

***CHARLES DUDLEY
WARNER***



***BADDECK, AND
THAT SORT
OF THING***

Charles Dudley Warner

Baddeck, and That Sort of Thing

EAN 8596547311461

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

TO JOSEPH H. TWICHELL

BADDECK AND THAT SORT OF THING

I

II

III

IV

V

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

TO JOSEPH H. TWICHELL

[Table of Contents](#)

It would be unfair to hold you responsible for these light sketches of a summer trip, which are now gathered into this little volume in response to the usual demand in such cases; yet you cannot escape altogether. For it was you who first taught me to say the name Baddeck; it was you who showed me its position on the map, and a seductive letter from a home missionary on Cape Breton Island, in relation to the abundance of trout and salmon in his field of labor. That missionary, you may remember, we never found, nor did we see his tackle; but I have no reason to believe that he does not enjoy good fishing in the right season. You understand the duties of a home missionary much better than I do, and you know whether he would be likely to let a couple of strangers into the best part of his preserve.

But I am free to admit that after our expedition was started you speedily relieved yourself of all responsibility for it, and turned it over to your comrade with a profound geographical indifference; you would as readily have gone to Baddeck by Nova Zembla as by Nova Scotia. The flight over the latter island was, you knew, however, no part of our original plan, and you were not obliged to take any interest in it. You know that our design was to slip rapidly down, by the back way of Northumberland Sound, to the Bras d'Or, and spend a week fishing there; and that the

greater part of this journey here imperfectly described is not really ours, but was put upon us by fate and by the peculiar arrangement of provincial travel.

It would have been easy after our return to have made up from libraries a most engaging description of the Provinces, mixing it with historical, legendary, botanical, geographical, and ethnological information, and seasoning it with adventure from your glowing imagination. But it seemed to me that it would be a more honest contribution if our account contained only what we saw, in our rapid travel; for I have a theory that any addition to the great body of print, however insignificant it may be, has a value in proportion to its originality and individuality,—however slight either is,—and very little value if it is a compilation of the observations of others. In this case I know how slight the value is; and I can only hope that as the trip was very entertaining to us, the record of it may not be wholly unentertaining to those of like tastes.

Of one thing, my dear friend, I am certain: if the readers of this little journey could have during its perusal the companionship that the writer had when it was made, they would think it altogether delightful. There is no pleasure comparable to that of going about the world, in pleasant weather, with a good comrade, if the mind is distracted neither by care, nor ambition, nor the greed of gain. The delight there is in seeing things, without any hope of pecuniary profit from them! We certainly enjoyed that inward peace which the philosopher associates with the absence of desire for money. For, as Plato says in the *Phaedo*, “whence come wars and fightings and factions?

whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money." So also are the majority of the anxieties of life. We left these behind when we went into the Provinces with no design of acquiring anything there. I hope it may be my fortune to travel further with you in this fair world, under similar circumstances.

NOOK FARM, HARTFORD, April 10, 1874.

C. D. W.



BADDECK AND THAT SORT OF THING

[Table of Contents](#)

I

[Table of Contents](#)

“Ay, now I am in Arden: the more fool I; when I was at home, I was in a better place; but travellers must be content.”
—TOUCHSTONE.

Two comrades and travelers, who sought a better country than the United States in the month of August, found themselves one evening in apparent possession of the ancient town of Boston.

The shops were closed at early candle-light; the fashionable inhabitants had retired into the country, or into the second-story-back, of their princely residences, and even an air of tender gloom settled upon the Common. The streets were almost empty, and one passed into the burnt district, where the scarred ruins and the uplifting piles of new brick and stone spread abroad under the flooding light of a full moon like another Pompeii, without any increase in his feeling of tranquil seclusion. Even the news-offices had put up their shutters, and a confiding stranger could nowhere buy a guide-book to help his wandering feet about the reposeful city, or to show him how to get out of it. There was, to be sure, a cheerful tinkle of horse-car bells in the air, and in the creeping vehicles which created this levity of sound were a few lonesome passengers on their way to Scollay's Square; but the two travelers, not having well-regulated minds, had no desire to go there. What would have become of Boston if the great fire had reached this sacred point of pilgrimage no merely human mind can imagine. Without it, I suppose the horse-cars would go continually round and round, never stopping, until the cars fell away piecemeal on the track, and the horses collapsed into a mere mass of bones and harness, and the brown-covered books from the Public Library, in the hands of the

fading virgins who carried them, had accumulated fines to an incalculable amount.

Boston, notwithstanding its partial destruction by fire, is still a good place to start from. When one meditates an excursion into an unknown and perhaps perilous land, where the flag will not protect him and the greenback will only partially support him, he likes to steady and tranquilize his mind by a peaceful halt and a serene start. So we—for the intelligent reader has already identified us with the two travelers resolved to spend the last night, before beginning our journey, in the quiet of a Boston hotel. Some people go into the country for quiet: we knew better. The country is no place for sleep. The general absence of sound which prevails at night is only a sort of background which brings out more vividly the special and unexpected disturbances which are suddenly sprung upon the restless listener. There are a thousand pokerish noises that no one can account for, which excite the nerves to acute watchfulness.

It is still early, and one is beginning to be lulled by the frogs and the crickets, when the faint rattle of a drum is heard,—just a few preliminary taps. But the soul takes alarm, and well it may, for a roll follows, and then a rub-a-dub-dub, and the farmer's boy who is handling the sticks and pounding the distended skin in a neighboring horse-shed begins to pour out his patriotism in that unending repetition of rub-a-dub-dub which is supposed to represent love of country in the young. When the boy is tired out and quits the field, the faithful watch-dog opens out upon the stilly night. He is the guardian of his master's slumbers. The howls of the faithful creature are answered by barks and

yelps from all the farmhouses for a mile around, and exceedingly poor barking it usually is, until all the serenity of the night is torn to shreds. This is, however, only the opening of the orchestra. The cocks wake up if there is the faintest moonshine and begin an antiphonal service between responsive barn-yards. It is not the clear clarion of chanticleer that is heard in the morn of English poetry, but a harsh chorus of cracked voices, hoarse and abortive attempts, squawks of young experimenters, and some indescribable thing besides, for I believe even the hens crow in these days. Distracting as all this is, however, happy is the man who does not hear a goat lamenting in the night. The goat is the most exasperating of the animal creation. He cries like a deserted baby, but he does it without any regularity. One can accustom himself to any expression of suffering that is regular. The annoyance of the goat is in the dreadful waiting for the uncertain sound of the next wavering bleat. It is the fearful expectation of that, mingled with the faint hope that the last was the last, that aggravates the tossing listener until he has murder in his heart. He longs for daylight, hoping that the voices of the night will then cease, and that sleep will come with the blessed morning. But he has forgotten the birds, who at the first streak of gray in the east have assembled in the trees near his chamber-window, and keep up for an hour the most rasping dissonance,—an orchestra in which each artist is tuning his instrument, setting it in a different key and to play a different tune: each bird recalls a different tune, and none sings “Annie Laurie,”—to pervert Bayard Taylor's song.

Give us the quiet of a city on the night before a journey. As we mounted skyward in our hotel, and went to bed in a serene altitude, we congratulated ourselves upon a reposeful night. It began well. But as we sank into the first doze, we were startled by a sudden crash. Was it an earthquake, or another fire? Were the neighboring buildings all tumbling in upon us, or had a bomb fallen into the neighboring crockery-store? It was the suddenness of the onset that startled us, for we soon perceived that it began with the clash of cymbals, the pounding of drums, and the blaring of dreadful brass. It was somebody's idea of music. It opened without warning. The men composing the band of brass must have stolen silently into the alley about the sleeping hotel, and burst into the clamor of a rattling quickstep, on purpose. The horrible sound thus suddenly let loose had no chance of escape; it bounded back from wall to wall, like the clapping of boards in a tunnel, rattling windows and stunning all cars, in a vain attempt to get out over the roofs. But such music does not go up. What could have been the intention of this assault we could not conjecture. It was a time of profound peace through the country; we had ordered no spontaneous serenade, if it was a serenade. Perhaps the Boston bands have that habit of going into an alley and disciplining their nerves by letting out a tune too big for the alley, and taking the shock of its reverberation. It may be well enough for the band, but many a poor sinner in the hotel that night must have thought the judgment day had sprung upon him. Perhaps the band had some remorse, for by and by it leaked out of the alley, in humble, apologetic retreat, as if somebody had thrown something at

it from the sixth-story window, softly breathing as it retired the notes of "Fair Harvard."

The band had scarcely departed for some other haunt of slumber and weariness, when the notes of singing floated up that prolific alley, like the sweet tenor voice of one bewailing the prohibitory movement; and for an hour or more a succession of young bacchanals, who were evidently wandering about in search of the Maine Law, lifted up their voices in song. Boston seems to be full of good singers; but they will ruin their voices by this night exercise, and so the city will cease to be attractive to travelers who would like to sleep there. But this entertainment did not last the night out.

It stopped just before the hotel porter began to come around to rouse the travelers who had said the night before that they wanted to be awakened. In all well-regulated hotels this process begins at two o'clock and keeps up till seven. If the porter is at all faithful, he wakes up everybody in the house; if he is a shirk, he only rouses the wrong people. We treated the pounding of the porter on our door with silent contempt. At the next door he had better luck. Pound, pound. An angry voice, "What do you want?"

"Time to take the train, sir."

"Not going to take any train."

"Ain't your name Smith?"

"Yes."

"Well, Smith"—

"I left no order to be called." (Indistinct grumbling from Smith's room.)

Porter is heard shuffling slowly off down the passage. In a little while he returns to Smith's door, evidently not satisfied in his mind. Rap, rap, rap!

“Well, what now?”

“What's your initials? A. T.; clear out!”

And the porter shambles away again in his slippers, grumbling something about a mistake. The idea of waking a man up in the middle of the night to ask him his “initials” was ridiculous enough to banish sleep for another hour. A person named Smith, when he travels, should leave his initials outside the door with his boots.

Refreshed by this reposeful night, and eager to exchange the stagnation of the shore for the tumult of the ocean, we departed next morning for Baddeck by the most direct route. This we found, by diligent study of fascinating prospectuses of travel, to be by the boats of the International Steamship Company; and when, at eight o'clock in the morning, we stepped aboard one of them from Commercial Wharf, we felt that half our journey and the most perplexing part of it was accomplished. We had put ourselves upon a great line of travel, and had only to resign ourselves to its flow in order to reach the desired haven. The agent at the wharf assured us that it was not necessary to buy through tickets to Baddeck,—he spoke of it as if it were as easy a place to find as Swampscott,—it was a conspicuous name on the cards of the company, we should go right on from St. John without difficulty. The easy familiarity of this official with Baddeck, in short, made us ashamed to exhibit any anxiety about its situation or the means of approach to it. Subsequent experience led us to