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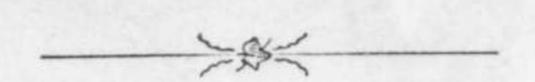
PRIVATE LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

Salmon Portland Chase,

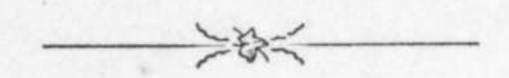
BY

ROBERT B. WARDEN.



"It does not astonish me that some good men consider me an enigma."

CHIEF JUSTICE CHASE to REV. MR. BLANCHARD.



CINCINNATI.
WILSTACH, BALDWIN & CO., 1874.

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CHAPTER IV.

FIRST SOJOURN IN "THE OHIO COUNTRY."

INDER date May 24, 1813, the work of which the short title is Annals of Congress, shows that "Dudley Chace, appointed a Senator by the Legislature of Vermont for the term of six years, commencing on the fourth day of March last," produced his credentials, which were read, and thereupon, having taken the oath prescribed by law, took his seat in the Senate. Under date, September 21, 1814, the same work records that Dudley Chace, from the State of Vermont, appeared and took his seat in the Senate.

When his uncle Dudley first appeared in the Senate of the Union, Salmon was but five years of age. No doubt, however, that event impressed him; and no doubt it beckoned him toward political agitation and aspiration. That, when he came on to Washington, the presence of his uncle in the Senate greatly aided him in gaining influential friends, need not be said; it goes without saying, as the French express themselves.

Our hero heard in boyhood wonderful accounts of "The Ohio," as the State of which he was to be Chief Magistrate was called; but the reality, though quite unlike the fable, was more wonderful than it would have been had it indeed had waters like New England rum, or cucumbers that grew on trees.

Ohio was no El Dorado. Nor was the fertility by which its soil invited agriculture such as that of the region whereof was reported that it responded to the tickling of a hoe with the laughter of a harvest. Yet the region was, as Mr. Chase himself, in a sketch of its history, was to show, more blessed than it would have been had its agriculture been but as the light gardening labor of the pair in Paradise before the fall. The blessing so appreciated was in part corporeal, in part spiritual. In the body, we shall find Ohio representative of all that is best in physical conditions in this wide extent

^{1 13}th Congress, 1813-1814, vol. 1, 9.

of landscapes under one vast rule of laws and manners; in the soul, in population, institutions, legislation, she is wonderfully typical of the whole country. But the greatest wonder of her past was that which most distinguished the condition of her pioneers from the condition of the first white penetrators of the Dark and Bloody Ground—a legal system, guarding her domain from the invasion of the institution known as slavery, and giving, at the same time, to the white man and the red man of Ohio a relation to each other very different from that of the red race and the white race in Kentucky.

Chase wrote to Mr. Trowbridge:

"It was probably in February or March, 1820, that I visited my

sister at Hooksett, as already mentioned.

"At any rate, it was about that time that my mother received a letter from my uncle, the Bishop, offering to take charge of me, and my mother accepted the offer, and early in April I started, with my brother, Alexander, who was going west with the expectation of joining Gen. Cass' expedition, in company with Mr. Schoolcraft, who afterward became so famous.

"For several months—at least weeks—before going, I knew that my uncle had proposed to take me and that I was to go to him in Ohio. I tried to find out where I was going and got some queer information. 'The Ohio,' as the country was then called, was a great way off—it was very fertile—cucumbers grew on trees—there were wonderful springs whose waters were like New England rum—deer and wolves were plenty—people few. A copy of Morse's Gazetteer gave me somewhat better but still scanty information."

Our hero's narrative of his first going to Ohio opens in this manner:

"At last the day arrived, and we were off. Almost the whole journey to Buffalo is now a blank in my memory. We must have started—my brother and I—in the spring—probably early in April. My impression is that we crossed the Green Mountains on a rainy or very misty day. I have a faint recollection of passing through clouds. The condition of the atmosphere was peculiar. Electricity seemed to saturate our clothes and buffalo robes. They sparkled under friction, something like a cat's back in the dark. Our road went through Bennington to Albany; and we traveled by stage."

Judge Caldwell, in the Supreme Court of Ohio, paid a charateristic tribute to the flat-boat. A haughty steamboat had been sued for damage to a flat-boat. Judge Caldwell considered that, at least for what the flat-boat of the past had done, she well deserved respectful treatment. So one might maintain about stage travel.

If we do not feel quite moved enough to drop a tear or two in memory of the old stage coach, which once seemed to us, and indeed was, so fine a type of rapid progress, let us at least remind the railroad of the vanished glory of the stage, and warn the locomotive not to bear itself too proudly.

Secretary Chase went on as follows:

"When the carriage rolled into Albany and rattled on the rough pavement, I said to my brother: 'What a rocky place this is.' Up to this time I had no notion of paved streets, but had always thought that stones should be taken out instead of being placed in a road. We made little or no stay in Albany, but pushed on again by stages to Buffalo, passing through Canandaigua, which I remember only by what I thought its stately hotel and the mansion of Gideon Granger.

"At Albany [Buffalo] we were obliged to stop. The lake was not yet open, and the 'Walk in the Water,' on which we were to pursue our journey, lay up Black Rock, waiting the disappearance of the ice.

"Meantime, at the tavern, I formed some acquaintances with persons who were kind to me. I remember particularly a Mrs. Devereux, who was, like us, going up the lake, and a young lad about my own age.

"One Sunday, a party, of whom I was one, went out to the missionary service at the Seneca Village, where the famous chief, Red Jacket, still exercised some authority. For some cause, there was no service. I was not able to distinguish the chief from other Indians. They all looked odd and fantastic to me. I had never seen Indians before."

This is a fact worth noting as we pass. We shall find our hero greatly interested with his legal teacher, Wirt, for justice to the red man of the South.

The narrative goes on as follows:

"I made one other little excursion while at Buffalo. My brother and Mr. Schoolcraft had gone down to Niagara Falls leaving me behind. I wanted to see them too, and with started on foot. The forest was burning and the road lay through it, and it seemed dangerous to me; though it is probable there was no real danger. At any rate we went through, and, almost fagged out, stopped at a farmer's, two or three miles, perhaps, from the falls, and asked lodgings for the night, which were cheerfully given. Is it remembrance or fancy, that a pitchfork, with its steel points driven into the floor, so as to hold it securely erect, vibrated from the jar of the cataract?

"The next morning, on reaching the falls, we gazed wonderingly on the indescribable cataract. We descended the rough steps and a rough, precipitous path, which led down into the gorge and to the foot of the falls, and there was a new wonder. A hillock of ice formed by the spray, rose just below the reach of the falling waters, forty or fifty feet high and shone like a monstrous pearl in the sun. Near it I found my brother and Mr. Schoolcraft, who were a good

deal surprised to see me, and perhaps a little displeased. But they took charge of me, and I got back to Buffalo much easier than I got to the falls."

What an opportunity for "fine writing" was here almost thrown away! But let us at least thank Heaven that if Chase did not describe, he had the benefit of visiting, in boyhood, that true wonder of the world.

Let us read on. Said Secretary Chase to Mr. Trowbridge:

"The sun shone, the winds blew, the ice melted, and in the first day of May the lower end of the lake was clear. The 'Walk in the Water' was ready, and we went on board one evening at Black Rock. I had never seen a steamer before, and she looked prodigious to me. It was odd to be tucked away into a berth in the cabin—no state-room for me. Indeed, I do not know that there was any state-

rooms for passengers.

"Toward morning I was roused by a terrible shaking, and rattling, and clang. I thought the boat was breaking in pieces, or, perhaps had got loose and was going down the falls. I was soon relieved, however, by the information that the engines were working and we were about to get under way. On getting out on the deck, sure enough, the boat was making her way slowly against the rapid current toward Buffalo. It was Saturday morning. The engines were not powerful enough to stem the current, and were assisted by a number of yokes of oxen on shore, towing. In an hour or two we had left Buffalo and were on the Lake, steaming toward Cleveland, the engines being assisted now, not by oxen but by sails. The wind was fair and the air clear and bright. The party was agreeable and every thing went pleasantly. Night came-my first night on the waters—but I am afraid I was not conscious of any thing peculiar about it. And the next day seemed so like other days that I quite forgot it was Sunday, and asked somebody to play chequers with me!"

To have played chequers on Sunday would have seemed to Chase a fearful thing, although, as we have seen, his training in religious matters had not been quite puritanically rigid and severe. Perhaps he never came to look at Sunday as the sunny day it seemed to some of our best Christians.

"We were" he says, "at dinner when the boat reached Cleveland, and her motion as she stopped and brought to anchor off the town—for there was no harbor then—gave me my first slight experience of home-sickness. I have never had so much since. We went ashore in a boat, and I was placed under the care of Judge Barber—not a lawyer, but one of the Associate Judges of the Common Pleas, of whom there were three in each county, usually selected from respectable but unprofessional citizens.

"Here my brother left me, going up the lake with Mr. Schoolcraft to join Gen. Cass."

If I was disappointed on discovering that Chase had not described the fall, at Niagara, of the wonderful water-way of which Lake Erie is one of the wide-spread expanses, I was disappointed also on discovering that he had not described the aspects of the lake. He would not have thought of playing chequers, had he duly felt the presence of that inland sea, the largest water surface he had ever seen. He had read Shakspeare, and had gained some knowledge of the classics, which especially the Greek, as Humboldt, in the second volume of the Kosmos, has so admirably shown, takes so much notice of the sea. But he, at least does not pretend to have dissolved in rapture at the sight of Erie's waters. He confesses that he fears, that he did not find his first night on the waters marked by any great peculiarity, and that the next day seemed to him so much like other days, that he experienced a wish to play at chequers.

We shall find him fond of chess. And let it be recorded, for or against this volume, that I question whether fondness for the game of chess has yet appeared in any man in whom appeared very deep feeling for the picturesque, the grand, the beautiful in landscape. No one who loves landscape very deeply will be apt to give much

time to chequers or to chess.

Had one the pen of Ruskin, or the pen of Sunset Cox, one might attempt to pen-paint a "great old sunset," or a "bully" sunrise, such as Chase may have short-sightedly beheld on that Sunday, when, forgetting that it was the first day of the week, he had a mind to play chequers. I forbear. I have, indeed, no recollection more entirely tempting than the recollections of some Erie sunsets and some Erie sunrise views; but to let off descriptions of them, at this instant, would be at once inconvenient to the writer and annoying to the reader.

Let the reader fancy for himself the wonders worked on the aspects of the waters and the heavens by sunrise, and by high noon, and by the sun's decline, while Chase was a passenger in the "Walk in the Water," or while he remained at Cleveland.

^{1 &}quot;Vergessen wir nicht, dass die griechische Landschaft den eigenthuemlichen Reiz einer innigeren Verschmelzung des Starren und Fluessigen; des mit Pflanzen geschmueckten oder malerisch felsigen, luftgefaerbten Ufers; und des wellenschlagenden, lichtwechselnden, glanzvollen Meeres darbietet." Kosmos, zweiter Band, seite 10, Verlag der Cotta'schen Buchhandlung.

"Judge Barber received me very kindly, having probably been informed of my coming, and of his own wishes, by the Bishop.1

"I spent several days—perhaps, a couple of weeks—at his house, on the west bank of the Cuyahoga, amusing myself by going down to the Ferry and playing ferryman, taking passengers to and from the Cleveland or Eastern side, and sometimes paddling down toward the lake till the waves rolling in, rocked my canoe."

The last quoted letter thus proceeds:

"But my destination was Worthington, in the center of the State, where my uncle resided; and I was anxious to get there. So, hearing one day, that a wagoner was going down that way, I went to him, and tried to make a bargain for his taking me. He was a Pennsylvania German who had settled in Ohio, and had been bringing wheat or something else to the Cleveland market."

Here we see two marked Ohio types—the emigrant of German lineage, and the product of the wheat plant—each remarkable as a symbol of the best civilization in this country.

Secretary Chase proceeds:

"He was willing to take me for 'ein tollar,' but was going no farther than Canton. I did not like the strange jargon which he spoke—having never heard any such—and was a little afraid of him. Besides, to get to Canton was not reaching Worthington. So the wagon project was abandoned.

"There was a mineral spring of sweet water which was a great attraction to me; and those pleasant rambles in the woods and openings.

"Finally, two young men, delegates—one of them, at least—to the Convention, left Medina, 4 taking me with them. The settlement of the country was only begun. Great forests stretched across the State. Carriage ways were hardly practicable. Almost all travel-

¹ It will be noticed that, admirably as our hero could, and generally did construct a sentence, faults of construction, such as that just made apparent, not seldom show themselves in his less studied compositions. After all, in letter-writing, one must not be too particular about correctness.

²115 N. W. of Worthington; 124 from Columbus.

³ I can't make out the name.

^{4 108} miles from Worthington.

ing was performed on foot or on horseback. The two young men had two horses, and the arrangement was to ride and tie. That is to say, one was to ride on, dismount, and tie his horse, and walk on. The one on foot was to come up, take the horse, ride on beyond the

walker in front, and tie, and so on.

"Once, when I was riding, I came to a place where the roads parted, and was at a loss. Taking that which seemed most traveled, I rode on, and before long, came to its end at a spring. It was a path beaten by animals going to drink. I made my way back to the less traveled road. 1

"We passed through Wooster, 2 passing a night there. The place seemed great to me, and the lighted houses, as we went in after

dark, very splendid.

"In three or four days we reached Worthington. I entered the town walking, and met my uncle in the street, walking with one of his clergy or friends."

The next letter, dated January 25, 1864, contains the sentences:

"My uncle, at the time I went to him, was in the maturity of his intellectual and physical powers. He was a great worker, a thoroughly practical man, always thinking of something to be done, and then doing it with all his might. There was not a particle of flam or cant in his make up. Thoroughly religious, he always looked to God. His motto was, Jehovah Jireh-God will provide. But his faith in God only animated him to most strenuous personal labor. It was not passive but active. If any thing was to be done, he felt that he must do it; and that, if he put forth all his energy, he might safely and cheerfully leave the event to Divine Providence."

Can we say, with confidence, like uncle like nephew as to that? We "shall see what we shall see," in this respect. The nephew thus farther characterized his remarkable relative:

"Usually exceedingly kind and a delightful companion to young and old, he was often very harsh and severe, not because he liked to be, but because he was determined to have every thing just as he thought it ought to be."

Here, at least, we can with certainty pronounce, like uncle like nephew. Of the uncle, however, adds the nephew:

"He was thoroughly imbued with a sense of the importance of his episcopal office, and a thorough believer in the subordination of the orders to the Episcopate. Certainly, he lived to Govern; 3 but he liked to govern for the good of others, not his own."

¹ What a figure of what so often happens in the spiritual ways of life! Here, too, the less traveled way is often the true course to the right destination.

²⁸⁴ miles from Worthington.

³ So, in the original, with a big G. To Govern (with a big G) was also a marked liking of the nephew. Every man his own Pope, was not, indeed, our hero's motto,

So, it seems to me, was it with this nephew of his uncle. Willing but not anxious to be President, his propensity to govern, strongly and almost despotically, was at all times animated by regard for what appeared to him the good of others, not his own. Of his uncle he farther says, in the same letter:

"He liked to overcome, too; great obstacles stimulated but did not discourage him."

Gentle reader!

"Dost thou like the picture?"

It seems quite like a portrait of the very man by whom it was portrayed. Our hero thus proceeds:

"Among us boys he was almost, and sometimes, indeed, quite tyrannical."

That statement may be impeached. The author of it once confessed to me and others, that he had told a lie! Shall we say, false in one false in all, according to the maxim of the legists, falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus? (See Davis v. Ohio, 15 Ohio State Reports, overruled in a subsequent case, of which I do not now remember the title, but in which, as counsel, I labored for that overruling.) Our hero, relating an acknowledgment made to his uncle, to the effect that he had wrongly called that personage "a darned old tyrant," said to me and others, on the seventh of December, 1872, that when he asked the pardon of his uncle and made that acknowledgment, he lied; for that, in point of fact, he well knew at the time, that his uncle was—what he had called him, as we have just seen. But the angel that tearfully blotted out the oath of uncle Toby may have blotted out that lie.

Our hero adds about Philander Chase:

"But he was not disliked—much less hated—he was revered and feared. He was not loved by them then—but, afterward, when they had left him, and looked back on the days they had spent under his charge, and saw him more as he really was, love mingled with their reverence, and became its equal in their hearts."

though so many men, though simple laymen, act as though they had divine assurance of their own infallibilty. Infallibity, in my poor judgment, is an attribute of God alone, not delegated or deputed; but I feel how much easier it is for a man to believe in his own infallibility, than in the infallibility of any other man beneath the heavens.

I can but think just here of what Laboulaye has said of Franklin as lived with in his writings.¹ For, the more that I have lived with Salmon Portland Chase in his diaries and letters, the more have I been astonished that so much of their contents should be now presented, for the first time, to the public. Here, indeed, we have not such letters as an American Madame de Sévigné might have written to her daughter. Had these letters been written to our hero's daughter, Nettie, whom he regarded as the genius of the family for letter-writing,² they would still have been the letters, not of a mother but of a father; and I do not mean to intimate that Chase was just a male paragon of letter-writers, at any time, or that he ever could have been a paragon of that description; yet it is impossible to read such sentences as those last quoted from the Trowbridge correspondence without feeling a watering of the eyes and a quicker beating of the heart.

And yet this man once pardoned me for having furnished, to a widely-circulated paper, an editorial, which, as I remember, said of

him in substance:

"We do not say that Mr. Chase has a bad heart. We only say he has no heart."

True, that was many years ago, and in the midst of stormy agitation. But now the gentle reader must, at least, begin to understand the holy office of this book, in which mingled expiation, gratitude, and justice, modify and animate each paragraph, each sentence, and each word.

Chase wrote as follows in a Trowbridge letter:

3 A school-mate.

² Post.

"William Walker" was a Wyandot—a half or quarter-breed. He used to tell us stories of Indian wars, and escapes and pursuits, while I listened wonderingly. I have read, I think, in one of Cooper's novels one of his stories, which I must not stop to relate—a fight—a defeat—the flight of the defeated—the pursuit—the adventures of one of the braves—plunging into the water—concealing himself among a drift of logs—the pursuit over that very raft—extreme danger—final escape.

"In the vicinity of the town were some of those strange fortifications and burial mounds, which form so remarkable a feature of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys—mysterious monuments of an un-

l'a Plus j'ai vecu avec Franklin, plus je me suis etonné qu'on n'ait pas donné plus tôt au public français cette correspondance si pleine d'esprit et de sens." Préface, tome second de la Correspondance de Benjamin Franklin, traduite de l'Anglais, et annotée, page 3.

known race. I took great interest in these. I used to take Atwater's Antiquities of Ohio—I am not sure of the name of the book—when I went out into the forests after the cows, and could stop at an abandoned clearing, and sit down in the old log hut or in its shade, and read and wonder by the hour; and, sometimes, perhaps, forget the cows. One of my earliest pieces of composition, after I went to the College at Cincinnati, was on these mounds—perhaps it was

written to be declaimed—I forget.

"One of the most noteworthy things I saw, during the time I was at Worthington, was the flight of vast flocks of pigeons and their roost. They might, if it were possible to count them, be numbered by hundreds of thousands. They came from the west and formed a roost south-east from our house, in the forest between Alum Creek and the Olentangy—or, as it was then called, the Whetstone. From this roost they departed westward each morning, and returned toward night-fall. Their flight was wonderful. They came toward their roost in vast bodies—sometimes so vast that they actually darkened the sky and dimmed the light below like thick, black clouds. Sometimes a flock, flying toward the forest, would sail too low, and, coming to its edge, would suddenly stop, turn and rise over the trees—the clapping of their wings making a rattle like the noise of musketry—or more like that of sharp, but distant thunder.

"They continued to come and go for perhaps two weeks—perhaps not more than one. One night, pretty soon after they had established their roost, a night attack on it was planned. A hired man of my uncle's, a neighbor or two, and perhaps half a dozen or more boys, of whom I was one, formed the party. There was one gun and a few charges of powder and shot—perhaps a dozen. This was our only artillery. An hour or so after dark, we started in high spirits, not knowing where the roost was, but guided toward it by the roar, like that of falling waters, which the pigeons made. We had proceeded, perhaps half or three-quarters of a mile, when we

were confused by similar sounds from different directions.

"After considering a moment, it became plain that one sound came from a mill-dam in the Olentangy, and we took the direction of the other. It was not long before we came to the outskirts of the pigeons' camp. Now and then we found pigeons roosting on saplings and boughs so low that we could, by bending the young tree or branch, catch one or two. Our gun served us in better stead. Stopping under a tree, crowded with pigeons—the branches bending under their weight, our gunner would advance boldly, and, nothing daunted by superior numbers, fire into the mass. Then such dropping of birds-such commotion among the unhurt-such flights—such inability to get away and settling down again into place. I think, however, that no more than one shot was ever fired into the same tree. Our ammunition was soon exhausted, and we addressed ourselves to the work of picking up what birds we could find by the help of a torch-light. Many had been killed outright, but vastly more were hopping round wounded. It was pitiful to see them. We caught all we could and put them out of pain by speedy death. In some instances, their own weight had proved

more destructive than our assaults. Branches were broken down by the mere mass upon them, or the shock of their motion. In one instance a very large branch was thus broken from a tree-large enough to be a tree itself-four or five inches in diameter. Many pigeons were entangled in these branches carried to the ground, and wounded. About the large branch we picked up near a hundred. We remained in the woods all night, and satisfied our hunger, made keen by the exercise, on pigeons, which we dressed and cooked by extemporized processes and fires. Morning came at length. We gathered our spoils, and tying the pigeons together, and placing long strings of them on poles, carried, each, by two boys, one before and one behind, we set out on our return. Before getting off, however, the pigeons had started for their mast field. And what a sight was that of the breaking up of the vast camp, for the march and work of the day. Great flocks would rise from their roost-trees and sail away, turning, sometimes, their breasts to the rising sun, and making a display of exceeding beauty. Other great flocks would follow, till the whole host was gone. We did not hunt again, but others did, and barrels of pigeons were salted for winter stores."

It is impossible to read this narrative and descriptive matter without feeling what a relief it must have been to the composer; yet how many of its phrases were inspired by the warlike undercurrent of his feelings and his thoughts.

It must have been a great relief to go back in memory to that almost sylvan village and to its vicinity of woods and waters.

There was nothing bold or grand in the purely telluric features of the landscapes thus revisited in memory. No rapid elevation, no great height of earth-form was there visible. The Whetstone (or the Olentangy) was not a western Connecticut or an interior Ohio. Yet it was an interesting flow of water, which, had Chase set out to make a formal topographic sketch, would have made considerable figure in the picture.

Did our hero care much for the fluid elements of landscape?—for the changing heavens and the ever-moving waters? He did not appear to have marked feeling for those parts of scenery. Indeed, he would, it seems to me, have been quite ready to accept the doctrine, eloquently taught by Ruskin, that all true landscape is dependent for its interest on its relation to the works and ways of human life.¹ That doctrine is, indeed, like so much of the most

^{1&}quot;We find that all true landscape, whether simple or exalted, depends, primarily, for its interest on connection with humanity, or with spiritual powers. Banish your heros and nymphs from the classical landscape, its laurel shades will move you no more. Show that the dark clefts of the most romantic mountains are unin-

suggestive matter yielded by the pen of Ruskin, quite too highly colored; but, for minds like the mind we study—master minds, and, therefore, missionary minds—minds forced by something like an instinct to move men to better action and to more exalted thought—the doctrine here alluded to, would have superior claims upon attention.

Doubtless, in that life at Worthington, the mind of Chase was busier with animated nature than with any lifeless object there observable.

Before proceeding to the purposed account of his distinctively scholastic occupations at the place now under view, let us attend a little farther to his life as an assistant and *protegé* of his uncle, the great man of Worthington and its vicinity.

habited and untraversed; it will cease to be romantic. Fields without shepherds and without fairies will have no gaiety in their green; nor will the noblest masses of ground or colors of cloud arrest or raise your thoughts, if the earth has no life to sustain, and the heaven none to refresh." Modern Painters, V, 207.

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