

CHAPTER XII.

It being necessary to obtain, from New York, what was indispensable for duly installing me in my meditated character of "Editor and proprietor of a newspaper," and as every man in Canada who has important business to transact, must depend, not upon others, but upon himself, I determined on setting out immediately, although the advanced state of the season, it being late in November, promised any other than an agreeable journey. Crossing to Morristown in the Fanny Elster, I took the stage for Utica, intending thence to go by railroad to Albany, and to take my chance of the manner of accomplishing the remainder of my route to New York, as the state of the river might permit.

A heavy fall of snow, the first of the season, having covered the ground during the night of my transit to Morristown, we were fortunately enabled to proceed in a sleigh; and this mode of conveyance I found much more agreeable when, on gaining a chain of mountains, forming a spur of the Alleghenies, we repeatedly dashed into short and steep hollows, where the wheels of a coach or waggon would have acquired a dangerous velocity, which even the abrupt elevation of the opposite face might have proved almost insufficient to check. A smooth ice-road might, it is true, have been attended by the same disadvantages, but an upset from this would not have entailed the same danger of broken bones, or impalement on the sharp rocks around, besides the snow was sufficiently deep to act as a check upon the runners, which, even as it was, went rapidly enough to keep the spirited horses on their mettle.

Apart from the pumping and jerking consequent on our passing over these abrupt and interminable undulations, there was a wild and romantic character about the scenery that forcibly impressed the imagination. The various description of the pine, the cypress, and the hemlock, wore, amid the snows that fringed their boughs as with trellis work, an appearance of loneliness and sternness, leading one to expect, at every moment, the appearance of some savage beast of prey, that, emboldened by the solitude which reigned around, should feel disposed to avenge the violation of its privacy by a bold and reckless attack upon the intruder. Never were the characters in Cooper's "Leather Stocking" and the "Pathfinder" more vividly brought before my recollection. This was the sort of scene in which he loved to introduce them, and, I know not how it was, but with that dreamy state of half-consciousness which a solitary traveller awakened early from his slumbers, feels in a situation of this kind, when the fancy is fully at work, I looked, at each moment expecting to see a deer or a wild turkey arrested by the crack of a rifle, and a hunter, equipped as the charming Indian novelist has painted him, issuing in pursuit of his game. And, singular enough to remark, we had not proceeded many miles after this idea had entered my head, when the crack of a rifle *did* resound near us, and a wild turkey was seen to plunge and flutter in its last agony. A moment afterwards, and a tall hunter, dressed a good deal in the Indian fashion, was seen wending his way, through the open trees, towards the bird, and the driver, at a signal from him, reined in his horses. The hunter, lifting his prize into the sleigh, stepped in afterwards on his way to the village at which we were to change horses, and which lay at the extremity of the Adirondacks we were then traversing. Entering into conversation with the hunter, I found he had been absent two days in quest of deer, which was to constitute the chief luxury of his Christmas dinner. He was a fine-looking fellow, well made, active, and just the style of man I should have conceived to be the best suited to the fatiguing mountain chase, from which he was just unsuccessfully returning. About an hour afterwards we reached the termination of the chain, the descent from which was rather abrupt, and seemed to require all the dexterity of the driver to pass over without accident. At the base lies the village of Hunnond, where we breakfasted and changed horses. Passing through numerous villages, distributed along the road, we came finally to the brow of a lofty hill from which is commanded a most extensive view of the vast plain in which Utica is situated, and through which the picturesque little river of the Mohawk runs. Utica is a flourishing commercial town, its houses principally built of brick, and its streets exceedingly wide. It has, besides being the centre of the great western rail route, many roads branching off to other parts of the country. If they are all like that by which I proceeded to Syracuse a few years before, they are highly capable of improvement. There is an excellent hotel—the Eagle—at which the stages usually stop; and here the traveller is certain of meeting with a comfort and civility which are not, any where, surpassed throughout the State.

From Utica to Albany, the railroad travelling is all that can be desired. The only nuisance being the change of cars, which occurs once along this road before reaching the latter place. During the last day's journey, previous to arriving at Utica, I had been joined by an American gentleman and his wife, who were then returning to New York from a visit they had been making to some friends on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Both appeared to me to be possessed of very superior manners and address,

and a few hours passed in the discussion of various topics with which the majority of people whom one encounters in a public stage-coach are but little familiar, soon satisfied me that I had met with those whose acquirements, not less than their *savoir faire*, would have done honor to the best European society. We soon fell into that sort of intimacy which a communion of the pleasures, not more than of the annoyances, of travelling, so often induces between people of kindred minds, and by the time we had reached Albany, which we did in the same car, our sentiments of preference for each other's society seemed to have been confirmed.

After crossing the river on foot and on the ice, to a small village on the east side of the Hudson, opposite Albany, we had continued to rise gradually above the river until, eventually, we found ourselves many hundred feet above its level, and then having traversed twenty-seven miles, passing through the village of Kinderhook, descended, by a similar inclination, to the picturesque city of Hudson, where it was expected we should find the river sufficiently open to admit of steam navigation. In this, however, we were disappointed, and after having recruited ourselves with a substantial dinner, once more resumed our journey, intending to stop at Rhinebeck, where, we were informed, a steamer was momentarily expected.

On leaving the city of Hudson we ascended nearly two hundred feet, and pursued our way along the high road to Rhinebeck, seventy-one miles distant from Albany, and in a rich and productive flat bordering on the river. Here we were assured a boat would arrive in the course of the night, at the landing about two miles below the town, and accordingly prepared ourselves to pass the intervening hours in the not-very-comfortable hotel in which we had supped. Hour after hour passed in this manner; fatigue weighed down our eyelids, and yet no one ventured to retire to bed, for every one seemed to know that the act of embarkation and starting would so immediately follow the announcement of the arrival of the boat, that to go to bed would, in all probability, be to lose the passage for the next eight and forty hours at least. We were nearly all in one room—the only room in the house that could be spared to the passengers—and after sitting up as long as exhausted nature would permit, each dropped on the carpeted floor with a cloak, or portmanteau, or carpet bag for a pillow, as suited the means at command of each. Mrs. Newbold, who had as much of the power to reconcile herself uncomplainingly and good-humouredly, to circumstances, as she had of the manner and appearance of a sensible Englishwoman, threw herself upon a cloak near her husband, and sustained herself to the last, endeavoring to make herself amused, and kept awake by the facetiousness of an acute Yankee, who had entered into a discursive conversation with a young lawyer of New York, one of our immediate coach companions, and who kept his companions alive with the roars of laughter his dry remarks and drolleries elicited. Insensibly, however, the influence of the drowsy god made itself felt, and gradually, one after another, the voices were hushed, and powerful indications attested that more than one of us slept as profoundly as if there was no anticipated interruption to his slumber. About an hour before the dawn of day the door was opened, and the announcement of the arrival of the steamer, and the readiness of the coaches to take us to the landing, soon drew all to their feet—the snorers included—and, before the day had well broken, we found ourselves on the deck of a small steamer very unlike in appearance and accommodation what is usually found on the noble Hudson; but selected at this particular season of the year, as being less likely to sustain injury from the floating ice through which she was compelled to force her way to the Rhinebeck landing.

We passed successively on our route down, Poughkeepsie, West Point, and Sing-Sing, near which village the celebrated penitentiary of that name is situated, forming an imposing feature, though not by any means elevated in the view from the water. The former place, which has in it about one thousand dwellings, and from five to six thousand inhabitants, is celebrated in American history, from the fact of the convention of 1793 having met in it for the adoption of their constitution. Although having so small a number of inhabitants, Poughkeepsie appears to be divided into every stage of sectarianism, for of thirteen churches, there are not less than ten distinctions in the mode of worship practised in them, as for example, one Presbyterian, one Congregational, two Episcopalian, one Baptist, two Friends, two Methodist, one Dutch Reformed, one Universalist, one Roman Catholic, and one African. The soil around is a mixture of sand, clay, and loam, forming a super-stratum over a bed of limestone.

Sing-Sing, besides its penitentiary, the main building of which is eighty-four feet long and forty-four feet wide, containing five stories, in which are a thousand cells, has a fine marble academy for boys, and a seminary for girls. Both of these buildings are pleasantly situated. Above the village is the great Croton Aqueduct Bridge, an especial object of attraction to the eye of the passenger from the water. The penitentiary, which is conducted on the silent system adopted in Auburn, is however admitted to be less perfect.