

[A Journey to Canada by Richard Cartwright, Jr. (1759-1815), written c1777]

A Journey to Canada—

The distracted Condition of ~~this~~ my native Country, where all Government was subverted, where Caprice was the only Rule and Measure of ~~the Actions of those who had~~ usurped the Authority and Right of ~~[illegible crossed out word]~~, and where all the Distress was exhibited that Power guided by malice can produce, had long made me wish to leave it; ~~and~~ accordingly, after having with some Solicitation obtained a ~~Pass~~ Permission from the Committee, and procured a Pass from Gen^l Gates, I set out from Albany 27th of October and notwithstanding the tender Feelings of Humanity which I suffered at Parting from the fondest of Parents and a Number of agreeable Acquaintance it gave me a sensible Pleasure to quit a Place were Discord reign'd and all the miseries of Anarchy had long prevailed.

The Morning was rainy when I left my Fathers House in Company with Major Hughes on Horse-back; the Rain continued and about Noon we arrived at M^{rs} Peoples's where I feasted heartily upon some cold meat which the good Lady of the House furnished us with. Riding fourteen Miles in the Rain had given me such an Appetite that no sauce was wanting to make me relish this homely Fare. The wet Weather, the Badness of the Roads, and the various Difficulties of so long a Journey, at this late season of the Year which seemed at once to encounter me, were sufficient to discourage one who had scarce ever been from Home before. But the Prospect before me of pursuing my original Plan of Life, and enjoying Peace with all its attendant Blessings made me look upon the Fatigues of the Way as Trifles. When travelling through the Wet and Dirt, I would say to myself by way of comfort this will make a fair Day and good Roads the more agreeable. And indeed we should not know the Value of good Things did we not sometimes experience their contrary Evils.

The Rain encreased so much in the Afternoon, that we determined to remain all Night, as we had a good comfortable House. About Dusk we were joined by Cap^l Collier and L^t Dowland very dirty & wet and not a little cold and Hungry: after providing them with Refreshment and taking Supper ourselves, we spread our Mattresses upon the Floor; and for my Part, I slept as soundly as though I had lain on a Bed of Down. Nothing like Hunger and Fatigue can make Food and Rest agreeable.

The 28th was a worse Day than the former, so that it was impossible to proceed. Our situation however was far from disagreeable, we had an obliging Lanlady, a warm Room, good company, and plenty of excellent Victuals and Drink: so we spent this Day very cheerfully, expecting a change of Weather that we might pursue our journey.

Accordingly the morning of the 29th being fair, after a hearty Breakfast we proceeded on our Way, and when we came to Bemuses rode a small Distance back into the Wood to view the Ground whereon Gen^{ls} Burgoyne and Gates had their late Encampments; traversing these bloody Fields, where many a brave and generous men have met their Fate, my Imagination, touched as I was with my own Circumstances, represented to me in the most affecting colours the unhappiness of the different surviving Relations. The weeping Parent, distressed Widow, wretched Orphans, and afflicted Friends seeing to present themselves to my revolving mind drew from me with a sigh, O'

cursed Ambition, what miseries dost thou bring upon mankind! Perhaps the Woes of others then most affected us, when our Heart is softened by feelings arising from our own Condition. Entering the road again near Taylors we went on, and about 3 o'clock P. M. it began to rain; we were then 5 miles from Saratoga but resolved not to stop short of that Place. The Rain grew more violent and we came about 4 to the Fish Creek, where Gen^l Schuylers House and Mills lately stood which now were but an Heap of Rubbish. L^t Dowland and myself rode through the Creek, the Bridge having been destroyed which made us completely wet, and came to P. Lansing's Esquire who received us very kindly and entertained us in the best manner he could: we had a warm Fire, hung Beef, and good Grog which was then to us the highest Luxury. The major and Cap^t Collier staid on the other Side, to procure Boats for Carrying the Baggage over safe. It grew dark and our Waggons did not arrive, which made me very uneasy, as my Niece whom I was carrying with me to Canada was in one of them, however as it was too dark to recross the Creek swoln as it was with the Rain I staid till the next morning and then resolved to go in Quest of the rest of our Company. Of this I was prevented by one of the Servants coming up and informing me that the Waggons had crossed the Creek in the Rain, and had gone to an House two miles forward. Presently after the other two gentlemen came up who had missed the Waggons by going in Quest of Gen^l Schuyler with whom they passed the Night. We ordered the Waggons back to Lansings near which about 12 o'clock we all crossed the River in a Boat which the Gen^l had ordered up for that Purpose, and halted in the Evening at M^f Wings, having had a very pleasant Day.

The whole Way from Still-Water to this Place was mark'd with Devastation, and of the many pleasant Habitations formerly within that Distance, some were burnt, others torn to Pieces and rendered unfit for Use, and but a few of the meanest occupied: the Inhabitants in general having been forced to leave their once peaceful Dwellings to escape the Rage of War. Thus this once agreeable and delightful Part of the Country now displayed a most shocking Picture of Havock and wild Desolation. The inevitable Distress of the Fugitive Inhabitants, their Want not only of the Superflueties and comforts, but even of the common necessities of Life, occurring to my musing Thoughts, made me imprecate curses upon the Heads of those,

Whose Last is murder & whose horrid joy
To tear their Country & their kind destroy.

yet the delightful Prospect which the River, the variegated Face of the Country and the different coloured Foliage on the Trees afforded, served somewhat to divert my mind from these melancholy Reflections.

Near M^f Wings House is a fine Fall of Water, which a viewed with a Pleasure peculiar to these Irregularities of Nature, which strike the mind at once with ~~Wonder~~ Delight and Astonishment.

The 31st in the Morning we proceeded to Fort George which was entirely reduced to Ashes; where in the Afternoon we fortunately met with a Boat which carried us to Diamond Island about five Miles up the Lake where lay a Detachment of british Troops. On our Arrival here it gave me unexpressible Pleasure to think myself at a happy Distance from those scenes of outrage, Tumult, and oppression, and to find myself secure

from those petty Tyrants, who had involved my once happy Country in every species of Distress, & made it feel all the misery that cruelty gained with Power can cause.

This Island, which is very small is Nothing but a barren Rock, exposed on every side to the Wind, which at this Season made it disagreeably cold. Here we lay all Night in our Tent, and the next Morning the 1st of November, sailed from thence before a brisk southerly Breeze in a Barge, which arrived the Night before with orders to abandon that Post and at dark came to Ticonderoga Landing.

An Accident happened on our Passage this Day which alarmed me a little, but was however attended with no bad Consequences. We stopped at Sabbath Day Point, 16 miles south of Ti, to dine ashore; as we were getting out of the Boat my Niece, a Girl between nine & ten year of Age tumbled headlong into the Lake, and I wet myself much in getting her out. Such a Ducking was then not a little unpleasant, but dry Cloaths and a good Fire prevented us from receiving any Detriment.

At the Landing was a small guard, the officer of which treated us with much civility & Politeness. We slept here much crowded that Night, & the 2nd in the Morning leaving Mr. Dowland at the Landing, we went on to Ti, where I spent most of the Day in visiting a Number of my old Acquaintances, ~~who had suffered much for their Attachment to government, and the real good of America, but having by different means escaped from their Persecutors, their country's pretended Friends but real Enemies, were now [illegible crossed out word] by Arms her real Rights & Liberties,~~ who had fled from the Persecution of the Times.

It being determined upon to abandon this Garrison, the Work of Destruction was already beginning, in one Part was seen Heaps of Carriages in Flames, in another the Heavy Artillery destroyed, and all in the greatest Hurry to get what could be removed without much Difficulty ~~removed~~ on board the Vessels. However this was but the beginning and we did not stay to see the conclusion of the Scene, which ended with [illegible crossed out word] setting the Forts and Houses in a Blaze, for having with some Difficulty procured a Boat and got our baggage round to the Fort, we set out from Ti at Dusk in the Evening, leaving behind Mr. Dowland who did not attend, and that Night went three or four Miles up the Lake, landed on the West Side, made a Fire and slept very comfortable near it in our Tent.

The 3rd in the Morning we pursued, and after rowing some Time, there sprung up a brisk southerly Breeze, before which we sailed in our Boat all the Day, which was indeed very fine, and about Sun set just off the Split Rock, got on Board of the Liberty a Schooner taken from the Rebbels, and after passing a very disagreeable Night came the next Morning to Point au faire, where getting again into our Boat we arrived safe at S^t Johns in the Evening.

Cap^t ——— of the 21st and, as these Creatures are commonly called, his Mistress were on Board the Vessel, and came with us in our Boat from Point au faire. It made me smile to see them like two Turtles billing & cooing all the Way. An honorable and manly Love is truly respectable, but such a Criminal Connexion, with such a childish, toying Fondness, is the one wicked, the other highly ridiculous.

Our Accommodations at S^t Johns were not extraordinary; we were however obliged to remain here upwards of two Days for Want of Carriages, except Major Hughes, who being very unwell, with a good deal of Difficulty procured a Horse and left us on the Morning of the 4th.

I should have past my Time here disagreeably enough had it not been for those Friends of all Hours the Muses, which one can carry with them without Trouble wherever they go, they had often before prevented many a tedious Hour, and now entertained me almost as agreeably I believe as any company I could have found in the Place. 'Tis Pity they are not more generally relished; for could Men agreeably spend their Leisure Hours, in Reading, Writing, Thinking, on Conversing sensibly, what Abundance of mischief, Extravagance & Excess would be thereby prevented.

The 7th in the morning ~~in the morning~~ we got our Baggage into some carts which had arrived the Night before, in one of which my Niece was obliged to ride while I with the Servants went a foot, and after going 18 miles of the worst Road I ever saw, we arrived in the Evening at Lapari, a Village on the opposite Side of the River St. Lawrence about 9 miles from Montreal. We were obliged to stay here all Night, as there was no Boat to be got, and the carters refused to proceed to Long-Isle where the Ferry is kept. The next morning, the servants, by some means or other got a Boat, but no People could be got to work her; and after a good Part of the Day was spent in Altercation with the major of militia, the commanders of which are always applied to in these cases, and are obliged to furnish Men, especially for any thing belonging to the military, I saw no Likelihood of getting from there any other Way, than by walking down to the Ferry, which I resolved to do, and leave the Baggage to a trusty old servant of the Majors; ~~and~~ I proposed to Hannah to stay till they could come with the Boat. But she with Tears in her Eyes replied, no, my dear Uncle I have come so far with you; don't think to leave me now; I'll go along with you. Accordingly taking her by the Hand, I set off, and before we had gone much above a League It began to snow hard; this certainly was very disagreeable to the poor Creature, but she trudged on with wonderful Alacrity, and we got to Town late in the Afternoon, my Niece much fatigued & both not a little dirty.

On my arriving at Major Hughes's I found him dangerously Ill; which sincerely affected me, for his Behaviour to me had been such as to interest me in every Thing that concerned him.

A little after dark the Servants arrived, who had met with one or two People, that wanted to cross the River, assisted by whom they brought over all our Baggage safe. Thus ended our journey, which took up in the whole twelve Days, a much shorter Time than, all Things considered, we could reasonably have expected to have performed it in: and indeed many who left Albany before and together with us did not arrive till many Days after.

—Written Dec^r 1779, as a Poets Corner to a Gazette published by Col. Johnson.

When Want of Business or a cloudy Day
Leaves the blank Soul to gloomy Thoughts & Prey
How Happy he, who has the pleasing Art,
With some kind of Trifle to amuse the Heart,

With lively Fancies to amuse the Head
And chase the frightful Forms of Cord & Lead
Tho Sense & Science bear the Palm away,
He merits much who can with ease be gay,
And useful each, in due Succession frame
While as the Humor prompts from Sweet to sweet we move
See Swift for trifling as for sense renown'd
Alike by Momus & the Muse crown'd
And for his Baggatelles more widely known
Than for that Witt & Genius all his own.

R.C—

—Verses sent to a Young Lady with the Spectators 1799—Dec^r

Spec begs to wait upon Miss Bliss,
And hopes to entertain her;
He'll say a thousand pretty Things,
If pretty Things, can gain her.

Nor fear to listen to his Tales,
Should he e'en talk of Love;
For honest Short-Face means no Guile,
His Aim is to improve.

Hey Day, Miss Betsy cries What's this,
Why sure the Creature's stupid
Fine Things! No Guile! Improve,—What Stuff
I'd rather hear of Cupid.

R.C—

My dear Fathers Journal on his first leaving home
M. M. D.

[End]

*Library and Archives Canada, Hon Richard Cartright Papers, MG23, H,1-7
Transcript by Eric Schnitzer(from photocopy of original document). Spelling and punctuation per original document.*