

## BLOCK ISLAND.

By CHARLES LANMAN.



MOHEGAN BLUFF.

AS the poet Dana made Block Island the scene of his fascinating story called the "Buccaneer," we may with propriety begin our description with the opening verses of his famous poem:\*

"The island lies nine leagues away,  
Along its solitary shore  
Of craggy rock and sandy bay  
No sound but ocean's roar,

Save where the bold, wild sea-bird makes her home,  
Her shrill cry coming through the sparkling foam.

"But when the light winds lie at rest,  
And on the glassy, heaving sea  
The black duck, with her glossy breast,  
Sits swinging silently—

How beautiful! no ripples break the reach,  
And silvery waves go noiseless up the beach."

Its exact position, at the junction of Long Island Sound and Narraganset Bay, is longitude  $71^{\circ} 30'$  west, and latitude  $41^{\circ} 8'$  north, and it is washed by those waters of the Atlantic which are perpetually blue. From Newport it is, indeed, just "nine leagues away," less than five from Point Judith, eight from Watch Hill, and seven from Montauk. The island is between eight and nine miles long, and from two to four in width. At its northern extremity, where stands a lighthouse, a sandy bar shoots out for a mile and

a half under water, upon the end of which people now living allege that they have gathered berries, and from which at least two light-houses have been removed in the last fifty years on account of the encroachments of the sea. Clay bluffs, rising to the height of one and two hundred feet, alternate with broad stretches of white beach in forming its entire shores. Its surface is undulating to an uncommon degree, and almost entirely destitute of trees. The highest hill, lying south of the centre, rises more than three hundred feet above the sea; and by way of atoning for its want of running streams, it has two handsome lakes, one of which is of fresh-water, and the other of salt-water, with an area of about two thousand acres. Small ponds fed by springs are numerous, and of great value to the farmers. The only harbor on the island lies on the eastern side, nearly midway between the two extremities, and the contrast presented by what are called the Old Harbor and the New Harbor is very striking. At this point also is the only collection of houses that approaches to the dignity of a village. Here the Block Island fleet, the fish-houses appertaining thereto, a relief station, one big and one smaller hotel, and several boarding-houses, half a dozen shops, one church, and two windmills, are scattered about in very

\* The entire poem was reprinted, with illustrations, in *Harper's Magazine* for October, 1872.

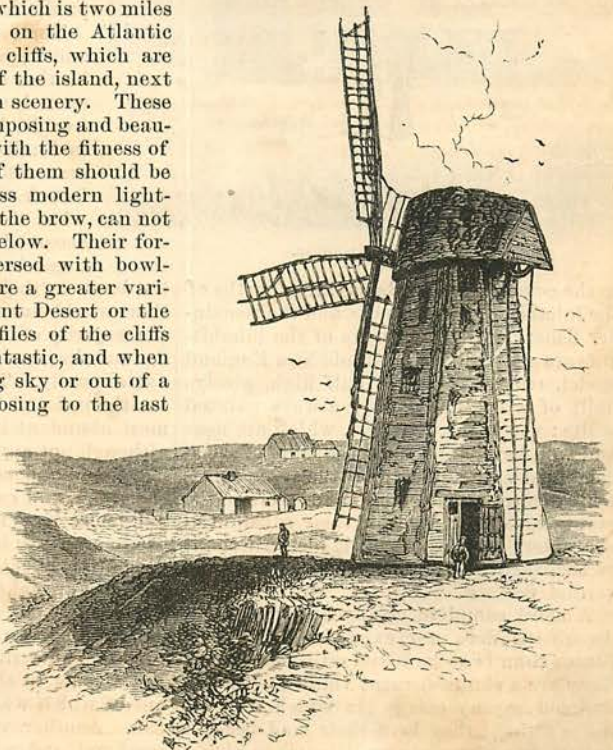


much of a helter-skelter fashion. One of these windmills was built upon the main shore at Fall River sixty years ago; twenty years ago it stood near the Old Harbor, at which time we made a sketch of it; and to-day it is a conspicuous landmark in the interior of the island. From this village, branching out in every direction, are many winding roads, most of them private and blocked up with gates, upon which are located the snug habitations of the islanders, numbering in all about thirteen hundred souls, three-fourths of whom are thrifty farmers, while the balance are supported by the harvests of the sea. Barring the massive and interminable stone walls which intersect the entire island, the inland landscapes are almost invariably composed of undulating pastures, studded with picturesque homes and barns and hay-stacks, the most of them commanding glimpses of the sea. From the height of land already mentioned, and known as Beacon Hill, the ocean presents nearly a complete circle, broken only by one hill, and well-nigh every house upon the island may be distinctly seen, as well as about two hundred sails per day during the summer months. Other prominent landmarks are Clay Head, a lofty and solemn promontory pointing toward the northeast; Pilot Hill, also in the northeastern part; Bush Hill, near the Great Pond; the Great Bathing Beach, which is two miles long, and as fine as any on the Atlantic coast; and the southern cliffs, which are the crowning attraction of the island, next to the sea air and the ocean scenery. These great bulwarks are both imposing and beautiful, and it is in keeping with the fitness of things that the highest of them should be surmounted by a first-class modern lighthouse, which, though near the brow, can not be seen from the beach below. Their formation is of clay interspersed with bowlders, and hence we find here a greater variety of colors than at Mount Desert or the Isles of Shoals. The profiles of the cliffs are both graceful and fantastic, and when looming against a glowing sky or out of a bank of fog, they are imposing to the last degree; and while you may recline upon a carpet of velvety grass at their summits, you have far below you the everlasting surf of the Atlantic, dashing wildly among the bowlders, or melting in peace upon the sandy shores. But to enjoy this cliff scenery in its perfection, you must look upon it under various aspects—in a wild storm, when all the sounds of the shore are

absorbed in the dull roar of the sea coming from afar; in a heavy fog, when the cliffs have a spectral look, and the scream of the gulls is mingled with the dashing of the unseen breakers; at sunset, when a purple glow rests upon the peaceful sea and the rolling hills; at twilight, when the great fissures are gloomy, and remind you of the dens of despair; and in the moonlight, when all the objects that you see and all the sounds you hear tend to overwhelm you with amazement and awe.

But the air and the ocean, after all, are the chief attractions of Block Island—the air, bland and bracing in summer, pure and delicious as nectar in the sunny autumn, and not without its attractions even in the winter and early spring; and the ocean, in conjunction with the sky, making glorious pictures, thus leading the mind from sublunary things to those that are eternal in the heavens.

The aborigines of Block Island were a part of the Narraganset nation, and they gloried in the fame of their three great chieftains, Canonicus, Canonchet, and Miantonomoh, the first of whom it was who sold Aquidneck, now Rhode Island, to the English. It was about the year 1676 that the last two of this trio were slain, one of them at Stonington and the other at Sachem's



OLD WINDMILL.



Plain, in Connecticut, and with them the Narraganset power virtually expired. When the white men first visited Block Island, they found there about sixty large wigwams, divided into two villages, adjoining which were two hundred acres of land planted with maize; and while the records do not state when these Indians finally left the island, the presumption is that it was soon after the whites had fairly obtained possession of their new domain.

In colonial times the land-owners were comparatively few; their estates were large, and houses somewhat pretentious; they were waited upon by slaves, and in the habit of exchanging formal visits with the great proprietors on the Narraganset shore. In modern times, however, we find the land so cut up and subdivided that a farm of one hundred acres is rather a novelty, while the largest proportion range from two to forty acres, and the largest on the island contains only one hundred and fifty acres. Contrary

to the common belief, in which they are successful to a man; they are simple in their habits, and therefore command respect; they are honest, and neither need nor support any jails; they are naturally intelligent, and a much larger proportion of them can read and write than is the case in Massachusetts, the reputed intellectual centre of the world; they are industrious, and have every needed comfort; and kind-hearted to such an extent that they do not even laugh at the antics of those summer visitors who have a habit of making themselves ridiculous. In their physical appearance the men are brown and hardy, as it becomes those who live in sunshine, mist, and storm even from the cradle; and the women are healthy, with bright eyes and clear complexions, virtuous and true, and as yet without the pale of the blandishments and corruption of fashion.

While storing away, with a liberal hand, a supply of all the necessities of life for their own consumption, the Block Islanders have an eye to trade, and send over to Newport and Providence, to Stonington and New London, large supplies of cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, grain, poultry, and eggs, as well as cod livers for oil, and large quantities of sea-moss, receiving in return not only money, but all the necessities of foreign growth or production.

The fishermen of this island live and appear very much like their brother farmers, but naturally have more intercourse with the outside world. Very frequently, indeed, we find individuals who are both farmers and fishermen. They are a quiet but fearless and hardy race, and what they do not know about the ocean—its winds and storms and fogs—is not worth knowing. All



OLD LIGHT-HOUSE.

to the common belief, about three-fourths of the inhabitants are farmers, and the remainder fishermen. The houses of the inhabitants are generally after the old New England model, one story and a half high, always built of wood, and nearly always painted white; the barns, however, which are neat and well kept, are frequently built of wood combined with stone walls; the stone fences which surround or cross and recross the plantations are noted for their substantial character; and the grazing lands, on account of their neatness and beauty, are invariably attractive.

A more complete colony of pure native Americans does not exist in the United States than is to be found on Block Island. They are a clannish race; think themselves as good as any others (in which they are quite right); they love their land because it is their own; their ambition is to obtain a good plain support from their own exer-

the boats in their possession at the present time would not number one hundred, and the majority of these are small, but they suffice to bring from the sea a large amount of fish annually. The two principal varieties are the cod and blue fish. The former are most abundant in May and November, and although not any better by nature than the Newfoundland cod, they are taken nearer the shore, and cured while perfectly fresh, and hence have acquired a rare reputation. There are three banks for taking them, ranging from five to ten miles distant. The blue-fish are taken all through the summer and autumn, are commonly large, and afford genuine sport to all strangers who go after them. The writer of this once saw sixty boats come to shore in a single day, every one of which was heavily laden with blue-fish. Another valuable fish taken is the mackerel, and when they are in the offing in June, the Block Island fleet, joined to the



stranger fishermen, sometimes present a most charming picture. And as they anchor at night, to use the language of another, under the lee of the island, the lights in the rigging, the fantastic forms of the men dressing the fish, the shouts of old shipmates recognizing each other, the splash of the waves, the creaking of the tackle, the whistling of the wind, the fleecy clouds flying across the face of the moon, conspire to make a picture that seems more like a fairy vision than reality.

But the sea-faring men of Block Island are not all purely fishermen. Many of them do a profitable business as pilots. A goodly number of them, too, are called wreckers, and their business is to lend a helping hand, and not to rob the unfortunate, when vessels are driven upon the shore by stress of weather or lured to destruction by the deceitful fogs. And it occasionally happens that we hear of a Block Islander who becomes curious about the world at large, and obtaining command of a ship at New Bedford or New London, circumnavigates the globe; but they are always sure to come back to their cherished home, better satisfied with its charms than ever before.

This island was discovered by the Florentine Giovanni di Verazzano in 1524, while upon a voyage along the coast of North America under a commission from the French king. The name that he gave to it was Claudia, in honor of the king's mother; but as he did not land upon it, and never saw it afterward, the island was utterly forgotten for well-nigh a century. After the Dutch had founded New Amsterdam, some of them sailed for the northeast, on a visit to the Pilgrims at Plymouth, and they saw the island also; and it was one of the white-haired race, Adrian Blok or Block, who rediscovered it, and whose name it has ever since borne. Its original owners, the Narraganset Indians, named it Manisses.

In 1636, while Roger Williams was planting the standard of civilization and Christianity on the spot where the city of Providence now stands, a certain Boston trader attempted to establish a business arrangement with the Indians on Block Island. "The cause of our war" (according to a writer in the Historical Collections of Massachusetts) "against the Block Islanders was for taking away the life of one Master John Oldham, who made it his common course to trade among the Indians. He coming to Block Island to drive trade with them, the islanders came into his boat, and having got a full view of his commodities, which gave them good content, consulted how they might destroy him and his company, to the end they might clothe their bloody flesh with his lawful garments. The Indians having laid their plot, they came to trade, as pretended; watching their opportunities, knocked

him in the head and martyred him most barbarously, to the great grief of his poor distressed servants, which by the providence of God were saved. This island lying in the roadway to Lord Sey and the Lord Brookes's plantation, a certain seaman called John Gallop, master of the small navigation, standing along to the Mathethusis Bay, and seeing a boat under sail close aboard the island, and perceiving the sails to be unskillfully managed, bred in him a jealousy whether that island Indians had not bloodily taken the life of our own countrymen and made themselves master of their goods. Suspecting this, he bore up to them, and approaching near them, was confirmed that his jealousy was just. Seeing Indians in the boat, and knowing her to be the vessel of Master Oldham, and not seeing him there, gave fire upon them and slew some; others leaped overboard, besides two of the number which he preserved alive and brought to the Bay. The blood of the innocent called for vengeance. God stirred up the heart of the honored Governor, Master Henry Vane, and the rest of the worthy Magistrates, to send forth one hundred well-appointed soldiers under the conduct of Captain John Hendicott, and in company with him that had command, Captain John Underhill, Captain Nathan Turner, Captain William Jennings, besides other inferior officers." The result of the expedition was, "having slain fourteen and maimed others, the balance having fled, we embarked ourselves and set sail for Seasbrooke fort, where we lay through distress of weather four days; then we departed." Captains Norton and Stone were both slain, with seven more of their company. The orders to this expedition were "to put the men of Block Island to the sword, but to spare the women and children."

Soon after that event the island became tributary to Massachusetts, and Winthrop informs us that on the 27th of January, 1638, the Indians of Block Island sent three men with ten fathoms of wampum as a part of their tribute, and by way of atoning for their wicked conduct. In 1658 the General Court of Massachusetts granted all their right to Block Island to Governor John Endicott and three others, who in 1660 sold it to a certain company of persons, and the first settlement was commenced in the following year. The story of that sale was duly written out at the time, and after the settlement had been effected was placed on record among the files of the island, where it is to be found at the present time.

In 1663 the island was annexed, by the charter of Charles II., to the colony of Rhode Island. In 1672 it was incorporated as the town of New Shoreham, and so named, it is supposed, because some of the prominent settlers had come from the town of Shore-



ham, in Sussex County, England. From the start, it had conferred upon itself more ample powers of self-government than had been conferred upon any other town in the colony, for the reason that "they were living remote, being so far in y<sup>e</sup> sea," and because of "y<sup>e</sup> longe spellles of weather," which sometimes rendered it difficult to reach the island.

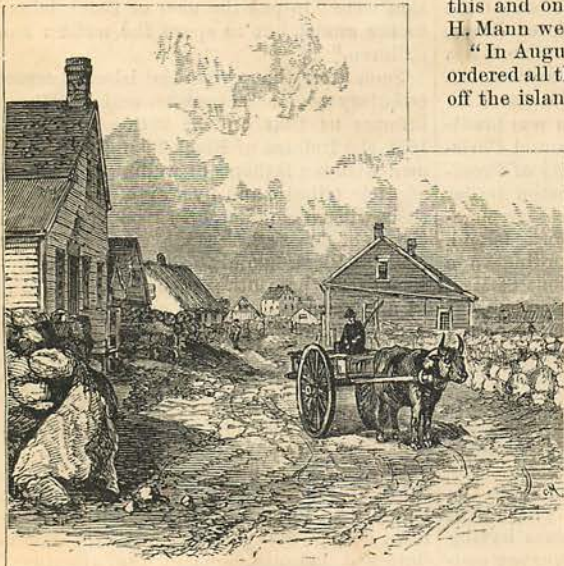
When war was proclaimed between France and England in 1689, Block Island came in for rather more than its share of attention from the enemies of England. In July of that year, as we learn from the records of Massachusetts, three French privateers came to Block Island, having among their crew one William Trimming, who treacherously decoyed and betrayed those he met at sea, pretending they were Englishmen, as he had a perfect use of the English tongue. He was sent on shore, and, by plausible accounts, succeeded in obtaining a pilot to conduct the vessels into the harbor, whereupon the people, who imagined no treachery, were immediately made prisoners of war. They continued on the island a week, plundering houses, and stripping people of their clothings, goods, etc., and destroying their bedding. This same Trimming was afterward shot dead on the spot (it was thought through surprise) by Mr. Stephen Richardson, of Fisher's Island, lying near New London, where he had gone with others of the crew on a similar expedition, he having his gun partly concealed behind him, and not laying it down when commanded. Mr. Richardson was much blamed at the time for it.

In 1690 the French again landed upon the island, plundered it, and carried off some of

the inhabitants. Other attacks were made from time to time during that and the subsequent wars between England and France, viz., in 1744 and 1754, as well as during the Revolutionary war and that of 1812, the island having been, from its position, peculiarly exposed to them, and it did not obtain a lasting peace until after all hostilities were ended.

Mr. W. H. Potter, while discussing the hostile demonstrations alluded to above, gives us this information: "In 1775 H.B.M. man-of-war *Rose*, Captain Wallace, with several tenders, was stationed to guard the island, lest the islanders should transport their stock and stores to the main-land, these being wanted to supply the British ships. Notwithstanding the vigilance of Commodore Wallace, the authorities of Rhode Island, under the superintendence of Colonel James Rhodes, brought off the live stock from Block Island, and landed them at Stonington, whence they were driven into Rhode Island. It was to punish Stonington for this raid that Wallace, it is supposed, bombarded Stonington Point in the fall of 1775. I have conversed with a person who was present when the *Rose* made her attack on Stonington, and he said of her destination, 'The next day the *Rose* set sail for her station off Block Island, where, I understood, she was stationed to prevent the cattle of the island from being removed.' As Newport was in possession of the enemy, the Block Islanders had their full share of trials." That the people were intensely loyal to the colonies is abundantly shown by the old records, but, as subsequent events proved, they paid for their patriotism by suffering much persecution. From a communication sent to us on this and one or two other topics by Dr. T. H. Mann we cull the following:

"In August of 1775 the General Assembly ordered all the cattle and sheep to be brought off the island, except a supply sufficient for their immediate use, and two hundred and fifty men were sent to bring them off to the main-land, and such as were suitable for market immediately sent to the army, and such as were not, sold at either public or private sale. Total number of sheep and lambs removed was 1908, and the amount paid to the inhabitants for the same was £534 9s. 6d. out of the general treasury. By an act of the General Assembly of May, 1776, the inhabitants of New Shoreham were exhorted to remove from the island, but there is no record of any general attention being paid to the exhortation; but some



STREET SCENE.

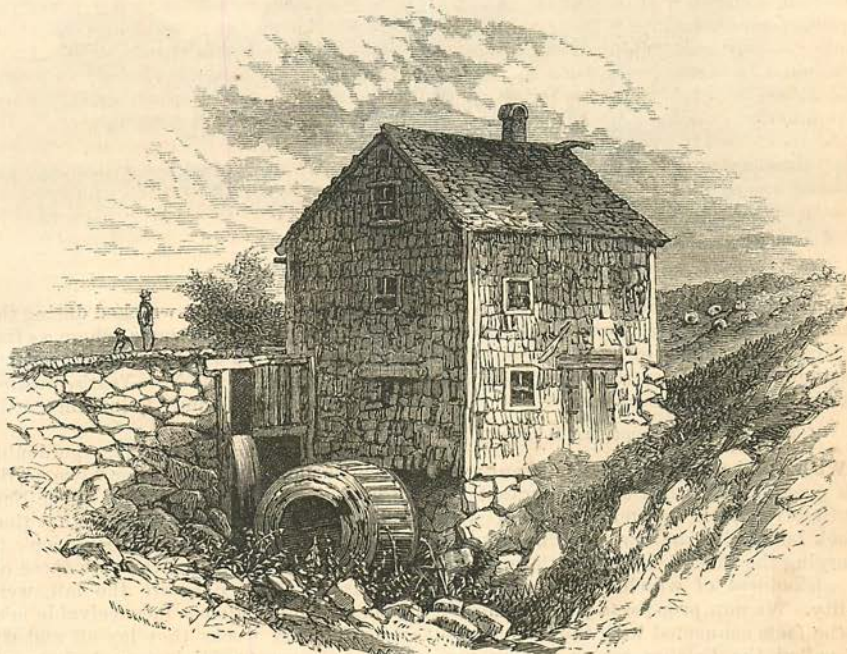


few did leave the island, and their petitions to the General Assembly for permits to return, collect the rents, and look after their property were quite frequently presented, and usually referred to the general commanding the defenses of the coast of the colony.

"There are a number of instances upon record of the abuse by individuals of the rights of neutrality. The royal forces occupied the island, or held direct communication with it, for nearly eight years, and it was not a difficult matter for the hardy boatmen, with their small open boats, to procure supplies from the main-land under cover of 'needed supplies' for their own use, and sell to good advantage to the troops who occu-

life of General Nathaniel Greene, says: 'The maiden's name was Catherine Littlefield, and she was a niece of the Governor's wife, the Catherine Ray of Franklin's letters. The courtship sped swiftly and smoothly, and more than once in the course of it he followed her to Block Island, where, as long after her sister told me, the time passed gleefully in merry-makings, of which dancing always formed a principal part?.....'

"She was an intimate acquaintance of General Washington's wife, Martha, meeting her many times at army head-quarters whenever the army rested long enough to permit the officers' wives to join them. In the life of General Greene, above alluded to, we read: 'And an intimacy sprung up between her



OLD MILL.

ried the island, or touched at the island for such supplies. At several different times the boatmen lost their whole cargo by confiscation to the colonial forces, who eventually put a stop to the smuggling. There is no evidence that this kind of smuggling was carried on to any extent, only by a few individuals.....

"An exchange of prisoners took place between the contending forces upon Block Island at several different times, its location making it a very convenient station for such exchanges. The island furnished several distinguished men to the Revolutionary forces, and one lady who figured very conspicuously as the wife of General Nathaniel Greene. George Washington Greene, in his

and Mrs. Washington which, like that between their husbands, ripened into friendship, and continued unimpaired through life. His first child, still in the cradle, was named George Washington, and the second, who was born the ensuing year, Martha Washington."

In the old times of which we are speaking the lottery was considered a legitimate means to be used for raising funds for any undertaking that required an extraordinary outlay of money. Even the stern old Puritans of this colony looked upon the lottery as legitimate when its gains were to be applied to a laudable purpose.

It has already been mentioned that the poet Dana made Block Island the scene of





THE NEW LIGHT-HOUSE ON MOHEGAN BLUFF.

his most brilliant poem; and although his local descriptions are poetically accurate, and he makes much of a burning ship, we must question the assertion that his hero, Matthew Lee, the Buccaneer,

“Held in this isle unquestioned sway.”

With equal ability, but in a different vein, the poet Whittier has also celebrated the leading romantic legend associated with Block Island, but he made the mistake of charging the Block Islanders with some acts of wickedness of which they were never guilty. We now propose to give a summary of the facts connected with the famous vessel called the *Palatine*, which we are permitted to make from an elaborate paper prepared by Mr. C. E. Perry, who is, on account of his researches in that direction, the highest authority extant.

The passengers of the *Palatine*, it would appear, were wealthy Dutch emigrants who were coming over to America to settle near Philadelphia.

There is much difference of opinion concerning the date, some placing it as early as 1720, while others suppose it to be as late as 1760. Nothing definite can be determined, but Mr. Perry's grandmother, who is now seventy-six years of age, and retains her faculties in a remarkable degree, remembers distinctly of her grandmother's telling her repeatedly that she was twelve years old when the *Palatine* came ashore.

If this reckoning can be depended on, the

*Palatine* must have been wrecked during the winter of 1750-51. She came ashore, as tradition reports, on a bright Sabbath morning between Christmas and New-Year's, striking on the outer end of Sandy Point, the northern extremity of the island.

The unfortunate passengers, who doubtless commenced this memorable voyage with bright hopes of a happy future in the New World, whose attractions were at that time currently believed by the common people in many parts of Europe to vie with those of the garden of Eden before the fall, were doomed to suffer almost inconceivable miseries. For six weeks they lay off and on, skirting the coasts of Delaware, during a period of peculiarly fine and delightful weather, almost within sight of the region they had hoped to make their home, while an unnecessary and enforced starvation was daily reducing their numbers and leading the survivors to pray for death as a welcome release from further sufferings.

These emigrants, many of whom were quite wealthy, had with them money and valuables, and the officers of the ship, headed by the chief mate, the captain having died or been killed during the passage, cut off the passengers' supply of provisions and water, though there was an ample sufficiency of both on board. The pangs of hunger and thirst compelled the unarmed, helpless, starving wretches to buy at exorbitant prices the miserable fragments that the crew chose to deal out to them. Twenty



guilders for a cup of water and fifty rix-dollars for a ship's biscuit soon reduced the wealth of the most opulent among them, and completely impoverished the poorer ones. With a fiendish atrocity almost unparalleled in the annals of selfishness, the officers and crew enforced their rules with impartial severity, and in a few weeks all but a few who had been among the wealthiest of them were penniless.

Soon the grim skeleton starvation stared them in the face, and as day succeeded day the broad waters of the Atlantic closed over the remains of those who a few weeks before had been envied for their good fortune and their fair prospects.

At last even the brutal officers, whose villainy no words in our language can adequately express, became satisfied that they had got all the plunder that was to be had, and left the ship in boats, landing perhaps on Long Island, to make their way to New York, carrying with them undoubtedly a remorse which preyed upon their souls, as hunger and thirst had gnawed at the vitals of their hapless victims. The famished, dying remnant of the once prosperous and happy company had no control over the ship, and she drifted wherever wind and tide might take her. How long she drifted, with the wintry winds whistling through her cordage, and the billows breaking around and across her, we shall never know. We may picture to ourselves these dying immigrants in their helpless journeying over a waste of strange waters.

Drifting here, drifting there; land always in sight, yet always inaccessible; some dying from weakness and despair, some from

surfeit when the crew had gone and the provisions were left unguarded, all more or less delirious, and some raving mad. When the ship struck on Sandy Point, the wreckers went out to her in boats, and removed all the passengers that had survived starvation, disease, and despair, except one woman, who obstinately refused to leave the wreck. These poor miserable skeletons were taken to the homes of the islanders and hospitably cared for. Edward Sands and Captain Simon Ray were at that time the leading men on the island, and it was to their homes that most of these unfortunate people were taken; and on a level spot of ground at the southwest part of the island, which then formed part of Captain Ray's estate, are still to be seen some of the graves where those who died here were buried. Edward Sands was Mr. Perry's grandmother's great-grandfather, and when the survivors of those who were taken to his house had sufficiently recovered to leave the island, one of them insisted upon his accepting some memento of their gratitude for the kindness shown to them during their stay, and gave to his little daughter a dress pattern of India calico. Calicoes or chintz patches, as dress patterns of the Eastern calico were then called, were rare in those days, even among the wealthy classes; and a little Block Island girl could not easily forget her first calico dress, especially when the gift was connected with circumstances so unusual and peculiar. Mr. Perry's grandmother has often heard her grandmother speak of this dress and relate its history. This anecdote, simple and unimportant as it may seem, has a bearing on the subject, for it



OLD ICE-HOUSES ON BLOCK ISLAND.



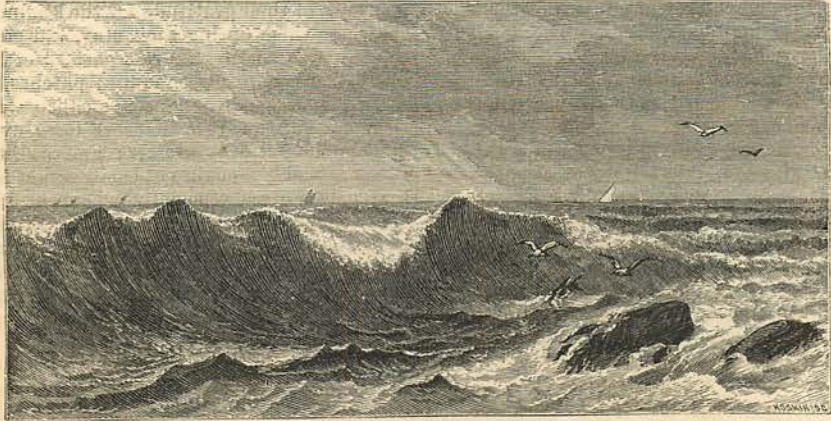
disposes of the supposition that none of the *Palatine's* passengers ever left the island. Where they settled, or where their descendants may be now, is one of those mysteries that hover like a dark cloud over the whole subject, and seem to preclude all hope of its ever being completely unraveled. One, and one only, of the passengers that lived to tell of their living death on board this prison-ship remained permanently on the island.

This passenger was a woman whose original surname is not known. Her given name was Kate, and owing to her unusual height, she was commonly spoken of as Long Kate, to distinguish her from another woman of the same name, who was generally known as Short Kate. Both women were more frequently called "Cattern," a corruption of Catherine.

Long Cattern married a colored slave belonging to Mr. Nathaniel Littlefield, and by him had three children—Cradle, Mary, and

sea, one of the wreckers set her on fire. The object of this act is not now apparent, but it is very improbable that he intended to destroy the unfortunate woman who persisted in remaining on board. No motive for such a horrible design can be imagined, and he doubtless supposed that she could be induced to leave the wreck when she discovered that it had been set on fire.

That she did not do so, and that she was not removed by force, only add two links to the inexplicable chain of circumstances that already perplex and embarrass us. The ship drove away into the gloom and darkness of a stormy night, while the hungry flames crawled up her spars, crackled through her rigging, licked up the streaming cordage and loosened sails, and settled at last to the hull, where it finished its cruel task. So ends the material *Palatine*. So ends the life of her last unhappy passenger. So, doubtless, would have ended the story of her voyage and her wreck, to the outer



A ROYAL VISITOR.

Jennie. These all died on the island. Jennie never had any children. Cradle had five children, but none of them were ever married. Mary also had a large family, but they all moved away, with the exception of two sons, whose children moved away, and a daughter Lydia, who married, and left several children, one of whom, familiarly known as Jack, still lives on the island. Long Cattern had her fortune told before she sailed, by a seer of her native land, who prophesied that she would marry a *very* dark skinned man.

The *Palatine*, it would seem, merely grounded on the extreme edge of the point, and as the tide rose she floated off, and the wreckers, making fast to her in their boats, towed her ashore in a little bend farther down the beach, now known as Breach Cove. An easterly wind springing up, and appearances indicating that, in spite of all the efforts that could be made, she would drive out to

world at least, had it not been for that remarkable phenomenon that has served to perpetuate her memory, and to stimulate research into her history.

Tradition tells us that her shrieks of despair and agony could be plainly heard on the shore, growing each moment fainter and fainter until death or distance finally ended them.

"But the year went round, and when once more  
Around their foam-white curves of shore  
They heard the line storm rave and roar,

"Behold again, with shimmer and shine,  
Over the rocks and seething brine,  
The flaming wreck of the *Palatine*."

Little wonder that the great sachem, with the superstitious awe common to the Indian character, went raving mad whenever that strange light appeared in the offing.

There are various versions of the *Palatine* or fire-ship story, but the facts collected by Mr. Perry are undoubtedly the most authen-



tic. The names of many respectable people, natives of Block Island and others, are in our possession who have declared that they had frequently witnessed the appearance of a burning ship off the shores of the island, and there are very few of its inhabitants who do not believe in the romantic legend. Several persons have attempted to account for the phenomenon on scientific principles. One of them, Dr. Aaron C. Willes, who was formerly a prominent physician on Block Island, wrote a letter in 1811, in which he asserted that he had seen this radiance himself a number of times, and after describing its peculiarities, but without hazarding any speculations, he makes this remark: "The cause of this roving brightness is a curious subject for philosophical investigation. Some, perhaps, will suppose it depends upon a peculiar modification of electricity; others upon the inflammation of hydrogenous gas. But there are probably many other means, unknown to us, by which light may be devolved from those materials with which it is latently associated, by the power of chemical affinities."

A full account of the shipwrecks that have happened on its shores would take more space than we can now spare. During the last twenty years, however, there have been not less than sixty, and the records show that they have been quite frequent during all the years of the present century. The loss of property has, of course, been great, but the lives lost have not been as numerous as some would imagine. In 1805 a ship called the *Ann Hope* came ashore on the south side, and three lives were lost; in 1807 the ship *John Davis* was purposely driven ashore by the captain, when the steward was murdered for fear that he would tell tales. Not long afterward three vessels came ashore in one night, but no lives were lost except those of one captain and his son, whose bodies were washed ashore clasped in each other's arms.

In 1830 the *Warrior*, a passenger packet running between Boston and New York, and accompanied by another vessel of the same line, anchored off Sandy Point one evening, in a calm. During the night the wind sprung up, leaving both vessels on a lee shore. The other vessel got under way and went out, signaling the *Warrior* to follow; but it is supposed the watch on board the *Warrior* were asleep; and when they awoke, such a gale of wind was raging that they could not get under way, and that morning she dragged her anchors and went ashore, and every soul on board was lost. The captain, who was an expert swimmer, got ashore, and brought his little boy with him; but the child's hat blowing off, he ran back after it, and the sea coming in rapidly, they were both lost.

The wreck of the steam-ship *Metis* off the

shores of Watch Hill during the latter part of August, 1872, is well remembered, together with the fearful suffering and loss of life there sustained. During the morning of August 31 the drift from the wreck commenced driving up on the west shore of Block Island. A large amount of the drift consisted of fruit and other articles of a perishable nature. The property was carted up in heaps on the beach. There were many cart-loads of tea, soap, flour, boxes of butter, cheese, kegs of lard and tobacco, barrels of liquors, crates of peaches, boxes of lemons, barrels of apples, cases of dry-goods, boxes of picture-frame mouldings, and a large quantity of drift-wood, broken furniture, and general *débris*. A large, fine-looking horse was washed up with the halter still fastened to the stanchion to which he was tied. About twelve o'clock on the same night the body of an infant apparently about six months old was found, and immediately carried to a house near, where a coffin was procured, and the next day the child was buried. The night clothing which was upon the child was carefully preserved for identification, but its father nor mother ever came to shed a tear over the little grave, as they had probably gone down with the ill-fated vessel.

Two life-saving stations have been recently built upon the island, one at its eastern extremity and the other at the western. These stations are supplied with mortars for throwing lines across shipwrecked vessels, and with life-boats calculated to ride out safely any sea that may be raised, and all other necessary apparatus for rescuing the lives of mariners who may be wrecked upon the shores. The buildings will furnish shelter, lodging, and victuals to those who may be unfortunate enough to be wrecked upon the island. During the winter season and stormy weather a crew of six men to each station is in constant readiness to meet any emergency.

The stories and legends of the wreckers so often told and written are calculated to leave very erroneous impressions of the humane exertions of the wrecking bands scattered at intervals along our whole Atlantic coast. Although many of these bands have become quite wealthy in their avocation, it is just as true that they have saved millions upon millions of dollars to the owners of wrecked property, which, without the aid of the bold wrecker, would have been entirely lost. There being two "gangs" upon the island, it naturally follows that considerable rivalry exists between them, which redounds to the advantage of the owners of any vessel which chances to become a wreck on the coast.

From shipwrecks to religion the transition is not only natural, but should be profitable; and so a little information on the



churches of Block Island will not be out of place in this paper. There are two church societies and two churches. They are both of the Baptist persuasion, and founded in 1772; prior to 1818 they were united, but about that time one Enoch Rose dissented from some existing opinions, whereupon a "war of the Roses" was commenced, which ended in two parties, the Associate and the Free-will Baptists; and whether this Rosy war was any more beneficial than some others of like character, is a question that can not now be settled. One thing, however, may be asserted with safety, and that is, that the islanders are a church-going people, and have generally been fortunate in having good and capable men as religious teachers. During the summer of 1875 an extensive eating-house was established at the Harbor for the convenience of transient visitors, the keeper of which is an ex-preacher, who takes delight in devoting his establishment to religious services on Sundays.

Block Island is entirely without wild animals — not even a rabbit or a woodchuck will ever appear to startle the tourist on his rounds. The traditionary lore has gone so far as that the oldest inhabitant once saw a fox, but that individual was found to have come over from Point Judith on floating ice in a severe winter. Thanks to St. Patrick, there are no snakes, but any number of toads and frogs. Wild fowl, such as geese, brant, ducks, and others, were once numerous in the spring and autumn, stopping here to rest while migrating, but they have been frightened away by the roar of civilization, which has already got thus far out to sea. Loons in large numbers sometimes winter in the bay that lies between Clay Head and the Harbor. They arrive in the autumn, soon lose their wing feathers, when they are for several weeks unable to fly, and can only escape from their enemies by diving; and it is a singular circumstance that one winter a great many hundreds of them were caught by a field of floating ice, and driven toward the shore, where they were easily killed by the native sportsmen.

#### CLEMENCE.

THE air among the pines that day seemed heavenly to Paul Ashford, where, deep in fragrant shade, he lay upon the mellow carpet of fallen leaves, his ears filled with a sea-like murmur, his eyes upturned to the blue sky of late June.

Such a contrast to turbulent Gotham, whose never-ending whirl of business and pleasure, thronged pavements and noisy streets, made the green and quiet of this New Hampshire village little short of paradise to weary eye and worn-out nerve! For the glad life which abounded here was not

that of restless humanity, but of vegetation, bird, and insect, with here and there a group of lazy, large-eyed cattle.

Upon Paul Ashford fortune had bestowed that golden mean implied in the philosopher's prayer, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." To one of his temperament, however, this was an injury rather than a benefit. The possession of greater wealth would have afforded scope for the exercise of his generous impulses and cultivated tastes, or the stimulus of poverty might have aroused his dormant energies to develop more fully the gifts with which Nature had endowed him.

For that partial dame had chosen to make Ashford a glaring instance of her favoritism, and the curse that lurks, as cynics say, in every blessing rendered this versatility his chief drawback. In literature, art, and music he was "clever," when in either path alone, with the aid of a little adverse criticism, he might have risen to eminence. But his book had been pronounced a success, his sketches full of promise, his tenor at amateur concerts faultless, and having taken his place as an "Admirable Crichton," he had become nothing more. So his great natural gifts had achieved for Ashford little beyond that social celebrity which is the result of such accomplishments, when united with a good temper and a handsome person.

Possessing a comfortable income and no incentive to action, he might be likened to the nicest, brightest of engines, finished within, polished without, lacking only—steam. And, as a consequence, at twenty-five he fell a prey to *ennui*.

"You need a thorough shaking up," declared his physician, not sorry for the opportunity. "Leave off your make-believe life a while. Don't visit Saratoga or Newport, but take a pedestrian trip to the mountains, and end your campaign by two months in some place such as God made it. Don't come back till your face is browner and your eyes brighter. And go without your friends, to make the change complete."

Which advice Ashford first laughed at, then pondered, and finally followed.

Amidst the grandeur of cloud-cutting summit and deep ravine, the clear mountain air had filled him with fresh life, while sun and wind had left their wholesome rudeness upon his cheek. *Ennui* had slipped off like an old garment long before the delicious afternoon when he had thrown himself down to rest a little, before resuming his tramp, under the pine-trees in the outskirts of Hillburn, a hamlet nestled amidst that Alpine scenery.

He took a book from his knapsack, only to find that reading accorded less with the place than dreaming; and before he fairly knew it, his dreams were genuine, for he was fast asleep.