Albany, on the east bank of the Hudson, we met riding-horses, exercised by grooms, and more than one handsome carriage,—tokens that we were approaching some centre of luxury. The view of Albany rising from the river side, with its brown-stone court-house and white marble capitol, is fine ; but it wants the relief of more trees within itself, or of a rural back-ground. How changed is this bustling city, thronged with costly buildings, from the Albany of the early days of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, when the children used to run up and down the green slope which is now State Street,—imposing from its width, and the massiveness of the houses seen behind its rows of trees ! A tunnel is about to be made under the Hudson at Albany ; meantime we crossed, as every body does, by a horse-ferryboat ; a device so cruel, as well as clumsy, that the sooner it is superseded the better. I was told that the strongest horses, however kept up with corn, rarely survive a year of this work.

We observed that, even in this city, the physicians have not always their names engraved on brass door-plates. On the most conspicuous part of their houses,—perhaps on the angle of a corner house,—is nailed some glazed substance like floor-cloth, with “ Dr. Such-an-one ” painted upon it. At Washington I remember seeing “ MAGISTRATE ” thus affixed to a mere shed.

As we surmounted the hill leading to our hotel, we saw our two shipmates dancing down the steps to welcome us. There certainly is a feeling among shipmates which does not grow out of any other relation. They are thrown first into such absolute dependence on one another, for better for worse, and are afterwards so suddenly and widely separated, that if they do chance to meet again they renew their intimacy with a fervour which does not belong to a

friendship otherwise originated. The glee of our whole party this evening is almost ridiculous to look back upon. Everything served to make a laugh, and we were almost intoxicated with the prospect of what we were going to see and do together. We had separated only a fortnight ago ; but we had as much to talk over as if we had been travelling apart for six months. The Prussian had to tell his adventures ; we our impressions ; and the Southerner his comparisons of his own country with Europe. Then we had to arrange the division of labour by which the gentlemen were to lighten the cares of travelling. Dr. J., the Prussian, was on all occasions to select apartments for us ; Mr. S., the Dutchman, to undertake the eating department ; Mr. H., the American, was paymaster, and Mr. O., the German, took charge of the luggage. It was proposed that badges should be worn to designate their offices. Mr. S. was to be adorned with a corn cob. Mr. H. stuck a honk bill in front of his hat ; and, next morning, when Mr. O. was looking another way, the young men locked a small padlock upon his button-hole, which he was compelled to carry there for a day or two till his comrades vouchsafed to release him from his badge.

The hotel was well furnished and conducted. I pointed out, with some complacency, what a handsome piano we had in our drawing-room ; but when, in the dark hour, I opened it in order to play, I found it empty of keys !—a disappointment, however, which I have met with in England.

Before breakfast, the next morning, we walked down to the Padroon's house,—known by reputation, with the history of the estate, to every body. We just caught a sight of the shrubbery, and took leave to pass through the court-yard, and hastened back to breakfast, immediately after which we proceeded by railroad to Schenectady. There we at once stepped into a canal-boat for Utica. I would never advise ladies to travel by canal, unless the boats are quite new and clean ; or at least far better kept than any that I saw or heard of on this canal. On fine days it is pleasant enough sitting outside, (except for having to duck under the bridges, every quarter of an hour, under penalty of having one's head crushed to atoms,) and in dark evenings the approach of the boat-lights on the water is a pretty sight : but the horrors of night and of wet days more than compensate for all the advantages these vehicles can boast. The heat and noise, the known vicinity of a compressed crowd, lying packed like herrings in a barrel, the bumping against the sides of the locks, and the hissing of water therein like an inundation, startling one from sleep,—these things are very disagreeable. We suffered under an additional annoyance in the presence of sixteen presbyterian clergymen, — some of the most unprepossessing of their class. If there be a duty more obvious than another on board a canal-boat, it is to walk on the bank occasionally in fair weather, or at least to remain outside, in order to air the cabin, (close enough at best,) and get rid of the scents of the table before the unhappy passengers are shut up to sleep there. These sixteen gentlemen, on their way to a Convention at Utica, could not wait till they got there to begin their devotional observances, but obtruded them upon the passengers in a most unjustifiable manner. They were not satisfied with saying an almost interminable grace before and after each meal, but shut up the cabin for prayers before dinner ; for missionary conversation in the afternoon, and for scripture reading and prayers quite late into the night, keeping tired travellers from their rest, and every one from his fair allowance of fresh air.

The passengers were all invited to listen to, and to question a missionary from China, who was of the party. The gentleman did not seem to have profited much by his travels, however ; for he declared himself unable to answer some very simple inquiries. “ Is the religion of the Christian missionaries tolerated by the Chinese government ? ” “ I am not prepared to answer that question. ” “ Are the Chinese cannibals ? ” “ I am not prepared to answer that question. ” One requested that any brother would offer a suggestion as to how Government might be awakened to the sinfulness of permitting Sunday mails ; during the continuance of which practice there was no hope of the Sabbath being duly sanctified. No one was ready with a suggestion, but one offered a story, which every head was bent to hear. The story was of two

sheep-drovers, one of whom feared God, and the other did not. The profane drover set out with his sheep, for a particular destination, two hours earlier than the other, and did not rest on Sunday like his pious comrade. What was the catastrophe ? The God-fearing drover, though he had stood still all Sunday, arrived at his destination two hours earlier than the other. “ Ah ! ” “ Ah ! ” resounded through the cabin in all conceivable tones of conviction, no one asking particulars of what had happened on the road,—of how and where the profane drover had been delayed. Temperance was, of course, a great topic with these divines, and they fairly provoked ridicule upon it. One passenger told me that they were so strict that they would not drink water out of the Brandywine river : and another remained that they partook with much relish of the strong wine sauce served with our puddings.

In addition to other discomforts, we passed the fine scenery of Little Falls in the night I was not aware what we had missed till I traversed the Mohawk valley by a better conveyance, nearly two years afterwards. I have described this valley in my other work on America, [1] and most therefore restrain my pen from dwelling on its beauties here.

The appearance of the berths in the ladies' cabin was so repulsive, that we were seriously contemplating sitting out all night, when it began to rain so as to leave us no choice. I was out early in the misty morning, however ; and was presently joined by the rest of my party, all looking eagerly for signs of Utica being near.

By eight o'clock we were at the wharf. We thought Utica the most extempore place we had yet seen. The *right-up* shops, the daubed houses, the streets running into the woods, all seemed to betoken that the place had sprung up out of some sudden need. How much more ancient and respectable did it seem after my return from the west, where I had seen towns so much newer still ! We were civilly received and accommodated at Bagg's hotel, where we knew how to value cold water, spacious rooms and retirement, after the annoyances of the boat.

Our baggage-master was fortunate in securing a neat, clean stage to take us to Trenton Falls (14 miles), where we promised each other to spend the whole day, on condition of being off by five the next morning, in order to accomplish the distance to Syracuse in the course of the day. The reason for our economy of time was not merely that it was late in the season, and every day which kept us from the Falls of Niagara, therefore, of consequence ; but that our German friend, Mr. O., was obliged to be back in New York by a certain day. We all considered a little extra haste and fatigue a small tax to pay for the privilege of his companionship.

We clapped our hands at the sight-of the “ Rural Retreat,” the comfortable, hospitable house of entertainment at Trenton,—standing in its garden on the road.

As no other company was there, we could choose our own hours. We ordered a late dinner, and proceeded to the Falls. We had only to follow a path in the pine forest for a few paces, and we were at the edge of the ravine which encloses the cascades.

It is a pity that the Indian name is not retained. Trenton Falls are called Cayoharic by the Indians. They are occasioned by the descent of West Canada Creek through a ravine, where it makes a succession of leaps from platforms of rock ; six of these falls being pretty easily accessible by travellers. Much has been said of the danger of the enterprise of ascending the ravine ; but I saw no peril to persons who are neither rash nor nervous. The two accidents which have happened have, I believe, been owing, the one to extreme rashness, and the other to sudden terror.

From the edge of the ravine, the black water, speckled with white foam, is seen rushing below with a swiftness which already half turns the head of the stranger. We descended five flights of wooden steps, fixed against the sleep face of the rock, and at the bottom found ourselves at the brink of the torrent. I never was in so dark and chill a place in the open air : yet the sun was shining on the opposite face of the rock, lighting the one scarlet maple which stood out from among the black cedars and dark green elms. We selected our footing with a care which we were quite ready to ridicule when we came back ; and were not above grasping the chain which is rivetted into the rock where the shelf which forms the pathway is narrowest, and where the angles are sharpest. The hollow is here so filled with the voice of many waters, that no other can be heard ; and after many irreverent shouts had been attempted, we gave up all attempts to converse till we reached a quieter place. Being impatient to see the first fall, I went on before the rest, and having climbed the flight of wooden steps, so wetted with the spray of the fall as to be as slippery as ice, I stood on the platform under a covert of rock foaming with the thunder of the waters, and saw my companions, one by one, turn the angle of the path, and pause in front of the sheet of liquid amber, sprinkled with snow. The path on which they stood seemed too narrow for human foot ; and when, discerning me, they waved their hands, I trembled lest, disregarding their footing, they should be swept away by the furious torrent. When we found our heads turning with the rush of the dark waters, we amused ourselves with admiring the little wells in the rock, and the drip from the roots of a cedar projecting from the top of the ravine,—a never-failing, glittering shower. Between the fifth and sixth fall there is a long tranquil reach of water ; and here we lingered to rest our bewildered senses, before entering upon the confusion of rocks through which the sixth forces its way. We see-sawed upon a fallen trunk, sent autumn leaves whirling down the stream, and watched the endless dance of the balls of foam which had found their way into the tiny creeks and bays opposite, and could not get out again.

Gay butterflies seemed quite at home in this ravine. They flit through the very spray of the Falls. It seemed wonderful that an insect could retain its frail life in the midst of such an uproar. When the sun, in its course, suddenly shone full into the glen through a chasm in its rocky wall, how the cascade was instantly dressed in glory ! crowned with a rainbow, and invested with all radiant hues ! How the poor banished Indians must mourn when the lights of their Cayoharic visit their senses again in the dreams of memory or of sleep ! The recollection of these poor exiles was an ever-present saddening thought in the midst of all the most beautiful scenes of the New World.

When we had surmounted the sixth fall, we saw indeed that we could go no further. A round projection of rock, without trace of anything that I could call a foot-hold, barred us out from the privacy of the upper ravine. The Falls there are said to be as beautiful as any that we saw, and it is to be hoped that, by blasting ; a pathway, or by some other means, they also may be laid open to the affections of happy visitors.

They have been seen and reported of. A friend of mine has told me, since I was there, how Bryant, the poet, and himself behaved like two thoughtless boys in this place. Clambering about by themselves, one summer day, when their wives had gone back to the house, they were irresistibly tempted to pass the barrier, and see what lay beyond. They got round the rock, I cannot conceive how, by inequalities in its surface. They met with so many difficulties and so much beauty higher up, that they forgot all about time, till they found themselves in utter darkness. They hastened to grope their way homewards through the forest, and were startled, after a while, by shouts and moving lights. Till that moment, they never recollected how alarmed their wives must be. It was past ten o'clock, and the poor ladies had been in a state of uneasiness half the evening, and of mortal terror for the two last hours. They had got people from the neighbourhood to go out with torches, little expecting to see their husbands

come walking home on their own feet, and with nothing the matter with them but hunger and shame. I hope the ladies were exceedingly angry when their panic was over.

The forest at the top of the ravine was a study to me, who had yet seen but little forest. Moss cushioned all the roots of the trees ; hibiscus overspread the ground : among the pine stems there was a tangle of unknown shrubs ; and a brilliant bird, scarlet except its black wings, hovered about as if it had no fear of us. I could learn nothing more about it than that the people called it the red robin. Before we returned, the moon hung like a gem over the darkness of the ravine. I spent another happy day among these Falls, some months after, and was yet more impressed with their singularity and beauty.

When we had exchanged our wet clothes, an excellent dinner was served, and our host himself waited upon us, sitting down by the window when nothing was wanted. In the course of dinner, Mr. H. related to me some particulars of the slave insurrection at Charleston, a few years before, when upwards of thirty slaves were hanged at once. Some circumstance which he told led me to observe that I should have done as the thirty did, in their place. " Oh," said he, " so should I" I thanked him for his response, saying that no defence he could now make of slavery would stand against such an admission. He did not retract, but a long argument ensued, in which our host became deeply interested. He moved his chair forwarder and forwarder, till I saw him leaning over the table between two of the gentlemen, to listen. Every body had long done eating, and every dish on the table was quite cold, and the debate concluded, before our host remembered that we had not had our pudding, and started up to serve us.

We soon retired to our rooms, being in need of rest after the discomforts of the canal-boat, and the fatigues of the day : but it was not too late for the neighbours to offer their hospitable welcomes. Just after I was undressed, the cards of visitors were brought me, with a friendly message : but it was too late to do more than send a message in return.

We left the place at a little after five in the morning, in a dismal rain. While breakfasting at Utica, we engaged an " exclusive extra" to carry us to Buffalo, for eighty dollars, the precise route being agreed upon, and the choice of times and seasons to remain with us. On going out to our carriage, we found the steps of the hotel occupied by a number of persons, some from Boston, who offered me welcome to the country, and any information or assistance I might need. One gentleman put into my hand a letter of introduction to an influential friend of his at Cincinnati, as it was understood that I was going there. So from this strange place, where I had not spent above two hours, we drove off amidst a variety of friendly greetings.

This day I first saw a log-house, and first felt myself admitted into the sanctuary of the forest. These things made the day full of interest to me, though the rain scarcely ceased from morning till night. Well settled farms were numerous along the road ; but in the intervals were miles of forest—dark thronging trees with their soft gay summit ; Till now, the autumn woods had appeared at a distance too red and rusty ; these, when looked into, were the melting of all harmonious colours. As for the forms, some were drooping, some towering, their tall bare stems wreathed with crimson creepers. The cleared hollows and slopes, with the forest ever advancing or receding, are as fine to the imagination as any natural language can be. I looked for an Indian or two, standing on the forest verge, within a shade as dusky as himself ; but for this I had to wait another day.

Just after dark we arrived at Syracuse, in time for the common supper. I was surprised at the size and style of the hotel. Land and building material being cheap, and there being no window-tax, there is little inducement to economize space in the American houses ; and the new hotels have the ambitious air which is given by spaciousness. The deficiency lies in furniture, and yet more in attendance ; but I really think that if travellers will trouble them-

selves to learn a little of the ways of the house, so as not to run into opposition to other people's convenience, much more comfort may be enjoyed in these places than unaccommodating tourists will believe. Our chambers were quite sufficiently furnished here ; and I never, in any place, found difficulty in obtaining as large a supply of water as I wished, by simply asking for it in good time. I observed that the hotel parlours, in various parts of the country, were papered with the old-fashioned papers, I believe French, which represent a sort of panorama, of a hunting party, a fleet, or some such diversified scene. I saw many such a hunting party, the ladies in scarlet riding-habits, as I remember the landlord of the inn at Bray, near Dublin, to have been proud of in his best parlour. At Schenectady, the bay of Naples, with its fishing-boats on the water, and groups of lazzaroni on the shore, adorned our parlour-walls. It seems to be an irresistible temptation to idle visitors, English, Irish, and American, to put speeches into the mouths of the painted personages ; and such hangings are usually seen deformed with scribblings. The effect is odd, in wild places, of seeing American witticisms put into the mouths of Neapolitan fishermen, ancient English ladies of quality, or of tritons and dryads.

There is taste quite as bad as this in a matter of far more importance—the naming of places. Syracuse in the State of New York ! I often wonder whether it is yet too late to revert to the Indian names,—to undo the mischief which has been done by boys, fresh from their smattering of the classics, who have gone into the forest to hew out towns and villages. I heard many Americans say that the State of New York ought to be called Ontario, and the city, Manhattan. But so far from bringing back the nomenclature to a better state, we not only find Utica, Syracuse, Manlius, and Camillus, and the village of Geneva on Seneca Lake, with Ithaca at its other extremity, but the village of Chittenago actually baptized into Sullivan : and all this in the neighbourhood of the lakes Onondago, Cayuga, and Owasco. It is as bad as the English in Van Diemen's Land, who, if I remember rightly, have got Palmyra, Richmond, and Jericho, all in a line.

Some curious associations arise from a new nation using the language of the old. While speculating sometimes on what the classical conceptions can be in the minds of youths who hear every day, in the most sordid connexion, of Rome, Utica, Carthage, Athens, Palmyra and Troy, it occurred to me that some of our commonest English writing must bear a different meaning to the Americans and to us. All that is written about corn-fields, for instance, must call up pictures in their minds quite unlike any that the poets intended to create. "Waving corn" is not the true description to them ; and one can scarcely bring one's tongue to explain that it means "small grain." Their poetical attachments are naturally and reasonably to their Indian corn, which is a beautiful plant, worthy of all love and celebration. But the consequence is that we have not their sympathy about our sheaves, our harvest wain, our gleaners; for though they have wheat, their harvest, *par excellence*, is of corn cobs, and their "small grain" bears about the same relation to poetry with them as turnips with us.— Then, again, there is the month of May, about which we lose their sympathy. Over a great proportion of the country. May is one of their worst months,—damp, drizzly, with intervals of biting winds, as little fit for the climate of a poem as our windy and dusty March. Many other such particulars might be mentioned, which it would be a new employment to trace out.

When I traversed New York State at a subsequent period with another party of friends, we saw many Indians before reaching Syracuse. It was at Oneida Castle, a village on the borders of the Oneida territory, which was once fortified after the Indian fashion ; whence its formidable name. We saw in such close neighbourhood as to cause many strange reflections, the episcopalian church built for the Indians of the vicinity, who are declared to be reclaimed from idolatry, and their ancient Council Grove, where they met to think their own thoughts and say their own sayings. This grove is a fine clump of twenty-seven butter-nut trees. We passed through the village on the day when the Indiana had all come in to receive their annual government allowance of seven dollars a head. Two men were drunk ; the rest looked

sober enough. The squaws were neatly dressed in blue pantaloons edged with white, and had clean blankets over their shoulders. The babies looked fat and lively. One squaw had her infant lashed to a board at her back. When we stopped to water the horses, we saw several boys with bows and arrows, and Dr. F. made them understand by signs that any one who could strike a quarter dollar which he would fix on a post, should have it. He made a notch in the post of a shed, and placed his coin, and forthwith the arrows flew like hail. One struck deep into a post, and we saw how easily fatal this weapon might be. An old Indian or two watched the sport, and assumed the superintendence. The coin fell, and Dr. F. was going to deliver it to the claimant, when an old Indian came forward with

“No, no.” He showed by signs that the coin had fallen, not from it being struck, but from the post having been shaken. The quarter dollar was put up again, and soon after struck and bent in the middle by the arrow of a youth who looked as happy with his prize as if he had regained a tract of his native wood. The party gave us some very bright looks as we drove away.

In a hotel on this road, I found a Sabbath School History of Lady Jane Grey, compiled obviously for the purpose of prejudicing the reader's mind against the catholics. Among other wise things in it, there was an explanation that the heroine was called “Lady” because she was related to the king ; and people are sometimes called so in England. A clear idea to give the American youth of our English peerage !

We left Syracuse at dawn ; and this was the morning when, finding ourselves too hungry to proceed to Skaneateles without food, we were treated to that abundant breakfast, so characteristically served, which I have described in my other book. [2] No one likes to breakfast twice over in description, any more than in reality ; and I therefore say nothing about Elbridge here.—The greater part of this day, and some of the next, was spent at Auburn, in viewing the prison, walking about the town, and driving down the shores of the pretty Owasco Lake.

The cultivation of the country now began to show the improvement which increases all the way to Buffalo. At the head of Cayuga lake, we travelled over the longest bridge I ever saw, —even a mile and eight rods long. It is wooden, of course, laid upon piles, and more conspicuous for usefulness than beauty. The great ornament of this route is the village of Geneva, reared on a terrace which overhangs Seneca Lake. The northern States abound in beautiful villages ; but I know none more captivating than this. A long row of handsome white and red houses, each with its sloping garden, fronts the lake ; and behind the dwellings, the road is bordered with locust trees, which seem to embower the place. The gardens are more carefully cultivated than is at all common in America, and they well repay the trouble bestowed on them. There is a college, standing on high ground above the lake, to which a natural lawn steeply descends from the open space in front of the building. Holstein, aide-de-camp to Bolivar, was professor of modern languages in this college when I was first at Geneva. Before my second visit he had removed to Albany. To crown the temptations of Geneva as a place of residence, it has a rather choice society. It has been charged with not being healthy ; but I believe this is not true. It seems to be well and speedily supplied with literature. I saw a placard outside a bookseller's store, “Two Old Men's Tales, price 80 cents,”—that is, four shillings. One of my last interests, before I left England, had been watching over the publication of this work ; and now here it was selling at four shillings, in the back of the State of New York ! I remarked two things more about this village,—that all the women I saw were pretty, and that a profusion of azalea grew wild in the neighbourhood.

The road to Canandaigua ascends for a considerable distance, after leaving Geneva, and the last view of the place from above was exquisite, embosomed as it lay in the autumn woods, and with its blue lake stretched behind it in the sunny atmosphere. One element in the

exhilaration of such scenes in America is the universal presence of competence. The boys who gather about the stage do not come to beg, or even to sell, but to amuse themselves while eating their bread and meat, or on their way to the field. The young women all well dressed, the men all at work or amusement, the farms all held in fee-simple, the stores all inadequate to their custom,—these things are indescribably cheering to witness, and a never-failing source of pleasure to the traveller from Europe. It may be a questionable comfort, but it *is* a comfort to think “if these people are not happy, it is their own fault.” Whether their minds are as easy as their fortunes, it may not be safe to affirm ; but at least the sin and sorrow of social injustice in regard to the first necessities of life are absent.

The moon was gleaming over Canandaigua Lake when we came in sight of it ; and a golden planet dropped beneath the horizon when we took the turn towards the village. We found that Blossom’s hotel did not answer to the favourable description which had been given us of it. This had been training day, and the house was so noisy with drunken soldiers that when we had attained the drawing-room, we locked ourselves in till the house should be cleared, which happened as early as nine o’clock : but we still found the inn less comfortable than most upon the road.

The pretty village of Canandaigua is noted for its good society. It would have given me pleasure to have been able to accept the kind invitation of some of its inhabitants to prolong my stay now, or to revisit it the next year. But we had promised Mr. O. to cause no delay in getting to Niagara, and we engaged, in return for his agreeing to stop this day, to travel all night; and I never was able to allot any future time to this place. We saw as much of it, however, as we could in one day.

There are many families of Scotch extraction at Canandaigua, and to this the village owes its superiority in gardens to almost any place in the country. We spent the greater part of the day with a gentleman who was born in Scotland, but had settled at Canandaigua thirty-four years before, when the place was almost a desert. He now sees himself surrounded by handsome dwellings, trim gardens, and a highly-cultivated society, able to command resources of books and other intellectual luxuries, to almost any extent, from the directness and ease of communication with New York. He had just taken possession of a splendid new dwelling, and had presented his old one to the episcopalian church for a parsonage. He showed me, from the top of the house, where this dwelling had stood, where it stood now, and how it had been moved entire in a day and a half. I think the distance could not have been much under a mile.

After our early breakfast we were engaged till church time in receiving and making calls, as there was no time to be lost. We went to the episcopalian church with our friends, and heard a sermon which could not please us,—it was so full of dogmatism and bitterness. Our friends insisted on entertaining the whole of our large party, and invited some agreeable guests in addition, so that we spent a very profitable as well as pleasant afternoon. We walked over the grounds, enjoyed the view of the lake from the house-top, and picked up a good deal of information about the place and neighbourhood, which might seem to the inhabitants scarcely worthy of the name of knowledge, but which is inestimable to the stranger as opening new departments of enquiry, and explaining much which he did not understand before.

The stage was ordered for nine, and we returned to Blossom’s for an hour’s rest before setting out on our rough night’s journey.

We reached Batavia to breakfast, and soon after found ourselves on the first piece of corduroy road we had encountered in the country. I mention this because corduroy roads appear to have made a deep impression on the imaginations of the English, who seem to suppose that American roads are all corduroy. I can assure them that there is a large variety

in American roads. There are the excellent lime stone roads which stretch out in three directions from Nashville, Tennessee, and some like them in Kentucky, on which the tourist might sketch almost without difficulty while travelling at a rapid rate. There is quite another sort of limestone road in Virginia, in traversing which the stage is draped up from shelf to shelf, some of the shelves sloping so as to throw the passengers on one another, on either side alternately. Then there are the rich mud roads of Ohio, through whose deep red sloughs the stage goes slowly sousing after rain, and gently upsetting when the rut on the one or the other side proves to be of a greater depth than was anticipated. Then there are the sandy roads of the pine-barrens, of an agreeable consistency after rain, but very heavy in dry weather. Then there is the ridge road, running parallel with a part of Lake Ontario, and supposed to be the edge of what was once its basin. The level terrace thus provided by Nature offered the foundation of an admirable road ; one of the best in the States. Lastly, there is the corduroy road, happily of rare occurrence, where, if the driver is merciful to his passengers, he drives them so as to give them the association of being on the way to a funeral,—their involuntary sobs on each jolt helping the resemblance ;—or, if he be in a hurry, he shakes them like pills in a pill box. But the American drivers are a class of men marked by that merciful temper which naturally accompanies genius. They are men who command admiration equally by their perfection in their art, their fertility of resource, and their patience with their passengers. I was never upset in a stage but once during all my travels ; and the worse the roads were, the more I was amused at the variety of devices by which we got on, through difficulties which appeared insurmountable, and the more I was edified at the gentleness with which our drivers treated female fears and fretfulness.

By this time a solitary Indian might be frequently seen standing on a heap of stones by the road-side, or sleeping under a fence. There is something which rivets the eye of the stranger in the grave gaze, the lank hair, the blanket-wrapped form of the savage, as he stands motionless. We were generally to be seen leaning out of every opening in the stage, as long as the figure remained in sight.

We issued from the corduroy road upon one on which we could easily have performed twelve miles an hour. Houses with porches of Ionic pillars began to be scattered by the road-side. We were obviously approaching Buffalo. Soon the lake was visible, and then we entered the long main street, and stopped at the entrance of the Eagle hotel.

[1] “ Society in America,” vol, ii., p. 188.

[2] “ Society in America,” vol. iii. p. 87.

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