

AN ISLAND OF NEW ENGLAND.

BY GUSTAV KOBBE.

WITH PICTURES BY JOSEPH JEFFERSON AND CHARLES A. WALKER.



MONOTYPE BY CHARLES A. WALKER.
THE MANSION HOUSE.

IT sometimes happens, in this ever-changing America of ours, that a bit of country, almost as it once was when the old Cabots or Bartholomew Gosnold first found it, still exists, preserved by a succession of single owners from the general forest devastation which has followed more divided proprietorship. Such is the island, hardly a mile's distance from one of the most picturesque parts of the coast of New England, which retains its Indian name, Naushon, said by some to mean "The Isle of the Blest." The native deer are still to be found there, only kept from the rule of the survival of the fittest by a few hunts every autumn. Many noted people have joined in these hunts, which were features

of the autumn on the island even before it became the property of the present owners. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, at one time of his life a frequent visitor to the island, rarely missed one of them. Among his poems in the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" may be found several which owe their inspiration to his visits to the island.

Science suspending her Habeas corpuses
While I was shooting or looking at porpoises,

as he himself writes. The same poem includes his famous pun:

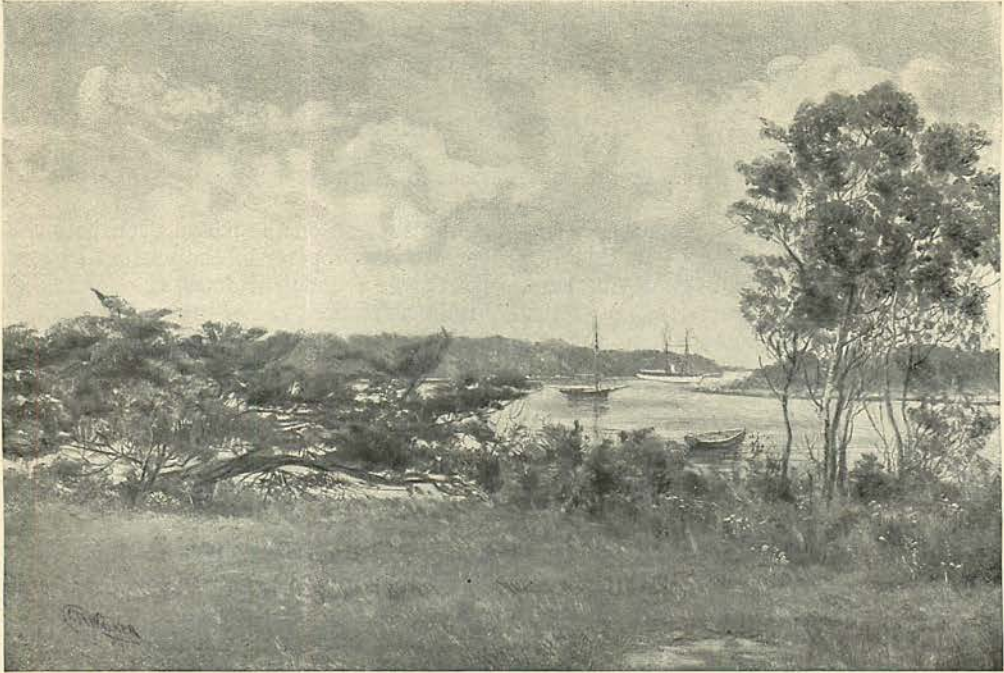
And if I sit where the bumpers are bubblin'
While I am looking—each cork seems a Dublin.

Many a hunt dinner was enlivened by a song from this most genial of poets; and when, many years ago, the sterling old "governor" of the island, who had been his first host, died, he penned that noble threnody, "The Last Look," beginning:



PAINTED BY JOSEPH JEFFERSON.

THE EDGE OF THE WOOD.



MONOTYPE BY CHARLES A. WALKER.

HADLEY HARBOR, LOOKING OUT.

Behold—not him we knew!
This was the prison which his soul looked through,
Tender, and brave, and true.

So it is that we owe to this island one of the most beautiful as well as several of the wittiest poems in our language.

The island still boasts most of its natural beauty, and the present proprietor has labored to restore such ravages as man has been guilty of, though fortunately there seems to have been but one gross instance of violence. This was about 1825, when the heirs of Governor Bowdoin owned the island. The heirs were minors, and the wiseacres who administered the estate thought the island might be made to yield an income if its wood were cropped. There being no provision in the will for cutting, they obtained permission from the legislature, which at the same time appointed a militia general to see that the rights of the heirs were guarded. Men were hired, houses built, and fifteen hundred acres of fine old trees felled. As a result the market was overstocked, and at the settlement of the account it was found that through the transaction the estate had incurred an indebtedness of fifteen hundred dollars, and had lost fifteen hundred acres of fine woodland.

The island is one of a considerable group, all of which retain their Indian names, so far as these are pronounceable by the

Anglo-Saxon. There are three Indian traditions relating to it, which have been preserved by Wait Winthrop, son of John, who owned it at the beginning of the last century. The first states that the house on the east end of the island was raised, "ye Indians say, before ye English came to America"—in which statement I should say there was more Indian than truth. The second tells how the Indians on the mainland, being at enmity with those on the island, persuaded the "devell" to throw a rattlesnake on to the latter. The snake "increas't much," and a squaw was "bit." The third relates that while the "devell" was building a bridge from the main to one of the smaller islands, a crab caught him by the finger, whereupon he threw the crab toward an island twenty miles distant, where crabs now breed.

This Wait Winthrop had a disposition fit for a recluse life in his island home. When he set out for it, he wrote in his journal: "I am now this present year, 1702, twenty-one years of age, and in all my life hitherto have never found a true friend, one yt I could trust." A Puritan pessimist at one-and-twenty! The old Winthrop deed, a fine specimen of "indenture," hangs in the island mansion. The "consideration" for which the Indians originally parted with the property consisted of a red coat and some beads!

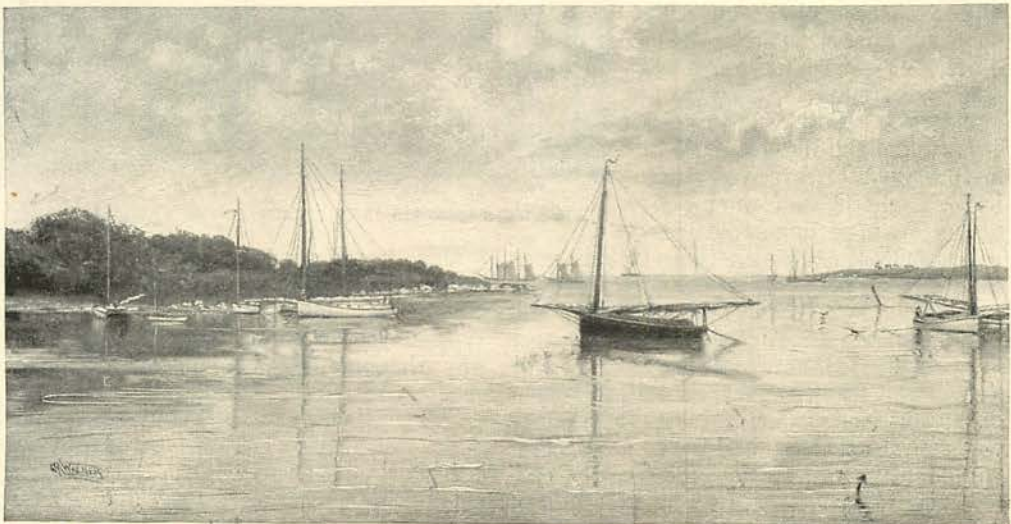
The best method of improving a spot of such natural beauty is to leave it alone; and this the present proprietor does most thoroughly, especially as he finds that experts disagree on artificial means. One of those he consulted was a lumberman who knew something of tree culture; but as soon as he entered the woods the man of business overcame the arboriculturist, and he exclaimed enthusiastically: "Cut them down! Cut them down! They're just a good marketable size!" The other, a noted landscape-gardener, advised that every tree on this five-thousand-acre estate be trimmed—a proceeding which would likely extend through several generations, and then have to begin all over again. Fortunately the owner left nature to herself. So intent is he upon preserving the natural beauty of the island that the roads over it are clearly defined only where this is absolutely necessary. Wherever they leave the woods, and wind in and out among and over the mounds of turf and rock which add so much to the varied attractiveness of the landscape, they are marked only by a few slight streaks of brownish paint upon an occasional rock or stone, hardly noticeable unless one is on the lookout for them.

Among former old residents of the island a story was current that the mansion was haunted. It was only just finished in 1813 by "Governor" B., and furnished from England, when, so the story goes, one day, just before dinner, the governor told the family to wait for him, went up-stairs, and, not returning, was sought, and found dead in his chair. The

wife, startled out of all thought but that of getting away from the island as soon as possible, left things just as they were, and tradition says that the table remained untouched. The house was shuttered closely and left for seven years to the tender mercies of mice and mold. At the end of that time an agent was sent to open the place. But a crop of tales had arisen, and had spread all about the country-side. From the mainland parties came to inspect the haunted house. "The governor had said the family were to await his coming for seven years, and now the time had come"; "lights were seen," "noises heard," etc. The whole paraphernalia of a ghost-story were at the disposal of a yarn-spinner. Mischievous farm-hands who had access to the house hid themselves therein, after tempting two unfortunates to spend the night there, and when those poor fellows were quaking in terror, the hidden friends sounded a gong and sent them flying to the farm, firm believers in the ghost; and so on endlessly.

The nearest approach to the appearance of a veritable ghost was when Mr. Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War, visited the island. He occupied the haunted room, but had not heard of the ghost—so he said, or was said to have said. He was awakened by the door slowly opening and some one hobbling about as if bumping the floor with a cane. This continued some time, then ceased suddenly. The room was too dark to see the intruder, nothing further occurred, and the Secretary at last slept.

He said nothing at the time, and so missed



MONOTYPE BY CHARLES A. WALKER.

TARPAULIN COVE.

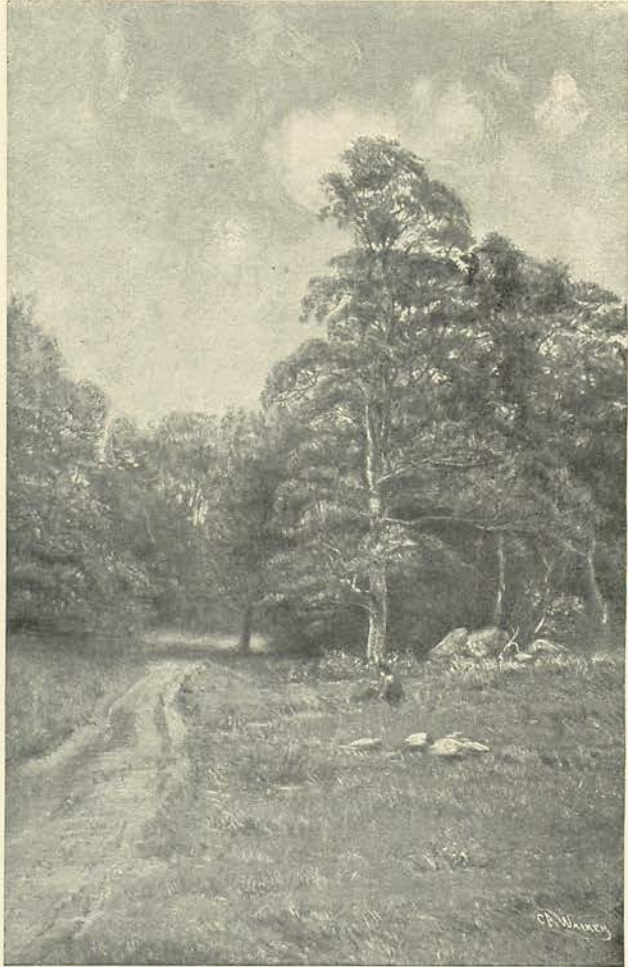
the explanation, *i. e.*, that the door of the haunted room, from a very ancient latch not catching well, had a trick of opening, and underneath the room visited by the ghost of the governor was one haunted by mosquitos, the human inhabitants whereof were wont to rise and rap the walls with slippers, when the pest became too bad for sleep.

Mr. Stanton may have heard the ghost—we leave it to the reader to decide.

Half-way along the south shore of the island there is a famous cove, with a lighthouse and keeper's dwelling and a farm-house, and there is another farm-house at the west end. From the eastern end, where the mansion and other residences stand, to the cove is four miles, and from there to the western end three, so that there are great reaches of forest and wild land, where the deer roam at large, between the human habitations. These, therefore, hardly mar the natural aspect of the island, and the solitude—one of its chief charms—is practically unbroken.

Few estates can boast the varied beauty of the island, which unites in a rare degree sea-shore and upland. The waters between the group and the mainland are picturesquely streaked and eddied by the tide rush, here being one of the narrow entrances to the bay. The rocky shore of the main, and the beacon on the promontory, form a fitting background for these restless waters. Between the principal island and its several islets are pretty waterways over which it is delightful to row or paddle, except in certain narrow passages where the tide sometimes makes a veritable sloping plane of water, and you have to pull, paddle, or pole your boat literally up-hill. Coming out from one of these narrow passages between wooded shores, late one afternoon, we saw a low point, with just one fantastic cedar darkly outlined against the sky. It was slack water, perfectly calm, and the air so still that you could hear the faint tinkle of the bell-buoy in the narrows. Just as we emerged from the passage, three blue herons flew low over the water from one of the wooded shores

to the point. If we had been a thousand miles from civilization, the solitude could not have been deeper; and the noiseless flight of the heron gave it an air of mystery. But presto, change! a moment later we were out on the Sound, with its shimmering sails and its smoky steamers, a procession of coasters hardly equaled on any other reach of the Atlantic.



MONOTYPE BY CHARLES A. WALKER.

THE OLD SASSAFRAS TREE, KNOWN AS THE EMERSON TREE.

Once in the woods beyond the clearing on which the mansion stands, it is easy to realize why the island should have been one of William Morris Hunt's favorite haunts, and why Emerson loved to dream within its shadowy retreats.

The woods have distinct characteristics of their own. It must be remembered that here is a forest on the very edge of the ocean, and not composed of stunted pines and cedar, or of scrub-oak, but of trees such as we are accustomed to see inland. This confirms the

statements of our early writers concerning the forests along our coasts. These woods have not been devastated, and still stand in all their beauty, the fallen leaves of each season still further enriching the soil and strengthening the growth of timber. The rest of our coast has not fared so well; and hence, when we are told that the barren swales of sand on which we stand were the home of an ancient forest, we have doubts. But here is living proof of the lofty beauty of our coast before civilization began its attack upon it. Here, too, we are reminded of the Norseman's reputed landfall upon this coast—Vineland. For, besides numerous other grape-vines, the island forest boasts one which, having climbed the trunk of one of the tallest trees of the island, has spread its tendrils from branch to branch of this and neighboring trees, until it actually forms a roof over nearly half an acre of woodland floor. The day I stood beneath it, every leaf was fluttering, so that the glints of sunshine fairly rippled over the deep, soft covering of fallen leaves. The hollow was filled with a woody fragrance. It was a place fit for the elves to dance of a moonlight night. For here, in the "Alhambra," as it is called, with an orchestra of crickets, katydids, and tree-toads, they might hold festival unseen, except perhaps by some astonished deer. Nor would they leave a footprint on the springy mold to betray their trysting-place. It is delightful in this forest, where all the fallen leaves, except those the wind has blown away, have remained, no one can say for how many centuries, to lift this mold by its dry top, and see layer after layer grow richer and moister, until it becomes a deep-brown muck and gives forth the same earthy aroma that rises from a valley after a heavy rain.

Soon after entering these shadowy woods I noticed an effect produced by the nearness of the ocean. We were at the bottom of a hollow, where the trees grew straight and tall; but as I looked about me, following the sides of the hollow up, I observed that the trees immediately about me grew no taller than the top of the hollow. They were tall because their growth started from the very bottom; and by just so much as the other trees were rooted higher along the sides of the hollow, by just so much they were shorter than those rooted in the depths. All growth was checked at the top of the hollow. Not a tree-tuft protruded above it. Those trees which grew near the top, where the wind could dive in upon them, were like the cedars you see in the sand hollows along a beach.

Their branches had been blown on so long from one direction that they all grew to leeward. I climbed up and sat on what I may call the windward rail of this hollow, and could see that the wind, sweeping over it, had checked all growth, leaving an almost level circle of tree-tops. So much sway, at least, his Majesty the Atlantic holds over this forest retreat, through his viceroy the wind.

Not far from here are the large spreading black oak named after General Sherman, and two fine beeches dedicated to General and Mrs. Grant. The Sheridan Path, leading to the oak bearing this soldier's name, might be a mountain trail, yet a few rods in another direction you gain a view of the Sound.

Sheridan took his last ride on the island. When his host had last seen Sheridan he was a light, dashing young officer. Naturally supposing that the hero of the famous ride from Winchester, and one of the greatest of cavalry generals, would prefer the saddle to the cushion, he had had the horses saddled. Sheridan, whose weight had increased considerably, rather demurred at riding, saying he had not been astride a horse for years, but finally mounted. It proved his last mount.

Though Hunt came here for rest, he was irresistibly attracted by the beauty of these woods, and painted several passages in them. Among them is an old tree, a bit of fallen wall, and a glimpse of the open from under the trees. Through the leafy arch to one side you can look out upon a reach of blue water.

Not long after emerging from under this arch, we came to a cleft running down to the shore. It is rough and rocky, with stunted, wind-blown trees, a dun, autumnal coloring giving added significance to the name—the Witches' Glen.

But the most exquisite passage on the island is Cathedral Path. The road here leads through a hollow where beeches spread their Gothic branches from smooth, slender, column-like trunks. Some of the larger trees in the hollow form the nave of the cathedral, the road leading through it like a broad aisle. On the sloping sides are the galleries, a cluster of small trees on the edge standing up as straight and slender as organ-pipes; and there is always music in this sanctuary. A little farther on is the chantry of this forest cathedral—a smaller hollow, with the same effects upon a diminutive scale.

Soon we emerged from the forest upon the low shore at the head of the principal cove. Here are the remains of a small Revolution-



TREES NAMED FOR GENERAL AND MRS. GRANT.

ary water-battery, and a little farther back in the woods is the magazine. A Hessian officer relates in his diary that the British, upon landing on the island, were met by a man and a little girl, the man bearing a flag of truce, the little girl an egg in token of confidence. When the egg was accepted, she held out her right hand with a kiss.

The cove is an important haven for coast-wise shipping. When vessels cannot stem the head wind and tide of the Sound, they put in here. As many as 193 large sail have been counted after a blow; and during one year 12,000 vessels were in the Cove, making it for that year the fifth port of the country. Back of the Cove is a small graveyard, mostly sailors' graves. Some are marked only by oar-spoons stuck in the ground. But this was doubtless the best the former ship-mates of the dead could do for them. It was the first harbor they had made, and they put in only for the hasty burial, thinking it a snugger haven than the bottom of the sea. Occasionally a relative has visited the spot afterward and put up a headstone. One not very large, over the grave of Ithneal Hill, is spoken of in the epitaph as "this small tribute of respect." The epitaph of a Captain

Loring, whose body was brought in here in 1788, reads:

Loring, in all the pride of life,
Hath quit this brittle clay;
And calmly steered his single bark
To yonder world of day.

But the most pathetic grave on the island is in the very heart of the forest. It is a little mound—the last resting-place of a child. A headstone, half rotted away, lies beside it. Only a few letters—not enough to disclose the identity of the dead—can be deciphered. What a strange burial-place, to reach which one must break through thickets and traverse swamps, as if some one, having buried here his last hope, had laid it as far from himself as possible!

Beyond the cove, toward the western end of the island, is the French Watering-Place, another spot with Revolutionary associations. For from this little pond, fended by only a ribbon of sand from the Sound, D'Estaing's fleet obtained water. Not far from the extreme western end is a pretty lake with wooded shores.

The beauty of the island is thus most varied. From its shores you can look out



TREES NAMED FOR PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLEVELAND.

upon a bay on one side and a sound on the other, and then ramble on through forests along paths that seem to lead into the very heart of the mountains. There is smooth, sunny upland, too. Every now and then you have a glimpse of deer bounding through the woods, or standing on some hill-top, silhouetted against the sky, then suddenly vanishing as they take alarm.

The deer are still hunted on the island, and it is to be hoped the hunters have better luck now than in the early days, when, as Holmes puts it:

The second day now blazed away
Each double-barrelled hero;
They made the number up to ten—
If ten be one and zero.

However, bad hunting luck seems to be the lot of poets who visit this island; for one of these, of a later day than Holmes, has celebrated his erring aim in these stanzas:

“THE MAN WHO MISSED THE MARK.”

Since first the music of the hound
And the hunter's horn rang clear,
Poets have vied the praise to sound
Of him who killed the deer

My merry song is not the old,
For shooting goes by luck;

My hero is the hunter bold
Who missed the bounding buck.

No pang for him in all the day,
No stain on stone or grass;
He took his “stand,” and he had his play:
Heard the calling chorus pass;

Saw the antlered deer go leaping by
With a flight like a winged bliss;
He fired, as he blinked his frightened eye—
He fired, but he fired to miss!

Not death he gave from the barrel bright,
But life in the deep woods dark;
My wreath of laurel is twined to-night
For the man who missed the mark!

Then a merry song—but not the old,
For winning goes by luck;
My hero is the hunter bold
Who never killed a buck!

There is also a memento of Whittier on the island, in these lines of his on a sun dial at the mansion:

With warning hand I mark time's rapid flight,
From life's glad morning to its solemn night.
Yet through the dear God's love I also show
There 's light above me, by the shade below.

The gentle spirit breathing through these lines seems to float like a benediction over this fair island.



PAINTED BY JOSEPH JEFFERSON.

ROAD THROUGH THE WITCH'S GLEN.