

## Trip from England to Canada by Charlotte Townsend – 1862

---

It was a glorious day in the early sixties that my sister and I left with our friends by train for Dartmouth to join the Steamship for British Columbia. Each train brought its load of passengers who were then taken in small boats that were going to and fro all day. There were numbers of young men, girls with women with families going to make a new home in a foreign country. Everywhere was excitement and bustle, the Captain giving order to the Officers, who called to the men who were singing as they went round and round to the clinking of the Chain to the Anchor. At last the huge Anchor was raised and amidst great cheering, noise and waving of handkerchiefs the ship began to move out with its living human beings of two hundred or more souls, one of those floating worlds, those temporary homes which carry us away from our time honoured country, dear old England, which we all love. Some were leaving their hearts behind them; to others the past was a dream and the future a blank. It was a strange and motley crowd that stood on the deck watching with scarcely a dry eye the shores of dear old England gradually diminishing from sight, and when it had all disappeared nearly every one turned with sad faces and heavy hearts to go below to discuss the new home they were going to, or tumbled into bed to dream of the happy days never to return – but quietness reigned for a short time only, for it is well known that the English shore is the most dangerous of any, and ere long the ship, with its living freight was at the mercy of winds and waves, and tossed and rolled to such a degree that part of the cuddy, the cow, sheep and boats from the davits were washed away, which of course created great confusion and noise overhead. I was awake with one of the others and heard it all, but fortunately most of the passengers were sleeping and did not know what danger we were in till the next morning, although the Minister on board, (and many put it down to him, for there is a saying “if a minister is on board there’s sure to be some mishap”) wanted to come and rouse us all up but the Captain said, “your place is with your wife and family, and let them be – if they are to drown let them go in their beds asleep.” There were two hundred in the steerage, it is terrible to contemplate the fearful loss of life that would have occurred had such a catastrophe happened for the girls and women below would have gone down to their deaths like rats in a trap.

The Matron, an agreeable married woman, was thought necessary to look after the girls, some of whom were quiet and docile, while the majority of them she found difficult to manage and wanted their own way.

There were 7 or 8 of us who kept to ourselves and had nothing to do with the Matron. We were in a different part of the ship, and passed our time with other lady passengers, who had their husbands and families. One couple had a dear little girl, who started to walk on board, and was the pet and plaything of everyone. Then another couple had dear little twin girls 3 months old, but the dear little things suffered from proper nourishment, so had a goat on purpose for them, but some miscreant below used to milk it before the father went so the poor babies had to have condensed milk. They thrived pretty well but towards the end of the voyage failed so much that their little lives were despaired of and died a couple of days after landing. It was a hard trial for the parents to have to part with them after such a voyage.

Well time seemed to pass very pleasantly with our books and work and in conversations with the Captain and Officers who were always very agreeable and always ready to do anything we wanted – the many below thought him austere and disagreeable and always trying to do something to him for spite – one day he found the hose cut which of course made him furious, so he offered a reward to anyone who could find out who did it – no one did and they would not tell – the hose was mended and kept in a long box at our end by the wheel – it made a nice seat when we would chat to the man, who was a dear sailor, although it was like “Mary and her lamb”, against the rule. He told us all sorts of yarns – he said that he had never had such a good passage.

We were only 3 days rounding the Horn. It was about this time my sister and one of the other ladies began to feel sick and weak and when I spoke to the Doctor said it was nothing but change of diet but they were at last so bad they had to keep to their beds. My sister’s turned out to be Gastric Fever and the other was put in the hospital. They were never left night or day. I, of course, stayed with my Sister and another young lady with the poor thing in the hospital. One Sunday she wanted some cherry pie and after the landing making her comfortable left for a cup of tea when all the girls were having theirs, when the Minister came and called the matron and asked if all were there – then said that the poor woman in the hospital had just died.

He had hardly said the words when down went all the girls tumbling over and hurting each other, one had a severe out over the eye and it was while the Doctor was sewing it up that I found out he was from the Westbourne Grove, and our family doctor got him the appointment on the ship. The Captain, who is a Mason, found out the poor thing was a widow of one so he had her placed on the upper deck. He was expecting to get into the Falkland Islands every day. My sister began to get better and we were all looking for a walk on terra firma and going to the funeral of the poor widow but the Captain advised us ladies not to go on shore for most of the men had gone and were drinking and behaving shamefully, so we stood on deck and watched it in the Church yard. We were there 13 days, a barren place not a tree or shrub to be seen, nothing but wild geese. One thing made it pleasant H.M.S Triumph and we used to sit and listen to the band every evening. At last we steamed away again and the Triumph left the evening before. Everything got into ship shape and the Minister used to hold Church Service and one Sunday up came many of the men with their camp stools and someone had tied a string to one of them and when it was all quiet they pulled the string and down they all went like a pack of cards – but the Minister saw

nothing of it for he kept his eyes closed all the time. We had some very severe storms and gales, I remember one well, all the hatches were fastened down and everyone sent below but the one that nursed the widow and myself were great friends so we thought being good sailors we could remain on deck so there we sat with our feet in a basket and an umbrella up when the Captain spied us out and he more than rounded us up and sent us below. The ship was rolling and tossing terribly and any moment we might have been washed over – nearly everyone was bad and I never knew what it was to have a days sickness.

We were now getting to the end of our long Journey and we all thought with sorrow of the parting with the Captain and Officers. It was like leaving a second home. We had been 3 months together and had a very pleasant time. I was called up once to look at the walls of sea at either side, it was a grand sight and looked as if it would swallow the ship completely. The sunsets and Southern Cross were lovely. We at last arrived at our destination where we found letters from home and where we found new homes and friends.

The Captain invited the six of us to a champagne lunch on the ship the following week, which we accepted and went to Esquimalt in an Express Wagon. We laughed and thoroughly enjoyed it. We were called the merry English girls for sometime. This was the last we saw of the Captain for he and most of the crew left for China and the ship and all hands being lost in a typhoon.

My sister went to "Fort Hope" with a clergyman and his wife who we knew in England. I was to have gone too but declined thinking I had gone far enough, so went and stayed with a good kind family a little way from town. It was a lovely place and I stayed till they left for England. There were no roads or regular sidewalks. My friend of the boat and myself were returning from a party and it was raining so we had our umbrellas up and before we knew it we fell over a cow that was taking a quiet sleep in the middle of the bridge. We were up quicker than we went down and a little worse for mud and dust. While I was with the family up the Gorge we used to come into church and balls in a canoe and only an Indian to paddle, but it all seems like a dream – I could tell many amusing things that occurred, here is one – One Sunday evening we were going to Church – we were following an old Gentleman with a candle in a bottle and a very tall man was in front when down he went and we all fell. When I was up minus my belt and books and any quantity of mud we could not help laughing to see the state we were in and the berger told us if we kept laughing we must leave the Church but we did not do so.

I have never been back, my dear Mother died, she belonged to the Willis family, her father having the finest ballroom in St James, London Eng and known all over London.

#### Line on Leaving England

Home of my childhood I leave thee in sorrow  
My feet will ne'er cross thy threshold again  
And the sun will rise on the fast coming morrow  
Will see me a wanderer far ore' the main.

Home of my youth, in life's early morning  
Sorrow nor time, nought could break its repose  
When I laughed at the world and all follies spurning  
With the fearless indifference youth only knows

When thou sawest me depart, twas in hopes of returning  
Now seeist me depart in sorrow and woe  
A Wanderer, all comfort and solace scorning  
With anguish that none but the desolate know

I have been to Dawson. Went down Bonanza Creek, 175 feet deep, washed out a pan of gold and had a pleasant time with my son and his wife and also to Yale with a friend and stayed a week with them. I think I have had a pretty good time considering the number of years I have been here.