

# COMMENTARIES

## UPON TOPICS DEMANDING THEM.

Vol. 1.

HALIFAX, N. S., SATURDAY MAY 4, 1878.

No. 1.

### NELLY MADDOX'S GRAVE

AN AFTERNOON REVELATION.

(From "The Portfolio.")

It was late on a bright, sunny afternoon, in the Autumn of 184—, that I suddenly found myself upon a public high road, upon the east side and near the head of Bedford Basin,—a beautiful expansion of the harbor of Halifax, Nova Scotia. I use the expression—*found myself*—most literally; and the discovery came about in this wise. Although scarcely claiming to be an enthusiastic sportsman, I am rather fond of sport and especially so of wandering alone in the woods. Being temporarily in Halifax, the heart of a sporting country, during the *par excellence* sporting season, I employed my leisure in frequent excursions, gun on shoulder, within the not very remote vicinity of that city, but with what result, so far as the bagging of game was concerned, it is not my present purpose to tell.

There is a tract of wilderness country lying eastward of this same Bedford Basin,—between that and the great Eastern post-road, and bounded on the third, or Northern, side by what, I be lieve, is called the "Falkland road"—to which my attention had often been attracted. To me that tract, viewed from whatever point of view, looked as if it must abound in game; yet I could not learn that ever anybody had "shot over" it—never heard it named by sportsmen at all in fact. By continuously dwelling upon this thought, I managed to convince myself that, here, almost under the noses of these Haligonians, was a well stocked, natural preserve which nobody had ever thought of. I quietly resolved to profit by my discovery; and, as a meet reward to my own superior shrewdness and readiness of

perception, I resolved to indulge in a treat therein—all by myself. Accordingly, on the bright Autumn day already referred to, I caused myself to be driven up the Windsor post-road to "the ten-mile house," at Sackville. There I shouldered my gun, stepped off somewhat gleefully for a mile or so along the Falkland road, and then, in delighted loneliness, plunged into the wilderness on my right.

Was not my sly self-sufficiency well served! Never was any poor devil more egregiously self-sold than I. Game, indeed! Not a feather, or a hair, was to be seen—probably never was seen there since the world was made. And then, such a country to plod through! And yet, how innocent it looked, with its gently undulating, foliage-clad hills, when seen from the smooth high road! I learned to know afterwards how deceptive are appearances, even at short distances, in these wilds, and how nearly impassible even to the most agile of inexperienced pedestrians are large tracts of the country along the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia. Mountains and ravines one would be prepared for; but this sort of thing I found much worse. Low crags—beautifully masked, however, with vegetation—had to be climbed with just as vigorous efforts as if they formed part of a mountain side. Then there was the chaos of boulders—*moraines*, I suppose the geologists call them—in the deep troughs between. Where these were plainly exposed to view so that one could pick his steps, it was no light feat to trip over them; but when, as was more frequently the case, they were partially concealed—*glossed over*, I may say—by broad carpets—often exquisitely beautiful, though—of closely woven moss, or thick ferns, or dense low shrubbery, they became a real congeries of man

traps; and every step taken was at the peril of the fracture, or dislocation, of one's nether bones. Then the thickets of half living and half dead timber, tangled and interlaced with rank shrubbery, which appeared at first impenetrable, and which, when once penetrated, seemed as if one's person must be inextricable therefrom. By way of farther variety, there was an occasional bit of bog which had to be crossed, in doing which one sank over the knee at every step, and, in some instances, would probably have soon disappeared altogether had he not most expeditiously broken into that pace which, in Ireland, if not elsewhere, is called "bog-trotting."

I soon discovered that I had truly "put my foot in it," and that my first object must be to "get out of that" as quickly and as little painfully as possible. Game be'd'd any way, in such a country as that. So, I set my face directly towards the declining sun and toiled outwards. At last—as mentioned above—I found myself upon what seemed a public highway, of the existence of which I was not previously aware, but which seemed to follow the general direction of the eastern shore of the Basin, and which I supposed must lead from Sackville to Dartmouth. I determined to follow it to the latter town, whence I could cross over the harbor to Halifax.

Yet, at the point, where I first came out upon this road—and frequently afterwards indeed—I could not but make a long pause in rapt admiration of the marvellous beauty of the scene spread out before me. Far below lay that magnificent sheet of water, Bedford Basin, unruined, glittering like a great mirror of polished steel. Its for the most part wooded, western shore—charmingly sinuous as to horizontal outline, and undulating as to elevation—was, beneath the declining sun, bathed in a golden light which,