

A TRIP FROM BOSTON TO MONTREAL IN 1844

Extracts from Journal of Edmund Allen Meredith, LL. D.*

ON Tuesday, the 25th of September, 1844, I for the first time beheld the city of Boston. I had intended pushing on at once to Salem for the purpose of catching Richard McDonnell,¹ "The Chief", before he sailed for the coast of Africa, and for that purpose transferred my chattels to the depot of the Salem and Portsmouth Railroad.

Having learned, however, that the great annual muster of the volunteer corps of the State of Massachusetts was to take place on the "Common" of Boston at 9 o'clock, I thought it would be well worth while to delay a few hours, for the purpose of seeing how they could "play at soldiers" here.

I wandered about in every direction, looking for some place to get my breakfast, but no such place could I discover. It seemed to me that it was a town of booksellers, for nothing was visible wherever I turned but books and stationery.

I began to think that I was in a *literary* town. At length I rushed in despair into a shop, and enquired for the nearest restaurant. The man pointed to an hotel across the street called "The Albion", which, as I afterwards learned, was almost the only hotel where I could have procured breakfast at that hour, 10 o'clock, as the breakfast hour at the other hotels was over. The Albion Hotel being conducted on English principles, you can breakfast at any hour you please and have your table to yourself.

The breakfast was very nicely served, and my enjoyment of it was very much increased by the communicativeness of the Irish waiter who attended at the table, who took the opportunity of expressing his contempt for the ladies and gentlemen of this country:

Ah Sir! thim that calls thimsilves ladies and gintlemen here! What are they? They are not gintlemen these! Not like the gintlemen of our country. Thim is the rale gintlemen, the blooded gintlemen. Why Sir, every drop of blood that flows in their veins, Sir, it's Royal blood.

*Communicated by his daughter, the late Mary E. Meredith.

¹This was his cousin, afterward Sir Richards Graves McDonnell, who was Chief Justice of Gambia Settlements in 1843, and who later was Governor of Nova Scotia.

October 8th: Leaving my countryman in the middle of his inviction against the "quality" of the States, I must proceed upon my journey, postponing to some other opportunity my reflections on men and manners in Boston.

I must mention, however, that to my worthy countryman T. C. Gratton, Esq., English Consul at Boston, Richard and myself were indebted principally for the pleasure we received from our sojourn in Boston. On the evening of the 7th I accompanied him, his lady and daughter, and a party of nine others, to see Macready in Richelieu.

I cannot say I liked Macready as much as when I first saw him in the same character in London. By the way, Macready represents Richelieu as being almost an octogenarian, whereas I believe Richelieu died when he was little more than 60. Mr. Gratton says that he very much prefers Forrest's representation of the character.

I must leave Boston and proceed on my way to Concord, New Hampshire.

Having breakfasted at the Pavilion at six o'clock, I was transferred to the Concord railroad in time for the train at seven o'clock. The railroad to Concord runs through the town of Lowell, which is twenty-five miles from Boston. As far as Lowell there is a double track. From Lowell to Concord there is but a single track, or line of rail. There is also a double track on the Boston & Worcester line. These, however, are the exceptions, single track being almost universally used.

The railroad to Concord passes through Lowell, Manchester and Nashua. Manchester is a young but rapidly improving village. A cotton mill is about to be established there, in which there will be about five hundred looms. The largest factory at Lowell does not number more than two hundred and twenty. The railroad in many places runs along the banks of the river Merrimac, on which Concord is built. At Concord it is a noble river. The scenery along the line of road is interesting and at this season of the year, when the forest is arrayed in its gorgeous autumnal livery, looks extremely well. The land, however, is not so highly cultivated or so undulating as in Pennsylvania.

Shortly after passing Lowell, the road enters into the State of New Hampshire, or the "Granite State", as it is usually styled. This State, as may be inferred from its name, is more remarkable for its stone than for its clay. Indeed all the New England or "Yankee" States are very greatly inferior to the southern and western States in the quality of their soil. There are, of course,

some exceptions to the general rule of barrenness, as for example, the rich valley of the Connecticut river in Vermont, and some others which I do not know of.

The cars reached Concord at 10 1/2 a.m. To my utter astonishment and amusement I found that "the train dined at Concord", previous to starting at 11 o'clock a.m. I had, as I conceived, been tolerably well broken in to dining at any hour when dinner was placed before me, no matter how early. Nay, sometimes I have even come out very strong at one of their twelve o'clock dinners, while travelling. But here I confess I was fairly beaten; and not possessing the convenient appetite of "Captain Dalgetty", or of my Yankee fellow travellers, I sauntered about the town while they were stowing away their pounds of steak in their usual "high pressure" style.

On reaching Concord, my luggage was transferred to one of a dozen coaches which were waiting to receive the passengers. During my wanderings through the town I discovered that there was a route by the White Mountains to Burlington, which—though much longer—was infinitely more interesting than the direct route through Haverhill and Hanover. This route, therefore, I resolved to take, having a little time and money to spare, and accordingly I directed the coachman to transfer my chattels from the Hanover stage to the stage for the White Mountains. "What?" said the coachman, in astonishment, "I thought you told me, Sir, that you wanted to go to Burlington?" "Yes," said I, "but I go by the White Mountains." "Well, I guess if you are going to Burlington, this is the stage you want. You have no call to go to the White Mountains at all."

After some time I succeeded in persuading the fellow that I was really going to Burlington by the White Mountains, and he at length took down my baggage and left it on the ground, for the White Mountain stage. I heard him afterwards remarking, as he pointed to my baggage, with an air of mingled pity and astonishment, "Going to Burlington by the White Mountains!" The idea of my going out of the direct road, for the purpose of seeing the White Mountains—which present perhaps some of the most splendid scenery in the United States—never once occurred to the mind of the Yankee coachman; and when, in reply to some query as to my business in going to the White Mountains, I answered that "At present my business is pleasure", he seemed more completely confounded than before.

While surveying the stage, which was honoured by being selected for a short time as the bearer of Caesar and his fortunes

(i. e. self and portmanteau), I was somewhat surprised on reading upon the coach, "Concord, *Meredith* and White Mountains." I soon ascertained that there was a thriving village of the name on the way to the White Mountains, and about twenty-five miles from Concord, and moreover I would have the felicity of sleeping there that night.

While on the road to this interesting "location", I was informed that I would have ample time to become acquainted with the place, as by some recent alteration of the stages I would be compelled to remain at the village for twenty-four hours; and worse than this, after leaving the place I could not advance more than thirteen miles upon my journey to the Mountains from Meredith. I confess I was somewhat disgusted on discovering that my progress was destined to be so exceedingly tedious, nor did the prospect of seeing my own town of Meredith console me.

Leaving Concord, the stage crossed the river Merrimac, and for some time the road went through the primitive forest, which here consisted of stunted fir trees, the soil being very light and sandy. The country, after we had left the forest behind, became very beautiful and undulating, presenting a chain of mountains to the view upon the north, and occasionally affording a fine view of the Vermont hills to the west.

At half-past three we came within sight of Meredith Bridge, which is very beautifully "located" (as the Yankees have it), upon the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee. (What a name for a respectable sheet of water!) The outlet of the lake, a river of the same unpronounceable name, affords the inhabitants the advantage of a fine water power, which they have turned to account, there being three large factories—two cotton and one woollen—on the river. The hill behind the town affords a beautiful view of the town and lake, of which however only a small portion can be seen. The lake, which would in another country be looked upon as a splendid sheet of water, is here considered little better than a pond. It is about twenty-five miles long and twelve miles broad, and numbers on its breast about 175 islands.

After tea I strolled out to look at one of the factories, or perhaps, if the truth were told, to see the factory girls, rather than the cotton yarns and spindles. At tea there were all kinds of cakes, with brown ryebread, pickles, apple puddings, pumpkin pies, small bits of cold beef, and various "sasses", but not a morsel of plain white bread. The traveller who wishes for white bread must, like the cautious vintner of whom Horace speaks, when going into the

country parts carry it amongst his *viatica*; for if he relies upon the country inns, he will find himself sadly disappointed in his reckoning.

The overseer at the cotton mill showed me everything very fully. The factory, he told me, had been established over ten years ago by some poor mechanic. They were "getting along" very well, and had now thirty-two looms in operation. They kept about sixty girls in employment. The girls here work fourteen hours per day, and earn about a dollar and a half per week besides their board. They all dress very well, and look very happy and healthy.

The overseer could hardly suppress his astonishment when I assured him that I could not form any guess as to what price some bed-ticking, such as he was then manufacturing, would sell at in England. He was equally amazed to find that I had never heard of Meredith Bridge. He told me that the most extraordinary revolution had been effected in the town within two years. From having been most drunken and intemperate, it had become remarkable for the good conduct and sobriety of its inhabitants.

I forgot to mention that on my way from Concord to-day I passed through "Shake" Village. This village is placed upon a rising ground, and is beautifully neat. The houses are all of wood and are painted white, the roof being dark red in colour. This is, I believe, the principal settlement of the "Shakers". I do not suppose that there can be more than two hundred or three hundred people in the village.

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October 9th: Had a very comfortable bedroom, and profited by it admirably. It was under the roof of the Winnepesaukee Hotel. As the stage for Centre Harbour was not expected before four p.m., I made a great effort to obtain a private conveyance to Centre Harbour, being very desirous to ascend Red Hill, of which I had heard a great deal. I could not succeed, however, in procuring any mode of conveyance, as all the horses were engaged by the sporting characters of Meredith Bridge who were engaged in a great shooting match that day.

A person at breakfast who, it appears, teaches the young idea how to shoot, literally being both schoolmaster and sportsman, gave me an account of a Yankee method of shooting pigeons commonly practised here. As the plan is novel, at least to me, I shall note it here, for the benefit of the sporting world.

One or two pigeons, whose eyes are sewed up, are attached to a pole by a long string. When a flock of pigeons appear, these

creatures are thrown into the air by the operator, who conceals himself in a booth or other shelter, near. The blinded pigeons, after describing some circles in the air, alight again upon the ground, imitating thus the motions of a pigeon that has succeeded in finding food. The flock of pigeons, attracted by these movements, make for the decoy pigeons and settle in myriads upon the pole, for the purpose, as it were, of reconnoitering the ground. They are then swept off by the murderous sportsmen in great numbers, the pole being placed at an acute angle to the ground, so that the shots from the booth rake the whole length of the pole.

The village of Meredith Bridge contains now about 1,200 inhabitants. There is another village upon this "Great Bay", for such is the name of that portion of Winnepesaukee Lake, in front of Meredith Bridge. It is called Lake Village and contains about 300 inhabitants.

At 4 p.m. I started for Centre Harbour, which is 13 miles from Meredith Bridge. The coach road, which in many places commands a fine view of the lake, passes over a very rocky and very hilly country. Indeed, on every side there are mountains in view, rather an unusual circumstance in an American landscape. The traveller is at no loss to understand the origin of the term "Granite State," as on every side he beholds huge masses of granite rock. The fields, too, are covered with huge stones. Even the characteristic "Snake Fence" gives place to the loose stone wall, built from the stones picked up from the adjoining fields.

I hope I shall not discover any more appropriate origin to the epithet, analogous to that in which the etymological traveller deduced the name Stony Stratford. When awakening in the morning he exclaims "Stony Stratford! Stony Stratford! Well art thou called Stony! for never was I so flea-bitten in the whole course of my life."

On arriving at Centre Harbour at 6 1/2 p.m., I sat down with the "coachie" to tea, and another gentleman who turned out to be one of the White Mountain guides. My coachie, who was very free and easy, assured the White Mountaineer that the hills of which he was telling "was not a circumstance" to the hills which we had crossed, between this place (Centre Harbour) and Meredith Bridge.

Meredith Village is about three miles from Centre Harbour. It is prettily situated on the lake. The whole road over which I travelled to-day was through Meredith County, so that I could not but feel myself at home upon it.

I have given directions to be called at four o'clock a.m., so

as to be able to ascend the Red Hill before the coach leaves in the morning for Conway.

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October 10th: I awoke very early in the morning, having dreamed that I had been called for the purpose of starting for Red Hill. Having with some difficulty succeeded in persuading myself that my call was merely of my own imagination, I attempted to sleep again. Before I had quite effected my purpose, I was veritably called by the bar-keeper, who awoke me for the commendable purpose of telling me that it was then past five o'clock, and consequently that it was useless to call me. I afterwards discovered that I did not suffer any great loss in consequence of my friend's laziness, as the morning was too hazy and the view from Red Hill would have been very limited. I breakfasted at seven, and started at a quarter to eight.

The "Granite State", I must confess, supports its character well, the road from Centre Harbour to Conway in bareness and stoniness surpassing even that which we passed yesterday. During the entire drive of thirty-two miles there was not an attractive field to be seen. There were indeed a great number of orchards along the road, and these appeared to be plentiful and good. Every house upon the road displayed long strings of apples, peeled and sliced, and hanging from the windows to be dried. Such is the rude process which is adopted here for preserving apples. The driver was not a little amused when I said the soil was most excellent for raising roads, and indeed for this purpose it was admirable, being light and sandy.

The only portions of the State which are available for cultivation are some of the valleys or alluvial beds formed by the river running through the State. Such, for example, as the valleys of the Connecticut, Merrimac and Ossipee rivers. These alluvial valleys, which seem to be devoted principally to pasturage, are termed "Intervals". While at Conway, I saw one of these "Intervals", that formed on the river Pequaket, which runs through the village. The appearance of green fields, with cows and sheep innumerable "dotting" the green braes gloriously with spots of living light, was really refreshing after the barren and gloomy rock-strewn country through which I had passed.

Although the country was hopelessly sterile, it was far from being unpicturesque. On every side were ranges of mountains, (not exactly as high as the Alps), but still very decent mountains. On the north the Sandwich and on the east the Ossipee Moun-

tains, while to the south we had the Guildford Hills and Gunstock Mountains. This last mountain received its name from the fact that a huntsman had killed a catamount, which attacked him while his musket was unloaded, with the stock of his gun. We passed innumerable ponds upon the roadside. The Ossipee Pond is really a very noble and beautiful lake; and from the view which I had of it from the coach I should think it would rival Lake George in beauty.

Before striking Lake Ossipee, we passed through some miles of primitive forest, there being little more than room for the coach to pass. The fine trees had been cut down for timber. The forest stretches east, with but few interruptions, to Portland, in Maine, a distance of 50 miles. There is a boundless continuity of shade, enough to satisfy the most shady past. With the exception of this tract of forest, the valley through which I passed to-day looked like a country "broken out", so rugged and uninviting was its aspect. If, however, Irish beggars sometimes hide considerable sums of money beneath their rags, so it would seem does New Hampshire.

At Eaton Corners, which we passed through to-day, there is a lead mine; and at Jackson, on the road from this place to the White Mountains, there are mines of iron and tin. In spite of these internal resources of New Hampshire, I think that I should be disposed to concur with Daniel Webster, himself a native of New Hampshire, that it would be the best State in the Union to emigrate from.

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October 13th: At Conway, the capital of New Hampshire State. Breakfasted with my friend the coachman, and some others. I started from Conway, at seven a. m. It was a glorious morning, and the rising sun lit up the sides of the mountains with a mellow purple light. The air was perfectly clear, and everything seemed to promise that my pilgrimage to the White Mountains would be recompensed. The road for a considerable distance runs along one of the rich, green "Intervals" which support the State.

I soon discovered that our coachman was a genuine sportsman, and that he managed very beautifully to vary the labours of the driver by the pleasures of the sportsman. He praised his rifle, which he kept always ready loaded by his side, and informed me that during his drive from the mountains to Conway he had bagged no less than six brace of partridges (or, as he called them, "patt-ridges").

To-day, most unfortunately for our sporting coachman, the game was by no means plentiful. In fact he got but two shots at the "partridges", both of which he missed. After discharging his gun he waited five or six minutes to reload, during which time he committed the reins to my charge. Indeed after his second unsuccessful shot he got off his seat, reloaded, and gave chase into the woods. After about ten minutes he returned and resumed his seat with the utmost nonchalance, just as if he considered that shooting "partridges" was part of his duty as coachman. In consequence of this episode upon the journey, and stopping to play at bowles, or something of the sort, the passengers were delayed pretty nearly two hours longer than was at all necessary on the road to the White Mountain House.

The scenery in the White Mountain Notch, or Gap, is extremely fine, and reminded me very much of the celebrated Llanberis Pass in Wales. The palm, however, must be conceded to the Welsh pass, the mountains being very much higher and bolder. The mountains on one side of the road are covered with trees, whereas those on the other side of the road are generally devoid of vegetation, being generally of a slaty, crumbling character.

There are a very great number of slides, as they are termed, or furrows, in the sides of the mountains, made by the tumbling of great avalanches of earth from the upper part of the mountain. One of these landslides, which fell about eighteen years ago (about 1826), destroyed an entire family. They fled from their cottage some two or three hundred yards, and were all buried together under the rocks. A small heap of stones marks the place where their bodies were discovered, and the cottage escaped uninjured. Immense fragments of rock, which from time to time had fallen, strewed the ground on each side of the road. The levelling principle of democratic America seems to extend even into their mountains, the aristocrats of the natural world.

The Mountain House is situated at the western entrance of the Notch, and it commands a very fine view of Mount Washington. It is about nine miles from the House to the summit. Although the hotel had been generally filled during the summer, it was almost completely empty when I passed, the people having fled at the approach of snow and cold weather. One man, a botanist, had ascended the mountain the foregoing day, and had camped upon the hillside during the night. This plan is not very often adopted, as the ascent and descent can be readily accomplished in eight hours or less.

From the Mountain House we drove to Littleton, 18 miles,

without changing horses. This seemed to me to be a very long stage, but I was doomed to experience a still longer one that evening; for on reaching Littleton, and being desirous of pushing on to Danville, I took my place in the open wagon for that place, which was 25 miles distant. In taking my seat beside the driver, I enquired how often we changed upon the road. He told me that we would not change at all, that these horses would take us the entire distance. Now, it was then about 6 1/2 o'clock p.m.; and as we had but two horses, miserable looking creatures, unlike in everything but their decrepit condition, I did not much relish this notion. To add to the discomfort, there was no moonlight and the night was rather cold. It was a situation remarkably adapted for the display of Mark Tapley's power of being jolly under disadvantageous circumstances. We did not reach Danville until half-past two o'clock.

Immediately after leaving Littleton we crossed the river Connecticut, the boundary between New Hampshire and Vermont, and then found ourselves in the latter State. I had been consoling myself during the 25 miles stage with the prospect of a hot supper and good night's rest on reaching Danville, but *Diis aliter visum*; on my reaching there the landlord indeed assured me that I should have supper, by all means, but I found that the supper consisted of tea and cakes, spread upon a large table in a cold room. I begged to decline the supper, mixed a tumbler of hot brandy punch, and retired to bed.

Previous to retiring for the night, I paid my bill, which for the brandy amounted to a quarter of a dollar. The landlord gave me, at the same time, the facetious intelligence that I would be called at three o'clock, as the stage started at four. The object of routing out unfortunate travellers at that unchristian hour, was, as I afterwards found, to secure their breakfast at Marshfield, where the proprietor of the stage kept a hotel. There certainly was nothing to be gained, as far as the passengers were concerned, by this proceeding, as the stage reached Montpelier fully two hours before the stage from Concord, for which one is obliged to wait before proceeding to Burlington.

Montpelier is the capital of Vermont, and is extremely prettily situated. The State House is a fine building of stone. Here as elsewhere I found every seat, both in the Senate and the Hall of Representatives, provided with its appropriate spittoon. While at Montpelier I had an opportunity of seeing the Assembled Wisdom of the State. The day preceding my arrival had been Election Day, as they term it, meaning thereby the day of assembling for the despatch of business.

From Montpelier to Burlington, 40 miles, we drove six hours in the stage. The road was along the banks of the Onion river, or rather the Wanouska river, which latter name is certainly more euphonious, although the former expresses the same meaning. The Indians gave the name, Wanouska, from the fact that the soil of the banks enclosing it is very favourable to the cultivation of onions.

The far famed Green Mountains add very much to the beauty of the drive. We passed along, close to the Camel's Hump, the highest point but one in the entire range.

But I grow weary of my jottings, finding myself once more in this city where everything indicates activity and toil, and I shall therefore merely say that through the instrumentality of Capt. Sherman's immortal Burlington I found myself at St. John's on the morning of the 14th, when I proceeded by railroad to Montreal.