Old Dorchester.

NEPONSET, HARRISON SQUARE, SAVIN HILL, AND THE GREAT SEWER.—CITY POINT.

TO the northward of the Neponset River, the shores of the harbor for several miles lie in the ancient town of Dorchester, which was settled in 1630, and annexed to Boston in 1869. It is now one of the loveliest of suburbs, with several villages among its graceful hills, and many of the noble rural estates for which the environs of Boston are celebrated. Here town and country meet, in happy union, amid a diversity of natural scenery, which affords rare opportunities for generous landscape gardening. Gray old colonial churches and mansions stand side by side with last year's growth of Queen-Anne cottages; and from a score of hill-tops the wide harbor is seen outspread, stretching to the far-away sea. A region so fair and favored, and inhabited by the genuine old Puritan stock (we have seen its steeple-crowned fathers landing at Hull, away back in 1630), must needs have been a nursery of noble men. Among its eminent natives was John Lothrop Motley, who grew up in the love of the sea and its heroes, and was by this inspiration moved to write the most bewitching historical romance of Boston Harbor, and the most vivid and picturesque history of the sea-kings of Holland. Here, too, was born Edward Everett, the silver-tongued orator and statesman, many of whose finest passages were lighted up by the poetry of the adjacent hills and waters. From his own simple and pathetic words, let us recall a mournful picture of the neighborhood. In his youth he often heard of the last Massachusee Indian, who lived in a lonely wigwam on Stoughton Pond, "and used to come down, once or twice a year, to the seaside; hovered a day or two about Squantum; caught a few fish at the Lower Mills; strolled off into the woods, and with plaintive wailings cut away the bushes from an ancient mound, which, as he thought, covered the ashes of his fathers; and then went back, a silent, broken, melancholy man,—the last of a perished race."

Near the mouth of the Neponset River, which flows down from the heights of Sharon and Walpole, is the brisk village of Neponset, once a hopeful outport of Boston, with a very respectable commerce, and now a comfortable suburb. The memorials of antiquity abound in and about this retired corner of Boston, and up through the delightful valley of the

Neponset. On Pine Neck occurred an exciting hunt, 240 years ago, when a huge bear was slain here by Goodman Minot, after alarming the whole countryside. Once a vindictive Indian visited this stalwart hunter's house, in his absence, when there were but two children and a servant-girl on the premises. He fired at the maid, but missed her; and she returned the shot, wounding him in the shoulder. He then tried to break in at the window, and was hotly enough received with a shovelful of burning coals, dashed into his face, upon which, bleeding and fatally scorched, he fled to the woods, where his body was found the next day. The General Court presented the maid with a silver bracelet, bearing this inscription, "*She slew the Narragansett hunter.*" The same old Minot House stood until 1875, when it was destroyed. On Pierce's Hill, near by, is the Pierce mansion, built in 1640, with a museum of Dorchestrian antiquities, and now owned by the seventh generation of the family which founded it. Other neighboring localities are regarded with reverent interest by the local antiquaries.

Commercial Point, which the Indians called *Tenean*, projects into the harbor to the northward, near the mouth of the Neponset River, and has deep-water channels up to its wharves. It was occupied in 1633 by John Holland, who sent out vessels hence in the cod-fishery, for twenty years. During the Provincial era fortifications were erected here; and in 1774 "the greate gun" was carried away, probably to keep it from the British soldiers. In the War of 1812 also, it was fortified, and had the camp of the militia from the western counties, when called out by Gov. Strong, in 1814, to defend our coasts. After its long march from the rendezvous at New Salem, the regiment of farmers found a pleasant resting-place by the Bay-side through the fair October weather. One of the commands encamped here was the victim of a singular piratical attack; for on a certain occasion, when ordered to parade before the State House, it neglected to set guards, and on returning from Boston found that people from vessels in the harbor had completely stripped the camp, taking even the tents.

The commercial and shipping business founded here in 1807, proving unsuccessful, was replaced, six years later, by a pottery, bakery, and hotel; but the locality was nearly deserted, and presented a sad scene of desolation and decay. In 1831 a new life was infused into it, when Dorchester capitalists formed a company for prosecuting the fisheries of cod and whales, and six ships and nearly a score of schooners were owned and sailed from the Point. Crowds of hardy mariners then thronged its wharves, spun South-Sea yarns in its tavern, and distressed the Dorchester farmers with their rollicking pranks. For some reason the business did not prosper; and the last ships of the fleet were laden with Argonauts and lumber, and sent around the Horn to California. The next occupants were a firm who erected a huge

building for making heavy iron-castings, and carried on a large business here for several years. They then sold the property to the Boston Gas Company, its present owners, whose works are destined to be of great magnitude and importance. The comfortable new club-house of the Dorchester Yacht Club is on one side of the Point. The characteristic American hopefulness has several times seen this dreary old Commercial Point the centre of a coming metropolis; and once the Old-Colony muse predicted its future majesty, in a resounding poem, beginning with these lines:—

> "Where DORCHESTER her lucid bosom swells,
> Counts her young navies, and the storm repels;
> High on the Mount, amid the fragrant air,
> Hope stood sublime, and waved her auburn hair;
> Calmed with her rosy smile the tossing deep,
> And with sweet accents charmed the winds to sleep."

Close to Commercial Point is the pleasant upland of Harrison Square, occupied by a quiet and nobly shaded collection of pretty houses and villas, islanded between the rushing current of the Old-Colony Railway and the harbor, and crossed by several commodious streets. This Arcadian village was once famous for its stanch Abolitionists, who were always free with their money for the good cause of liberty.

A little farther to the northward, nearly insulated by two coves, is the picturesque rocky height of Savin Hill, deriving its name from the evergreen shrubs along the upper slopes. The road which runs around its base is lined with pretty villas, commanding views of the adjacent waters, through the abundant foliage of their grounds. There is a small beach on one side, and toward the harbor projects the peninsula of Fox Point. Until the formidable southerly advance of the town began, Savin Hill (although within 3½ miles of the State House) was a delightful semi-marine paradise, where a few favored gentlemen dwelt in peaceful luxury, with their yachts and horses. But now the city has pre-empted the thirteen acres of picturesque, rocky, and thicketed wild land on the crest for a park; three or four summer boarding-houses have been opened among the villas; and the manifold noises of the metropolis are slowly approaching from the crowded northern streets.

The pleasant highland north-west of Savin Hill is Jones's Hill, recently opened to settlement, and commanding a superb view of the harbor. To the south is Meeting-House Hill, crowned by a church and other public buildings. This was the headquarters and parade-ground of the American right wing during the siege of Boston, in 1775. Farther inland is Mount Bowdoin, at whose foot lived the patrician Bowdoin family, affluent in statesmen and philanthropists. The storied plains and hills of Dorchester cover all the

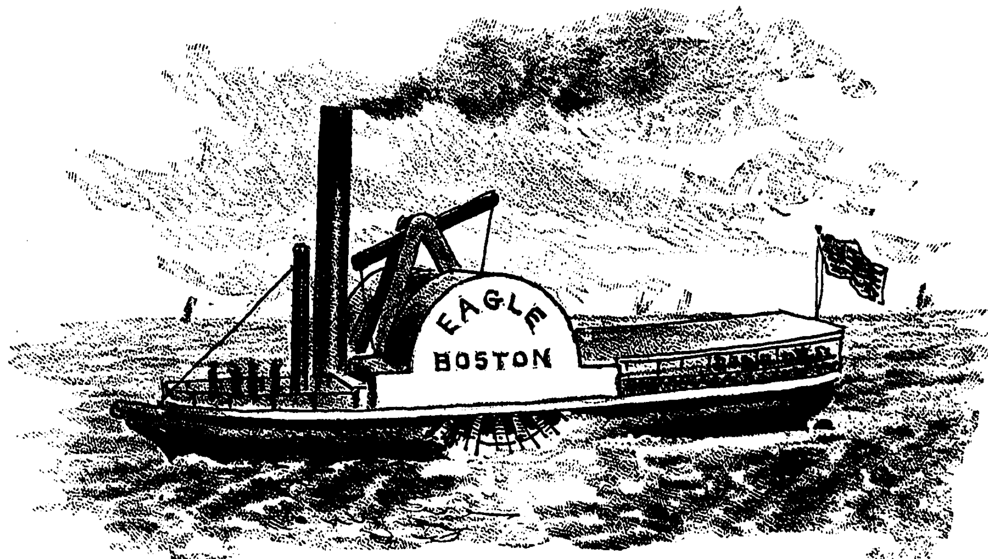
intervening reaches, now rapidly filling with the overflowing population of Boston.

Hutchinson says, in his venerable history, that the capital of the Indians in this region was "on a small hill, or rising upland, in the midst of a body of salt marsh in Dorchester;" and Young thinks that this must have been Savin Hill. The Dorchestrians have an inscrutable joke about Capt. John Smith having landed here, while exploring the New-England coast. In 1633 a fort was built on the crest of the hill, at the expense of Dorchester. The engineer in charge — "straight as an arrow, well-nigh as brown as the Indians whom he fought, in leather breeches and peaked hat, with a heavy sword hanging by his side" — was Capt. John Mason, who had fought in the Netherlands under Fairfax, and afterwards crushed the hostile Pequot tribe in Connecticut. The home of this famous Puritan soldier was on Fox Point, where he lived for many years. Several great guns were mounted on the fort, overlooking the approaches to the harbor of Dorchester. The main battery was probably at the flat rock on the south side of the hill, to command the Neponset River. It was thought that the chief commerce of the settlement would enter that way, since Dorchester was then the chief town of Massachusetts. After the colony changed front to the northward, and the Castle was built, the fort on Savin Hill fell into ruins. Among the ancient residents of Savin Hill was the ambitious and hot-headed Deputy-Gov. Roger Ludlow, a man well off in this world's goods, and a rigid Puritan, as befitted Gov. Endicott's brother-in-law. Being disappointed at not receiving the chief magistracy, he went away to Connecticut, and then to Virginia, where he died. His neighbor was Thomas Hawkins, the fearless old sea-dog, who chartered several war-vessels to the Frenchman La Tour. Afterwards he built the famous 400-ton ship *Seafort*, "set out with great ornament of carving and painting, and with much strength of ordnance," all which naval splendor was lost on the coast of Spain in 1645.

Since the little Gibraltar of Dorchester was dismantled, its site has not appeared in history. In 1824 Lafayette visited the summer camp of the New-England Guards at Savin Hill, which Levasseur, his secretary, called "a very picturesque place on the shores of the sea, where, during the season of good weather, the volunteer companies of Boston come successively to pass some days in tents, and devote themselves to military exercises."

The beautiful description which Motley gave of Boston Harbor, as Blackstone saw it, may well apply to the view from this hill-top: "The Bay was spread out at his feet in a broad semicircle, with its extreme headlands vanishing in the hazy distance, while beyond rolled the vast expanse of ocean, with no spot of habitable earth between those outermost barriers and that far-distant fatherland, which the exile had left forever. Not a

solitary sail whitened those purple waves; and saving the wing of the sea-gull, which now and then flashed in the sunshine, or gleamed across the dimness of the eastern horizon, the solitude was at the moment unbroken by a single movement of animated nature. An intense and breathless silence enwrapped the scene with a vast and mystic veil. The Bay presented a spectacle of great beauty. It was not that the outlines of the coast around it were broken into those jagged and cloud-like masses, that picturesque and startling scenery, while precipitous crag, infinite abyss, and roaring surge unite to awaken stern and sublime emotions: on the contrary, the gentle loveliness of this trans-Atlantic scene inspired a soothing melancholy, more congenial to the contemplative character of its solitary occupant. The bay, secluded within its forest-crowned hills, decorated with its



The Excursion-Steamboat in 1818.

necklace of emerald islands, with its dark blue waters gilded with the rays of the western sun, and its shadowy forests of unknown antiquity expanding into infinite depths around, was an image of fresh and virgin beauty, a fitting type of a new world, unadorned by art, unploughed by industry, unscathed by war, wearing none of the thousand priceless jewels of civilization, and unpolluted by its thousand crimes — springing, as it were, from the bosom of the ocean, cool, dripping, sparkling, and fresh from the hand of its Creator. On the left, as the pilgrim sat with his face to the east, the outlines of the coast were comparatively low, but broken into gentle and pleasing forms. . . . A chain of thickly-wooded islets stretched across, from shore to shore, with but one or two narrow channels between, presenting a picturesque and effectual barrier to the boisterous storms of ocean. They seemed like naiads, these islets lifting above the billows their gentle heads, crowned with the budding garlands of the spring, and circling hand

in hand, like protective deities about the scene. On the south rose, in the immediate distance, that long, boldly broken, purple-colored ridge called the Massachusetts, or Mount Arrow Head, by the natives, and by the first English discoverer baptized the Cheviot Hills."

A little way north-east of Savin Hill is Old-Harbor Point, which, after ages of neglect, has recently become a centre of great activity, on account of the works of the great sewer, the *Cloaca Maxima* of Boston, whose works are being constructed on a scale of magnitude and munificence worthy of ancient Rome or modern London. On this Point are two enormous Leavitt and two Worthington engines, with tanks into which the accumulations of many miles of intercepting sewers are to be discharged, their outflow being pumped up thereinto by the engines, and freed from floating substances and heavy drift, after which the sewage will be sent off through the tunnel under Dorchester Bay to Squantum and Moon Island. Handsome stone buildings are to be erected here, of great magnitude and imposing proportions. The entire cost of the works on the Point will exceed $1,000,000. It has for many years been a source of inconvenience and danger to Boston, that her sewers emptied into the streams, bays, and docks of the city, and poisoned the air; their contents being left on the flats at low tide, and driven back around the town by the flood tide. The new intercepting sewers surround the margin of the city, below the level of the existing sewers, and conduct their contents to a still lower main sewer, down which they flow to Old-Harbor Point, where they are to be pumped up forty feet, and the fluid part will pass through the tunnel to Moon Island and the sea. It is hoped to complete this colossal work by 1884, by which time its cost will probably have exceeded $6,000,000.

The tunnel under Dorchester Bay is nearly a mile and a half long, and contains 5,000,000 bricks and 8,000 barrels of cement. All of it was cut through solid slate and conglomerate rock, with great difficulty and danger, at a depth of over 150 feet below the sea level, and with an internal diameter of 7½ feet. In the centre of the bay an island has been formed of the *débris* from the tunnel, heaped around the central shaft, whence tunnels were cut eastward and westward, to meet those being driven from the shafts on the mainland. The great five-acre reservoir on Moon Island will have cost upwards of $800,000. It is being constructed by the Cape Ann Granite Company, by digging out the northern part of the grassy hill, stoning and cementing it inside, and defending it by a ponderous sea-wall on the outside. It will have four compartments with a capacity of 25,000,000 gallons. The sewage is to be stored here during the time of one tide, and poured into the harbor about two hours after the ebb-tide has fairly begun. According to the experiments carefully made by the engineers, the receding tide will carry it eastward between Long and Rainsford Islands, and between

Gallop's and George's Islands, and throw it against the Brewsters, and thence into the open sea. Fancy the consternation of the lobsters!

Farther to the northward, across Old Harbor, rise the crowded heights of South Boston, now an important section of the Massachusetts metropolis. There were a large number of Indians living on this now populous peninsula until the time of the great pestilence, when so many died that they were left on the ground unburied, and the survivors fled in profound terror. For many decades after the settlement of this region by the whites, great numbers of Indians used to congregate here on a certain day of each year, and hold a commemorative feast, in which all the articles eaten were products of the sea. The locality was at the south end of the present K Street. The Indians called this handsome peninsula by the name of *Mattapan* or *Mattapannock;* and after Dorchester was settled, in 1630, it was a common pasture, abounding in rich grass and diversified by clumps of trees. In 1660 the first building was erected, by Deacon James Blake; and in 1775 there were nine houses here, the finest of which was the mansion of the Fosters, one of whom designed the present State seal. On the night of March 4, 1776, Gen. Thomas occupied the heights, with 2,000 Continental soldiers and 400 carts of fascines and intrenching tools, his men being forbidden to speak above a whisper. The moon shone brightly, and by morning two formidable forts appeared on the hill; and Lord Howe exclaimed in dismay, "The rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in a month." The British positions in Boston were commanded at all points by the guns on the heights; and Washington was so sure that an attack would be made, that he had the entire militia force of Massachusetts called into his camps, and concentrated his floating batteries and boats at Cambridge, ready to carry 4,000 soldiers to land on Boston Common, and fall upon the British garrison, while his best forces should be engaged on the heights. 2,400 regulars were sent to the Castle, under Earl Percy, to storm the new batteries; and this chosen force would probably have been well-nigh exterminated but that a strong gale sprang up and made it impossible for them to land. The British generals, finding it inconvenient to exist in a town so commanded by hostile batteries, made haste to get away; and the right wing of the American army, posted on Dorchester Heights, watched their departure with great joy.

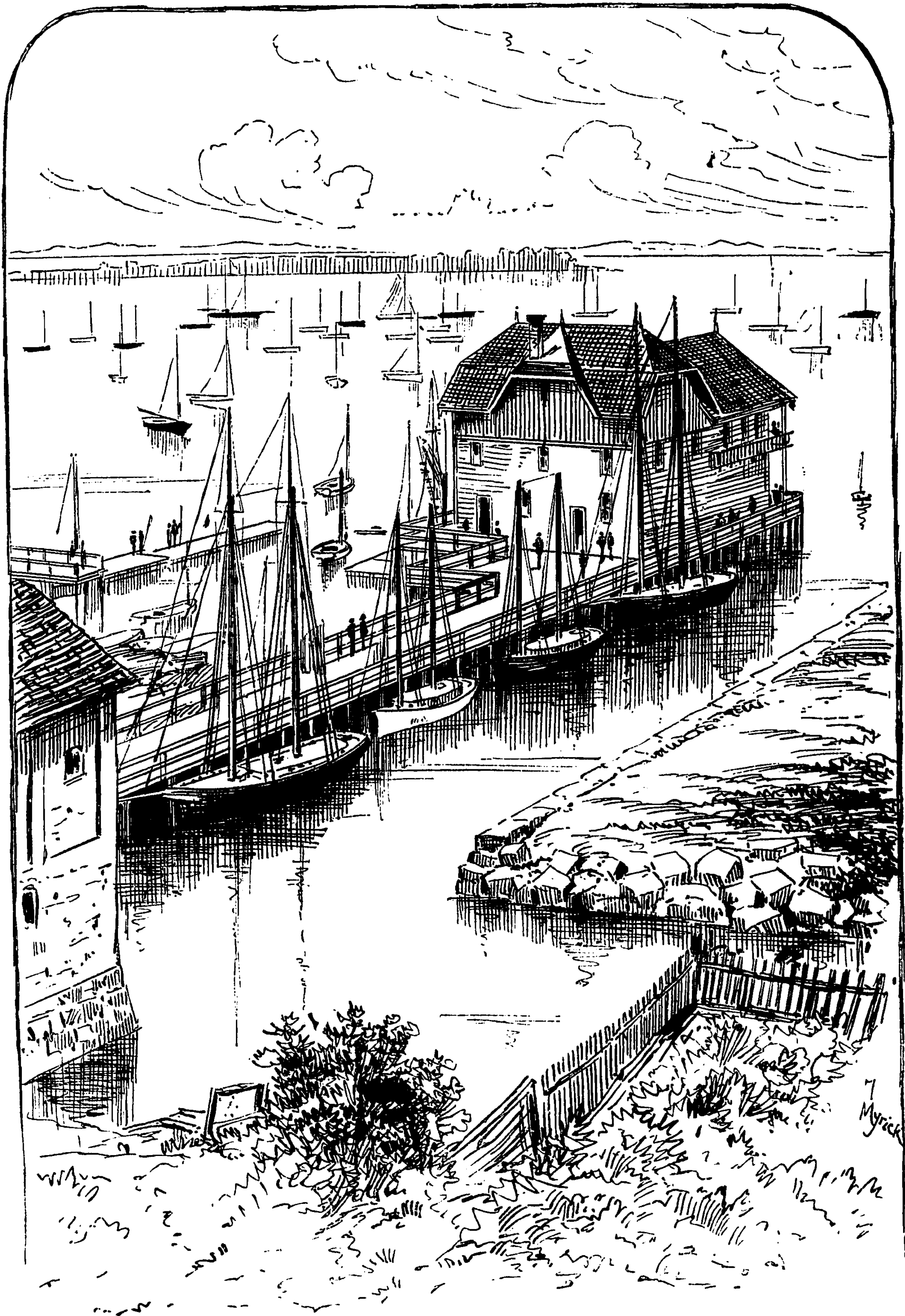
In 1814 new defensive works were constructed here, and several regiments of militia went into barracks to protect them. One night a false alarm was caused, by boats burning blue lights in the harbor. The garrison formed hastily in the darkness, and more than a third of the soldiers fled incontinently into Dorchester. Thirty years later a large town had risen here, with famous ship-yards, one of which launched twenty-seven ships within ten years. Among the chief industries of the present time is

the manufacture of iron, in which South Boston has but two or three rivals in America.

In 1803, foreseeing the future magnitude of Boston, Messrs. Tudor, Green, and Mason bought most of the peninsula as a speculation. The ensuing annexation movement was resisted by Dorchester, but without success; and in 1804 the territory became a part of Boston, and its land rose to a tenfold value. There were then 19 voters here; in 1840 there were 6,176 inhabitants; in 1855, 16,612; and now there are upwards of 60,000.

The low promontory of City Point, the most easterly part of South Boston, is the paradise of yachtsmen. Here scores (and sometimes hundreds) of pleasure-boats of all classes are to be seen, — in winter hauled up in yards and on wharves, covered with canvas, and partly dismantled; and in summer, straining at their cables in the blue waters off-shore, graceful, dainty, and apparently full of bounding life and pride. More than a dozen yacht-clubs have moorings here, including vessels from ports scores of miles away. Here, too, are the yards of the shipwrights who make these fair little ladies of the sea, carrying out in careful lines and exquisite decorations the pet theories of the sportsman, or the costly vagaries of the millionnaire. On shore there are half a dozen taverns, frequented by these amateur mariners and their sailors; and a seaside theatre, much patronized on summer evenings, and within half an hour of Boston Common by horse-cars. That portion of South Boston which lies to the eastward of Q Street is to be laid out by the city as a water-front esplanade, together with more than twenty acres of the adjacent flats, which, when filled and graded, will form the City-Point Battery, where the people may come to enjoy the music of the band, the pleasant sight of the ships and islands in the harbor, and the delicious and bracing sea-winds. Even now thousands of people come hither on a warm day, to be refreshed by the views and the salty coolness, or, perchance, to enjoy the sea-baths in the spacious bath-houses which have been built here.

Among the yachts are sloops, schooners, steam-launches, and many convenient and swift little cat-boats. They lie at their moorings, in fairly deep water, and quite out of danger, because large vessels rarely enter this part of the harbor. Another marked advantage of this locality is its comparative vicinity to the lower roads and the sea, enabling the yachts to reach blue water much more quickly than from the inner wharves of the port. The club-houses of the Boston and South Boston Yacht-Clubs are at City Point. During the summer a small sailboat and skipper may be hired, at the public landings, for 75 cents an hour; and rowboats cost about 30 cents an hour. The steamboat *City Point*, built in 1882, and with accommodations for 300 passengers, runs several times daily from this



HOUSE OF THE BOSTON YACHT-CLUB, CITY POINT.

locality to various points in the upper harbor, such as Long Island and Point Shirley.

This bustling haven of summer-pleasurers was once the remotest and most solitary corner of Boston. In those ancient days the adjacent hills often re-echoed the roaring of the eighteen-pounders of that oddest of military corps, the Sea Fencibles, — a coast-guard composed of the ship-masters who were left stranded in Boston by the war and blockade of 1812. In their blue short-jackets and white trousers, with anchor-emblazoned glazed hats, these jolly tars would march to City Point, with unsteady rolling gait, and there fire their big guns at floating targets. The soldiers carried boarding-pikes and cutlasses, and yearned for a chance to use their primitive weapons against the hated Britishers. The valorous sea-dogs are now all in their graves, and the American commerce which they loved so well is buried with them. But the great flotilla of pleasure-boats off City Point bears witness that the old maritime spirit is still strong in New-England men.

Captain John Smith.