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SCONSET COTTAGE LIFE:

A

SUMMER ON NANTUCKET ISLAND.

BY

A. JUDD NORTHRUP.

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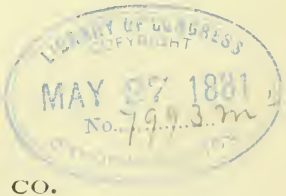
AUTHOR OF "CAMPS AND TRAMPS IN THE ADIRONDACKS."



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PREFACE.

The Island of Nantucket has, within a few years, been "discovered" again,—this time by seekers for summer rest and recuperation; and it has been found to be one of the most delightful, peaceful and healthful of sea-side resorts. Indeed, it is not strictly a "sea-side" resort, for it is as much out in the ocean as a vessel on her way to Liverpool.

In the following pages, by relating the actual experiences of my family and myself, for one summer on the Island, and picturing, as faithfully as I can, the Island scenery, simply as it impressed me, and bringing to view, or at least hinting at, much else that seemed to me to be interesting, I have endeavored to give the reader a fair and reasonable impression of summer life on Nantucket, and, incidentally, of sea-shore life in general.

'Sconset, a little hamlet on the extreme south-eastern end of the Island, was our home, and the center

of our domestic and social life. I have written of it fully, partly because it has delighted me to do so, and partly because I have hoped thereby to do a benefit to those who may seek the sea-side with their families, and who want to know how to obtain the largest measure of healthful enjoyment, with the least amount of worry and expense. And I hope, too, that the summer lounger,—and may we all be such for at least a few vacation days!—with mind and mood attuned to simple pleasures, will find something to gratify him in this story of so quiet and quaint a thing as "'Sconset Cottage Life." A. J. N.

Syracuse, N. Y., May 19, 1881.

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'Sconset Cottage Life:

A

Summer on Nantucket Island.

CHAPTER I.

PLANS AND PRELIMINARIES.

THE winter snows were yet heavy on the earth. We two, the "joint head" of the household, sat in the library before the bright fire in the grate, one evening, after the baby and the youngsters had subsided and gone to bed.

"I have been thinking," said the charming little woman who had been steadfastly gazing into the fire for the space of ten silent minutes while the master of the house sat reading his evening paper; "I have been thinking," repeated she with portentous deliber-

ation, "that it would be an excellent plan to take the children and all go to the sea-shore next summer."

"Sea-shore!" exclaimed I in amazement; "how on earth do you expect I am to spare a whole family away off at the sea-shore for a whole summer! Indeed, where's all the money to come from? And do you suppose you would have any boys left after a summer by an ocean full of water!"

"I have been thinking," imperturbably continued my wife, evidently prepared for my burst of astonishment, "that the children and I could all go to 'Sconset, take a cottage for the season, live there as quietly as you please and far more economically than at home, for three months; and you can come down and join us for three or four weeks in place of going to the Adirondacks for at least this one summer."

There was the woman of it—the suggestion that by this arrangement one of my fondest dreams would be realized, a summer vacation by the sea with all my family! All the rest might be impracticable, a woman's fancy, a heavy expense, and all that; but instantly there came over me the old longing for the sea with its swelling waves and roaring breakers, and my heart and head were filled with all the poetry and

romance of old Ocean. The cherished day-dreams took form and substance and seemed about to be realized—this, too, with the good little wife, and with the lads whose daily nonsense and hilarity, eager questions and zestful enjoyment of the old things which are ever new to each new generation of boys, are keeping me young and half romantic in my heart despite the labors and cares of the full tide of middle life!

It was therefore with a changed tone and manner that I now said, "I don't know but there may be something in that; tell me all about it."

"Well, 'Sconset, as you know, is right on the end of the nose that Nantucket Island thrusts out into the Atlantic,—as if sniffing and smelling the sea-breezes that come fresh and pure and strong all the way from the West Indies or from Spain, without an inch of land between it and them. The island itself is so well out to sea that there are no land-breezes, which on the coast of the main-land occasionally bring most distressingly enervating days. Besides, it is the most peaceful, quiet and restful place on the globe. It is almost as much out of the world as Patagonia."

"And, for a family of children, about as difficult to reach, I imagine," said I.

"Not very difficult," continued Mrs. Imperturbable, who had evidently "been thinking" to some purpose on this pet project of hers, with a view to meeting every objection that I might urge. "I am sure I had no trouble in getting there, last summer, with Theodore, helpless as the poor little fellow was. To Boston, is simple enough; a transfer there to the Old Colony Railroad Depot; another at Wood's Holl to the steamer; still another at Nantucket town from steamer to Captain Baxter's stage or some private conveyance; a seven miles' ride over the sandy road —and you reach 'Sconset, safe and sound, twenty-four hours from home."

She had indeed done what she was describing, and much more, and knew whereof she spoke. Without giving me time to interrupt, she continued:

"I might as well confess it and have it off my conscience,—I have already written to Mr. Folger, who owns one of the nicest of the little cottages on the 'Sconset bluff above the beach, one of the old fishermen's houses, a little box of a thing, but as cosey and cunning a place as you ever saw, and the dearest place

for 'love in a cottage,' you know! This very day I have received a reply from Mr. Folger, and he says we can have his cottage, if we wish, for the season—that is, from June 1st to September 1st—all furnished and ready to move into, for $50. Isn't that nice! and 'reasonable,' as you men always say; and wouldn't we have the most delightful time in the world! Just think of it—a summer of cottage life by the sea!—the very thing you have always been dreaming of! Now, don't you think it is 'wise,' and 'sensible,' 'the perfection of plans'? Say 'Yes!' Be a good, nice man, and believe for once that your 'little wife' has thought out very wisely, all by herself, something delightful—and 'practical!' "

What could I say? My own fancy and her enthusiasm had borne me along, a most willing victim. Yet I rallied, and finally insisted that this wise little woman should make "her figures" on the expenses of the proposed expedition; and, with the conservatism and caution of a discreet husband and domestic comptroller, vouchsafed the declaration that when she had done so "I would consider the matter further."

As anybody might have foreseen, the figures of this cunning enthusiast, when made, were "all right."

The poetry of mathematics is never more beautifully embodied and illustrated than when projecting a vacation or a travelling tour the prospective expenses are put down in black and white—by a woman. In this case, when the wonderful schedule was shown me, I suggested many things,—for instance, "transportation."

"Oh, I forgot that!" was the easy and honest response.

Finally we got that matter all clear, and of course, since the woman's heart was set upon it, it was decided that the family should go to 'Sconset for the summer, and that I should join them for my own briefer vacation as soon as I could. It was a clear case of foreordination from the start.

CHAPTER II.

OFF FOR 'SCONSET—A MOVING SCENE—LETTERS—BOYS AND EELS.

AFTER many seriously busy days in June, there came one grand, climacteric and most notable day, upon the evening of which "the family" were to depart. The procession of errand boys, delivery wagons, and messengers to and from the dressmaker's, shoemaker's and all sorts of makers, gradually dissolved. There was hurrying to and fro within doors; trunks were yawning and waiting to be packed; faces of boisterous urchins were receiving their final scrubbing and polishing, and freshly cropped heads were undergoing the salutary discipline of the brush; trunk-straps were being hunted for, high and low; the ever-so-many odds and ends of things were every now and then being remembered and hastily sought all over the upturned house; and the volunteer hands of half a dozen female relatives and friends were as busy as they could be in every direction.

Meanwhile a helpless man, the meek husband and father of this family, paced up and down the piazza, watch in hand, (the occasion seemed something between a funeral and a wedding,) counting the quarter hours and minutes, and wondering "if they would ever be ready up-stairs." Occasionally he ascended to the region of chaos, gazed in a most disheartened way into the packing-room and saw with dismay the bed and chairs and floor covered with matters and things that were evidently to go into the still nearly empty trunks. Then with wrinkled brow and ill-concealed apprehension he wandered to the rooms where the dressing was proceeding. Chaos everywhere!

The wretched family man groaned and despairingly said, "You'll be late, I know! It isn't possible for all those things to get into the trunks, and for you all to be dressed in time for the train!"

"Just run down stairs, you horrid man, and don't bother us right in the midst of all this hurry!—I guess we shall come out right." And over the head and shoulders of the little matron went some female toggery or other as she uttered these deprecatory and half hopeful words.

The anxious "horrid man" slowly descended to the piazza again, killing as much time on the way as possible, watch in hand, and gazed down the street for the carriage and baggage-wagon already due. The sun, too, was sliding down the western sky with fatal swiftness. No Joshua checked its career, no Vanderbilt held the train, while the madam and the three boys and the girl-baby should be finally dressed, and the lids of the ponderous trunks should at last be closed.

"Here's the baggage-man, and the carriage is just turning the corner!" shouts the distracted man, up the stairs, his terror-laden voice resounding through all the upper regions.

"In a minute!—we'll be ready in a minute!" was the response from somewhere above,—from a mouth half filled with pins.

A dozen feet were hastening from room to room; the boys were shouting and laughing and chasing each other in great glee; the baby was protesting in her own fashion as the nurse finished curling her hair; and the whole atmosphere was as full of voices and hurry and scurry as if the house were on fire.

Three painful minutes elapsed.

"Shall we come up for the trunks?" shouted the anxious husband.

"In a minute!" came dimly down through the noise of voices and feet.

Five minutes.

"Shall we come?"

"In a minute!" sounded again down from some other part of the upper region.

Ten, fifteen minutes had passed.

"The man says you can't catch the train if you are not ready to send the trunks!"

"In a minute!"—a scurrying from one room to another.

"Come!" said another voice from the head of the stairs.

That baggage—hosts of it—was locked and strapped and bundled and got down stairs somehow in a wonderful way and in the shortest time on record. The family followed "in a minute" and were almost tumbled into the carriage, and away we went with wave of hands, a flourish of the whip and the rattle of wheels over the pavements.

We caught the train! After the baggage was all checked and the whole family party and Jane, "the

faithful," were safely and cosily bestowed in the sleeping-car, the good byes all said and said over again, and the long train moved slowly out of the depot, one citizen heaved a sigh of relief, and sought his lonely home.

"The family" were off for 'Sconset and their cottage by the sea!

The next morning came a telegram from Boston—"here all safe and sound—comfortable night;" and in due time a hurried postal from 'Sconset itself, sent out to Nantucket by the man who took the family over to the hamlet, announcing their safe arrival.

Then came daily letters of the daily doings and happenings, letters full of feminine enthusiasms over the quaint life, the sea, the moors and the people of that out of the world bit of creation; full of little domestic experiences—cares and pleasures of their cottage life; full of that wonderful girl-baby, not quite two years old and just beginning the great work of mastering the vocabulary;—and not forgetting the scarcely less wonderful "Jane," who was nurse and house-keeper and peace and rest and spinal column for the whole household. Glimpses of the beauty and quaintness of such a life and its surround-

ings came in almost every epistle to the solitary man at home.

"I could scarcely have believed," said one letter, "that a whole family, baby and all, could be transported so easily. And, at the end of our journey, we found the cottage in a most perfect state of neatness. I never saw any place more exquisitely clean and orderly. I think even the soul of my dear friend and paragon of house-keepers, M— D——, would have been delighted and satisfied. The old sense of restfulness, that I used to feel last summer, came upon me immediately.

"Ned, however, as I anticipated, tired himself out, the very first day after our arrival, in tramping up and down the beach through the sand trying to shoot sea-gulls, which wisely kept just out of range of his gun; and at night he was thoroughly disgusted with Nantucket and all its belongings. But this morning he and Elliott have been to Sankaty where they went in bathing in a light surf, and he has come home believing that 'life is worth living.'

"Our cottage is such a nice little home! I am perfectly delighted with it. I wish you could see how happy the baby is. She trots around in her lit-

tle blue flannel dress and looks so cunning! Yesterday morning she went out into the tall grass in our little back yard. The grass was topped out full and the daisies in it were thick and tall. As she moved around, her little fair curly head was on a level with the flowers and grass-tips. She was reaching up and picking them with her plump little hands, the prettiest bit of a picture I have seen in a long time. She seems to appreciate that the ocean is something new, and says "wa-wa!" whenever she sees it. This morning I took her down on the beach, which is just below the bank and behind our cottage, took off her stockings, and Theo.'s also, and the two had the merriest time in the warm clean sand!"

By and by the boys wrote, painting the picture from their stand-point. Elliott, the "nine year old," led off as follows:

"DEAR PAPA—

I went perch fishing with Ned we went to Sackacha pond we went by the beach and we got out of bate and we had to bite off pieces of A fish to bate our hooks with we caught about 75 fishes. Friday night Ned and Kirkwhite from detroit went eel bobing. They brought home about eighteen eels, but they caught more and lost them.

Your affectionate son

ELLIOTT."

The youngster's first epistolary effort had at least the merit of directness, and taught his father (something of a sportsman) a "new wrinkle" or two in the matter of resources. But I take it that it was Ned's genius that suggested "biting off pieces of A fish to bate our hooks with."

Ned himself, the eldest of the three lads, fourteen years old, with muscles like steel springs, and courage to match, a good swimmer, a fair wing-shot, all his senses alert as a young Indian's, the inventor (on paper) of submarine vessels—notably "The Nautilus," after the manner of Jules Verne's,—flying machines, and other impossibles,—Ned himself forgot his fun one day long enough to write a letter which still further increased my knowledge of life at 'Sconset and particularly of eel-bobbing. Here it is:

"'SCONSET, July 14, 1880.

"DEAR PAPA:—

I should have written you before, but Chet. Clark made me promise that I would write him first, so I wrote him a long letter that would do for all the rest of the boys, Sunday, and I was so tired I could not write any more, and other days I have too much else to do.

"Yesterday we had a splendid surf in the afternoon. I went in swimming three times. Elliott went in a

little way in the morning. In the afternoon the waves were seven or nine feet high. You had to look out and not let them tumble you, but it was boss fun riding up and down on the waves near where they broke.

"Last Friday Kirk White and I went bobbing for eels. As you may not know how it is done, I will explain. You have to string about four feet of worms on some strong thread and loop it up and tie a fish-line and sinker to it. Then you eat your supper, take your candle-lantern (when you haven't got a better one) and some crackers by way of lunch, or grub, just as you may call it, and then walk about two miles and hire a boat, for all night if you want it, for twenty cents, and then, as it happened to be the case with us, lie down and read till dark if not so already. When dusk, not before, though, because the perch will raise havoc with your bob, you let your bob within about four inches of the bottom and pull them in. But it is a great deal more fun and more exciting than fishing for trout, for two reasons,—one, because there are plenty of them, and the other is because ten out of twenty drop off when they are about half in the boat. They are quite gamey, too. Once in a while you get a big one, and they are as hard to pull in as the biggest brook trout you ever saw or heard of. I caught one of that description. It was the largest one caught around here this summer—at least Walter Folger says

that he never saw one as big, and he has seen a great many. It was about eight inches around and about three feet long. You may not see how a bob without a hook can catch any. I don't either, but they say their teeth catch in the threads; but I don't see how they can, they are so small. We caught together with one bob about twenty-five in two hours. It was an awful job, catching them, to put them in the basket, they were so slippery. The basket had a big hole in it that I had to carry them home in, so I took off my blue flannel-shirt and put it in the bottom of the basket. It was so foggy that we could not see the Light-House, and we were within about half a mile of it, so we got lost and went tramping around for an hour or so before we knew where we were. The basket came all to pieces and I had to tie the eels up in my blue shirt. When we got home I put the eels in our hogshead of water, and in the morning they were all dead and not fit to eat. I didn't think they would die, because one day when I went perch-fishing I caught an eel, and he lived a long time.

"I went perch-fishing to-day, too, and had the good luck to catch the biggest perch I ever saw. We caught about 80 in all in a little while. I am commencing to think this is a pretty good place after all, but not near as good as the North Woods. I find something to do most every day. One day I went up in the Light-House. Another day I went hunting.

There isn't much hunting yet but there will be pretty soon. Will you send some tar-oil by Aunt Mamie to use when we go camping? The mosquitoes are terrible thick out by the ponds, and we want a good lot. A piece of a whale came ashore a while ago. I would have written this letter better, but I thought you would rather have a long one and not have it written quite so well. It would take me too long to copy it nice. Your affectionate son

NED."

—As to the eels in the hogshead of rain-water, I heard further,—an epistolary wail from the distressed mother, chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, who lamented more over the household loss than the boys did over the defunct eels. However, step by step, blunder by blunder, boys learn wisdom; and no doubt Ned has engraved on his mental tablets, "never put eels in the household rain-water!"

CHAPTER III.

A SECOND MIGRATION—NOTES BY THE WAY—HEADS AND SUB-HEADS.

EARLY in August I went on to Nantucket to join my family for the vacation I had promised to spend with them. A night ride to Boston; a few hours by rail to Wood's Holl, by the Old Colony Railroad, whirling past frequent villages and manufacturing towns, then into a wild and wooded region, out again along the eastern shore of Buzzard's Bay, past many a delightful nook where summer cottages are clustering by the peaceful waters of the Bay;—and then comes the charm and delight of the sail (if a steamer does actually "sail") out into the sea and the blue waves, all beauteous and holiday-like at this vacation season.

Soon the green shores of Martha's Vineyard cast off their veil of dimness and rise up clear and well-defined.

One sees at a glance why "Vineyard" became a part of the name of this "Emerald Isle." The steamer swings around to the eastward of the northerly point and approaches the Camp-Meeting Wharf. Many of our fellow-passengers leave us here, for it is the height of the camp-meeting season, and worshipers find it easy to be zealous and self sacrificing, even to dwell in tabernacles, when heaven and earth, almanac and business all harmonious unite in extending a call to the hot and dusty cities to come up hither and worship and be comfortable.

Hardly half a mile below is Oak Bluffs, or Cottage City, the marvel of the Island, where wealth and exquisite taste have built a fairy city for summer loitering and invigorating indolence. With some ado, for the tide is running counter to our purpose, we grapple and hold to the wharf, while passengers leave us and others come on board, and a multitude of visitors sit in the pavilion over the approaches of the landing gazing at us, or struggle down among the shouting porters and quiet baggage-men to shake hands with some acquaintance among us.

The lines are cast off, the steamer's head swings slowly around, the throb and rumble begin again, and

we are off for Nantucket, two hours away, right out to sea and below the horizon. The ocean is in good mood ; the sun in its afternoon glory is warm enough, but the gentlest of sea-breezes coming in upon us from the broad Atlantic is like a cooling beverage for refreshment. All the senses are lulled to luxurious rest, and we would be content to sail on under the summer sky through an endless day like this. Two of us, rocked in the same cradle long ago, (the old cradle now at peace in a garret,) are seated together on the upper-bow deck in the shade of the pilot-house, and we gaze, and dream, and drink the air, and hear the gentle whispers of the sea ; while ever and anon we peer into the distance along the horizon line where sea and sky mingle in such harmony of color that we hardly know where sea ends and sky begins, peering to detect the first faint line of the low cliffs of Nantucket.

Muskegat Island is at length sighted, and then Tuckernuck,—jagged fragments left over after Nantucket was finished, or else wrongfully rent from it by the remorseless sea after Nature had finished her work and pronounced it "very good." Our hearts throb quicker, for there are our——, but, no, an old traveler

corrects us as we utter our joyful exclamation; and we fall to dreaming again of 'Sconset and the cottage-ful of kindred waiting there to greet us in the old-fashion,—wondering, too, down in our hearts, if it isn't just possible that this treacherous ocean over which we are sailing so peacefully has, in some other mood, opened its ponderous jaws and swallowed down Nantucket Island, 'Sconset, cottage, kindred and all!

By and by the horizon grows unsteady, wavers, is jagged,—and sharp eyes detect land! Nantucket is safe, for there at length rises "the Cliff." That wonderful water-tank on stilts next catches our eyes; soon after church spires thrust their javelin points above the bluff from the still hidden town that lies just around yonder head-land; a light house; "the bell buoy;" and as the steamer carefully feels its way over the bar, along its narrow path, the town of Nantucket itself, sitting on its amphitheatrical seats around the harbor, flashes in the sunlight upon us.

It was with me a case of "love at first sight." Before we had swung around Brant Point and were safely at the long wharf, I had pledged heart and hand to the queenly capital of the Island. The constancy of my affection, after the crucial test of familiarity,

assures me that the love though sudden was wisely discerning from the first. Indeed, nothing can be more delightful than this quaint, quiet, beautiful little town as it appears to one sailing into the capacious harbor for the first time.

At the wharf there was the usual hurrah and confusion. They say it is a modern innovation in Nantucket—this noise and hurry—the result of an invasion of hackmen and other barbarians from "the Continent." However, we saw upon the hat of an honest looking, serious faced and quiet man the one word that concerned us—"Siasconset," (the word of the map makers and "foreigners" but used, no doubt, as a concession to the ignorance of new comers,) and to him we clung with one hand while the other grasped the peace offering, (a basket of peaches for the boys,) until he promised to see us, luggage and all, safely transferred across the island that very night.

It was nearly dark when, after many delays, we finally set out, up through the town, out into the unfenced fields, along the wide sandy road of parallel ruts, over the moors, away to 'Sconset. The seven and a half miles were long ones, and the ghostly milestones passed slowly in a most straggling and discour-

aged procession as we moved on toward our destination. The black and stunted jack-pines that bordered the road for a portion of the way looked like bandits awaiting some secluded and gloomy gorge to perpetrate foul murder upon us and atrocious confiscation of our bags. The chill of the damp sea-air closed one mouth after another—all except Jehu's—long before we reached the elevation from which the star of Sankaty Light was discernible and where we caught the first twinkle of the little 'Sconset, whither the star pointed us on our way.

Down the hill we toiled in the much vexed sand of the narrowing road, Jehu more vehemently belaboring his steed as we approached the end of our journey. Down the one broad avenue we rattled, over the pebbly and no longer sandy way, until, at the very foot of the street, almost at the edge of the bluff, where in the dim light we seemed about to run down a little white box of a house, the horse made a short, sharp turn into a lane—and we were there! So were the family—so were the neighbors who were expecting the arrival of the "husband," that phenomenon which is often more conspicuous at 'Sconset for its absence than its presence.

The "joint head" was again united, and all the little "sub heads" were as happy about it as—as was the happy father. The dreams by the evening firelight of the library were already being realized; and the great waves, beating on the shore, were sounding out their deep, solemn Amen!

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST VIEWS—OCEAN—'SCONSET—COTTAGE SLEEPY HOLLOW.

IN the early morning after my arrival, I went out upon the bluff back of our cottage to look upon the ocean whose subdued roar had mingled with our evening greetings and with all my dreams, and which broke upon the silent morning hour like echoing thunder among the distant hills. A dweller inland all my life, and seldom getting more than glimpses of the sea, this vast, restless and moody realm of waters is always a solemn mystery to me. Its power and possibilities, its boundless expanse, its moaning and thunderous booming along the shore, its majestic, swelling waves rolling in from beyond the vision's ken, always fill me with unspeakable emotions.

I had now come to sit down at the feet of this master of all the passions, to study its secret and probe its heart, if possible, and to enjoy with simplicity and

in fulness, all the sensations that it might excite within me. On this morning not a breath was stirring, but the thunder of the surf, that had mingled with my dreams, was sounding all along the shore, and like serried ranks with martial music marching home from victorious battle-fields, the tireless and ceaseless waves were coming in, rank upon rank, wave upon wave, and breaking in seething foam upon the beach.

Breakfast broke the spell and revery; after which the tables were turned—I was the beach, and with lively demonstrations of delight the children dashed upon me, broke all over me, climbed upon me, and had merrier sport than ever had the serious and savage waves I had been gazing on, dashed they against rock and beating crag or upon smooth and sandy beach; and the music of childish shout and laughter was richer to my ears just then than all the whisperings of the sea or the booming of the breakers. Indeed, I was a great favorite in the house, for a day or two—such is the idealizing and enhancing power of absence!

I saw, however, by daylight, that the whole family group had been growing away from me. The lads were as strong and rugged as little Indian boys; the girl-baby was about as broad as she was long; and

even the matron, with all her responsibilities, had grown so young and blooming that I felt it was an unfortunate and embarrassing mistake not to have brought along our marriage certificate to disabuse the honest sceptics who thought she was my grown up daughter.

"The family" now consisted of our own household of seven, and my niece and two sisters who had lodgings elsewhere. The cottage, a little one-story house with low ceilings and queer little rooms, shingle-sided, and odd in every feature internal and external, was as full as a bee-hive and a vast deal noisier. It was a marvel how we all got into it, and turned around when once in it, and why it didn't burst with its plethora of humanity.

This same little fisherman's house, built low and strong to resist the sweeping gales and fierce tempests of winter, and shingled all over to keep out the driving spray which would penetrate any other covering, is a type of all the houses of the original hamlet —the fisherman's 'Sconset. It stands twenty or thirty feet from the edge of the bluff, twenty feet below which the sand-beach extends a hundred yards or more to the water's edge where the summer breakers

spend their force. In autumn and winter the waves frequently dash wildly across the stretch of sand against the bluff; and in their fury they have already carried off cottages built too near the edge.

Original 'Sconset consists of about two hundred of these cottages built along three narrow parallel lanes or streets running along the bluff. The houses are in little enclosures, two or three in a group, with narrow cross-lanes, this arrangement having been adopted as a protection against a general conflagration, and also to allow free passage for everybody to and from the central town-pump.

The town-pump itself groans and creaks night and day, for it supplies the whole population. One trembles to think what would happen if a valve should collapse. And as everybody must go or send to the pump daily, it becomes the best advertising medium in the whole village. Here you will find who has a "cottage to let," who has "lost" a bracelet or a pocket-book, when and where there is to be "preaching," and occasionally items of news from the outside world posted *pro bono publico* by some benevolent person. Indeed, that is a pump worth having on a

sandy island with the "salt, salt sea" all around it, with not a drop of compassion in all its tides.

At least half of these fishermen's houses are occupied as "cottages" by the summer visitors, and by the fishermen during the fishing seasons, spring and autumn, and most of them are vacant in the winter when there is "nothing to live for" in 'Sconset. The owners of the cottages are mainly residents of the "town"—as Nantucket village is invariably designated. After the first days of September have sent the children home to the schools, and the fathers and mothers back to their homes on the continent, and the summer birds have flown, the Nantucketer who has quietly staid in town goes out to 'Sconset with his family to enjoy his own vacation and take his ease in his own house. He will tell you that the summer visitors make a great mistake in going away so early, and that the months of September and October are the most delightful of the year. This accords fully with the experince of my own family who remained there through the month of September. After the "August Storm" the temperature is equable and agreeable for several weeks.

It was years ago, however, that Nantucket discov-

ered a delightful retreat in 'Sconset. The "town" itself is in the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of a serene old age, its mighty deeds all gone into history, its whale fisheries a glory of the past, its population living on what it has done in olden times and upon its growing reputation as the most delicious summer resort anywhere on the coast. Yet the quietest seek a deeper quiet, or at least the change of air and scene curative and restful to body and spirit. The Nantucketer, believing loyally in his own country—this little island only about three or four miles wide and fourteen long—made 'Sconset his watering place.

So it happens that here and there among the fishermen's humble homes a more modern and ambitious house lifts its two-storied front, tempting Providence and the storms. So, also, it comes about that along the one broad street, and up the slight ascent on the road to Nantucket,the rich men of the Island, old sea-captains and merchants, built more pretentious cottages for their summer enjoyment. Later, as "foreigners" found out the secret of 'Sconset,there sprang up the two hotels, The Atlantic House, and The Ocean View House, which are still modest and moderate.

Also, a little south of the old village, along the bluff named Sunset Heights, is springing up a still later growth of cottages, half a dozen or so, built and owned by the residents of several different States. These command the finest views and are delightful residences. We shall hear more of Sunset Heights before ten years shall pass—a new 'Sconset of wide and deserved fame. The bluff north of the village is witnessing a similar growth and promisès to be a fit companion wing to Sunset Heights.

But there is quaint little original 'Sconset yet, with the diminutive, be-shingled, low-roofed fishermen's houses of days long gone by; and it is that which makes the charm of this sea-side resort unlike anything and everything else along the Atlantic coast. The "modern improvements" are yet and long will be externals—the heart will always be "Old 'Sconset."

There is no railroad to 'Sconset. By and by there will be. Now no sound more fearful breaks the spell of the ocean's solemn moan than the blast of Captain Baxter's tin-horn announcing his arrival with the mail, or, when he sets forth to town, telling all 'Sconset to hurry up with their letters and errands, for he is off

in five minutes,—five minutes exactly by that big silver watch which, he says, General Grant gave him!

Indeed, but for the summer visitor, big and little, Sleepy Hollow never was half so quiet as 'Sconset. As to noise and bustle, it is Sunday all the while. There isn't a pavement to rattle a hoof or wheel upon, —the velvety turf makes no sound under your foot. Possibly Sunday is a busier day than all the rest of the week, for on Sunday there is in the little schoolhouse a Quaker meeting or a Unitarian service, or, in one of the hotels religious exercises are conducted by some clerical visitor according to his own creed. Of course, when one is hungry for religious instruction and solace he takes what he can get whether it is cut and carved or dished after his own particular fashion or not.

'Sconset of itself, it is plain to see, is not in the ordinary sense remarkable—indeed, its chief charm may be that it is not remarkable. But it sits by the ocean which is always grand enough in any mood, and which, although old enough to have a fixed character, is full of new surprises and revelations of power and majesty. Safe on land, one delights to study the savage sea showing its white fangs as the rising wind

buffets the crests of the running waves, or to scan the wild waste under the darkening storm clouds and see how out on "the rips" (the reefs) the white pillars of tossed waters leap up at the sky as if to snatch the lightnings out of the hand of Jupiter and deliver them over to Neptune.

But it is more to one's mind, I think, on a vacation, tired of the turmoil of town and men left behind, to lie on the 'Sconset bank a hundred yards away from the hiss and swash of waters mingled with the thunderous throb of the breakers, of a calm day, and watch the oncoming of the regular and stately waves. One is never tired of that, I am sure.

One of our household loved better, spreading a rug on the sand, to sit and half recline just out of the reach of the nimble water running up the sandy incline, and to both hear all the sounds and watch all the waves. She did this by the hour, day by day, gathering up into her heart all that the ocean had to say in all its moods to a most devoted admirer. The printed book was closed many a time that she might "go down on the beach" and read the myriad-leaved book of the sea; and best beloved voices could not detain her long from the voices—numerous toned and

tender as well as strong, no doubt, to her ear—of this new lover of hers who brought tales and sentiments from all lands and shores. My busy wife and my indolent and domestic self, as well as the Practical Sister, used to have our bit of fun over the new possession of the maiden heart,—but she never heeded us if only wind and weather were right and ripe for her over-tryst with the ocean.

The ocean, however, is not all that humble 'Sconset depends upon for its peculiar charm. Turn your back to the sea, and you will gaze upon something unlike anything you have seen elsewhere in this wide country —the moors! Is this little island, after all, an excerpt from bonnie old Scotland?—a bit of her heathery moor-land? That is what the learned travelers, in their enthusiasm, say; but I don't know. The low-rolling, brown and purple hills, treeless except where ragged little pines are planted, barren of nearly everything but a wild beauty of their own,—another sea, but so quiet and sombre!—the stretch and expanse as of a descended and upturned sky, cloud-ridged, and with a bewildering indefiniteness—these were what divided with the ocean our admiration and devotion.

Years ago, one day, I was on a treeless prairie of

the West. The vast level plain was unbroken by a single elevation, and the sky came down to it on every side like a hollow hemisphere of blue. We were "out of sight of land," and only the narrow ribbons of iron, straight as an arrow, over which we were whirling away out of one horizon into another, told us that mortal man had been there before. That was something to see and feel, but it was hardly so impressive as the moors of the little sea-girt island of Nantucket.

Some day later, when we traverse these fields of nature, we will look closer into the secret of this charm and dreamy mystery so delightfully off-setting and supplementing the impressiveness of the sea.

Between my new born impressions and enthusiams, and the devoted attention of my boys who wanted me forthwith to see and do everything, and the overwhelming affection of the infant heiress of the family, who seemed to fear I might vanish out of sight, my first day at 'Sconset was fast becoming a busy one, when—alas! I began to grow unaccountably sleepy!

"It's always the way, the first few days," I was told.

"You came to rest," my wife added, "and you shall sleep as often and as much as you like. If anybody thinks you are dull, I'll explain that you are a 'new-comer.'"

The boys were called off, the little lady was inveigled "down beach to see 'wa-wa,'" and I slept.

When I wakened, one whose whole soul enjoyed 'Sconset, and who, being "an older but not a better" admirer of the surroundings, felt that he was somehow responsible for the due intensity and correctness of my first impressions, besought me to walk with him to "Tom Never's Head," a good two miles away. I protested that I was indisposed to walk so far. Would I, then, take a little stroll up toward Sankaty? No, I thanked him, I would prefer not to, if he would excuse me. I ought certainly, at least, to take a plunge in the surf,—it was very fine to-day,—would I not join him in that most excellent and healthful diversion?

"Alas! my dear sir,—I am very much obliged to you,—I appreciate and thank you for your kindness, —I hope to see and do all these things," exclaimed I in genuine desperation, "but, to tell you the humiliating truth, I am as drowsy as an owl!"

"Oh—yes—I had forgotten that you came only yesterday."

With kindly consideration he bade me good-afternoon; I glanced through the western windows and noted with satisfaction that the sun gave me two hours before tea; and I fell off again into a delicious 'Sconset slumber.

It was a typical experience; and as I was in pursuit of the typical I would not have missed it if I could. For several days, in the midst of all that was new and interesting, I slept inordinately and ate in proportion. Everybody to whom I confided the secret only laughed and said, "Oh, that's the story with us all when we first come here,—sea-air, you know."

I thought even this was worth something to the worn-out men who came hither for rest and recuperation—to sleep, to eat, and then to eat and sleep again. The nervous, headache-y, dyspeptic toiler at office-desk, the head-weary of every calling, need these humble good things in their lives quite as vitally as a rejuvenation of their sentiments, a waking up of their enthusiasms or a kindling anew of youthful poetic fires,—but then at 'Sconset they may have all these and the slumber, too.

CHAPTER V.

SURF-BATHING.

ON the second day I was duly initiated into the surf-bathing of 'Sconset. At eleven o'clock, straggling down the bank and across the sands to the beach came the bathers, men, women and children—in motley suits passing all description, fantastic and uncouth, neat and artistic, faded and forlorn, bright and gay, span new and clean, and mottled with clinging kelp,—costumes baggy, short in the extremities, disguising beauty and giving ugliness a new horror,—dresses bewitching in the revelation of white arms and fair necks,—all sorts, indeed, and amazingly amusing to a fresh comer to 'Sconset. Down they came to the two or three chosen bathing-grounds, where a stout rope stretched over a support on shore extended out forty or fifty feet to a barrel which sustained it and beyond which it was firmly anchored,—a contrivance which gave confidence and courage to the most timid.

Captain Gorham is there to see that no serious accident shall occur. He sits quietly on the bench on the beach, with his elbows on his knees, watching every movement, ready to spring to the rescue if there is a faint or a strangle.

Into the surf the bathers dash, or timidly creep, and with feminine little shrieks running back from an incoming big wave, or plunge headlong through the wall of water just before it breaks,—entering the water in as many ways, indeed, as there are characters and temperaments among the two-score bathers.

The strong swimmers strike boldly out into the smooth and swelling waves beyond the surf and swim and float with the tide that runs up or down along the shore like a river current, and come back to the starting point and repeat the sport. Those who do not swim cling close to the rope and let the breakers dash against them, often overwhelming and burying them out of sight for an instant and disorganizing the line in a most tumultuous fashion. By jumping up with the rising waves some keep their heads above water and preserve their equilibrium. But sooner or later an unusually large wave comes, and the whole line of bathers disappears. It is a matter of doubt

then on which side of the rope they will severally re-appear, and whether feet will not come up where heads ought to be. It is then, too, that Captain Gorham, if not already in the water among them, is doubly alert and makes a rapid calculation of how many hands were clinging to the rope before the wave came and how many heads ought to re-appear. But, with the proverbially tenacious grip of drowning men these venturesome non-swimmers, many of them slender women and timid children, almost always "hang on" to the cable and in the end come right-side up.

I swim. I am thankful for that. And so I dash boldly out to sea until the tide catches me in its strong embrace. I feel the sweeping power against which I can make no progress, and realize how insignificant and helpless, after all, the "man overboard" in a storm must be. Ah! but it is rare sport to dash into the wall of water, and an instant after to emerge calm and serene above the waves beyond,—the roar and fury of the waters all behind you,—to float quietly along just outside of the line of the breaking, foaming and rushing water, floating on the swelling bosom of the wave as safe as if swinging in a hammock, riding the ocean-swell as the sea-bird floats.

I never recovered, however, from my first shock at seeing the children running down the smooth sand, following the receding waves and then scampering back as the breakers heaved great floods of water after them—and often threw them down, dashing them "high and dry" upon the beach. It was sufficiently trying to my nerves to see anybody who could not swim,—man, woman or child,—clinging to a swaying rope and battling with the great roaring and pounding breakers; but the children were my special daily terror. I delivered many energetic domestic lectures upon the whole subject, but they all, of my own household,—where my word ought to have been law,—big and little, only laughed at me and said that it was because I *could* swim that I was frightened about them. The one answer to my fears was the reassuring fact that no bather at 'Sconset had ever yet been drowned. When, one day, they drew the senseless form of a young woman out of the surf and laid her upon the sand, I said "it has come at last—there must always be a first case." But that was only a faint, and not a drowning, and no harm was done.

Here a little later, like the star actor upon the

stage, come "the athletes!"—a half dozen young fellows in tights and magnificently built. Cart-wheels and summersaults on the sand as a prologue, and then, as a big wave comes rolling in from the sea and lifts its great front for a Samsonian destruction,—just as it curves its crest and bends its great shoulders, about to dash headlong with crushing force prone upon the sloping beach,—the athletes with shout and leap, the whole line of them, rush down the sands and plunge headlong into the liquid wall, out of sight!

Ah! there goes, too, a light-haired, scantily attired, brown-bodied little fellow, my Ned!—right among these athletes! I don't cry out; the women suppress a shriek; but I hold my breath hard for an instant, for I have not before seen this young fresh-water lad in the ocean;—and now, out in the smooth water the light-haired head comes up with the rest, and the strong young arms strike out in a masterly way that makes me proud of him. Later, when he performed the same feat with waves nine feet high, in a storm which reduced the surf-bathers to a few daring ones, I had no fear for him, but wondered what a boy wouldn't do.

There was one magnificent swimmer, Colonel S., of

Detroit, who for a whole hour, twice a day, in the wildest weather, struck boldly out beyond the limits set by the most venturesome, and swam with the tide for a quarter of a mile, then walked up the shore to his starting point and repeated, time after time, the perilous sport. When the clouds darkened the sky and the wind howled and the surf roared its loudest, and "the rips" out near the gloomy horizon were throwing up great white leaping columns of water, this sight of a man's head—nothing more—far out from shore, rising and falling with the big waves, was something not soon to be forgotten.

Of course we made the surf-bath the central fact of the day. Everything that happened or was done was quite subordinate in importance to the bath. Our cottage was just on the brow of the bluff opposite the chief bathing resort, which was reached by a stair-way down the bank and a narrow temporary plank-walk across the sand. So we used apartments connected with our convenient dwelling as dressing-rooms, and marched down in single file to the beach for the daily plunge and tumble. It was a spectacle to behold, they said, (and the brilliant and witty Miss Norris laughed inordinately at the sight)—the tall man lead-

ing down to the water his little wife, three other ladies, Ned, and last of all brown little "Ell.," in the costumes of the occasion.

When we marched back again it was a bedraggled procession, unmindful of the order of our going, with wraps about us to protect from the wind; and sometimes (only on a few occasions, however,) it required some effort to satisfactorily establish the all important "reaction." The boys managed that problem easily enough by lying in the sand under the sun's hot rays by the hour, with brief dashes into the surf; and they grew fat and brown and tough under the treatment.

After a particularly boisterous experience in the surf one morning, one of the ladies of the house, who had been badly shaken up by the breakers, said with vigor, "I quite agree with you that it is dangerous for ladies and children to bathe here as they do,—the undertow is very strong."

"Undertow? Not a bit of it! It's the knocking about, and pitching heels over head, and the rapid descent of the beach to deep water that's dangerous," said I, with full assurance and with the animation I felt in at length securing a convert to my opinion.

"Well, I have had some experience—a good deal

of it—in surf-bathing at various places,—you havn't; and *I* say this is the strongest undertow I ever encountered," replied she with some spirit, and with just the least bit of haughtiness.

"What do you call 'undertow,' anyhow?" asked I with a secret confidence that I was now about to utterly vanquish her. There's nothing like a definition to crush a woman with, especially when she is the one to furnish it.

"Undertow? Why, when the water of a spent wave rushes down the beach again to meet the next wave,—that's what I call 'undertow,' and it's particularly strong on this 'Sconset beach."

"Pshaw!" said I, eagerly; that's a backward-flow, and not an undertow at all. If the water in flowing back made an under-current and went under instead of against the breast of the incoming wave,—that's what I should call an 'undertow.' But it does nothing of the sort here,—it simply rushes down to the wave and is dashed bodily back again. I stood to-day just outside of the comb of the surf and tried to detect any evidence of this under-current, and there wasn't a bit of it. There was plenty of 'over-flow,' I assure you, and I went out of sight several times in

my pursuit of knowledge with a rope in my hands. But I got the fact I was after—there isn't any 'undertow.'"

"Let us see the dictionary then—perhaps you won't dispute that," said she, thoroughly aroused; "possibly your brief salt-water experience is not of so great value, after all, as you seem to think it is.—There!" as she opened the book to the word,—"hear the conclusion of the whole matter,—'*Undertow*, a nautical term for any decided under-current of water—'"

"Yes! Yes!" I interrupted; "just my notion exactly."

"Hear the rest of it, if you please," she continued, "'*The backward flow of a wave.*' I am right either way, but I am sure I am right according to the second definition."

"And I am sure," said I, with a little of the air and tone of a stump orator approaching a climax, "that when people talk of 'undertow' as a thing of danger at bathing resorts, they mean a 'decided under-current of water' that trips people's feet from under them and sucks them remorselessly down under the waves and out into the depths, hopelessly dead

and drowned. And I maintain on all my experience and observation here, and on the concurrent testimony of all the 'Sconset people, that there isn't anything here that deserves the name or fame of 'undertow.'"

"And I maintain just the contrary," insisted she, a little sharply.

Of course I was right—I knew I was. But I never could convince her; and on this occasion, with a pantomimic flourish of my fingers, I only said, at the end, "scissors!" Whereat she laughed—and the war was over. After that, our controversy never got further than "Undertow!"—"Backward flow!"—"Undertow!"—"Scissors!"

To be sure, she took a wicked pleasure, occasionally, in conversing in my presence with old habitues of the sea-shore upon the general subject, and gave me many a sly look of merry triumph when they agreed with her that "the undertow was very strong." As it is a cardinal point of my philosophy never to waste breath on obstinate error, I always refrained from enlightening these self-deluded persons.

Here, at least, I have the last word, and it must be an honest one—*There is no undertow at 'Sconset!*

CHAPTER VI.

ISLAND WANDERINGS—BLUE-FISHING—COD-FISHING.

NED was alway eager to show me his favorite resorts, and I often accompanied my young guide about the island. One afternoon we walked along the bluff by a well-worn foot-path to Sankaty Light-House, situated on a bank eighty-five feet above the level of the sea. Out of a corner of the snug little house occupied by the keeper and his assistant and their families, springs the high tower of solid masonry which is surmounted by its brilliant crown of glass. This revolving light is one of the finest on the coast; and gleaming like a star and then passing into partial eclipse, and gleaming again, it not only warns and guides the mariner on this dangerous sea, but also points out to the belated traveler his way along the bewildering paths over the moors. It is the pride of the Nantucketer, who realizes better than the home-staying dwellers inland can the full meaning of a shipwreck which this friendly light aims to prevent.

A walk of a mile further in the gloaming brought us to Sachacha Pond, about a mile long and three-fourths as wide and perhaps the largest body of fresh water on the island. No stream enters it, but the low-lying hills sloping down to its shores pour into this reservoir the rain-fall of Spring and Autumn. It is separated from the ocean itself by a low strip of sandy beach; and it is possible that the sea-water filters through the bank. Sometimes, in the stormy season, the larger waves dash across the long barrier into the pond. The water is slightly salt, but not sufficiently so to exterminate the fresh-water fish that thrive in it in great abundance.

It was here that the boys "went a-perching" and "eel-bobbing." The perch are quite unlike the fish of that name in inland waters, and in shape are very much like the black bass. They are delicious eating and in great demand at the 'Sconset table. They are also favorites with the shark-fishers as being a most attractive lure for the ravenous monsters roaming about on the adjacent shoals.

Sankaty Light was by this time gleaming against the darkened sky, and we hastened homeward along the lofty bluffs. The surf showed its white fangs

down below and seemed to bite and gnaw at the beach, rushing at it fiercely and then retreating, like some savage beast attacking a formidable enemy. We fancied it might be snarling and gnashing its teeth, while the huge dark body behind writhed in rage. But all the subordinate sounds were stilled by the distance—the hissing and seething of the waters on the sand—and we heard only that ever recurring boom! boom! all along the shore, coming up to our ears out of the growing darkness with crescendo force and then ceasing for an instant, then coming again, with tireless succession and regularity. Would it never cease its roaring!—this restless sea, beating from the beginning of all time to the end of all time upon the steadfast shore! Is it never weary, day nor night! Is it sleepless for ever!

The evening breeze from the ocean, delightfully cool and invigorating, was whispering in our ears its tales of travel over the wild waters; the darkness was deepening until the path on the fickle edge of the bluff was becoming uncertain to our eyes. We hastened our steps, and soon the twinkling lights in the windows of the village appeared, and the cheerful blaze of lanterns hung in the narrow streets

before the houses guided us to our door. We pulled the latch-string and entered our cheery little cottage—and I had faithfully and delightfully done one of the things set down in the 'Sconset curriculum. Our walk of five miles along the coast, forth and back, was almost as invigorating as a surf-bath.

One of the sources of revenue to the resident 'Sconseter is catching blue-fish out on the shoals and supplying the hotels and private tables with the catch fresh from the water. It was always interesting to see the fisherman accomplish the perilous feat of putting his dory—a large and wonderfully seaworthy row-boat—out through the surf, and beaching it again on his return. Getting the dory part way down the beach and watching for the coming of just the proper sort of wave, (I could never quite catch his secret,) when it came he gave a powerful push, leaped into the stern of the boat, seized the oars and by a single vigorous stroke was beyond the line of breakers before the next wave came, and riding safely like a duck on the long Atlantic swells. Rowing or spreading his sail, off he went to his fishing, a mile or more from shore, as if he had done the most ordinary thing in the world.

His return was managed with no less skill and with possibly more danger. I have seen him in a heavy sea riding up and down, just outside of the surf-line and in such proximity to it that he seemed momentarily about to be dashed ashore, looking long now out over the heaving and rolling waves as the swell lifted him out of the trough of the sea to the peak of the miniature mountain of water, then quickly along the shore and the line of furious breakers, for a full quarter-hour, —then suddenly by a quick stroke throwing the bow around toward land, pulling with all his might for an instant, and riding swiftly in on the crest of a wave, right up on the beach. I was always at fault there, too, in determining which wave it was that would bring him thus safely through the dangerous surf. For all that I could ever see, one wave was as good—or as bad—as another for such a landing.

The fishing depended very much on the condition of the tide, the movements of which had a stimulating effect upon the roamers of the deep. Sometimes the fisherman anchored his boat half a mile—and from that to a mile—from shore, at other times spread a sail which held the boat against the tide. There are two accepted modes of blue-fishing—"trolling" from

a yacht under full sail, (the faster you go, the better), and by the "heave and haul" method when in a row-boat or at anchor. The latter is practiced at 'Sconset for the excellent reason that there are no sailing craft on this coast, which latter fact, also, follows from there being no harbor to anchor in. Only such boats can be used as can be successfully beached.

To heave and haul for blue-fish—whirling the heavy "drail" until it acquires the right momentum and then sending it out thirty, forty, fifty, or even sixty feet, drawing it rapidly in again, hand over hand,—is not only hard work for an amateur, but without much practice it is very inefficiently done. The original and resident fisherman, however, believes it is the only genuine fishing. Trolling he considers the lazy device of inexperts and landsmen.

Now and then the blue-fisherman captures a young shark off the shore, and he might at any time load his dory, if it would carry them, with lusty fellows of that genus nine or ten feet long, if he should address them with the proper inducements by way of appropriate tackle and bait. Very little is said on that topic, however, for occasionally a bather has scruples in regard to sharks, difficult to overcome by logic, al-

though for that matter nobody has ever had a "bite" in a bathing-suit.

'Sconset was formerly one of the two principal fishing stations on the island for cod-fishing; and that industry still employs many men for portions of the year. Of this the summer visitor sees nothing. The cod-fish have an aristocratic way of going off for the summer to watering-places of their own, beyond the reach of business and perplexities of all sorts which possibly vex even the phlegmatic cod. The local fisherman tells you the simple fact is that for comfort's sake they abandon the shoals in warm weather and seek the cool and agreeable depths just outside the fishing-grounds, until it is again cool enough near shore to suit their instinct and fancy.

But 'Sconset sees another sight in October when the cod come in upon their favorite feeding grounds. The little village is filled with strong, fearless men and busy industry. Boats and fishing tackle are overhauled and put in order, the drying racks along the bluffs are repaired, and some fine day it is shouted along the highways and by-ways of the town, "the cod are in!" Then the work begins in earnest, and is continued until the autumnal storms and the severity of

the cold put a stop to operations. In March the fishing is again carried on until the warmth of the comparatively shallow water sends the cod off again into deeper water.

The life of 'Sconset, Spring and Fall, and the life of 'Sconset in Mid-winter are probably as unlike as can well be imagined. The "cottages" of the summer—the self-same "fishermen's huts" of March and October—what diverse tales they would tell if they had memory and tongue, and what different definitions of "life" would they give!

CHAPTER VII.

'SCONSET PEOPLE.

THE resident people of 'Sconset (what few there are) are genuine good people, if a summer's experience with them is to be trusted. It is true they are coming to have an eye to business in their dealings with strangers who are supposed to spend money freely in the vacation days, but they have not yet learned the arts and wiles of making the visitor bleed at every pore. They are quite content to live and let live, and seem to be as honest and conscientious in their transactions as any class you will meet with in any region unvexed by the summer tourist.

They are in the main the families of retired seamen or fishermen, or descendants of the famous whalemen of Nantucket who have seen perils by sea, face to face, that have sobered them for life; who

have been self reliant so long that it is in the blood and bone of the whole Nantucket population to be too self-poised and self-respectful to do a mean or unworthy act. Besides, there is a strain of the good blood of the original pilgrims to this island in all the inhabitants that does not fade out, wash out nor die out.

There is sturdy old "Captain Baxter," the express-man; stage proprietor, agent and driver all in one; the self-constituted post-master; the blower of the morning and evening tin-horn, announcing his departure to town and return;—Baxter with the famous ship's figure-head in his door-yard and rare old clock in his dining-room;—keen and witty Captain Baxter, the drawer of the long bow in his remarkable narratives;—the old sailor Captain of many a wild experience on the sea, who will spin you a marvelous yarn, but whose fancy runs away with his fact until you are incredulous of fact as well as of fancy;—Baxter ever-so-old and yet as spry as a boy, despite a little jerk of his legs as if he had rejuvenated them with steel springs; the only and original Baxter, good-naturedly esteemed one of the most useful men on the island.

Just beyond the big town-pump is the one little "store" of 'Sconset, where, upon a pinch, you may find stationery by the penny's worth, needles and thread, candles and cod-fish, fearful cigars and villainous tobacco, ancient peaches and modern candy, brooms and pails, and a few other necessaries of life. There you will find a cheerful little old man—or, read the "notice" on the closed door and hunt for him—whom all the children with wise discernment love. He it is who has the honor of being the father of the Rev. Phœbe Hanaford who will preach a sermon to you when she comes to 'Sconset that will do you good to hear.

There was a certain delightful elderly man who brought us the freshest vegetables from his garden every morning, gave us honest count and good measure, and kept the account as faithfully as if he had taken the iron-clad oath,—Folger by name. There being upon the island uncounted "Folgers" and "Coffins" and "Macys," it is no disclosure of identity to mention this one by name. This particular Folger was an old whaleman, and had on his various voyages in distant seas kept a remarkably well-written and interesting journal, illustrated in the margin with

skilfully drawn pen-and-ink sketches of whales, blackfish and porpoises in the attitudes in which they were seen at the dates opposite. I begged the volume to read, and followed the simple story of the whaleman's life of forty years or more ago—the days of calm, of spirited sailing, of sighting and pursuing and capturing whales, of the inevitable "man overboard"—with an interest only intensified by the plain, matter-of-fact style of the record.

Many a time, too, I led him to talk of the old times; and as he lacked the peculiar "fancy" of the versatile Baxter, I greatly enjoyed his homely narratives. It seemed like coming very close to the grave dangers and severe hardships and sad disasters of the long, weary voyages of the whalemen, to hear the story told in such a direct and realistic way.

"One time," said he, in one of these talks, "we had been off in the Pacific four years, and hadn't heard a word from home in all that time. When we came back, just as soon as we dropped anchor, I got ashore and went straight to my father's house. You see I hadn't got married then and was living at father's. When I got there, I went right in, anxious enough, as you may know, to find out what had

happened in all those four years and the first one I saw was father,—and then I saw a woman that I didn't know. 'Father,' said I, a little scared, like, 'where's mother?' 'Your mother,' said he, 'died two years ago last March.' I tell you, it was hard. I hadn't heard the first word. I guessed the rest,—that woman was his second wife! That was all right enough—but, you see, my mother was dead and buried and father was married again—and I had to take the whole of it in, all at once. I tell you, I wished then I was back on the Pacific."

The bronzed and hairy old veteran of the sea and of that wilder life in the early days of California, when hundreds of Nantucketers went off to the gold mines, seemed, as he told me the story, not even yet to have recovered from the shock of that long ago day.

The good man had a horse—a very sedate one—and a "box-cart," one of the peculiar institutions of the island, a four-wheeled affair with square box on springs, and an iron step behind by which to ascend the exalted thing. These we frequently chartered for our family cruises over the moors and to various notable points on the island.

"She's a lazy beast," said Folger, at the first hiring, "but a good one. If she won't go, *hit her a lick!*—she needs it."

It was an honest characterization of the animal, throughout, and we did not hesitate to obey the owner's injunction, with gratifying results.

Then there was the excellent old lady who made cakes and pies and baked bread and fancy things, all of them good, for the cottagers who did not have the facilities or the courage for such undertakings. With her, however, as with the rest of the purveyors to our comfort, one needed to use a little tact and a deal of politeness. You don't give "orders" in 'Sconset—you politely make "requests." These people need and want to make an honest living, and you are the most convenient material at hand out of which to make it. But they are descended from blood that ruled the wave and humbled the leviathan, and the spirit of the Norseman was never prouder than is theirs. They have great self-respect—none too much, no doubt—and if they perform services which you have been accustomed to think menial, they do them with a spirit that dignifies both them and their work.

It was young Horace Folger who caught blue-fish

for our table. The whales were all caught out of the Atlantic before he was born, perhaps; but I would wager his keen eye, quick hand and trained skill in handling a dory, against a whale's life, any time. He is a born whaleman, albeit he doth "heave and haul" out on the shoals to the end that the summer dweller at 'Sconset may feast upon one of the most delicious of fishes that ever melted in the mouth of the epicure.

The milkman—whom the little fair-haired lady in blue flannel soon came to know as the "mook-mon" —drove over from Quidnit, from beyond Sankaty, every morning; and on special request brought also long-necked clams and lobsters. It was for some days a mystery with me how milk was extracted from the sandy and sterile soil of the island. But a little wider observation discovered grazing fields near the ponds where a diligent cow, with patient spirit and perseverance, might accomplish something satisfactory; and various large enclosures of whole farms in a field where fine-looking sheep were feeding in the heather or browsing among the stunted bushes. I also found here and there, near the village, cornfields where seed-corn and fish planted together in the hills outwitted

Nature who meant that corn should not grow on a sand bank.

The few men of the original stock whom I saw at 'Sconset impressed me as having much of the unlettered wisdom of experience and of long observation and reflection upon all the various phenomena of nature. They had seen danger on the briny deep. They had been obliged to study wind and weather, to predict and prepare for storms, to interpret the phases and aspects of sky and sea, to snuff mischief in the sweet south wind, and to forecast imprisonment on shore in their snug, be-shingled cottages when the east wind should come in laden with fog and storm. It is not fair to say that all weather-wise men have an owlish air, as if they were on intimate terms with the planets and the unseen powers of the upper realm, for these modest old sailors do not—they are too sincere for that nonsense.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY AT 'SCONSET.

WHEN Sunday came, the resounding sea continued the mighty anthem which made all the week holy-days and 'Sconset a cathedral town. It was difficult to make any distinction. There was no exceptionally early rising on any day, and to lie abed on Sunday morning to a later hour would have been only a self-imposed penance. It is also one of the traditions of the place—among the summer folk—that a neglect of the surf-bath on Sunday would be a violation of good hygiene. And so the bathers, in slower procession, more sedately plunge and tumble in the turbulent waters, the ladies laugh and scream less loudly at the rope when the breakers dash them hither and yon, and the athletes omit the preliminary cartwheel and hand-spring.

However, to make sure of distinguishing this from other days, a party of us duly attended the "Quaker

Meeting" held at the school-house in the morning,and the "Praise Meeting" at one of the hotels in the evening. The former was not typical, I fear, for the good man who conducted the entire service from a platform, read and prayed and lengthily preached, as if it was by preconcerted arrangement that he was moved by the Spirit, precisely as the preacher of World's People might have been moved. The Praise Meeting, however, conducted by the transient dwellers in 'Sconset, and consisting wholly of the singing of sacred music with piano accompaniment was more spontaneous and a most fitting close of a peaceful day.

On another Sunday a clergyman, in the village for the day, conducted religious services in the hotel parlors. I do not say they were shortened in view of the bathing hour, but I know we, the congregation, including my household, staid not upon the order of our going, after service, but went directly to our rooms and cottages to prepare for the bath—seeking that which at least comes next after Godliness.

What a shock it gave me, when I emerged from my dressing room arrayed in my blue flannel bathing-suit all trimmed with white and unmistakably a bathing

suit, to see before me in the common reception-room of our cottage—the clergyman!

"What, sir! are you going to bathe?" said he.

"Well," I stammered, "it seems to be according to the 'Standards' at 'Sconset, and—I don't mind saying that I consider it to be quite as important to preserve one's health on Sunday as on any other day of inferior quality."

"Quite right! quite right!—and I am glad to hear you give so fair an expression of what I have thought is a wise truth," said the robust and genial clergyman, as he drew from under his arm—a bathing-suit!

"Can I have an apartment for a moment or two in which to re-attire myself?" he asked; and I thanked him for his moral support in the matter of the bath, and said he might.

Once at the beach, I found that the gracious and benign preacher was so magnificent in his physique, and (despite his efforts to be staid and sedate) fought the waves so gallantly, that I wondered he had preached so well. He never could have had dyspepsia, that grand promoter of serious meditation upon the sinfulness of the world; he certainly had none of the scholarly stoop and thinness which popularly be-

long to the digger in books :—and yet, had I not just now been listening to this strong swimmer with great delight and profit ?

I shall not tell his name. I do not know what stuff his deacons and elders, vestrymen, or whatever they are officially, are made of. Possibly they might see harm in what their pastor did. We did not. And some of us thought it was a good sign of the times that a simple, natural, quiet and healthful recreation of this sort could be indulged in with no thought on the part of any one that it was wrong for us or for "the minister."

None of us, I think, will ever forget the Sunday evening when a goodly company went down to the beach, with wraps and heavy coats, and sat on the sand under an extemporized awning, and some of us listened while others sang the good old tunes and hymns, and then rare songs that stirred the depths of our hearts,—while the moon came grand and queenly out of the sea, making ten thousand wave-crests silvery, and leaving the hollows blue and dark. Then mounting higher it poured such splendor down that the wide expanse of waters was lighted up with the glory of the night. Meanwhile sad, sweet song,

or triumphant hymn, or wailing echo of sorrow mingled with the martial dirge of the ocean forever pulsating along the shore.

There are sacred hours in other temples than those reared with hands. These by the sea,—are they not such to the true worshiper?

CHAPTER IX.

THE SQUANTUM—SACHACHA POND—ON THE MOORS.

"MY good house-band," for so did my wife affectionately address me for a season after our long separation, "we are invited to a 'Squantum,' to-morrow, by some kind friends of ours, and we must surely go. It's the thing; and of all the things here it's the most 'typical,' as you say."

"So we will; though what a 'Squantum' is passes my present comprehension," I replied.

"Oh, that's only an island name for pic-nic and a good nice time wandering over the moors to the squantum-ground. A 'clam-bake' on the shore is the full development of a squantum—though for that matter you may pic-nic where you please and as you please, in the open air."

The next morning, four of us from our cottage climbed up by the rear step and over the seats into Mr. Folger's curious but most serviceable "box-cart,"

(*bawx-cawt* is the local pronunciation,) the basket of sandwiches, pickles, cake, cold coffee, lots of canned things and what-not, were stowed away and the wraps and rugs handed up. The male personage of the party took the lines, obeyed Folger's injunction to "hit him a lick!"—to wit, the horse;—and away we went, threading the lanes of 'Sconset to its northern limits, and then off into indefinite space northwesterly and pretty nearly all around the compass. We were preceded by two carriages, (a comfortable innovation brought over from Boston,) whose occupants were familiar with the systems and sub-systems of ruts that traverse the moors in every direction, and cross and criss-cross each other to the utter distraction of the novice.

What a delightful ride that was! Out beyond the town into the fenceless fields, over the swelling waves of the landscape, through little vales and over the ridges and around the mounds;—skirting little emerald ponds no bigger than a village door-yard and surrounded by wild shrubbery, golden-rod and flaming flowers;—out among the heather, the dwarf oaks no higher than your knee, the creeping mealberry vines with hard, red, fruit like beads, the low

huckleberry bushes tempting you to dismount over the seat and back-step;—winding and turning and following the parallel ruts wherever they led;—at length coming to a gate and a vast sheep-pasture and letting ourselves through and carefully closing the gate after us;—catching gleams of the sea now and then on our right, and on our left looking up with respect upon the low range of Saul's Hills as being the highest land in all Nantucket;—at length by a swoop and a turn coming down from the west upon a bay of Sachacha Pond, our "Squantum-ground."

A small, deserted old house, surrounded by soft, luxuriant turf, green and inviting, made the objective point which all pleasure-seeking requires, while the adjacent barn ministered comfort and protection to our horses from the August sun. After descending from our vehicles and bestowing edibles and extra apparel under a broad extemporized awning, we strolled down to the bay. A thirty-foot whale-boat propelled by two small boys leisurely approached, and the round dozen of us embarked and slowly moved out into the lake, to the edge of the shallow water, where for half an hour in a most juvenile fashion and in high glee we fished for perch—that being strictly

"typical" of the legitimate squantum in this particular locality.

The greedy and voracious fishes took the proffered bait as if their lives depended upon it. Wriggles and feminine screams and fish *ad libitum* and finally *ad nauseam*—and the old whale-boat that boasted an experience, in its palmier days, in the Pacific, was laboriously rowed and poled back to the landing.

Hunger is the best sauce, as everybody knows, but the ladies had done the finest that 'Sconset would permit, and we hardly needed any sauce whatever when, on the shady side of the house, the white table-cloth was spread upon the green grass and laden with the treasures of the collective baskets.

Some of the ladies could sing charmingly. At 'Sconset and here, in the absence of all accompaniment, I noted anew what a wonderful thing is the human voice! —full of all tenderness and strength, feeling, melody, richness beyond comparison, and adaptation to all phases of human emotion! Man has made wood and metal and material of all sorts vocal with beautiful and grand sounds, has woven the threads of melody into harmonies that interpret thought and emotion

wonderfully,—but God made the human voice, and His work surpasses all the rest.

Did you hear Parepa at the Boston Jubilee?

The descending sun gently hinted to us that our dreamy afternoon in the shade of the old house was to end by and by; and we wanted a leisurely drive homeward over the moors in the afternoon light and by a new and still more picturesque route. We gathered up the fragments of our feast and were soon climbing into the box-cart and the carriages. Away we went, in quite a spirited fashion, picking our way among the criss-crossing ruts to Quidnet, a nearly deserted, little fishing hamlet near the sea and on the north-eastern shore of the Pond.

There we left our companions, took their directions, the sun and the faithful old landmark, Sankaty Light House, as our guides, and wandered off westward, to swing around by a long circuit homeward.

Striking through some sheep-fields, we came upon a few houses, three or four, weather-beaten and old—and this was Polpis. I wanted to see Polpis, to ascertain how a town would thrive under such a name. Luckily we found it, although it is "going back into the ground" so rapidly that in a few years

the tourist will look for it in vain. We saw, also, beyond us a house or two in the distance, near the arm of the sea which makes the harbor, and they said that was Quaise, once of some importance for some reason which I have forgotten (if I ever knew) but now almost too feeble to support even its short and queer name.

Everything is historic on this island;—that is one of the fortunes of things old, like the privileges everybody concedes to age. But unless you are a Nantucketer you do not experience a very exalted thrill over Polpis and Quaise. You very likely tire of the endeavor of honest souls to impress and solemnize you with regard to a good many of the other historic things of Nantucket. That is because you have doubtless been overwrought and are weary with your own modest local history of a commonplace order. And when you come to think of it, after all, Nantucket is about as far from being commonplace as any region of our broad country this side of the Rocky Mountains. It is unique, *sui generis*, delicious in its quaintness, in its humble romances, in its stories of the whaling fisheries. Everything here is insular and singular, too, considering that the little republic belongs to our

common country. The people speak of "the continent" as if, forsooth, the rest of us were foreigners,—good enough in our way, no doubt, but foreigners for all that.

Meanwhile we are getting out of Polpis, as best we can, along a very sandy road between fences which hold us remorselessly to our dusty appointed way. We pass the really fine farm of Mr. Sandford, who lives in Nantucket town but delights to bring his friends out here and show them what fine cattle and sheep and corn and hay he manages so well to raise on the sterile island.

But again we are out on the moors, into the firm hard ruts, or driving where we will where no wheel has rolled before us, beyond the fences and all signs of human ownership, in the midst of Nature's unvexed domain, and among the vales and on the rounded ridges of "Saul's Hills." These afford us points of observation where we see views which in the golden light of the late afternoon are exquisitely charming and dreamily beautiful. The tender haze of a lovely hour is over all—a bridal veil that beautifies every feature. The island is treeless except as to the scrubby jack-pines planted in some parts to induce

the growth of other varieties of trees; and the bare brown hills and broad level expanses in this light wear a rich and rare strangeness. Sankaty Light-House lifts its friendly and comforting face seaward, while on the other hand "the town" with its spires and white houses half encircling the harbor remind us of human life as a dream. Close at hand, all around us, are silence and absence of man and all his works, a solitude set in the eternal hills, absence of all traces of man, too, except here and there the winding path where others have wandered at their own sweet will like ourselves this summer's day. The descending sun is clothing the hills with a deeper purple and sending darker shades into the valleys.

Such wonderful lichens, such beautiful golden-rod such strange grasses, such a variety of rare and luxuriant mosses, such creeping vines, as we gathered, were never seen by any of us on "the continent" ou a country holiday.

"Oh, do please get that strange flower for me!"—"I must have that lichen for our little parlor; did you ever see anything so exquisite!"—"There is a moss more beautiful than any flower!"—"If you will be such a good man as to gather a bunch of that grass

for me,—it will arrange so prettily!" These were the continued appeals of the ladies.

They were not made in vain. I was in the spirit then as much as ever St. John was. I suppose I bounded out of that box-cart twenty times in pursuit of treasures of this sort and climbed laboriously back again, piling the capacious wagon full of the spoils. But we came at length upon such a store-house of these riches that the whole party, moved by a common impulse, descended from the ark, and then the spoliation began in earnest! The mild-tempered beast browsed contentedly along behind us; while we went from one lichen bed to another, or revelled in mosses fed to luxuriance on the damp sea-breezes, or—with more humble taste but hardly less appreciation—plucked luscious huckleberries by the handful.

It was delightful to the senses and surpassingly restful, too, to lie on the clean dry beds of grasses and the velvety mosses, among the heather, and look long and deeply into the calm blue sky, into depth after depth, until the mind took up the wondrous vision, where the eye grew weary, and saw unutterable things beyond,—looking, too, off upon the increasing purple of the hills,—and to feel that for once

to the tired body and weary spirit had come rest and peace immeasurable, a calmness beyond all expression, and the welling sense of some strange beauty in this lonely place, such as even meadows and parks and fountains and murmuring streams flowing between embowered banks could never give.

But already half the disk of the great round orb of day is below the horizon; and again making the perilous ascent into our ancient vehicle we proceed homeward by devious ways, along paths which lead us sometimes quite astray. All ways, however, lead to the broad highway, with its many ruts, from Nantucket to 'Sconset. Once in that we are safe, dark as it now is; and in due time the friendly lanterns over the gates, swaying in the light evening breeze, wave us gentle welcomes, and we reach our cottage door.

The "squantum" and the wanderings over the moors, this summer's day, will never be forgotten by us. And all ye who would possess one fresh memory of unaccustomed enjoyment of Nature in a rare mood, fail not at your peril to go and do likewise, if ever you are a cottager at 'Sconset!

CHAPTER X.

A DAY IN "NANTUCKET TOWN."

AGAIN chartering Folger's box-cart and lazy beast, one fine day five of us from our cottage drove over to Nantucket town.

And what a town! Not very large, indeed—once having a population of ten thousand souls, now only about three thousand; quaint, a choice bit of antiquity as antiquity goes in this country; seated like an empress on her throne upon the rising shore and encircling bluffs, and looking out on the peaceful harbor and beyond on the restless sea; historic in respect to a great industry, now as dead as the issues of the late "unpleasantness;" the nursery of noted men and high-bred women; and, although in decadence as a seaport, coming to renown and a new preeminence as a summer resort which once visited is visited again and always remembered with delight and affectionate longing.

The harbor still invites the great ships; but only the summer pleasure-steamers and the swift-flying yachts and the busy row-boats vex its waters. The wharves are ample to receive the oily freights of many whalers, as in the good old days, if only their ghosts would rehabilitate themselves in oaken hulls and spread again the many-sheeted canvas; but they are nearly all vacant now.

They point out to you the old Captains' Club House, down among the tall ware-houses, where the sea captains used to come together and spin their yarns and smoke their pipes and plan new ventures on the seas. The captains have pretty nearly all gone on their last voyage, never to return. The few that remain are mainly too old to hobble down to the Club; and while the sturdy brick building stands against wind and weather and the ample arm-chairs invite to social chat and smoke, its original use is fast becoming a memory.

There are various fine buildings that surprise one in this remote place, and tell of the past importance of the town. It has its Athenæum, full of curiosities and treasures pertaining to sea life and enterprise; containing also a public library that is an honor to

any town. Its Academy,—"the Coffin School"—incorporated eighty years ago, answers the question every intelligent visitor asks himself, "Where do these insular people get such culture as they exhibit in wise speech and in refined, high bred manners?" Its churches, excellent hotels, and occasional charming private residences attract your attention. Indeed, the town, although old, with grass growing around "the cobbles" in the streets, with the signs of age everywhere and the weather-beaten hue in its bewrinkled face, is as far from commonplace as the gourd-like Cottage City on the neighboring island.

Nobody seems to be in a hurry in Nantucket—except, perhaps, the teller of the bank where I went at noon to get a draft cashed. He wanted very much to go to dinner—and he went, not to open the institution again that day. A faithful servant, as he is, of the "soulless corporation" he represents, he wanted me to find some one to identify me, but warningly informed me that unless I returned within three minutes I must wait for my money until the next day—the bank would be shut until the morning. I chose rather to tarry the three minutes and dilate to him upon the absurdity of an intelligent Nantucketer

closing his bank at noon to go to dinner and then to sleep until the next morning. He answered me well enough, and politely, too, that there wasn't enough to do to keep the bank open more than two or three hours a day.

That is typical of Nantucket on its business side—Oriental, you will say, viewing it in a theoretical way and in the light of sentiment, with no draft to cash; but I called it by another name,—scolded, in fact, and went off and paid my wife's grocery bill, got my draft cashed in that way, and shunned that bank entirely.

They have a town-crier or two in Nantucket, a relic of the past, who rings a bell and hoarsely bawls out the news, announces a lecture or a "show" in a hobble-gobble dialect which may be Choctaw for all I know, or blows a horn to announce that the steamer is in sight. He is only valuable and endurable as a relic, however, the embodiment of an ancient custom —otherwise he is very much a humbug and a nuisance.

The bathing-houses on the harbor and on the shore of the sea outside, all of which we visited, are points of attraction all day long. They are admirable and unusually good in all their appointments. Large

numbers of people bathe and larger numbers gather there socially and sit in the covered pavilion and look on, and gaze at the ocean. That never wearies, whatever conversation may do. It is a popular drive, also, to the seaside bathing resorts. There is no surf-bathing, and to us, right from 'Sconset, it seemed a very tame matter to wade and swim in the quiet water, with no respectable emotion of possible danger to stimulate. But still-bathing has its advantages, and is very agreeable, notwithstanding its tameness. Not its least advantage is that by means of it many here learn to swim, and so graduate to that higher institution, the surf-bath, and the fearless plunge into the breakers.

From the bath-houses we drove up a steep hill to the cliff, north-west of the town, where are several delightful cottages overlooking a broad and magnificent expanse of ocean. At one of these, the summer residence of a Cincinnati gentleman and his family, we were most hospitably entertained, and shown cottage life as it exists at Nantucket; and vastly different from the life at 'Sconset it is. This cottage is an ample summer home, simply furnished, and yet abounding in pictures, books, and

bits of decoration that give it an air of luxury and refinement. But from the ample verandah facing the sea, the view, as considered from the great easy-chairs, is too fine and grand to permit one to remain long indoors. From this elevated position the study of the waves is very interesting, and the swift yachts and great sea-going vessels in the distance make the picture full of action.

The occupants of the cottage take their daily bath in the sea before their door. The descent to it is long and steep; and the gentleman of the house gave us a most animated description of the miscellaneous manner in which the whole household every morning rolled and tumbled down the sandy cliff to the beach, and afterward—*hic labor hoc opus est*—climbed up again by long successive stair-ways planted in the face of the bank.

On our drive to town again, we passed the fine large cottage of the artist, Eastman Johnson, who doubtless was then painting his picture, "The Nantucket Sea-Captain."

We went industriously about the town, visiting various resorts of special interest;—and first, the Athenæum, which contains the Library and Museum,

where they serve you up whales' jaws, teeth and so on, and harpoons,—indeed every interesting thing appertaining to whaling enterprises, except a wreck or a man overboard,—besides the usual dusty and musty antiquities that give a ghostly sanctity to museums, the dead-houses of the past. Then we all and severally inscribed our names and temporary abodes in the "Visitors' Book" at Mr. Godfrey's news-room, where everybody goes to learn where everybody is.

Nantucket abounds in old crockery and antique furniture, both rich and fine in their day and now esteemed greatly valuable because old. I suppose more ancient crockery has gone out of the plain old homes of Nantucket into fine houses in the cities of "the continent" than from any other town of its size in the country. They will tell you that Miss So-and-So, or Mrs. This-and-That—stately, dignified dames who have seen better days and whom the receding tides of commercial prosperity left aground,—are willing to part with treasures of this sort.

We went to see. The first room we entered was full of odd old crockery, (*was* it all *old?*) bright and clean, and labelled with the amount of the con-

sideration the payment of which would enable you to bear off the prizes. The ladies of my party wanted to purchase pretty much everything and were, after all, restrained in their enthusiasm only by the masculine veto. I felt my own weakness, I admit, when we entered the sombre-fronted old mansion where we found the antique furniture. There were tables, writing-desks, bureaus, bedsteads, stands, fire-place furniture and hosts of other things that quite captivated me,—but my own great good sense and intimate knowledge of the personal exchequer enabled me here also to resist temptation.

There are homes, however, in serious old Nantucket, where remain still the wealth, culture and high-bred men and women of the former days; but we, alas! are strangers and pilgrims and may not enter. We must, forsooth, content ourselves with these glimpses within the doors which have opened to us and other pilgrims at the stern knock of necessity.

A day in town is not complete, by any means, without a sail. This day happened to be most propitious,—a bright clear sky, a good breeze stirring, and a temperature that no manner of amending could have improved. So we went down *en masse* to the

wharf, engaged the little yacht "Ellouise" commanded by young Captain Adams, and were soon sailing about the harbor—itself a long, capacious inland sea separated from the ocean by a narrow strip of sandy beach—and then right out around Brant Point and over the bar to sea! How we danced and rocked over the waves, and sped along with the wind! Is there anything in life more delicious than sailing! And this is the daily delight of the summer sojourner at Nantucket. Those who linger in town say to the 'Sconseter,—

"Ah, you miss the sailing! How can you enjoy life by the sea without the daily sail? See all these pretty yachts waiting for you, each with its faithful captain who will take you in safety through any storm,—with this stretch of inland sea all the way to Wauwinet for rough weather, and the whole Atlantic for fair weather! This is what makes us love Nantucket."

The 'Sconset dweller is forced to admit all the attractions claimed, but plucks up courage and says,—

"But you haven't surf-bathing here,—you haven't our simple and quiet life,—you don't hear the roaring on the beach when you lie down to sleep and when

you wake,—you *are* in town, and that is what you left home to escape. The moors are out of sight; so are Sankaty Head on the one hand, and Tom Never's Head on the other. You don't get, here, the grand sweep of the ocean, and the sunrise and moonrise out of the waves; and the mad leaping and fierce fighting of the tides and waves on 'the rips' you never see here."

Since you cannot have both you choose one, each for himself, and therewith, happily, are content.

It is only honest to let the dweller in Nantucket have the last word and say, as he does,—

"'Sconset? Certainly,—we make that one of the points to drive to. We look at your surf and perhaps take a plunge; peep into your cottages and dine with you; and bring away the cream of your life there. We sometimes drive over to the South Shore, too, through the avenue of pines. There is the surf for you, when the south wind blows! That is the favorite drive of those delightful young lunatics—the lovers. They say the evening breezes whisper very pretty things among the pines. Then, too, when we are cheerful enough for it, we visit the old cemetery. Some of the patriarchs are there. Besides, near the

the town there is such success in agriculture that one may see green fields and waving harvests without cultivating his dreams to that end or going to the main-land for the vision. Indeed, why should one live at the very edge of creation when he can live centrally and take a peep over the brink whenever he chooses!"

When we returned to our hotel, the dear old College Professor, of Christian mould and spirit but Hellenic culture, grave as an oyster on the outside but like a peach inside for sweetness and richness—to say nothing of his rare, juicy humor—the Professor had come in from some philosophical wandering. We all knew him of old and rejoiced to meet him in his vacation leisure. He entered heartily into my planning for a day of blue-fishing, and went to the wharf to aid me in securing a place in some company that might be going out on the morrow. He knew every captain and craft, and it was not his fault that I did not succeed in securing the coveted opportunity.

However, this gave me an occasion to do the Professor a favor that he never dreamed of. I ordered out my horse and box-cart from the stable near the wharf; and, assisting the Professor to mount,

proudly drove him up through the town to the Sherburne House! I cannot say that he regarded the performance with entire equanimity; for when I sought to discern some merry twinkle in his eye, his spectacles gave no sign. The Professor, however, thought the cart might be something like that in which Nausicaa and her maidens took the royal washing down to the river; but he did not certainly know that he should have enjoyed a ride in that, while this had given him, to say the least, one of the most astonishing rides of his life. I did not precisely know what he meant, for the Professor is very kind hearted and polite, and never indulges in Carlylese.

It was a little later in the day than I intended it should be when we set out on our return to 'Sconset. The wind from the south shore was blowing gently, and as night fell, a thick fog enveloped us,—a "fog-rain," as they call it, came upon us,—and it became cold and very dark. There was no reasonable chance of losing our way. Indeed, the deep ruts of the parallel roads in the broad highway to 'Sconset would not permit us to deviate an inch from the direct route, unless we should unluckily fall into a pair of ruts switching off to Polpis, Quidnet or some other

hamlet. But we wondered what would happen if we should meet some belated traveler who had usurped or wandered into our particular pair of tracks,—or, if the Folger beast should give out,—or, if the creaking old box-cart should collapse a wheel, and no human habitation between Nantucket and 'Sconset! Of course, nothing did happen; and we jogged steadily on in the darkness, the south-west side of us growing damper and damper until our incredulity as to a "fog-rain" was utterly dispelled. At length Sankaty beckoned to us through the fog, and then the feeble lamps of 'Sconset did their finest to welcome the belated travelers, and we were again at our cottage door.

CHAPTER XI.

"A-SHARKING."

NO summer experience at 'Sconset is complete without at least one "sharking" expedition. It was indeed too typical an affair to be omitted by one in pursuit, as I was, of all the sorts of knowledge that could be picked up in this out-of-the-way corner of the universe, this "land's-end" of America.

We made up a party of five men,—not finding it convenient to take with us the courageous lady who wanted to be in at the death of a shark and to have a hand in the death herself. Driving over to Quidnet we engaged Captain Alexander Bunker, a rare old specimen of the ancient mariner, and a crew of two men, to take us out to the sharking grounds on the shoals. As a preliminary, we took row-boats and on Sachacha Pond, in a short time, caught about one hundred and fifty perch for bait. The thirty-foot whale boat was launched through

the surf,—no easy task,—the sail hoisted, and we moved gaily out under a smiling sun and a most beneficent sky, over gently swelling waves, to our destination about a mile from shore. Two anchors were put out so as to bring the boat broadside to the tide. The men split the perch from the back and thrust seven or eight upon each hook, and we cast our lines overboard with the tide.

The tackle for shark-fishing is formidable, as becomes the use it is put to. The hook, made of one-third inch wire, is nearly a foot long and four inches across the bend; and to it is attached three feet of strong chain having a swivel, for a shark's teeth are sharp and strong and when he is caught he is very uneasy and erratic. To this chain is fastened three or four feet of half-inch rope, into which is looped the small hand-line much like a good, stout clothes-line, and two or three hundred feet long.

The tide is an important element in the business, for when it is running the fish are then feeding and the lines sweep slowly away from the boat in search of a victim. The hook is lowered to within a foot of the bottom, here about thirty feet below; and as the tide carries the bait gently along, the fisherman pays

out line and patiently waits. There is busy life down in the sea-green waters, and denizens of the deep that you little dream of,—all sorts of fish, indeed, but each variety demanding a somewhat different inducement to put in an appearance at the surface. We are after sharks, however, and while we wait the Captain tells us what to expect.

"The shark," says he, "is a very gentle fellow to bite, considerin' what a row of teeth he's got, and what an ugly brute he is when he has once got a hold. He gives the bait a little nudge with his nose, just to see what it's made of, and when he's concluded it'll answer his turn he just flops over and takes it into his mouth as delicately as you please. You don't want to pull just yet, or you'll only jerk the bait away. Just let your line out a little and wait a bit until he's started to swallow it. You can tell; there'll be a sort o' tug on the line, not very heavy, though. Then throw yourself back, and pull like blazes!"

Meanwhile, H. had dropped a small hook and line over the boat's side for "place-fish." At this instant he sprang from his seat and began pulling in, hand over hand, something particularly lively. It proved to be a "baby blue-dog," two or three feet long.

"First blood!" shouted H., as the rakish and vicious little shark was drawn into the boat and dispatched; "and where this came from I'm sure there's game of a bigger sort."

Suddenly, D., in the stern, began tugging with all his might, the line slipping through his hands and he gathering it in again by main force and slowly gaining. We were all about as excited as he was, for this capture was evidently no "baby shark." When the fish came within sight of the boat his whole aspect changed from that of a swaggering, half good natured bully, to one of rage and fear. He threshed and floundered and pounded the water into a foam with his powerful tail, and shook his head fiercely to dislodge the stinging hook. One or two men grasped the large rope when it came within reach, the chain rattled over the boat's side, the nose of his sharkship was brought snug up to the gunwale, and then one of the crew, standing ready with a stout billy, gave the nose a dozen whacking blows, while gradually the swashing and gigantic writhings, and the foaming of the water subsided. The shark, of the variety known as the "sand-shark," was dead, and was speedily drawn into the boat. This fellow was eight feet long,

estimated weight, four hundred pounds. It was an exceedingly exciting piece of work to take him,—"but," the captain said, "wait till you catch a 'blue-dog' if you want to see fun alive."

Hardly had we done looking at the revolting creature, quiet enough now, when I, at my end of the boat, with seventy-five feet of line out, felt the "poke," the "nibble," the "tug" that I had been anxiously waiting for. Cautiously giving out a little more line, I waited two or three seconds and then surged heavily back and pulled with all my might. The hook was fast—there was no mistake about that! The ugly creature at the other end of the line pulled, jerked, ran hither and yon and counter to my wishes in every possible way. He pulled—I pulled. As the line slipped through my hands, in great excitement and with no breath to spare, I shouted, "Boys—here's business!"

Just then some one got a glimpse of the form of the fish as it appeared at the surface some distance away. He startled the whole party by exclaiming, "Its a blue-dog!—a regular 'man-eater!'" Three men clambered hastily to my assistance, for the "blue-dog" is more than a match for one man's strength,

and is very ugly at close quarters. We all pulled our best until the outlines of the thoroughly aroused shark appeared in the green water near the boat. Then followed a fishing "controversy" that cannot very well be reported as it deserves, and as exciting to us landsmen, I imagine, as the capture of a whale is to the old whaleman. As we drew the shark's head to the surface, his jaws distended and armed with the gleaming white fangs, sharp, deadly and devilish, the vicious eye full of anger, he lashed and beat the water with his powerful body and tail as an immensely exaggerated trout might have done,—rolling over and over like a propeller wheel, and sending the air bubbles of the foam several feet down into the water. It seemed for a few minutes as if we never should subdue the ugly brute. Our strength was tested to the utmost, although we drew the stout chain across the gunwale in such a manner as to secure a great advantage. At length, however, we had the nose snug up to the boat's rail.

"Ease off! Ease off! He'll be in the boat in a minute more!" shouted the Captain,—"then somebody 'll have to get out!"

We "eased off" in a hurry—the suggestion of such

company, and "overboard," stimulating us to prompt obedience.

"Get the lance!" shouted another. Indeed, pretty nearly everybody was shouting by this time,—especially those who were not red in the face and lame in the back with pulling on this forty-horse-power villain just now busy trying to punch a hole through the boat's side.

No pounding on the nose suffices to extinguish the vigorous life or stun the nerves of the diabolical blue-dog. The lance, and a desperate plunge of its steel into the very heart, is an indispensable part of the business when he is brought up for execution. It requires a quick, strong hand, a steady nerve and not a little skill, to strike such an active and fierce monster, in the midst of his terrible writhings. But at the opportune instant, the shining steel is placed at the gash-like gills and thrust in, eighteen good inches deep, right down into the vitals,—and withdrawn as quickly, for the stung and wounded creature makes a terrible dash against the boat, and rolls over and over in the water with tremendous energy. Again and again the lance seeks the vulnerable opening, and is plunged in as before. Now the General seizes a big knife, and

despite the Captain's warning, leans over the boat's side and plunges the blade in, half a dozen times, to the hilt. The blood crimsons this liquid battle-field, and the tide sweeps it along over a large surface. The struggles of the exhausted fish grow less and less, and finally cease.

"Tie him out, awhile," says the Captain; "it won't do to take him in yet. I've known 'em to come to, in the boat, half an hour after they seemed to be dead; and they make ugly work."

So my blue-dog, seven feet long as he afterward measured, was "tied out," with his nose close to the boat, until he should surely be dead. But he was dead enough—he never "came to." He had been stabbed to death as surely as ever Cæsar was.

I confess (with a little twinge) that I was never more excited with any sport (!) in my life than with this, my first capture of a shark, and a veritable man-eater at that. There was hard work enough on our part, and a wonderful display of power on his. It seemed as if our boat must go to pieces in the fight; and there was a spice of danger in the whole beastly business that made one's nerves tingle.

Before I had my first "nibble," I had been quietly

considering whether I shouldn't be sea-sick,—and the more I considered the possibility of the humiliating and inconvenient experience,the more surely I thought I detected the preliminary symptoms of the malady. But the "nibble" cured me instantly, and I was as thoroughly seaworthy the rest of the day as any old whaleman after a four years' voyage.

We continued fishing two or three hours, until the tide ran so strong as to carry our heavy hooks and tackle hundreds of feet away and lift them to the surface far above the sharks we were after. It was not due to my skill, they said, but to my good luck that I captured the two blue-dogs of the day, and a pair of sand-sharks;—four of the ten sharks taken (not counting "the baby;")—and they uttered some ungracious things, in a spirit of jealousy, about my profession,—something about "kindred ties," "natural sympathy," "congenial tastes," and such like, wholly inappropriate things. I only retorted that if I could have my good friends on the witness' stand sometime, for half an hour, under cross examination, I'd teach them a sounder discretion and a higher respect for the "profession."

We had a good boat load of useless fish, and had

performed our part of the duty of clearing the seas of these pirates. Considerations of duty, however, were an after-thought. I remember that when the murderous business was over, and having hoisted anchors we were sailing for shore, the question was raised by some uneasy moralist of our number as to the "what good?" of our bloody sport; and another uneasy moralist of our number soothed the general conscience by answering, "*Pro bono publico* have we done this! The whole sea-faring and sea-bathing world is benefitted by our sanguinary—not to say piscatory—exploits to day." And this is the only apology I can offer for a sharking expedition.

We were taken off and through the surf in a dory, after which we watched the operation of towing the dead sharks ashore, and drawing them up on the beach with a horse, and placing them in a row, side by side, a horrible lot of corpses!

The sharks were cut open in our presence and the livers extracted, which contain a valuable oil. The stomachs—the interior department of a shark is pretty much all gullet and stomach—were distended and full of water, or water and fish in different stages of digestion. I imagined the water went down their

throats while we were hauling them in. I can't conceive how even a shark, in a normal condition, should really want so much cold water in his stomach—it is carrying a good principle a little too far.

At the Captain's house we had a fish-chowder for our late dinner, lounged about the three or four houses which constitute "the town," and drove home in the early evening.

The shark-hook and appurtenances that I secured and brought away, and the shark's jaws that I negotiated for and afterward received, (presumably the same I caught,) are hanging on the wall just above the back of my arm-chair in my "private den," as I write. I look at the formidable hook, and the sharp fangs, and am vividly reminded of the details of that day "a-sharking."

CHAPTER XII.

BLUE-FISHING.

BLUE-FISHING is not at its best in August; and the angler, always in need of the philosophy which hopeth all things and endureth all things, should gird himself about with three-fold patience when he goes for blue-fish in that month. The penny may fall, heads up or tails up, win or lose. But the sail itself, even if no fish are caught, is a pleasurable experience not likely to be counted a disappointment, especially when a congenial company unites to make a day of it. With a fine breeze and a good-natured sky, and a halo of philosophy about you, heads are sure to come uppermost and you win, wag the piscatory tails at you ever so jocosely and defiantly down in the blue depths.

If you would catch blue-fish to your heart's content, go for them in June,—a piece of advice not likely to be serenely received by those who must wait until

August for their annual vacation. In the leafy month, the fish roam over these shoals in great schools, as hungry and predaceous as so many sharks. You may satisfy your bloodiest and most avaricious instincts as a fisherman; but after such a debauch of angling you will never dare to read the pages of the gentle Izaak Walton until you have washed your hands and your heart of such wholesale slaughter.

Perhaps it was better, therefore, that it was my lot to go a-blue-fishing in August, when we must hope much and fish a little. At all events, we drove over to town with delightful anticipations, resolved to be content with whatever might happen, and drove back again at night bringing a great basketful of the finest fish,—the least part, after all, of what we brought.

It was to young Captain Adams and his pretty yacht, "Ellouise," that we entrusted ourselves. Breeze and sky were all in excellent humor, as well as we. Two courses were open to us,—to the waters around Tuckernuck, westerly, and the shoals off Great Point, northwesterly. There is little choice between the two, we were told, and the direction of the wind generally settles the question, that course being taken which will afford the best wind for an easy return.

To be sure, the wind may change during the day, as it did with us, and then your wisdom goes for nought.

Fate and wind took us to Great Point. We went bounding over the graceful billows of the great bay which the bending shore of the island makes, looking carefully for the smooth, oily surfaces of water, called by the fishermen, "slicks," which indicate that a school of blue-fish are feeding below. Authorities differ as to the cause of the "slick," the fishermen generally maintaining that the blue-fish have the power of exuding or ejecting, or do in some way give off, an oily fluid, while feeding, which rises to the surface and makes the water smooth. Just why such a robust and voracious feeder needs smooth water or cares for it, while taking his dinner, the wise fisherman does not attempt to explain.

We who knew nothing about it, and were therefore all the more ready to give an opinion, without the slightest hesitation decided that it is more probable that when a blue-fish chops up his victims in his blood-thirsty way, some of the fat of the slain fish rises to the surface—hence the "slick." We held firmly to the opinion because nobody present could

disprove it; but the Captain's incredulity was as stubborn as our faith.

Meanwhile, the Captain's nautical eye was wandering all over the bay. "A slick yonder!" said he quickly, at the same time pointing at something that I could not possibly distinguish. Turning the course of the yacht, he ran us near it. The surface of the large waves all around us was broken into wrinkles by the wind—little waves running and climbing over the backs of the big ones, like so many playful kittens over the back of their dignified mother—but where the "slick" appeared there were no wrinkles. That was all there was of the phenomenon which we had so ably discussed.

The lines were got ready,—a good strong cord that would hold a twenty-pound fish, but small enough to cut one's fingers if much sharp pulling is to be done. The hook, an inch and a quarter across the bend, and the long piece of lead above it covered with an eel-skin, made baiting and catching apparatus. The Captain called it a "drail." As we turned into the wind and came to a dead stop near the oily surface, the General began to "heave and haul," our Sportsman of the heavy bass-rod and reel and pearl squid made

vigorous casts and reeled in, again and again, but there was no response. The "slick" was as barren as a rock, or—a suggestion that no one dared to make in that presence—the heaving and the casting, the hauling and the reeling, were not well done. By general consent, however, we voted the thing a delusion, possibly a premeditated snare on the part of the fish, and bent our course again directly to Great Point.

Here the tide and waves were running fiercely over the shoals and making very rough water. The Captain, however, turned the bow of our staunch little craft right into the most tumultuous waves, and we plunged about in a frightful fashion.

"Out with your lines!" said he; "here's where you'll get blue-fish if anywhere."

We obeyed, and the heavy "drail" skipped and flashed through the crests of the waves sixty or seventy feet away, while we speedily forgot how rough the water was. Our Sportsman, who had fished for about everything that swims, from one end of the continent to the other, but had never taken a blue-fish on a rod, now sent the pearl squid spinning

out thirty or forty feet and reeled off a hundred feet of line.

"Ha! there's a break!" sang out the Captain. And sure enough,—as the fortunate man found whose line was taut in an instant. We were going like mad through the roughest water, and a splendid fish had taken the hook. Hand over hand the lucky man pulled, the fish running from side to side and occasionally leaping right out of a wave and shaking the hook as a terrier does a rat. Brought to the boat's side, he was unceremoniously flopped in, as full of fight as ever; the Captain, thrusting the helm under his arm, twisted the hook from the savage mouth and threw him into the tub.

"An eight-pounder," says the Captain, as he tosses the "drail" into the water and the line runs over the stern of the boat.

Having crossed the shoal, we put about and plunged into "the rips" again. Then my turn came—the heavy strike, the leap and rush at the other end of the line, while at my end I felt the thrill and excitement incident to the novel and exhilarating experience of the first "strike" of a blue-fish. It was fine; something like, but much more savage than the

strike of a black bass. The strength and activity of the creature seemed to be animated and intensified by an angry intelligence quite becoming in this blood-thirsty marauder of the seas. How the line cut through the water, from side to side! How it cut through my fingers, too, as the ugly fellow now and then recovered some of the line! We were under swift head-way in a most uneasy and badly broken up part of "the rips," and I was plunging about the boat, trying to maintain my equilibrium and foot-hold, and at the same time to do my part of the pulling. But finally I had him near enough to see every motion and, in a most hurried fashion, to study his tactics. I had pretty nearly tired him out, but he was ugly to the last and fought it out with me most gallantly until Captain Adams flopped him ignominiously in, and sent him to the tub with his brothers, the noblest of them all. At the wharf that night he weighed ten pounds, a goodly fish for these waters in August.

Our friend of the fine tackle, despite frequent entanglements with sail and cordage, spun and reeled faithfully, and at length successfully. The capture of a blue-fish with rod and reel is something well worth seeing. The Captain was sure that it would be a

failure—that the rod would be converted into kindling wood in less than a minute. But the Sportsman was an artist in angling, scientific to his finger-tips, and as modest as he was brave. He quietly "thought" he could manage a fish if he should strike one. And he did, most magnificently. It was not a contest of "pull," but a skillful application of all the nice principles involved in trout-fishing with a six-ounce rod, with the disadvantages of a stiff rod and a rapid sail. There were splendid rushes, making the reel whiz,and leaps three feet or more into the air, and a prolonged struggle which we all watched with great interest and with misgivings as to which would be the victor, the plucky sportsman or the equally plucky fish. The Sportsman won—the fish went to the tub.

We had much more of this sport, all around, fortune distributing her favors with but little partiality. In the midst of it, however, the primal instinct awoke within us, and we ran into smooth water under the lee of Great Point, and lunched. The only memorable thing about that feature of the day is that we ate lobster inordinately—enough to kill a landsman, I think—and live to tell the tale. It speaks well for

the Nantucket lobster, and it is not solely for his benefit that I commend and commemorate his virtues.

Resuming active duty, back and forth across the shoal we sailed, capturing fish at nearly every bout, and achieving success to such a degree that our sport was degenerating into hard work,—until it finally occurred to the Captain, as the coolest observer on board, that the wind had veered around and become particularly fresh. It was a good ten miles to port by air-line; but, to reach it by the zigzag route made necessary by a dead-ahead wind, there was no estimating the distance we must sail. Hauling in our lines, we shaped our course for the harbor.

How we did scud away, right out to sea! I was almost convinced that the Captain had mutinied, stolen the ship, and was running away with us, when —'bout ship! and we drove straight for shore. Ah! that was a lucky thought of the Captain's! In two seconds more, we should have plunged right into the beach,—but he shifted sail and we set out for Wood's Holl or the North Pole again. It was getting to be pretty rough work for our little craft, out on the broad water, and we shipped a sea or two that excited one landsman more than his ten-pound blue-fish did.

The Captain himself did not talk any more, and gave strict attention to business, besides invoking the aid of the General who is something of a sailor. When we made our final tack, away out at sea, with the ocean quite in a rage, and pointed straight for harbor, there was general satisfaction, although we were now being buffeted about worse than ever.

But of course we made port in safety,—everybody does who goes blue-fishing with a Nantucket Captain. Indeed, it is just to say that the sailors of the Island bear the very highest reputation for good judgment, skill and honesty; and that a mishap to a pleasure party under their care is almost an unheard of thing.

It was natural to do so, and I mentally made comparisons, even in the midst of the excitements of the day. Blue-fishing, I concluded, is most exhilarating sport,—sailing under a sunny sky and over bounding billows,—capturing as gamey a fish as swims,—the salt sea-air filling one with new vigor and keen physical enjoyment. But is it the highest type of piscatory sport? Is it equal to fighting a two-pound trout with light rod and fine tackle? No! I said so at the end of that delightful day,—said it even right after I had captured my first blue-fish,—and I have not changed

my opinion. But then, it is one of the most enjoyable things of a sea-shore resort, and well worth doing.

Blue-fishing is black bass-fishing, *plus* the sailing and the increased size of the fish, but *minus* the rod and reel, the "play" of the captive, the feeling that you are giving him a fair chance for his life,—*minus*, indeed, all skill.

The return of the yachts, as they came sailing home from their various excursions, and swept gracefully around Brant Point, out of the rough water of the open sea into the smooth harbor,—the light of the setting sun shining and smiling on all their white sails,—was a most pretty sight. Many of them came from various fishing-grounds where they had spent the day with varied success. Our own tub compared well with theirs; but no party was as successful as those who were out a day or two before, when the water was very rough. A good, stiff breeze, which "makes everything hum," seems to inspire the fish with a desire to snap and bite at everything within their reach, even the shabby deceit of a "drail."

CHAPTER XIII.

NED AND "THE BARNUM BOYS" GO A-CAMPING—A DAY AT WAUWINET.

NED had written to me, long before I came on, for my Adirondack camp-stove and "lots of tar-oil,"—for he and "the Barnum boys" and Will Jones were going a-camping on the island. When he was gathering up his treasures at home for the summer's enjoyment, he took the precaution to pack away, in the bottom of one of those great mysterious trunks that accompanied the family, a water-proofed cotton "A" tent; but the tar-oil had hardly been dreamed of as requisite for the sea-shore, where the tuneful mosquito was not supposed to abound.

Indulgent father that I am, I sent the articles written for. The boys delayed their camping, however, until some days after my arrival, so as to initiate me into a full knowledge of all the wonderful things and places now grown familiar to them.

There were great preparations for several days; and four boys found it highly important to make a journey to town to lay in stores and procure camp luxuries, without which the hardships of tent-life would eclipse all the fun. Then an old horse and cart were engaged and the entire outfit was transported to the selected camp-ground seven or eight miles distant, at the head of the harbor, near Coskata Pond, on the northern peninsula.

At four o'clock the next morning, there was a mysterious tapping at our window which wakened me. Ned had been up for an hour, had dressed in his gray woolen shirt, (the blue one had been devoted to the eels, you may remember,) and hunter's clothes, breakfasted, and was ready to answer the call of his young companions. Slinging on his game-bag, filling his pockets with loaded shells and shouldering his gun,he marched forth, a proud and happy lad. The four boys went down to the beach, and in the darkness launched the dory through the surf ; and, taking advantage at this uncanny hour of the tide running strongly northward, coasted down several miles to the "haul-over," —a narrow strip of beach between the ocean and the harbor,—made a landing through the surf, drew the

dory over the sand into the quiet waters on the other side, and after a mile more of rowing were at the foot of the cliff on which they were to camp.

I thought it was a plucky thing for these lads to do, and admired their spirit. But if these "athletes" and my Ned had not all been good swimmers and skillful at the oar, I think, instead of turning over for my morning nap, as I did after the hubbub of their departure from our cottage was over, I should at least have gone down to the beach to see them off, or to "gather them in" if the dory had been swamped. After all, if you let a boy do dangerous things, but teach him at the same time what are the dangers and how to meet them, you may generally trust him to come right side up, even in the difficult matter of launching and beaching a dory in the dark.

Not many days after, an importunate appeal came from camp, by some stray messenger, for "more bread!" There had been enormous bakings, extravagant purchases of nearly every edible thing found on the island; and the lads, besides, were having fine luck with the plover, and now and then (I grieve to say) unlawfully shot a duck,—while in the Harbor

they caught blue-fish, and on the beach at Pocomo dug long-necked clams. A growing boy—four of him in this case—has a wonderful courage for enjoyment, and an appetite, in the open air, which is truly formidable and dangerous to trifle with. Nothing appals him but work that has no fun in it—and hunger. Hence the gay and happy night passage on the dark and gloomy sea, while the resounding surf along the coast was uttering muttered threats in their young ears; hence, also, the urgent cry for "more bread!"

Wauwinet is a locally famous resort right on the Head of the Harbor, with the ocean a few steps away on the other side; while, at what might be called the "Foot of the Harbor," is Nantucket town. A "shore-dinner," made up of all the obtainable sea-food of the season, served up in every possible form, at the rustic summer hotel at this point, is the avowed aim and object of an excursion to Wauwinet. So do we apologize, even to ourselves, for vagabondizing; as if, on a summer vacation, one might not, with entire propriety, go here and there without any object! Why should we, at 'Sconset, beg pardon for our indolence, explain our appetite, render a reason for a delightful drive over the moors, and point to clam-chowder,

clams roasted, clams fried, clam-fritters, and all that, as the final cause of a day at Wauwinet? It is the effect of our worse than four hundred years of Egyptian bondage. Oh, for a reformation in the public sentiment which ranks a happy, lazy, good-for-nothing vagabond who takes life easy and doesn't apologize, as no better than a criminal! *Vive le vagabond*—at 'Sconset!

The hungry boys, however, quite as much as the shore-dinner, drew us to Wauwinet. Jane baked the bread, Mrs. Jones made heaps of biscuits and molasses cookies, and the vegetable man ransacked his garden for its best. It was to be a gala-day for us, and our good feeling enured to the benefit of the lads in camp who, without knowing it, were already basking in the sun-light of our anticipated happiness. We were not the first who have done kindness to their fellowmen because their own stomachs were full and their hearts happy—rendering to others the overplus of happiness which they could not wholly consume.

There were three cart-loads of us,—my entire family, baby and nurse included, in one load, four ladies in another, and our friends, the robust parson

and his family, in the third—as cheerful a party on this occasion as 'Sconset turns out in many a day. We drove over the moor-road, under my general pilotage, getting most delightfully lost among the ponds and hills and dales, two or three times. I silenced the jokes of the parson at my expense by suggesting that if I was blind, as he intimated, I was having a right happy time leading the blind.

Wauwinet proved to be a really charming resort. The modest little hotel, to begin with, has jutted out here, and thrust out an addition there, and then by a happy inspiration spread out a broad, open dining-room, or pavilion, which looks over the stunted grass, down to the wharf and off upon the blue waters and dancing waves of the sunny and safe harbor, and beyond, half a dozen miles to Nantucket town itself. If you listen you may hear the surf a hundred yards away back of the hotel. Up the harbor a little steamer is plowing her way, with Nantucket sojourners coming for the Wauwinet dinner. The white-winged yachts are scudding about, the breeze being fresh, and the sailing here always safe. Two miles away across the water, on a bluff, we see the white tent of Ned and the "Barnum boys," and with a glass dis-

tinguish the flagstaff and the stars and stripes. They are patriotic boys—born so, when the cannon roar in the land made all the mothers' hearts brave, and men-children were esteemed the Nation's future defenders. One of these lads bears the name of "Malvern Hill," the battle field where his gallant father, shot through and through, was left for dead, but would not die.

While we are waiting for dinner, the ladies put on their bathing-suits and enjoy the luxury of wading and swimming in the clear, blue water of the bay, without the necessity of a rope or a husband or brother to cling to. My little lady, the pet of the cottage, has her shoes and stockings taken off, and fearlessly paddles about in the clean pools of sea-"wa-wa" left by the tide, to her great delight. The boys watch the schools of young blue-fish at the end of the wharf, and for once catch sight of a jelly-fish wafting himself gracefully through the water, floating like an amber cloud in the clear depth. Everybody, big and little, gathers the prettiest shells along the beach, now and then picking up some strange thing that brings all the heads together to examine it. Yonder, at the water's edge, is a fisherman cutting

the flesh from a shark's jaw and rinsing it frequently. We learn all about the process of "curing" sharks' jaws, but have no desire to practice the art. The whole shark business, indeed, is brutal.

The "shore-dinner" is at length ready. It is all that it has been pictured; and we learn with surprise how many notes your expert cook can play with a clam—a perfect symphony, if you stop to think of it. The unostentatious bivalve is glorious in his death, and a blind man would see beauties in him worthy of an ode. We were all a most clamivorous company until we had exhausted the entire range of the art of cookery, as it exists, in a high state of development, at Wauwinet.

After dinner, as had already been arranged, we chartered a whale-boat rigged with sails, clambered down into it as well as we could, while it tossed and pitched at the wharf, had the supplies we had brought handed down to us, and sailed across the bay toward the American Flag. We were obliged to anchor fifty yards from shore, and the small boat we had towed after us, and the dory the lads came out in to meet us, were loaded down with so many of our party as

ventured to go ashore in that fashion through the spiteful little waves of the bay.

Landing in a rough-and-tumble way, we clambered up the bank, by steps cut in the earth, to a level plateau where the tent was erected. The camp-stove was smoking as contentedly as it did in the camps of the great Northern Wilderness, and a kettle of clam-soup was cheerfully simmering on the stove. The rude table was already spread with tin-cups and the like. Dinner was evidently approaching—the basis being here, as at Wauwinet, clams. But dinner was forgotten in our advent, and we received a most enthusiastic welcome from the young campers.

"Where's Ned?" I asked.

"Oh, he's down yonder, somewhere, after plover," was the reply.

I went in the direction indicated to find him. He came out of the bush to meet me, with brown hat and clothes, the brownest of faces, bare-footed, and with his pants rolled up, his game-bag at his side and his gun over his shoulder,—the most perfect specimen of a young backwoodsman I had ever seen.

We were shown the interior of the tent, with the bed of old buffalo robes and blankets thrown over

dried sea-grass, and a pile of clothes, amunition and a generally demoralized miscellany; also, the cellar which the boys had ingeniously constructed and in which were stored birds and vegetables, a jug of fresh water, and all the remnants of their supplies. We emptied our pails and baskets and bundles, and the hungry eyes of the younsters almost shouted for joy. The incipient bread-famine was over, the siege was raised.

"Well, lads, how are you getting on?" was asked, when the greetings and surprises and rapid talking were over.

"First rate!—only, the plover are now nearly all gone, and the mosquitoes are pretty thick sometimes. They come up out of the bogs and bushes some nights by the million. And last night the wind blew across this bluff as if it would clean us all off. We didn't sleep much."

"What do you do?—where does the fun come in?"

"Oh, there's enough to do! Some of us get the breakfast, while others gather wood down by the Pond, or go over in a boat to Wauwinet for a jug of water. Then we all go off hunting, or else take the dory and catch blue-fish; or we go to Pocomoc, down

the Harbor, and dig clams along the beach. We go in swimming every day, and sometimes in the night, when we can't sleep, because of the mosquitoes,—and that's fun enough, too. Then comes the dinner. We aren't very regular about that,—this cooking business and dish-washing is about the dullest thing of the lot. So, we don't get dinner until we're mighty hungry—then we eat awfully! We've run pretty low, lately, on potatoes and bread; and clam-chowder and soup are getting to be a little 'stale.' If you hadn't come to-day, we should have had to make a raid on Wauwinet, or go home.

"One day we walked four miles up to the Great Point Light House, through the sand. The two old men and their wives, who live there year in and year out, were glad enough to see us. They said nobody came there and they were dreadfully lonesome. That was the time when a boy was good for something, and wasn't told to 'git out!'"

The lads assisted us to return to the whale-boat. We hoisted sail again, shouted back our good-byes to the gallant young Crusoes, and tacked away, with a provokingly contrary wind, all over the bay, back to Wauwinet.

On our return to 'Sconset, we took the beach-road, and enjoyed the peculiar glory of the ocean as darkness settled down upon us, but in due time were again safely in our snug little cottage.

Very early one morning, not many days after, I was aroused from slumber by somebody tugging at the latch string, and in walked Ned. The lads broke camp at two o'clock in the morning, and to avail themselves of the tide made a night trip down the coast in the dory, bringing with them their entire camp outfit. The poor fellows had been nearly eaten up by the mosquitoes, passing two or three almost sleepless nights, and were glad their allotted time was up so that they might return without suspicion of having made an ignominous retreat.

Ned, who when eleven years old had journeyed with me nearly a hundred miles through the Adirondack Wilderness, camping by the way, but with a good guide, very freely confessed that "he liked camping in the Adirondacks the best."

CHAPTER XIV.

A LONELY EVENING TRAMP—TOM NEVER'S HEAD.

AFTER supper, one particularly quiet day, I wandered off alone for a walk which should dispose me to happy slumber. Wending my way along Sunset Heights, the breeze from the ocean was so exhilarating that I could not find it in my heart to deny my legs the luxury of a good tramp; and on I went, southward, along the bluff, until I reached a broad expanse of beach where come only the autumn and winter waves driven by the fierce gales that harass this coast when the summer skies and summer visitors have betaken themselves elsewhere.

I came upon a curious formation, clusters of little mounds and hillocks of sand not much higher than my head, overgrown in part with various weeds and beach-grass. The night shades were already falling, and the sky had a weird aspect as if wickedly conjuring a storm. The sullen roar of the surf came with

dull resonance to my alert ear. The wind from seaward was rising and falling in mournful cadences. A startled owl lifted himself on broad and noiseless pinions,almost from under my feet,and circled suspiciously around me, returning across my path whichever way I turned or however often I frightened him with my voice. I could see Tom Never's Head and the Life Saving Station on the high bluff in the distance, and wandered around among the sand-dunes in that general direction,in no real danger of being lost,—enjoying to the utmost the strange and novel sensations of my night walking amidst these scenes so utterly unlike any I had ever before beheld.

At length I stumbled upon a beautiful little gem of a lake near the beach, as clear as crystal, but now as dark as ink. All along its banks, except on the seaward side, grew bushes like alders, with dark green foliage; and I could see that the lakelet, coy as a maiden, retreated around a point and half hid its wild beauty. I knew this must be "Tom Never's Pond," Ned's favorite shooting ground.

Pausing here awhile to gather in all the glamour and romance of the scene, at an hour when one's fancy paints the most common things with rarest

shades and hues, I climbed the hill and stood on the brink of the lofty height of the bluff,—the "Head." Here, on the right, the ocean sweeps away to the westward, and on the left to the north;—the ocean, vast, tragic, eternal;—the ocean, rolling its mysterious tides around the world and sweeping all shores.

The moon struggled up through the waves and poured the glory of its beams over the dark and heaving sea. All the crests of the grandly rolling billows gleamed. The gnashing teeth, gnawing at the beach far below, flashed in the cold light. Dimly I discerned the stranded hulk of a vessel that came ashore in a storm, years ago, and is now half-imbedded in the sand,—its oaken ribs resisting the tooth of time, and the beating of the waves. The wind soughed and sighed, and in its weird dialect seemed to tell the story of wreck and disaster on the great world of waters before and around me. Winds that might have come from sunny Spain or the Gold Coast,—winds that swept the rocky heights of historic St. Helena,—winds from the Canaries,—they might have come from anywhere in this world toward which my face was turned. And with all this, through all my emotions, like the grand undertone of the organ, came the ceaseless, painfully

regular roar of the breakers sounding out the seconds of this manifest eternity before me, beating the heart-throbs of this living thing, this sentient being—the ocean.

I turned away from the scene that I can never forget, and realized almost for the first moment that I was alone with all this gloomy grandeur. There, behind me, stood the Life Saving Station, suggestive of wreck and tragedy,—suggestive, too, of the strong feeling of kinship there is, after all, among men. Beyond, were the sad, still moors; and below, a vast field of dark verdure, Tom Never's Swamp,—all idealized under the rays of the moon, touched by the magic of the night.

I was compelled to say good night to all this loveliness and mystery, and rapidly walked down the hill and wended my way homeward. Among the sand-dunes the affrighted night-birds fluttered, sometimes startling me as much as I did them. The friendly light of Sankaty guided me through the labyrinth, and I emerged upon the bluff and into the beaten path leading to 'Sconset. The twinkling lights of the village caught my eye, and a sense of relief came to me as I felt once more that not only was the wide,

grand, gloomy and remorseless ocean in the world, but so also were men and women, and children, and cheerful firesides, and hearts that love and cherish.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OCEAN IN A STORM—"THE RIPS."

THE south and east shores of the island are bordered by broad and dangerous shoals. Storms and darkness sometimes bring the ill-fated mariner within the dreaded region, and shipwreck is almost sure to follow. To provide for these dangers and calamities, life-saving stations have been erected all along the coast at intervals of two or three miles, wherein are kept boats and apparatus ready for instant use in affording rescue and relief in cases of wreck; and as the stormy period of the year approaches, a patrol of brave and experienced men is established, whose duty it is to keep good lookout, night and day, and in case of disaster, to render all the aid in their power. The summer visitor notes, but little heeds, these unpretentious buildings along the bluffs, but which play an important part on the serious side of Nantucket life.

We witnessed and experienced one or two storms which revealed to us something of the power of the

waves. The long, graceful, Atlantic swells, that looked so benignant under the summer sky, reared their great fronts and rushed with gigantic fury upon the shore. They came, wave after wave, rank after rank, army after army, an endless host and multitude of roaring waters. The deep hollows seemed deep enough to engulf a ship. The towering crests were torn and buffeted into foam by the wind. The sight was grand, viewed from the high 'Sconset bank. The breakers, when we stood on the shore near them, were terriffic. No swimmer ventured to test their power and fury. The waves dashed high upon the sands, casting them hither and thither, and in a few hours changing the line of the beach.

But the ocean was, if possible, grander a few hours after the wind subsided. The waves lost nothing of their vastness and fury, but became smoother on their surface and revealed more distinctly their magnitude. The mountains and valleys of water swelling to such heights, sinking to such depths, and rolling along shoreward so swiftly and then breaking in thunder all along the shore, resolved into seething foam,—this was possibly a more sublime thing than the storm itself.

Strange and curious things came up on the beach in a storm;—pieces of wood borne from distant shores, perhaps; long, broad ribbons of kelp; sea-weeds of many kinds; bits of sponges; shells of various sorts; lively little crabs; curious pebbles; and one day a part of the huge body of a whale was rolled up on the beach with each large wave and was gradually carried, by the combined movement of tide and waves, northward along the coast.

These days of storm seemed to impress the entire summer population of little 'Sconset with awe. They forgot to be witty and jocose, and went about as if a tradgedy of some sort had occurred in their midst,—nothing horrible,. but something serious. Most of us watched the sea by the hour from the bluff, or standing on the beach just out of reach of the breakers, where we could hardly hear each other speak. We did not care, indeed, to talk, for this grand organ tone of the ocean was something to still all common sounds, and its theme belittled all common thought.

On these days, too, came many carriages from Nantucket, with people who wanted to see the surf at its best. They came on other days to bathe in the surf,

to see the curious little 'Sconset cottages, to drive over the moors, to visit Sankaty Light House, to dine with friends and talk of summer delights by the sea. But now every eye was upon the ocean, each thought was of the power and terror of the enraged sea, every emotion was in harmony with this deeply moved world of waters.

When the waves and the tide meet on the reefs, ("the rips" is the localism,) where the water is only ten or fifteen feet deep,—then there is an upheaval of water, a battle of the giants, worth a journey to 'Sconset to see. Half a mile or more south of the village there is a shoal where this phenomenon is occasionally seen. Wind and tide were in fierce opposition there on one of these days of storm, and I went down to the beach near the scene.

Yonder comes shoreward a great wave, towering above all its brethren. Onward it comes, swift as a race-horse, graceful as a great ship, bearing right down upon us. It strikes "the rips," and is there itself struck by a wave approaching from another direction. The two converge in their advance, and are dashed together,—embrace each other like two angry giants, each striving to mount upon the shoulders of the

other and crush its antagonist with its ponderous bulk. Swift as thought they mount higher and higher, in fierce, mad struggle, until their force is expended; their tops quiver, tremble, and burst into one great mass of white, gleaming foam; and the whole body of the united wave, with a mighty bound, hurls itself upon the shore and is broken into a flood of seething waters,—crushed to death in its own fury.

All over the shoal the waves leap up in pinnacles, in volcanic points, sharp as stalagmites, and in this form run hither and yon in all possible directions, colliding with and crashing against others of equal fury and greatness—a very carnival of wild and drunken waves; the waters hurled upward in huge masses of white. Sometimes they unite more gently, and together sweep grandly and gracefully along, parallel with the shore; and the cavernous hollows stretch out from the shore so that you look into the trough of the sea and realize what a terrible depth it is. The roar, meanwhile, is horrible. You are stunned by it, as by the roar of a great waterfall. You see a wave of unusual magnitude rolling in from far beyond the wild revelry of waters on "the rips." It leaps into the arena, as if fresh and eager for the fray, clutches

another Bacchanal like itself, and the two towering floods rush swiftly toward the shore. Instinctively you run backward to escape what seems an impending destruction. Very likely a sheet of foam is dashed all around you, shoe-deep, but you are safe—only the foam hisses at you in impotent rage. The sea has its bounds: "hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Mighty and terrible within its own domain, and beating wildly upon the shore, century after century, it yet obeys the law which is mightier than it, and abides within its own limits,—powerful to destroy, yet obedient at the last.

I think I never saw anything in all my life that impressed me as did this battle of waves and tide on "the rips"—not even Niagara. There you comprehend the cause,—the fall of water—gravitation. Here it is the mystery of the tide, the dominion of the moon contending with the waves that themselves—the wind meanwhile having already ceased—seem as mysterious. Here is an upheaval, a wild, tumultuous conflict of waters that ought, to all appearance, to be as calm and placid as a lakelet. There seems, indeed, to be life, will,—and a malignant will,—anger and ferocity, in this desperate struggle,

that are demoniac. And it is perhaps this element of the wonderful exhibition of Nature's forces that makes the scene peculiarly impressive.

I saw this display on two successive days, for hours each time; and I have never since felt any degree of the old familiarity with the ocean that the summer days by the seaside had encouraged in me. Ever since those days the ocean has been something more than water and waves,—something too grand and terrific, too wildly ferocious in its secret nature, too full of a sentient spirit of malignity, to be on easy terms with it.

CHAPTER XVI.

'SCONSET SOCIAL LIFE—VARIOUS SORTS OF PEOPLE.

I HOPE I have made it somewhat apparent what we saw and did at 'Sconset by day. The evenings, as well, were delightful, and full of such employments, too, as the summer saunterer is disposed to undertake.

A 'Sconset cottage parlor is a small affair, but it will very likely hold all your friends—provided you take several evenings for it and entertain them in sections. It is the good fashion, at 'Sconset, to entertain and be entertained after this manner;—and taking the happy results in enjoyment into account, the suggestion of our experience seemed worth carrying home, where there is less necessity for it.

It happened that the vocal talent was, for a season, well represented here, and that there was in our cottage a soprano voice in which I (as was proper in a good natured kinsman of its possessor) greatly

delighted. Others admired also. Hence, happy evenings at our cottage and a round of cottages.

A company of strangers from all over the land, meeting on the summer vacation platform at a resort where simplicity of life is the first article of the universal creed, where life, indeed, is almost as free from conventionalism as a family circle, readily finds itself interested in itself. We assume, without much risk, that a common purpose has brought together congenial spirits. The very fact that one is in love with such quiet sea-side life, is as good a recommendation to society, as it exists at 'Sconset, as a letter of introduction.

We certainly had the elements of "good society." There were literary men and women, at rest for a season; artists who assiduously sketched and painted the quaintest scenes and objects; one man of science, a college professor, who dissected and vivisected cats, sharks, and pretty nearly every living thing he could lay his hands on, and was writing a book and working himself thin and haggard; a College President who, far from halls of learning and the turbulent college dormitories, lounged in a hammock under an awning on the beach, genial and happy and restoring his soul

for another year of work,—filling himself with magnetism and virtue to vitalize the young men who should touch his garments and draw magnetism and virtue out of him again; men of affairs who came hither to escape ledgers, correspondence, telegrams, and worry; fagged and weary women, teachers of seminaries, off for a "good time;" professional men of various sorts, who came for a few days and were off again, prizing their brief respite in this quiet retreat as the brightest spot of the whole year; and the families of many men whom the affairs and exigencies of our ill-conditional world with its exactions will not give a vacation until it follows them to the cemetery. These were some of the men and women from whom an evening "sociable" was almost nightly made up at 'Sconset, at some cottage or other.

Is it any wonder that the humble fishermen's homes flashed with wit, and grew luminous with wisdom, and resounded with laughter that was not wholly empty? Such excruciatingly exquisite tales of personal adventure—notably the night-ride in a sleeping-car, and the interview with the austere railroad official—as were told with the rarest humor by the brilliant Miss Norris (that isn't quite her true

name, but it will answer *pro hac vice*) from a certain Seminary of Cincinnati,—and the no less brilliant conversation of the athletic parson's wife! When and where shall we hear the like again? The good natured battles of wit between these two charming ladies, were the best things at 'Sconset,—except the surf-bathing and the gigantic writhing of wave and tide on "the rips."

When the moonlit evenings came, the cottagers adjourned to the beach; and the ocean, with its grand monotone and mournful soliloquy, was taken into our social circle. It was noticeable what a change there was in the tone of the conversation and the pitch of the thought of the company, when we came from cosey cottage parlor into this presence of the august one. The songs that were sung were, however, the truest revealers of the change that came over all our spirits, and gave truest expression to the new inspiration breathed on all our hearts.

At 'Sconset the veritable "latch-string" still exists. At all hours of the day the cottagers, when calling upon each other, knock at the door and enter with little ceremony; and among friends the knock itself

is dispensed with, and the latch-string is pulled without any ceremony at all.

The "town" people and visitors greatly enjoy a peep within the cottages. We and our daily life are a curiosity. How we live in these little bird cages on the bluff is a problem they are eager to solve. The genuine summer 'Sconseter enjoys being interviewed, also, and with great good nature goes through the mere box of a house, exhibiting its quaintness of structure, its odd corners and cupboards, its tiny rooms, and the rare old crockery in the pantry. One day a friend from our own city, in town for the summer, drives over, bringing a huge watermelon and a basket of peaches, and dines with us. Another day in comes, like a breeze from the mountains, with a hearty greeting, another friend, bringing with him, as he says in his introduction, "the King of Nantucket, Mr. Sanford!" and the artist, Eastman Johnson. We show them the simple wonders of our mansion, but modestly assure them that while our cottage is small, yet the boundless ocean, just back of the cottage, is ours!

CHAPTER XVII.

LIKE A BEE-HIVE—THAT GUN—"WEARING BOYS."

THIS cottage, like the others, was indeed small, but as full as a bee-hive. With the boys in it, it buzzed very like a bee-hive. There never was a time when a visitor would not have instantly detected that it was the home of a lot of healthy boys. A boy always has a way of amassing a fortune that is an embarrassment to the elders, since he is sure to distribute his riches all over the house. If the house is a 'Sconset cottage, the embarrassment becomes serious. There were pebbles and shells, sea-weeds, vines, birds' wings and heads, and curiosities of all sorts, gathered in their raids over the island. The younger children, moreover, had been carefully provided for, in case of a rainy day and imprisonment in-doors, by the thoughtful matron of the house, who had stored a goodly assortment of toys and battered playthings, in one of the great trunks, before she left

home, and now judiciously brought them out, a few at a time, until the whole house looked like a miniature battle-field, or a discomfited toy-shop. Ned had a frightful way of leaving his game-bag and loaded shells and ammunition in the little parlor, and it was accounted a piece of extraordinary thoughtfulness on his part if his gun was not "stood up" in a corner of the same apartment.

On his return, one evening, from a long tramp and hunting excursion on the island, he went to bed as lead goes to the bottom of the sea. Just as he was dropping off to sleep he remembered his gun, damp with the sea-air, and begged his mother to take care of it. If there is anything under the sun that the bravest woman is afraid of, it is a gun! However, the motherly instinct stood in this case for natural bravery; and behold! this wife of one man, and mother of four children, plucking up a courage which clearly indicates that she missed her calling in being born a woman, took the weapon from its corner in the parlor, and carried it into the kitchen. She soliloquized, "I don't like to touch the thing, but the poor boy is so tired I must try to do something with it." Jane, the faithful, saw, and heard, and trembled.

Placing the muzzle on the floor, the courageous mother proceeded to examine the lock, lifted the hammer to see if that was all right, when (of course) bang! "the thing" went off. A heavy charge of shot crashed through the floor; the gun-barrel puffed and swelled its iron throat with indignation, but luckily didn't burst; the room was full of powder-smoke; and two women screamed with fright, and both, pale as ghosts, ran out of doors and looked at each other to see if they were actually alive and unhurt. It was, indeed, a wonderful escape, without any jocose features—to them.

It was intended to keep this exploit a secret, but the husband happening to be absent, the tale had to be told—the powder-smoke introducing the subject—to the first female 'Sconset friend that came in. Ned got a scolding for bringing a loaded gun into the house, made another mental memorandum, of a new "thou-shalt-not!" and bore a damaged reputation during the remainder of the summer.

Even the little lady in blue flannel seemed inspired to distinguish herself, and whenever a piece of wall-paper, loosened by the moist sea-air, presented the temptation, she persistently pulled it off, until we

were able to trace her all over the house in this "fox-and-hounds" game of hers.

It is no wonder that the excellent Nantucket lady, who owned the cottage, wrote us, when she went to take possession and enjoy her own vacation after the departure of these young desperadoes, that she thought our "family of boys a very *wearing* one." My wife was greatly distressed by the letter, and believed our reputation was irretrievably lost. But when I suggested that we drown the boys, and so re-establish ourselves, she wouldn't hear to it at all. I suspect the unaccounted for hole in the kitchen-floor, where an ounce or more of shot went safely through into the ground beneath, like a well-ordered shaft of lightning, was laid at the door of those "wearing boys." How true in this life that, "to him who hath shall be given"—even in the way of bad reputation!

CHAPTER XVIII.

LATTER DAYS—THE LIBRARY AGAIN.

FINALLY, one day I woke up to the consciousness that my vacation days for this summer were ended,—that I had, indeed, already lingered in the lap of this dreamy, luxurious life of rest and delight, longer than my allotted time. On the late Sunday afternoon, before I was to depart and leave my household by the sea, we walked together along the bluff toward Sankaty Head. In the light of declining day, the moors and the distant range of Saul's Hills were purple brown, as on many such a day before; the sea came in long, graceful swells, and broke in foam and resounding roar; the soft evening breeze from the ocean, smelling of the waves and salt sea-foam, refreshed and invigorated us; while we lingered on our way, reluctant to lose anything of the changing scene as day passed away and night took the sceptre and waved it over land and sea, evoking new beauties and grander glories, and inspiring our hearts

with an awe which the day could not command. The glory of the day indeed is one, and the glory of the night is another.

That night a storm came,—wind, rain, chilling blasts, right off from the ocean,—the one cold storm, which always comes between delightful summer and more delightful autumn. So it happened that my last gaze from the bluff, back of our cottage, was upon the ocean in a rage, and the great white pillars of fiercely tossed waters out on the reefs; and over all were the dark and stormy sky and clouds that seemed to mingle with the sea.

I came away pretty cheerfully, considering what I was leaving,—but I suspect it was because the parson and his wife were there to bid me good-bye, and I was striving to sustain a reputation for philosophy, which I very well knew I did not, at that particular juncture, deserve at all. Every seat in the stage was full, for everybody had taken a hint from the almanac and the storm and was going home; and Mr. Folger drove me over to town in his box-cart. The storm was very disagreeable, and he lent me a great heavy overcoat, worthy of the sea-coast in winter, which protected me very well.

The passage from Nantucket to Wood's Holl was very rough,—the Captain of the steamer said the sea was "rugged,"—and many were sea-sick. The dear old Island slowly sank below the horizon, and was enveloped in storm and cloud. I gazed in its direction long after it had disappeared, and cheered the gloomy hour with the sweetest recollections of the summer delights it had given me; and then I turned my eyes and thoughts to the great waves that tossed and rocked our struggling and groaning little vessel. However, they never have accidents on this line of boats, and we reached "the continent" in safety. Whirling away on the immensely long and heavy train to Boston, and then on and on by night, I was at home again.

The "family" remained at 'Sconset a month longer. After the storm was over, the beginning of which I had seen, the weather was very fine, the temperature equable and agreeable, and although most of the summer visitors had gone to their homes, about September first, the life there was as delightful as ever.

Finally, by a forced march, the brave little mother, and the brood of children, and Jane, and the big trunks, and the baby carriage, and a reasonably fair

share of their other impedimenta, came home,—leaving 'Sconset at 3 A. M. of one day, and reaching home at 7 A. M. of the following day.

—Again we were seated before the evening wood-fire in the grate, in our home library, the chill autumn air softened to summer temperature, and our thoughts going back to 'Sconset as a thing not now to be anticipated with eager delight, but to be recalled as a mellow memory of the richest pleasures of our life,—a summer by the sea, in a cottage, our family all together there.

The matron was ruddy and brown and robust; the lads were full of health and vigor; even the dear little fellow, for whose sake we had, in a large part, planned this summer life, was nearly well; while "that baby!" had set out on a career of growth that bids fair to make her in all respects equal to the "wearing boys."

"Did you like Nantucket as well as the Adirondacks?" asked my wife, a little shyly, conscious that this was the supreme test.

"Yes, and no," I replied; "the domestic and social side of me, and the poet side, so far as there is one, say 'Yes'; while the sportsman's side—the wild-man

in me—says 'No.' The two sorts of vacation are really not to be compared. Both are delightful, and to me they have proved to be about equally beneficial,—the sea-side life, because of its ease and home-comforts, having, in this instance, done me more good than some of my hard-working Adirondack trips."

"Yes," said my wife, with just the least air of triumph, "when you came back from the Woods last summer, you were all worn out and tired out. You always work too hard in the Adirondacks."

"But I am always good for a great deal of hard work at home after these trips, you know," said I, "and it isn't the worst thing in the world for a man of sedentary habits to have, once a year, all the physical labor he can perform,—especially when he performs it from the pure love of the thing."

"At all events, you will admit," added this wise woman, judiciously abandoning her former line of argument before I should "warm up" too much on my favorite theme,—"I am sure you cannot deny, that you have enjoyed the summer at 'Sconset with your family,—you said so, you know."

"Yes, yes, yes!—that's true! It was glorious! the richest, rarest, best vacation I ever had, in that view,"

I said, and felt, too; "and sometimes I think I never will take another summer's rest without going the same way you and the children go. But, after all,"—visions of forest and stream, recollections of camps and tramps in the rare old woods, floating in upon me,—"after all, it does a man good, sometimes, to go a-vagabondizing in the native wilderness, to live like an Indian, and get away from everything civilized. He comes back to society, to his work among men, with a certain something in him gained from the forest which I can't explain to you, but which I feel.—Well," continued I, after musing a moment, "I don't know,—if we can all go to 'Sconset every other summer together, and you will let me pack off alone, or with Ned, to the Adirondacks and catch trout for the intermediate summers, I think—as to my vacations—I shall be the happiest man in all the town!"

THE END.

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