

A TOUR OF THE MARITIME PROVINCES OF CANADA, 1834

Articles by JAMES BROOKS
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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	2
<i>To Our Readers</i>	3
1st Letter: Bangor ME	3
2nd Letter: St. John NB	6
3rd Letter: Halifax NS	10
4th Letter: Halifax NS	13
5th Letter: Nova Scotia	16
6th Letter: St. John NB	22
7th Letter: Fredericton NB	26
8th Letter: Houlton ME	29
9th Letter: Bangor ME	33

FOREWORD

James Brooks was born in Portland, Maine, in the first decade of the 19th century. His early years were marked by the loss of his father at sea, and the family's consequent financial difficulties. In overcoming these obstacles, he showed himself to be a prototypical "self-made man" — rising from apprentice to college graduate and attorney-at-law, from essayist and journalist to newspaper editor and owner, and culminating as a United States congressman.

In 1834, James Brooks was working as editor of the *Portland Advertiser*. That autumn, he visited two of the Canadian Maritime Provinces, publishing a series of newspaper articles about his travel experiences. His observations of those far-off days are a useful source of information for the modern reader.

To Our Readers

Portland (Maine),
September 30th, 1834.

Mr. Brooks, whose correspondence our readers have so often been acquainted with—and favorably acquainted with, we hope—left Portland this morning on a journey to the Eastward, to go at least as far East as St. John, N.B., and if cholera and quarantine will permit, to Halifax in Nova Scotia. After making this journey, he will, if not impracticable, go up the river St. John, and across the country to the St. Lawrence, then to Quebec and Montreal, and then as far West as time will permit, previous to the meeting of Congress in December; and in Washington he will continue till January.

During this journey, Mr. Brooks will correspond for the Advertiser as hitherto, and for one of the leading newspapers in the city of New Orleans. We are not able to say whether he will furnish us with a regular series of letters before he reaches the Canadas, as the affairs of our own State are pretty well known to our subscribers. But we have made this early announcement to our readers, and to others who may feel interested, so that they may understand when, and from whom, is to come the correspondence.

1st Letter: Bangor ME

Bangor (Maine),
October 4th, 1834.

Everybody must write a letter from Bangor, this rising city of the East, and so I begin mine. I gave you last year an account of matters and things here. I have not much to add that is new, for storms, wind and mud, one can see but little of a place amid. A few more hills have been torn down. A few more houses have been sprinkled about. Many more

people have come here. The new hotel is indeed a magnificent building, but I should not pardon myself if to mine own host of the Exchange Coffee House, I did not pay the merited compliment of saying, that I have never been in a house where a better table was kept, better regulations prevailed, or over which a more gentlemanly man presided.

When one sees a place *jumping* up like Bangor, for there is no *growing* about it, one is earnest to know the cause, the why and the wherefore. How is it? What causes it? They talk of the lumber trade—of logs and lands—of rivers with formidable consonants and unpronounceable names. But, after all, though these do much, they do but little or nothing toward the increase and prosperity of a place when compared with a spirit of enterprise—with courageous speculation—with a foresight that sees what is *to be*, and falters not in pursuit of it. If I understand the character of the Bangor people, that is pre-eminently the spirit that prevails here. There are many young men, and they engage in trade and adventure with the warmth and enthusiasm that commonly distinguish young men. Some of the best blood too of our State has come here— young men who had nothing at home but their own energies and talents, and who rushed here with a high spirit for enterprise, and who, in venturing much, have gained much. Hence, projects that would startle some of our capitalists, they engage in with confidence, and thus far they have succeeded. Prophecy has predicted their ruin, and croaked over their downfall; but Bangor has gone on increasing, and as yet destined to increase, in a growth that will soon leave Portland in the rear, unless our capitalists awake, and see what is going on, and what *might* go on about them. We are about a half-century behind the age. True, they are a little mad, but yet there is a method in their madness. One likes to hear them prophecy. There is something agreeable in their visions. They show one Greenleaf's map,¹ and talk of railroads—the Lord knows where—among lakes that a man can't pronounce, and by rivers that one never heard of. "*A splendid hotel*", says one, "*we are going to have here.*" Here! Where? and where do you think, but in the deep woods, where the path is just spotted out. "*We'll have one here on Moosehead Lake,*" he goes on adding. "*We'll make a road. The trout fishing is excellent. We'll make it but thirty-six hours distant from Boston.*"

¹ Moses Greenleaf (1777-1834) — Known as "Maine's first mapmaker"

We'll connect it with the Canada road to Quebec. We'll make it the grand highway."

Now here is adventure for you. One's head is turned dizzy. But dizzier still my head was made, when yet another speculation had conquered the Canadas, or rather the Canadas themselves had become States of the Union—and then a railroad was made from Quebec to the ocean, and the St. Lawrence was rendered useless, as it were, and our State, or the Bay of the Penobscot, had become what New York City is, the outlet of a vast interior. To hear these things is as good as reading Byron's *Manfred*.² It wakens up one, and lifts up one's ideas. As for limiting the springs of Yankee enterprise, who will undertake to do it? People, who, from Maine, will carry on the lumber business in Georgia and Florida—what will they not do at home!

In Bangor, it is said, there are already 8,000 inhabitants. How this may be I don't know, but if there are 2,000 names on the voting list, as it is said there are, this is not improbable. A large proportion, however, of the population is male. This is visible in the churches, as well as easily accounted for from the fact, that here a large number of young men resort, without families, and many, it is probable, for but a short residence.

I have never before travelled the seaboard route from Portland to Bangor, and now I must confess myself surprised at the extent and beauty of the villages all along the coast. Indeed, from Wiscasset to Bangor, there is almost a—continuous, I was going to say—succession of villages upon the road. On the Damariscotta river, and at the foot of the Pond, there are villages in which much business is done. Waldoboro is a pleasant town. Warren is more than pleasant, thriving and attractive. Thomaston is wealthy. Prosperity there seems to crown the exertions of all. The village at East Thomaston seems to be remarkably thriving. I went into the State Prison, and scrambled a half-mile or more, on a staging, upstairs and downstairs, around the spacious area in which is the limestone, and where is worked the granite. Never was there more civil or gentlemanly conductors—but though I don't like to

² *Manfred* — Dramatic poem (1816-1817) by Lord Byron, having elements of mystery and the supernatural

introduce politics into my letters, yet I must say that if they would devote the time, it is said they spend in electioneering, to making the prisoners keep the prison neater, it would be better for the prisoners, better for themselves, and better for the State. It does not compare in this respect to Charlestown, or the other State Prisons I have seen. Camden, too is a beautiful village. The road all along from Warren, beyond Camden, is dotted with limekilns. They tell me I must blow up Duck Trap toll bridge—a little bridge with a few more than a dozen planks over a little cove—to cross which they charge an enormous toll: and therefore, be it known that Duck Trap Bridge may consider itself blown up.

Belfast is the next large town in order. I sang its fame in my former wanderings. And then, further up the river, comes the upper village of Frankfort, a jewel of a village, where one might pass his days in peace—*if it were not in the county of Waldo!* To Frankfort, follows Hampden—we passed it in thick darkness—and then the City of Bangor, the Cincinnati of the East, with which I began and with which I end. I go in search of the East on Monday morning.

2nd Letter: St. John NB

St. John, (New Brunswick),
October 23rd, 1834.

Out of the woods at last am I, that is, where mails go, and news can circulate once in a century at least. By this time, I dare say, you think you ought to be hearing from a wanderer, who promised to write you some accounts of his journeyings. Since I wrote you from Bangor, I have crossed the Bay of Fundy, and have been through Nova Scotia, tarried awhile at Halifax, and tarried long at Annapolis, where I was compelled to wait for a steamboat to take me back to St. John. And now for an account of matters and things by the way.

I left Bangor on Monday, Oct 6, and arrived in Eastport Tuesday evening. The villages between Bangor and Eastport I need not speak of

at length, as they are better known to your readers than to a hurried traveler in a stagecoach. Ellsworth looks like a thriving and increasing village. One then is carried into not a very promising country, where the clearings are but few and far between, and where population has pushed but little into the interior. Cherryfield was our stopping place for the night. Columbia was rapidly passed through. Then came the Machiases, which are two neat and pretty villages, that seem to a traveler like an oasis in the desert, after he has been for hours amid huge trees, stripped of their foliage, with their naked branches towering to the skies, all burnt and blasted by some desolating fire, which has given the woods for miles and miles a most hideous aspect. I must confess that I was disappointed in this part of Maine, and the disappointment was greater, probably, as the unexpectedly beautiful picture which one can see, all along the shore road west of the Penobscot, leads one to expect something as unexpected east of the Penobscot. Population, however, has made but little advances there. The villages are thriving, and generally speaking, pleasant and attractive. All or almost all, seem to be doing well, who live there. But the genius of agriculture does not sit there, that goddess that makes the wilderness blossom like the rose, that sweeps off the forest, and scatters over hill and plain the charming farmhouse, and the happy farmer, and his happier family. Lumber is one of the sources of trade, and fishing another; and there is an apparent reluctance to touch the soil. Indeed, there are upon the sea coast but few temptations to touch the soil, so miserable is much of it, and so barren; but the interior, it is said—though but few people have as yet penetrated there, at least in the region of Machias—there is a more inviting region, the soil is better and the climate freer from damps and fogs.

From Machias, the traveler goes through the woods, and the woods, and the woods. The hideous burnt trees hang over the rocks like grim specters, as if to frighten off the settler. Nothing can be more dismal. In the glimmer of twilight, it would cost no fancy to suppose them to be anything other than what they are, such a desolation do they fix upon everything. Upon my word, the Dismal Swamp³ is a paradise in comparison. How beautiful then do the green fields of Dennysville

³ Dismal Swamp — On the border of Virginia and North Carolina; Brooks visited this district in 1833.

appear, the well-worked farms—the handsome dwellings, and the handsome church. The beauty of the picture is redoubled by the contrast. From Dennysville, we come to Pembroke, a village of some importance—and then comes Eastport—the end of the East, as we suppose it in the Western section of Maine; but the beginning, as they reckon things there, and but the beginning as I have found it: for, at Halifax, they talk with the utmost coolness of “the Eastern stage,” and there too, with a laughable *sangfroid*,⁴ they advise the traveler to go “down East,” that is to Pictou, to Prince Edward Island, or to the jumping-off place on the banks of Newfoundland. Rely upon it then, there is no “down East”, as there is no “West” as everybody will tell you, who has travelled there, each man you ask pointing to some region beyond, and thinking his neighbor farther advanced than he is. At Eastport, there is an Eastern mail. At St. John, there is an Eastern people. At Halifax, there is an Eastern stage.

Eastport is a beautiful island, take it all in all. There is about it much magnificent scenery. From the summit of its loftiest hills, one can see far and wide—and when the day is clear—but alas, when is it clear of fog in the Bay of Fundy?—the prospect is as charming as almost any in the Union. From the hills of Eastport, for the first time, I saw a foreign land; and from one of its hills, in the neat and superb parade ground of Fort Sullivan, the American flag floats in full sight of the dominions of a British monarch. The village of Eastport is built chiefly of wood—and exhibits signs of general prosperity and increase. Its fortunate position in peace, the frontier town of the Eastern section of the United States, gives it a thousand advantages, of which it daily reaps the profit, as the depot of the people under the two governments.

From Eastport, my next move was in the steamboat to St. John. Having been regularly inducted into the mysteries of *pounds*, *shillings* and *pence*, and been told that a *shilling* currency is twenty cents, and that of course five *shillings* make one dollar, and a *pound* is four of our dollars, and seeing for the first time the hills of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, I felt quite gratified for any pecuniary encounter with the Bluenoses,⁵ as they are called—why and wherefore, I wish some lexicographer would

⁴ *Sangfroid* — Imperturbability; “cool”

⁵ Bluenose — Person from Nova Scotia

tell me. Of course, there was a fog. That is always a matter of course I should say, though a friend did whisper to me in confidence, which I hope I am not violating by sending it to you in a letter, that the sun does occasionally shine clearly, particularly in the autumn, and in the mornings of summer. Indeed, I saw some such indications myself. The blazing orb did twice or thrice peep thro' the clouds, but it immediately veiled his face, as if he were not acquainted with this part of the globe, and shrank from the obtrusion of which he had been guilty. But be this as it may, it was as dark and as thick as drizzle could make it when we moved by Campo Bello (why this name? I do like to know the reason of things, for a Campo Bello it is not in appearance)⁶—and the first we again saw of land was the rocky shores, mountain high, of New Brunswick, looming up in the mist, like Alps and Alleghenies.

Anon, we were boarded by the physician of the port of St. John, who told us we "*must be fumigated.*" "*Fumigated!*" "*Why?*" we asked the captain of our steamer. "*Fumigated!*" What on earth have we done, that we must be fumigated. "*Fumigated you must be,*" said the captain; and for the fumigation we therefore prepared, with Christian fortitude and resignation. Indeed, I had no great objection to undergoing the process, for, as I had never witnessed a fumigation, and as one must learn by observation and expression, why should I not undergo a fumigation, for the sake of learning what a fumigation was? The doctor then boxed us up in the cabin of the steamer, carefully closed the windows, ordered us to undo our luggage, and then emptied the dreaded bottle into his chloride of lime, and then the smoke steamed up in columns and clouds, and cohorts—and we continued coughing and sneezing, and sneezing and coughing, and coughing and sneezing again, till the doctor himself laughed at the hubbub he had raised. Hard way of learning, this! thought I. Bad treatment, this, in foreign parts! But when the fumigation was over, at least, thought I, they will give us the logic of it; for when a doctor raises such a disturbance in a man's nostrils and throat, it is very rational that he should tell the patient why. Well, the logic is this. The cholera was in Halifax. *Argal*,⁷ as Shakespeare says, we smoke those that come from the State of Maine. This may be good logic in his Majesty's

⁶ The name Campobello was coined by a captain of the Royal Navy. It refers to the British Governor of Nova Scotia, Lord William Campbell (1730-1778), being an Italian-sounding form of this surname.

⁷ Argal — Therefore

dominions, but I'll be hanged if it is elsewhere—particularly when not a case of cholera has occurred in Maine, when it was all over, or nearly all over in Halifax, and when, furthermore, it was already prevailing in St. John. The fumigation over, we were then delivered to the Custom House, who treated us very civilly, and handled our little unmentionable articles very lightly; and then, after they had marked us as examined, we were landed at the wharf in St. John.

3rd Letter: Halifax NS

Halifax, (Nova Scotia),
(undated)

Annapolis is 56 miles from St. John. It is a famous city in the annals of Nova Scotia. Here was the old seat of government for many years. Here the old French and English governments fought their battles. Here, the French threw up almost the first fortification that was thrown up in America. Here, New England valor more than once displayed itself in contact with the arms of France. The party that once possessed Annapolis, the city of Annapolis as it was, Annapolis Royal, possessed the whole of Nova Scotia. Here, to this day, are some of the remains of the old French fortifications, a British garrison at this moment occupies, and from them, for the week past, have I heard the Kent bugle summon English soldiers to arms, to parade, and to sleep. But Annapolis has lost its ancient glory. Its star has gone down. It is now but an inconsiderable place, garrisoned, I know not why, by the British, unless it be that they have nowhere else to put their troops. Some trade is there carried on, but it cannot be much; and the party that now should seize it, would be far from possessing the whole of Nova Scotia.

Halifax is 132 miles from Annapolis, and the journey is performed in two days, in a stagecoach. Part of them are like the coaches of New England, and the other part are an indescribable sort of a go-cart, which somewhat resembles a camel taking his hump back into his mouth, and then trotting off four or five miles in an hour. We left Annapolis in the morning, and stopped for the night at Kentville, a pretty little village 60

miles from Annapolis, where there is a courthouse and jail, and two or three cottages. There we stopped on Sunday—and there too, we had a wide view of a magnificent extent of country, which is perhaps the most fertile and best cultivated part of Nova Scotia. Indeed, we have altogether a New England, at least. I have underrated the value and importance of this province. There are no farms in New England better, and but few so good as those in the township of Cornwallis, in Kings county. This township, as well as part of Horton, are made up of what is called interval land, land rescued from the tides, by dykes and ditches, as fertile almost as the alluvial bottom of the Mississippi, excellent land for grass and grazing, and never needing manure. No landscape can well be more beautiful than these intervals present, when varied with little hills, and dotted all over with painted farmhouses. For miles and miles there is such a prospect from a hill near Kentville, where you can see the Basin of Minas, the valleys on the river Halitant, Cornwallis and Gaspereau, all charming valleys, as beautiful as any I ever saw in any part of the United States; and all in a high state of cultivation, now lively, as it were, with numerous flocks who have been let into the fields, and who but add to the charms of the scenery. Little did I, with my ideas of Nova Scotia, cold, foggy Nova Scotia, as I ever considered it to be, expect to see such a spectacle as this, almost in the heart of its interior. But Nova Scotia is not near so foggy as on the other side of Nova Scotia, and the people contend that there is no more fog there than elsewhere. Nor is it so very cold, tempered as the climate is by the high tides that run up the rivers, and the contiguity of the sea.

The valley, or intervals which I have been describing, were chiefly settled by New Englanders, many of whom emigrated here before the war of the revolution, tempted to settle upon the rich lands from which the Acadians, the original settlers, had been driven, and some of whom came after the war broke out: the tories, or Loyalists, or Refugees as they are called. Hence, everything has the appearance of New England, and I should not know, from appearances, but that I was in the heart of a New England state, so like do the farmhouses appear, so like are the people, and their manners and habits. They want only our politics, and the excitement attendant upon them, to make the resemblance complete. The story of the Acadians, whose happy situation the Abbé

Raynal⁸ so enthusiastically describes, banished from their homes, driven into exile, robbed of their lands, plundered and driven from Georgia to Mexico, your readers will probably remember. They were the French, or descendants of the early French, and their crime was that they were suspected by the English, because they were French, and because their religion was Catholic, and not that of the English—and hence they were persecuted and proscribed as they were. The remains of their settlements are yet often to be seen. The willow tree, their favorite tree, often marks their residence, and numerous orchards have been pointed out to me, as planted by the hands of the Acadians.

From Kentville, we went to Halifax on Monday, distant 72 miles. Magnificent farms we went by as we journeyed from Kentville to Windsor. Windsor is an important town in Nova Scotia. There, the plaster of Paris comes from. There too, is the college for the province, and the academy, the first situated on an eminence, in an agreeable position, having a most extensive view of finely cultivated fields all around. The village, or town rather it is, from its size, is well built, and the streets are neat. Some business, much, perhaps I may say, is done there, but as it is not a free port as Halifax, Pictou, Liverpool and Yarmouth are—that is, a port into which articles can be imported from foreign countries—it lies under many disadvantages. After leaving Windsor for a mile, we enter upon a more barren country, till it begins to look quite unpromising and dismal, full of bogs, and heathland, and fields and hills covered with rocks. The road, however, over all these is excellent. The province has spent much money on this, its principal road, and there is none better in the United States, the macadamized roads except. Twelve miles from Windsor, we changed our go-cart for a handsome coach, on which were many showy labels, such as “the Royal Western Mail Coach,” a crown, and W. R., with the armorials of the King. The driver too seemed to enter into the spirit of his craft. He sounded his horn with an air, and scattered his letters and newspapers along, with all the pomp and circumstances of the profession. About ten miles from Halifax, the road strikes the margin of Bedford Basin, which makes a part of the harbor of Halifax, and will hold (it is said) a thousand vessels—and this we followed in quite a romantic road, and by many

⁸ Guillaume Thomas Francois Raynal (1713-1796) — French author of a history of European trade in the Indies and the Americas, in which he "portrayed the Acadians as living in perfect harmony with nature and themselves."

cottages or country houses of the gentry of the city, till we reached the Arcadian Hotel in the dusk of the evening, the only hotel in Halifax, and not a remarkable one either.

4th Letter: Halifax NS

Halifax, (Nova Scotia),
October 18th, 1834.

The cholera has just finished its career of destruction at Halifax, where it has driven a fatal car, seeking out particularly, for its victims, the poor, the miserable, the unfortunate, and intemperate, and, with some few exceptions, sparing all others. The military it first seized, and they were its victims, till they broke up their encampment in the town, and pitched their tents in the country. The population of Halifax in 1828 was 14,439. Probably it was not so great when the cholera broke out, from the fact that its trade has not been very prosperous the year past, and that the other towns in Nova Scotia, made free ports, have interfered with its trade—a trade which it for a long time exclusively enjoyed. The population, many now say, is not over 10,000, and, of these, the Board of Health have reported over 600 deaths, and many contend that a thousand have died. If this be so, the pestilence has indeed carried death on its wings.

Halifax is situated on the western declivity of a hill fronting the Bedford Basin. Across the Basin, on the Dartmouth side, it has a very pleasant and showy appearance. The streets are regularly laid out, and cross each other at right angles. All of them have been macadamized, or covered over with hard and durable materials. The houses and stores are built chiefly of brick, though there are many of wood. The government houses, guarded by a soldier armed *cap a pie*,⁹ is a building erected by the province for the use of the government, and is now occupied by Sir A. Campbell, who is the present Governor of Nova Scotia. The admiral's house was built by the province for the use of the admiral

⁹ *Cap a pie* — from head to foot (Old French)

of the station, and is now occupied by Sir Geo. Cockburn,¹⁰ whose command reaches from Bermuda to Newfoundland. By the way, I believe he is the same admiral that played such villainous pranks on our shores during the last war. In politics, he is a tory, and it is said that the British Whig ministers gave him this the most lucrative of their naval stations in order to get him out of the way, as he had been in the Admiralty, and is a man of much experience in naval matters. But the most showy building of all is the Province House—the Capitol, as we should call it—truly an elegant structure, and far handsomer than any of the State Houses I have seen in any of the States. It is built of brown freestone—140 feet long, 70 wide and 42 high. In it are all the various Provincial offices, and there the Assembly and the Council meet. The Assembly room extends the whole width of the building. The members of the Assembly sit in one continuous seat, with no desks, no tables, no pen and ink before them, and hence with no faculties for note-taking, and subsequent spinning out of long speeches. There is nothing else very remarkable in the Assembly Room, but the Council Chamber is a very showy room, with rich carpets; a throne, or if that is too big a word, with a chair, elevated on a platform, for the Governor, where he sits with his Council; and then the walls are covered with portraits of wigged and ermined Judges, and crowned and robed kings and queens. The present King William has lately sent over a full-length portrait of himself in his coronation robe, and this in remembrance, as I understand, of his station here when an officer in the Royal Navy.

The King's Dockyard is the next thing worthy of attention. This is the largest establishment the British have in America. A high wall separates it from the town. I did not note anything remarkable in it, but workshops and warehouses, buildings for officers and servants, &c. Off in the harbor were three or four British men-of-war, as black as thunderclouds; and why is it that the British paint every vessel so hideously black, even their steamboats?—And then there is Fort George, on which they are now erecting an immense, (and to me, it seems, though I am not versed in such matters, a most costly,) fortification—of granite chiefly—with ditches deep, and well-guarded. And what on earth can all this be for? Why this expenditure of treasure? Is it to terrify

¹⁰ George Cockburn (1772-1853) — 10th Baronet; Royal Navy officer; directed the capture and burning of Washington DC in 1814; Commander-in-Chief of the North American Station; (1851) Admiral of the Fleet

the poor colonists into everlasting subjection, to secure a perpetual foothold in America for British tools, or to keep us Yankees in awe? Be this as it may, most lustily do they ply their work, and a fortress as strong (I should think) as that of Gibraltar, is crowning a hill that overlooks the city, and commands the harbor. The Nova Scotians will have hard work to capture it by and by, when they set up for themselves, for I presume they will be thinking of this by and by, though they pretend to say it is treason now.

Nothing can strike an American, that is a Yankee, in Halifax, more oddly than the number of red coats he meets in the streets, and the pomp and parade of war around him. Troops are marching thro' the streets, here and there. The bugle sounds at this end and at that end of the city. Officers and their dogs are numerous, for, be it known, a dog seems to be a part of the paraphernalia of every British officer. The red coats of the infantry, and the green coats of the Riflemen meet one at every turn of the street. What a strange spectacle, too, is that of an armed sentinel guarding the gates of the Governor—and then of a sentry or two, or three or more, by every barrack, by the King's Dock, by the Ordinance Department, &c. &c. These things are very new to our eyes. What is the use of them in America? They may be necessary among the starving and infuriated population of Europe—but who would injure Sir A. Campbell, provided he slept o' nights without keeping up a man to walk up and down his gateway? Won't locks guard the dockyard? In a military station, all this perhaps is well. But when mingled with civil affairs, it seems very odd. The best troops in the British army, it is said, are stationed at Halifax, or, if not the best, some of the best. Three regiments are there at present, and a company of artillery. What a power, this of England, with her many faults and yet her many virtues! How wide her dominion! Her army is stationed in every quarter of the globe, and, well it is said, that the morning drum of her soldiery welcomes the sunrise in one continuous round, so widespread is her Empire, so vast her power, so numerous her possessions. Think of one little island, exercising this vast domain; one little island, hardly large enough in territory to make an American state; and yet, thundering in her fleets on every sea, unfurling her flag on every continent, on soil that is her own. But England lives on the past and the present. We live upon the future, and what a future it will be, if our Union is never dissolved.

5th Letter: Nova Scotia

(Nova Scotia),
October, 1834.

I have not a copy of the articles I have written you from Nova Scotia, so that I hardly know what I have written. I believe I spoke of the Province building in Halifax, which Haliburton¹¹ in his history of Nova Scotia, and all other loyal Nova Scotians, of course, pronounce to be the handsomest building in North America. This is not so, however. It is, true, a very pretty building, but it is far from being the handsomest building in North America. The Capitol at Washington is every way before it in grandeur, beauty and effect. Nevertheless, the Province Building is a very pretty building. If it were set on a hill as in the Capitol at Washington, it would produce a greater effect—but it is now in the center of the mart of business, almost buried in the earth. I think I wrote of its Council Room, an elegant room, its paintings, &c. &c., and of other offices belonging to it.

I wish Nova Scotia belonged to us Yankees. Really, I am full of a spirit of conquest. We do not know the value of this noble peninsula. We have no farms in Maine like very many of the farms—like whole townships—in Nova Scotia. Cornwallis and Horton are gardens, *bona fide* gardens; and though seen now in the decay of autumn, are, nevertheless, most beautiful gardens. The fogs of the Bay of Fundy never visit them. A range of mountains on the margin of the bay—or rather, the southerly winds which bring in the fogs, and thus carry them to New Brunswick—protect them. The soil there is very rich. The dyked lands are like the alluvial bottoms on the Mississippi. But all of Nova Scotia is not like this. I have seen the best part of it. As we approached Halifax, barrenness and sterility were visible enough. So, in all probability, is almost the whole country on the Atlantic sea coast, and on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. But then, what a sea coast! How full of fine harbors! What opportunities for the fisheries! How full of mineral wealth too! On the Bay of Fundy side,

¹¹ Thomas Chandler Halliburton (1796-1865) — Nova Scotian politician; *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, published 1829

there are grindstones and plaster, and on the other side, inexhaustible mines of coal. Shipbuilding, too, is carried on to a very great extent. The West India business is driven hard. Thus, you see, if the clime is inhospitable, there are remunerations for the loss of a more southerly sun. Of enterprise, there is much, but it is not Yankee enterprise—that unappeasable and daring thirst for action, that impels the old and young. The Nova Scotians do much. They are kindred spirits with us. They are the sons of New Englanders. They speak of us as with pride and pleasure. Very many of them boast their kindred—and many, I dare say, regret that, in an unlucky hour, they or theirs severed themselves from us before the war, or in the war of independence—but yet they want the impulse and energy of republican institutions. In short, they want the excitement of our politics, at which they laugh so much. Their young men want the impulse to exertion that our young men have. True, they can grow rich, but that is all. Riches, when acquired, seldom or never satisfy man’s ambition. Then he seeks for something else. He seeks for the political influence that property gives him. That is the crown of his pursuit, the reward often of his assiduous labors. But political rewards are things almost unknown in Nova Scotia. The powerful stimulus of our political action, operating upon all classes of society, and scattering rewards among all, is there unknown. I know not where in the world a young man’s situation can be worse., not even in England, for there rank exists, and rank rewards ambition. But, in Nova Scotia, there is not even that. They see and feel the influence, but only as it is imported from New England. The army has no rewards for them. Professional eminence they may obtain on a small scale. Wealth will not, as with us, operate so as to give them political power. There is little or no stimulus, in fact, for talent; but wealth, and such a stimulus, will never make a great people. It is too sordid.

It is no wonder then, that an American—for, by the way, they call us Yankees “Americans”, Yankee being yet a term of reproach—it is no wonder that a citizen of Maine, looking to such a fine province as Nova Scotia, which really ought to belong to us, should covet the possession of it. Their interests are identified with ours. Their cause is ours—and one of these days, they will be ours, and not by conquest either, but by request. As for conquest, I really fear it would be sorry business for us,

so many British troops are there, who are erecting another Louisbourg¹² in the form of a fortification¹³ at Halifax—a prodigiously stout fortification, terrific enough in my unmilitary eye, which no Sir William Pepperrell¹⁴ of Kittery, (Maine)—as in aforesaid times, when the spirit of our fathers was up—could take. But Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will, I am sure of it, be American States, and take from Maine the name of the border state. Why will they be? you will ask. Because it is their interest, I answer. *Home*, as they call Great Britain, is a burden to them, and they are a burden to home. By and by, they will demand why they may not elect Governors for themselves, instead of having two soldiers—good soldiers I don't doubt they are, such as Sir Colin Campbell,¹⁵ and Sir Archibald Campbell,¹⁶ sent out to govern them. What folly this! and the people have too much of our common sense, long to submit to it. Sir Archibald Campbell fights well in the Burmese war, and they make him Lieut. Governor of New Brunswick, to pay him for it. And then the people think of the "Lords", the Dukes, and the "Ducks," as Cobbett¹⁷ calls them, just as we do. All, they say, are very pretty things, when they don't have to pay for them. It costs nothing to say "my lord" to a man of noble blood—but if my lord had a foothold here, they would soon uproot it. But lords are handled as cavalierly here as other people. True, they are not often seen, and then they are in the army, or navy, or church, and so they are protected—but in civil affairs, we Yankees have set them sad examples of want of veneration.

The great example, which the people are evidently watching, is our

¹² Louisbourg — Large fortress located on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia; built by France in the 18th century

¹³ Halifax Citadel — Star-shaped fort, constructed between 1828 and 1856, on the site of previous defensive structures (Fort George)

¹⁴ William Pepperrell (1696-1759) — Merchant of Colonial Massachusetts; organized, financed and led the expedition which captured the French fortress of Louisbourg in 1745

¹⁵ Colin Campbell (1776-1847) — British army officer; served in India and the Peninsular Wars; Lt-Governor of Nova Scotia (1833); Governor of Ceylon, 1839-1847

¹⁶ Archibald Campbell (1769-1843) — British army officer; served in First Anglo-Burmese War; Colonial Administrator of New Brunswick, Canada, 1831-1837

¹⁷ William Cobbett (1763-1835) — English journalist, politician, supporter of democratic ideals and Parliamentary reform

example. Everything on our side of the St. Croix¹⁸ interests them, almost as much as it interests us. And, in everything, they contrast their situation with ours. They fully appreciate the spirit of enterprise that characterizes us. The number of our newspapers, though they have many when contrasted with Great Britain, they wonder at. The facilities for traveling, and the transmission of news, excite their attention—and indeed, they, when compared with us, are in a deplorable state of backwardness. For example, the mail is three days in traveling between the two great towns of Halifax and St. John, and often it is four or five at this season of the year, and the distance is but about 180 miles, 40 of which, however, is across the Bay of Fundy.

Not a daily, nor a semi-weekly, paper have they in either province. Nor would the people support one. There are six weekly newspapers in Halifax, five in St. John, I believe, two or three others in Nova Scotia, one at Pictou, where the coal comes from—and then they have a newspaper in Prince Edward Island, and one in Newfoundland, and one in Miramichi, one at St. Andrews, and one or two in Fredericton, which I believe includes nearly, or quite all, they have down east of us. But notwithstanding our example interests them so much, the professional men of the province, the Literati[?], are culpably ignorant of what we are doing, of all of our institutions, of the real working of our government. The businessmen there, who have trade with us, are far better informed. I remember of listening one Sunday in Fredericton with solemn gravity, which I could hardly keep in, to the most ludicrous blunders the members of the Bar were making. It would have made the most woebegone sinner in Christendom smile[?] to hear them discuss our Bank politics. Our Congress orators suffered severely. David Crockett was well known. One Webster was something of a man, so what is the difference in different kinds of fame, provided one has it? The newspapers—Oh, horrible—they wouldn't touch them. The elections were mobocracy¹⁹ right out. Bread and cheese, they contended, the Members of Congress actually ate in their seats, with their feet on the benches, and then they asked me if it weren't so—and I said yes, for even one's patriotism won't let one be. But then they did justice to our enterprise, to our canals, our railroads, our persevering

¹⁸ The St. Croix River forms part of the international boundary between New Brunswick and Maine.

¹⁹ Mobocracy — Rule by the mob

and indomitable industry. And well they may, for a Yankee would grow rusty, leading such a quiet life with no elections to engage in, no politics to talk, but few newspapers to read, and with his eyes fixed upon a little island, three thousand miles off, expecting news, laws and rulers from that by every packet.

If we had these provinces, what a different face all things would soon put on. A railroad across the Peninsula of Nova Scotia would be one of the first undertakings. St. John, at the mouth of its magnificent river, would soon be the largest city this side of New York. For the iron ore of Nova Scotia, which there could be worked to advantage, there being no duties to pay, we would send over flour—our southern products of all descriptions. Newspapers would thicken in all directions. The people would talk six times as much, and walk six times as fast, spending not half so much time at dinner, and soon learning the Yankee trade of eating. Cape Breton—what a mine of wealth this is, for such enterprise as we have. The fisheries are worth more than all the gold of Mexico. The population of New Brunswick would soon double and quadruple—and as for our businessmen in Maine, who already feel straitened in the *narrow* bounds of our own broad State, *there* would be a field for almost interminable enterprise, of all kinds and descriptions. Think, not yet have the British a road connecting the Canadas with the province of New Brunswick, though long ago, Sir James Kempt,²⁰ when Governor of Nova Scotia, pressed this subject upon public attention. How soon would our Military Road or the like, reach Miramichi, and a line of stages then run with the mail from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. We need all this exceedingly—and I hope some day we shall have it.

The purchase of Louisiana disturbed the balance of the Union—and that balance can only be restored to the Northern States by two or three strong States to be built up East of Maine. I have no fears of extending this Union to an undue size. If the government becomes a consolidated government, then the smaller the Union, the safer for the cause of liberty—but in a confederation of States, with a proper preservation of State Rights—why need we fear, even if we embrace all North America

²⁰ James Kempt (c1765-1854) — Born in Edinburgh; British army officer; served at Waterloo; lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia, 1820-1830

in the ample folds of our Union? The more States, the less danger of disunion: for when one State becomes restive, there are more to watch her and to keep her in awe. The more States too—I mean States of sufficient magnitude and sufficient importance—the stronger the check upon the tendency of the General Government to consolidation. I do not like the preponderating political power of the three great central States of the Union, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. If they move together, they crush us in the remote sections of the Union, or they engulf us in their petitions. The more States, then, on the outskirts of empire I say, the better—the better for liberty, and what is next to liberty, the preservation of the Union, which makes us all we are, or ever can expect to be, as a great republic, teaching a salutary lesson to all the nations of the earth.

Distance, in these days of rapid motion, is no objection. The prayer of the lover is almost realized, for time and space to the traveler, are *becoming* annihilated, if not annihilated yet. What is distance, when the Capital of the Union can be reached in less than 48 hours from the remotest Eastern State, as it can be with cars after the railroads between Baltimore and Washington, Boston and Providence are finished? What is distance when New Orleans will, within the lives of the middle-aged, be reached from Washington in four or five days. Distance is nothing now, though once it would have been an insuperable objection to such a magnificent Union. The Steam Horse, with the speed of the wind, and with sinews that never tire, has changed this world, and almost put us into another. Alas! we who are on the stage now, are on it a century too soon. We can only dream of what posterity is to do in this Western world. Other people brood over the grandeur and sublimity of the **past**—but, as Americans, we can fill the **future** with visions, and what is delightful, the best and the highest of them will be more than realized. But enough of speculation—I will enter upon particulars in my next.

6th Letter: St. John NB

St. John, (New Brunswick),
October 1834.

The steamer "*Henrietta*" took us across the Bay of Fundy—a treacherous bay it is too, with its everlasting fogs and its prodigious tide, deluding many a coaster, and benighted European, as he approaches its shores—and at noon, after some seven or eight hours of rough sailing, the forty miles athwart the bay, from Digby to St. John, were over, and we were landed in St. John, the largest town in, though not the capital of, New Brunswick. The port physician, who gave us the fiery fumigation when we went on from Eastport where there was no cholera, gave us but a gentle glance, when we returned from Halifax, where the cholera just *had been*, if there was none there now.

I asked everyone whom I met, what was the population of St. John—but none could tell, though all could "*fancy*", some number or other. I guessed it was some ten or twelve thousand—perhaps it is as large, in population, as Portland; but the census has just been taken, and we soon shall know. I have italicized the word *fancy*, for every man, woman, and child that make the least claims to respectability, fancy—just as we Yankees "guess", and the Virginians "reckon", and the Georgians "expect", or "'spect", as they pronounce it. "*I fancy the population is 8,000*", says one, "*I fancy it is 15,000*", says another. "*I fancy it is after ten o'clock*", says this man—and "*I fancy that it is a fine day*", says this woman. The old men *fancy*, and the young women *fancy*. Everybody *fancies*—and fancy at nothing, just as hundreds and hundreds exclaim "*indeed! indeed!*" no matter whether you communicate to them the important fact that their houses are burning down about their ears, or the unimportant fact that the day is fine or bad. *Fancy* is a sign of good breeding—and when that is the touchstone, who would not fancy? But I must not laugh at this peculiarity, for the well-bred people *do* speak good English, better than they of the same class speak this side of the boundary line—without our everlasting or ever-obtruding adjective, *considerable*, and that long word *terrible*, which qualifies everything

with many people, from “*a terrible cold day*” down to a “*terrible hubbly*,”²¹ or “*a terrible sloshy*” road.

The city of St. John is on the banks of the bay of St. John, with a gradual descent toward the bay. A majority of the streets are regularly laid out, and cross each other at right angles. To give some of them, however, a gradual descent, great expense has been incurred, as it was often necessary to [build some?] immense [ledges?], in doing which [...] The market in St. John is not a very remarkable building. Over it, there is a Reading Room, which, like the Reading Room in Halifax, is well-stored with English newspapers and periodicals, and with some few newspapers from this country. At this season of the year, business is uncommonly lively and brisk. A freshet in the river St. John had brought down immense quantities of lumber, and the harbor is crowded with English shipping, and hundreds of workmen are loading them as rapidly as possible. The shipping too, that are in the ports, are, generally speaking, of the largest size, intended, I suppose, for the lumber trade. Indeed, ships of immense size are built here and hereabout, not only in the neighborhood of St. John, but all along the lower part of the river St. John, and all along the northern part of Nova Scotia. The freshet on the river, which is bringing down so many rafts of timber, the numerous vessels in port, and the consequent activity in this, the closing business season of the year, in a region where the ice will soon chain up everything, gave to St. John life, animation, and apparent importance, which probably exaggerated everything in my view; for, indeed, it did seem like one of the busiest places in North America—a character, I believe, which it will not always sustain.

St. John, however, must, from the very nature of its position, be a large city—it may be, in the progress of time, the largest this side of New York—for it is at the mouth of a most magnificent river, one of the most important and valuable rivers this side of the Alabama, with a backcountry of immense extent, capable of sustaining a large population, that will ever seek vent for their trade in the city of St. John. While speaking here of the river St. John, I cannot but allude to its importance to us as a State, and of course to the United States, for we in this section of the State—and the more true is the remark, the further

²¹ Hubbly — Uneven; rough

that one goes west—have but a feeble idea of the importance of this truly magnificent river. As the Mississippi is our most important outlet to the tiers of States upon its own banks, and the banks of its tributaries, even so, the St. John is as important as an outlet to Maine; or to speak more precisely, the navigation of the St. John is as important to us, as the navigation of the Mississippi is to any one State on its banks. Steamboats ascend with ease to Fredericton, 85 miles from St. John; and with but little expense, they might ascend to Woodstock, where, indeed, they have been already—and I know not how much further up.

But, let anyone look upon the map, and trace out the tributaries of the St. John in Maine, and mark the manner in which the population upon their banks must be connected with its trade, then they will have an idea, but a faint idea, of the value that the free navigation of such a river would be to us. In every sense of the word, it is a noble river. It not only drains an immense extent of country, but much excellent land, capable of supporting a large agricultural population, whose market, more or less, will be at the city of St. John. Its tributaries too are rivers of themselves, important rivers, not only those from the East, but some of them from the Western side. Everybody speaks well of the land on the Aroostook, and all who know anything of the country go much beyond anything I have written in speaking of the importance, not only of the river St. John, but of that large territory which is now the subject of dispute between the United States and Great Britain—the subject of *dispute*, if it has not been trafficked away in some political bargain—I speak carefully; for, as important as that territory is, to us, as a people, yet it is a remarkable fact, that the people know not in what condition, or in what hands, is the negotiation.²²

I looked around into every nook and corner of St. John, as is my custom when travelling. York Point, where the cholera is raging, is a vile hole—full of an emigrant population, as filthy as they can well be—thus teaching people who would not have the cholera, the importance of being clean. The Parish of Portland, where there is also some cholera, is but a little better off as to neatness. The Irish emigrants here and hereabouts are crowded to suffocation almost—I dare not say how

²² The international boundary between New Brunswick and Maine was permanently settled by the Webster-Auburn treaty of 1842.

many there are in a house, lest I should be accused of exaggeration. I looked into the graveyard, where I found buried a son of one of the old Governors of Virginia, if I do not misread my notes—who, when driven off by the Revolution, came here to lay his bones. The Barracks—for the British have soldiers here, a Regiment, I believe—are on a handsome and airy plain. The redcoats are kept at home now, lest they should stray into the regions of the cholera.

Judge Chipman, now the Chief Justice of the Province, has an elegant establishment, with spacious grounds around it. There are seven other elegant houses, the names of whose owners I have forgotten. The Courthouse is one of the best, if not the best building of the kind in North America. There the Mayor has his court. There too, in the courtroom, are suspended the arms of the Province. A flight of stairs from the top to the bottom of the building, sustained on the principle of the arch, was worthy of attention. I was going to say something of the jail—but that rogue is a blockhead who stops long in any jail I saw in either of the Provinces.

Here, by the way, I must not omit the falls at the mouth of the St. John, a natural precipice—but yet with a fall up-stream as well as down-stream. The river is narrow at its mouth. The whole mighty current rushes through a narrow rocky channel with precipitous banks, and when the tide is down, the water falls over the rocks; but when the huge tide of the Bay of Fundy comes in with thirty or forty feet of water, seeking a passage up the narrow channel, it not only overwhelms the waterfall, but accumulates in a mass itself, and, vainly seeking a vent, tumbles over itself, and makes a fall in another direction. Of course, these falls are passable for vessels only at certain turn of the tide [...] the romance vein I would eulogize upon it—further than to say, that I understand that seven Yankees from Hallowell have purchased the privilege, and soon intend to cover it over, or partially to cover it over, with sawmills, and other such musical instruments—instruments, that if they do not discourse such delightful and romantic music as the harp and guitar, discourse in music far more profitable, and far more attractive to the ear of the speculator.

7th Letter: Fredericton NB

Fredericton, (New Brunswick),
October 1834.

What a rascally climate this is! For five or six days past, I have been trembling and shivering over every fireplace that our towboat has stopped at, from Fredericton to Woodstock—not the niggardly, beggarly fireplaces either of modern refinement, but prodigious ovens—immense brick caverns, almost, into which, it is no fiction that a cartload of wood can be upset, and there burn to advantage. Logs are piled upon logs, Pelion upon Ossa²³—foresticks²⁴ upon foresticks—and yet it is as cold as Greenland. A snowstorm, too, has come upon us. I am suddenly in the midst of winter; for winter, like spring, comes on here without the ceremony of notice or preparation.

I left St. John in the morning at 6 o'clock, in the steamboat "*Woodstock*," and about midnight we were landed at Fredericton—distance 85 miles. Our journey was longer than usual, as the wind was dead ahead, and the current swollen by the flood. On board, we had some of the dignitaries of the Province, and in a delightful warm cabin, we had a comfortable time. Is it the fashion here to address ladies by the titles of their husbands, to say Mrs. Attorney General, for Mrs. _____? I am sure I don't know; but, so did some of the people, and I ask for information. The dinner was at an English house, and eaten with English leisure. One can't help laughing, when he contrasts the rapid, devouring steamboat dinners with us, with the grave-like determination with which we ate of this. And yet our plan has its advantages. I travelled once, southward with an English gentleman, who never could get a meal before the stage horn summoned him hungry from his table, while I, having learned at College Commons the art of disposing of a dinner at the most in ten minutes, perhaps five—for a poor student in such a place, must devour quickly or starve leisurely—I had eaten enough and to spare, and was all prepared for a start in the best possible temper, while he would get up, fretting and growling, and cursing the whole generation of us Yankees. I don't wonder that John Bull, living on his little island, learns

²³ Pelion upon Ossa — making matters worse

²⁴ Forestick — Front log of an open log fire (such as a fireplace)

to eat thus gravely. but how can we Yankees eat thus? we who live in an immense country, and if we hope to get over it, must learn to eat flying—at least when we travel. We sat down to the table at 4 o'clock. A minister, who chanced to be travelling with us, asked a blessing. All the formalities of a regular dinner were gone through. The dishes were changed. The cloth was removed. The dessert was brought [...] the minister's blessing—for he did not detain us long—to a man travelling in a new country, through which he never expects to go again, and with his eyes wide open—panting to see everything. Give me the hop-skip-and-jump dinner when travelling—no confinement in a cabin—so that I can see what is about me, or see at least if there is anything worth seeing.

The banks of the river St. John, for some distance above the city, are rocky, high and wild, somewhat resembling the coast of Maine and New Brunswick. But as we ascended, our eyes fell upon many fine settlements upon the banks of the river—many fine houses—and the indications were, that there were many good farms in the neighborhood. We landed, as I said, at midnight, at the only hotel in Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick. The weather was bitterly cold. The wind howled, as if in the depth of winter. However, the good people make up in clothes what they lose in climate, and so one can pass the night very comfortably.

Next day, I prowled about to see the curiosities of Fredericton. The town, I suppose, has between three and four thousand inhabitants; but, as in St. John, nobody could tell—all "*fancied*". The streets seem to be regularly laid out. On the margin of the river there is one long street, extending the whole length of the town. Take it all in all, the town is a pretty town, and in it there are some handsome houses. I approached the barracks, and found the soldiers preparing for a parade. Anon, they marched out, clad in their most elegant uniform, for a review by the Governor of the Provinces, Sir Archibald Campbell—an officer who distinguished himself in the Burmese war, and who by some chance, is transferred, as British officers often are, from one end of the world to the other—from the Indies to the woods of North America. It was a fine spectacle, this review, and to me a new one. The Governor came on the

parade ground in his barouche,²⁵ with his aide-de-camp, and with servants in livery. His uniform was superb, and the star of his order glittered on his breast. Sir Archibald is a short, stout-built man, who looks as if he were every inch a soldier. The troops reviewed were two companies of grenadiers, and two other companies of infantry. The grenadiers were tall, well-built men, having on prodigious caps, which added to their apparent height almost a foot. On the parade ground, they went through a variety of evolutions, advancing, retreating, and firing, as if in earnest action. The Governor kept them over an hour, in a day most bitterly cold, while the poor fellows, standing erect, and under arms, found it most difficult to keep themselves comfortable, notwithstanding the variety and rapidity of many of their evolutions. But if the English have such fine troops as these all over the world, I do not wonder at the extent of their possessions. Almost all were young men, the very patterns of neatness, at least on the parade ground, under a discipline as perfect as one can well imagine, moving like so many machines, turned by a single crank. After the parade was over, they marched off the ground, the band of the regiment, in a most superb uniform, playing in the loveliest notes, with a skill and effect that charmed even my unmusical ear.

I could not help reflecting on the inutility of such a farce in such a place. What noble fellows would these be, thought I, to clear the woods in the vicinity—for piling—for making log fences, or stump fences, or stone wall, for grubbing, or any purpose that should enrich and advance the country, rather than resting here, just to consume the fruits of the earth. But then, the soldiers would not enlist for this. They enlist to be gentlemen—for the sake of wearing the fine coat, and being idle, as well as for the shilling a day—and I am told that it is the fact, that so many are the applicants for enlistment, that the enlisting officers take only the men of the best figure, and best promise. And yet, they desert, notwithstanding the eagerness of many of them to get into the army. The English troops at Fredericton desert, and make for the American lines; and on the other hand, the American troops desert from Houlton, and seek the British dominions—so restless is man!

²⁵ Barouche — type of horse-drawn carriage

I passed the evening with two officers, who had served in Portugal in the famous Peninsula campaign, under the command of the Duke of Wellington. What more interesting than these living, talking *books*, who will answer your questions, and are not dumb as the leaves of the paper you read. One can learn the horrors of war only by questions and answers. One of the officers who was then a Captain, was full of bullets and scars, almost. Many a night, he said, he had been compelled to sleep in the ranks in ploughed ground with the rain pouring down in torrents. Sometimes the field of battle, filled with the dead, became so pestiferous that it was death to approach it. He told me afterwards that, at the battle of Waterloo, the French cavalry were so desperately brave that, despairing of breaking down the ranks of the infantry in squares, they would gallop up in squadrons and fire their pistols in the faces of the British soldiers, or throw them at their heads, gnashing their teeth at the time—the only reply to which would be a hoarse laugh from the soldiers in the squares, who felt quite secure in their fortification of bristling bayonets. My captain after the war had sold his commission, invested the money in the purchase of lands in New Brunswick, became a farmer and a fisherman—and here he was, *he* who had been at Talavera and at Waterloo, catching fish in the Bay of Fundy, or building up towns in the wilds of New Brunswick. So goes the world.

8th Letter: Houlton ME

Houlton (Maine),
October, 1834.

On Sunday, I saw the troops in Fredericton in full uniform, once more. Regularly formed, and in regular order, they were marching to church—the magnificent band, one of the best I am told in the British service, escorting them, with its delicious music. Some few of the soldiers were leading their little children by their sides. The church they attend is the Episcopal church, and there, they have seats in the gallery. I went there too. The church was large, and sufficiently elegant. A sensible man preached for us, who did not care much about what he was saying, and of course his auditors did not care much about him. If a minister

preaches like a man talking in his sleep, an audience are not to blame if they close their eyes also.

I have omitted to say, that on Saturday I went into the Province Building, not very remarkable for anything, but rather shabby—having some few paintings, however, that were worth seeing. The courtroom is in the same building, and the court was in session. I found the lawyers in black (bombazine,²⁶ I believe, but I don't know) robes, with (what is the legal name? I have forgotten) [*bands*, we believe,] white collars, ministerial-like collars around their necks—and no member of the Bar could take his seat without this paraphernalia about him. The Judges wore no wigs here, but had on robes. Judge Chipman is now the Chief Justice—a fine looking man, who is Captain General of the Bench—the other Judges, and the members of the Bar, putting implicit confidence in what he says. Undoubtedly, he is a first-rate lawyer, and well worthy of the position he fills—a profitable position too, for a Judge of this court has a salary of between three and four thousand dollars a year, varied somewhat by fees, but nearer \$4,000, I believe, than \$3,000. Judge Chipman, who was just entering upon his first term as Chief Justice, was adopting some new regulations. “*No member of the Bar*”, says he, “*must appear in court without a black coat, a black stock, and a black vest*”. How ridiculous this—but it is to keep up the dignity of the Bar. A new Judge had just been sent out from England, and had just arrived. The members of the Bar *resolved* against this appointment from abroad, and *petitioned* His Majesty; but I suspect that they will have to keep the Judge, whom, by the way, I found to be a very sensible and well-informed Englishman, after a traveling acquaintance of nearly three hundred miles from Halifax.

I left Fredericton on Monday. Dismal enough was the prospect now, for everything was covered [...] means of conveyance I could use so late in the season, was the packet boat, now metamorphosed into a freight boat, the body of her being filled up with goods, and leaving only a little after cabin, six feet by eight, filled with bawling babies, and bawling mothers, without husbands. Lord, what a squalling there was at times! Yelp, yelp, yelp, was the everlasting music. *This* mother had just come out from Scotland with an infant in her arms, in search of her husband,

²⁶ Bombazine — “A silk fabric in twill weave dyed black.”

who was making him a farm in the woods somewhere. She met him on the river, coming after her, as requested by letter—and really it was delightful to witness the tender embrace, and to see the father kissing the infant he had never seen before. *That* mother had come down in a canoe, and was going back as she could. Here was a wife following her moving husband, who had moved from this place and that place, and from that place to this place, so that he had lived in almost every town within the two hundred miles square. There was an old Irish lady groaning in spirit, uttering the most dolorous wails imagination can conceive, and writhing her face in the most horrible contortions, as if she did not enjoy our company at all.

Who can describe the figure we cut at night, when four or five boatloads of us would put up at some stopping house on the river? Of course, every bed was appropriated—but when there were but two or three beds, it was difficult to accommodate so many. The women, all of them—and there were five, with seven children too—would make one bed somewhere or other for all; and as for my companion and myself, (for I had a companion,) we would stow away ourselves somewhere in the garret, under the eaves— and I have cause to remember it well too, for getting up one morning before the day broke, my head suffered not a little from the blow from a beam, my memory forgot to warn me against. And then, at night, the young ones would squall, and squall again most lustily. The mothers would hush the dear creatures, and make twice as much noise in the hushing as they made in the squalling. And then the boatmen would smoke and swear, and roar—and as night advanced, such unmerciful snoring, mortal man never heard. A whole regiment of the poor fellows, who could get no beds, but were compelled to lay upon the floor, would raise such a storm of nasal music, as made my nerves startle and jump. Oh, the delight of traveling! the pleasures of traveling! *Un triste plaisir*,²⁷ it is indeed, as Madam de Staël²⁸ has confessed. There is no place like that which one has at his own fireside, among his own friends, as I have found, and found to my heart's content.

Our boat was three days in going from Fredericton to Woodstock, distance 60 miles. On the third day, I left it ten or twelve miles

²⁷ *un triste plaisir* — a sad pleasure (French)

²⁸ Madame de Staël (1766-1817) — French novelist and critic; of Swiss parentage

downriver, and took land and foot passage to Woodstock, not caring to pass another night by the riverside. The passage was rendered more difficult on account of the high water. Horses tow up the boats as boats are towed on a canal—but I cannot say much in favor of the towpath. Indeed, in many places it was horrible. The horses would now ascend precipitous pathways, anon tumble along by huge rocks, soon swim some little creek, and often, but not very often, have passable paths. The daring of the riders is wonderful. The one we had was indifferent, whether he mounted a cliff fit only for the chamois to travel, or waded in water as high as his horse's back, or swam the rivulet. The progress thus made is from fifteen to twenty-five miles a day. Hundreds of timber rafts were floating down the river from St. John. Every little tributary was pouring out its treasure. We passed an Indian settlement on the way, in which there was a descendant of the old Acadians, with whom the boatmen would joke in *parlez-vous*²⁹ &c, &c. We passed a boat ascending the Madawaska, and all on board were Frenchmen. That sort of travel is amusing for a while, on account of the new life it shows one, but the pleasure does not last long—and I was rejoiced when encamped for the night at Woodstock. Twenty miles a day is tedious motion when one has been on a railroad that *does* carry him the distance in an hour, if necessary, with perfect ease and safety. By the way, let me not forget a lesson to housewives, who wish to dispose of their cats and their kittens—for, ascending the St. John, what should we see but a brood on a little raft descending the stream, which perhaps had come twenty or thirty miles—and the boatman told me this was no uncommon sight. But adieu to the tow path on the St. John. The cry of “*head in*” and “*head out*”. and “*clear the towpath*” I had enough of, and the reason why I went no further I have told you before.

I started on Thursday for Houlton, twelve miles from Woodstock, on foot, over a road then bad enough, but through an excellent country, as I am told—and there the flag of our country, the stars and stripes, floating on the barracks of American soldiery, lets one know (if he did not know it before,) that he has changed dominion, and is on the eastern border of our mighty and far extended Republic.

²⁹ The conversation was perhaps conducted in pidgin French

9th Letter: Bangor ME

Bangor (Maine),
November 3rd, 1834.

You see from the place where I date this, that I am not on my way to Quebec. I have found it next to impossible to make my way through the woods at this season of the year. The snow at Fredericton on Monday week fell from six to nine inches. Ice was rapidly making on the St. John and its tributaries. I was over three days on my way from Fredericton to Woodstock, only sixty miles! in a flatboat of more tedious motion than the broadhorns³⁰ of the Mississippi. No opportunity was there for ascending the river but in an open canoe, at fifteen, or at most twenty miles a day—and then, at this season of the year, with the prow Northward, aiming for the region of storms, and the wilderness, where, if the ice was to freeze one in, he must take to his snowshoes, a mode of traveling I have not yet learnt—I deemed it advisable to stop at Woodstock, N. B.; and, making my way on foot through the woods to Houlton, got on the Military Road, on which to Bangor, as fine a stagecoach now runs, twice a week, as there is in the country.

The lumber business here just now has had quite a revival—and everybody is wide awake. The freshet (isn't this a Yankee word?) has let loose the logs, and the "river drivers" are "driving" the rivers from Passadumkeag, and all the other "keags", of the Indian nomenclature. The lumbermen also are going into the woods, with their teams, provisions, and boats; and one meets them whether on the land, or the rivers, pushing through the woods of the one, and "poleing up" the waters of the last, from whence many of them will not appear till May or June. Everybody is then alive, preparing for the winter campaign. Bangor and the vicinity, in particular, feel the impulse. Rafts, almost innumerable, are running down the Penobscot for the shipping at Bangor—and—from Old Town to the costly dam thrown across the Penobscot by the Corporation, there is the sharp hissing music of—I know not how many—saws. Buildings are going up yet in all directions,

³⁰ Broadhorn — Flatboat; "rectangular, flat-bottomed boat with square ends, used to transport freight and passengers on inland waterways." Typically, the current of the river was used for propulsion.

not only in Bangor, but in the whole backcountry. The hotel is under good way, and will be opened in December or early in January. There is no mistake about this building. The Tremont is as yet its only rival. The carpeting is already going down; and judging from what I have seen and heard, it will be as elegantly furnished as any hotel in America. It has drawing rooms, many elegant sitting rooms, a spacious dining room, bathing rooms—and as for the Kitchen Cabinet Department, it is the best I have ever seen—I dare say, as good as that in the White House at Washington. The theater-going people are talking of a theater. The people's ideas are also as magnificent as ever. Projects innumerable are afloat, and many of them, I have not a doubt, will be put in execution. The activity, enterprise, and facilities for business are such in this region of the State, that, after all, there is but little exaggeration in what is said of it.

END OF TOUR REPORT