

Peddock's Island and its Tragedy.

GRAPE AND SLATE ISLANDS. — NUT ISLAND AND ITS ARTILLERY. —
HANGMAN'S ISLAND.

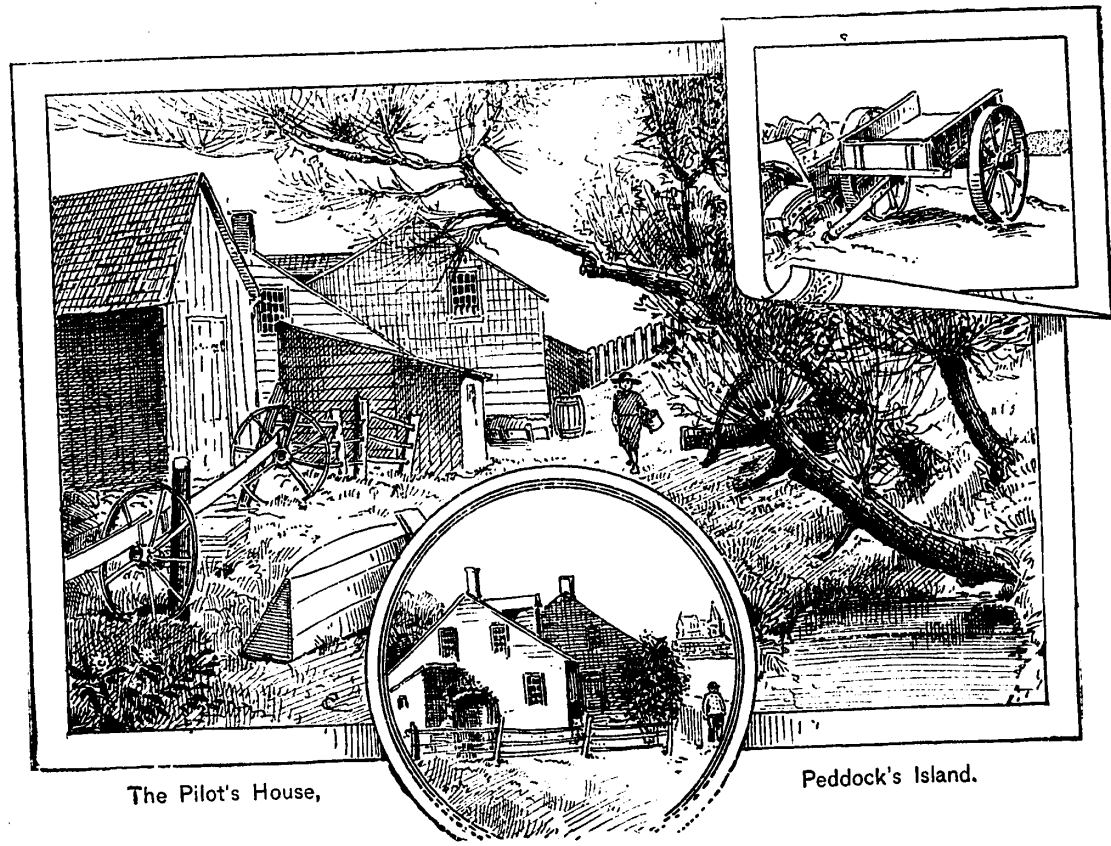
THE most conspicuous object in the view from the west end of Hull is the quiet and peaceful Peddock's Island, where, between two bold grassy bluffs, several snug houses are seen, clearly outlined against a background of dark-green orchards. Here dwell the Cleverlys, who, father and son, have piloted vessels into Weymouth and Quincy for half a century. From their sitting-room windows they look down Nantasket Roads and seaward, and watch their vessels coming in. From the East Head a magnificent view is gained over the lower harbor, and down on to Fort Warren, only a mile away. This fine hill is separated from Windmill Point and the Hotel Pemberton by the narrow and rushing strait of Hull Gut, a quarter of a mile wide. Thence the island rambles away to the south-west, hill and dale and isthmus, with four miles of coast-line, to within less than a mile of the shores of Quincy. The semi-insulated bluff of Prince's Head long supported the ponderous iron-clad targets upon which Norman Wiard's great guns played from Nut Island, their hurtling missiles tearing and piercing the iron plates as if they had been pine planks.

Not one in ten thousand of the happy summer idlers who sail by Peddock's know that it was once the scene of a tragedy of terrible results, which were thus recorded two hundred and fifty years ago: "It fortun'd some few yeares, before the English came to inhabit at new Plimmouth in New England; that upon some distaste given in the Massachusetts bay, by Frenchmen, then trading there with the Natives for beaver, they set upon the men, at such advantage, that they killed manie of them, burned their shipp, then riding at Anchor by an Island there, now called Peddocks Island in memory of Leonard Peddock that landed there (where many wilde Auckies haunted that time which hee thought had bin tame), distributing them unto 5 Sachems which were Lords of the severall territories adjoyninge. They did keep them so longe as they lived, onely to sport themselves at them, and made these five Frenchmen fetch them wood and water, which is the generall worke that they require of a servant. One of these five men out livinge the rest had learned so much of their language, as to rebuke them for their bloody deeds, saying that God would be angry with them for it; and that hee would in his displeasure destroy them: but the

Salvages (it seems boasting of their strength,) replied and say'd, that they were so many, that God could not kill them. But contrary wise in short time after, the hand of God fell heavily upon them, with such a mortall stroake, that they died on heapes, as they lay in their houses; and the living that were able to shift for themselves would runne away, & let them dy, and let there Carkases ly above the ground without buriall. For in a place where many inhabited, there hath been but one left alive, to tell what became of the rest, the livinge being (as it seems) not able to bury the dead, they were left for Crowes, Kites, and vermin to pray upon. And the bones and skulls upon the severall places of their habitations, made such a spectacle after my comming into those partes, that as I travailed in that Forrest, nere the Massachussets, it seemed to mee a new-found Golgatha."

In these words does Morton, one of the earliest settlers, narrate the tragedy of Peddock's Island, and the Divine wrath which, as the savages believed, came upon the red tribes. The *auckies* spoken of were probably great auks, a strange penguin-like bird, which Dr. Elliott Coues says was once common on these shores, but cannot now be found south of Labrador. Somewhat later, Morton received a more circumstantial account of the massacre of the French sailors from a chief who was engaged in the terrible work. "The Salvagis seemed to be good freinds with vs while they feared vs, but when they see famin prevail, they begun to insult, as apeareth by the seaquell; for on of thayr Pennesses or Chef men, Caled Pexsouth, implied himself to Learne to speek Eenglish, obsarving all things for his bloody ends. He told me he Loued Eenglish men very well, but he Loued me best of all. Then he said, 'you say ffrench men doe not loue you, but I will tell you what wee have done to y^m. Ther was a ship broken by a storm. Thay saued most of theyr goods & hid it in the Ground. We maed y^m tell us whear it was. Yⁿ we maed y^m our sarvants. Thay weept much. When we parted them, we gave y^m such meat as our dogs eate. On of y^m had a Booke he would ofen Reed in. We Asked him 'what his Booke said.' He answered, 'It saith, ther will a people, like French men, com into this Cuntry and driue you all a way, & now we thincke you ar thay.' We took Away thayr Clothes. Thay liued but a little while. On of them Liued Longer than the Rest, for he had a good master & gaue him a wiff. He is now ded, but hath a sonn Alive. An other Ship Came into the bay wth much goods to Trucke, yⁿ I said to the Sacham, I will tell you how you shall have all for nothing. Bring all our Canows and all our Beauer & a great many men, but no bow nor Arrow Clubs, nor Hachits, but knives vnder y^e scins y^t About our Lines. Throw vp much Beauer vpon thayr Deck; sell it very Cheep & when I giue the word, thrust yor knives in the French mens Bellys. Thus we killed y^m all. But Monnsear Ffinch, Master of thayr ship, being wounded, Laped into y^e hold.

We bidd him com vp, but he would not. Then we cutt thayr Cable & ye Ship went Ashore & lay upon her sid & slept ther. Ffinch cam vp & we killed him. Then our Sacham devided thayr goods and ffered theyr Ship, & it maed a very greeat fier. Som of our Company Asked ym 'how long it was Agoe sinc thay first see ships?' Thay said thay could not tell, but thay had heard men say ye first ship yt thay see, seemed to be a floting Iland, as thay suposed broken of from the maine Land, wrapt together wh the roats of Trees, with some trees upon it. Thay went to it with thayr Canows, but seeing men and hearing guns, thay maed hast to be gon."



The Pilot's House,

Peddock's Island.

Many years later traditions of these events lingered around the Bay, and pieces of French money were found near the Indian villages of Dorchester. But no record can be found of Leonard Peddock, who has left so great a monument in our harbor.

In 1634 the island was granted to Charlestown, for twenty years, to keep cattle upon. The rich, sweet grass on the bluffs seems to have been very kindly food for domestic animals; for in May, 1775, there were 30 cattle and 500 sheep here, which a raiding party of amphibious American infantry swept off, and carried to the mainland. The next year 600 militia of Boston and the Old Colony encamped here, to guard the harbor entrance. In spite of Sir Edmund Andros's dictum, that an Indian deed to land was of "no

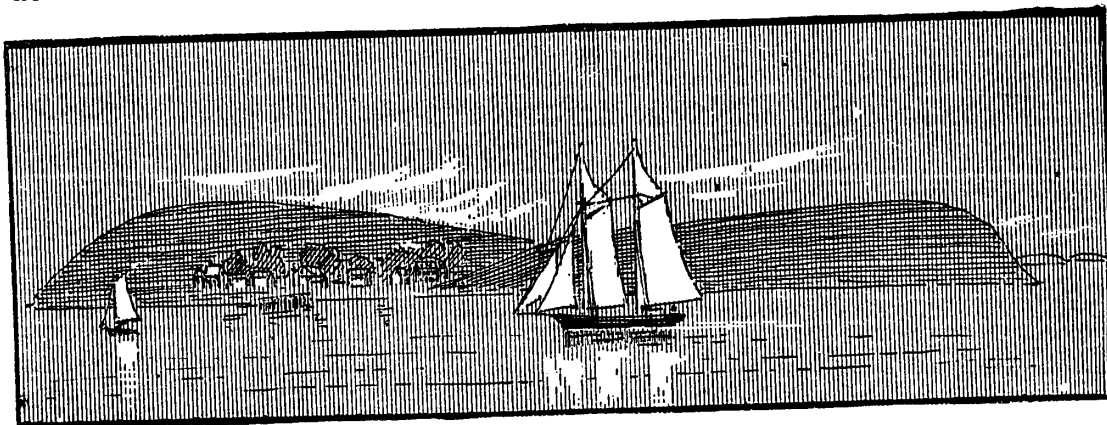
more value than the scratch of a bear's claw," the people of Hull were careful to secure a grant of the island from one of the last Massachusee sachems; and the domain was early taken from Charlestown and given to Nantasket, whose people divided it up, each taking four acres.

In 1778 the great French fleet of the Count D'Estaing, battered by storms and by British guns, took refuge in Boston Harbor. While the vessels were being refitted, large numbers of the soldiers and sailors were set ashore on the islands, where they erected fortifications. Soon afterwards a British fleet of a hundred sail approached the harbor, but were fain to turn to sea again when they saw the island-forts. There is a tradition that the outer head of Peddock's was fortified at this time; and very faint remains of the old intrenchments are still pointed out. As Chevalier states in his history of the French navy, "*Des batteries étaient déjà commencées sur quelques-unes des nombreuses îles qui avoisinaient la rade.*" As he previously gives a minute description of the French forts at Hull and George's Island, this paragraph must refer to other localities near Nantasket Roads, of which Peddock's afforded the best site for defensive works.

There are grewsome traditions of wrecks on these bold shores, one of them relating to a plague-ship which drifted into the northern cove. It was perhaps thought best to have a domain so associated with suffering and death placed under some form of ecclesiastical supervision, and Peddock's became a part of the parsonage-lands of Hull. About fifteen years ago it was bought by Miss Sallie Jones of Hingham, who now owns the entire island save a narrow strip of eight acres. There is a landing-stage near Cleverly's house; and in August camping-parties frequent certain parts of the island, their white tents making pretty contrasts with the dark bluffs. Peddock's is a series of lenticular hills, almost insulated from each other, and joined only by low bars. The hotel guests at Hull enjoy the results of the cattle grazing along these curving highlands, and the fruits and vegetables of the little farm. Nor are the higher senses without satisfaction here; for one of Foxcroft Cole's best paintings (much admired at the St. Botolph Club) portrayed the lovely view down the glen back of the houses, and the luxuriant orchard, with its network of wind-twisted boughs.

In the southern port of the harbor, beyond Peddock's, are several interesting little islands, rarely visited by summer explorers, yet each helping to make up the lovely panorama of blended sea and shore. Grape Island, a rather pretty and fertile islet, lies off the mouths of the two Weymouth Rivers, and covers about fifty acres, which are gracefully disposed in two swelling hills. About a furlong distant, to the eastward, rise the thickets and ledges of Slate Island. Grape has been for many years the abode of an eccentric old fisherman whom the harbor people call Captain Smith (a maritime simplification of his true name, which was Amos Pendleton), and who

is distinguished equally for his dangerous temper, his Munchausen stories of a past life of crime, and his complicated and ingenious system of profanity. He claims to have been for many years an officer of a slave-ship, and afterwards of a smuggler on the Spanish Main; and, to the few visitors who could win his confidence, he told blood-curdling stories of battles with cruisers, and long flights over Southern seas, with English or Spanish men-of-war in hot pursuit, long-toms roaring, and slaves dying by scores in the hold. The scene would change from the coast of Africa to the bayous of Louisiana, or the lagoons of South America; but everywhere the story was of horror and bloodshed. Captain Smith has a sinister reputation among the yachtsmen and fishermen of the harbor; and many stories are told of his firing upon invaders of his ancient solitary realm, and planting bird-shot in inconvenient localities. But the writer of this chronicle wandered at will over the domains of this sanguinary hermit, from the great



Peddock's Island.

bowlders on the eastern point to the shell-heaps which the savages left here so long ago, and up the grassy hills, nor heard nor saw the legendary shotgun which holds four yacht-clubs at bay. Here and there be vies of horses were enjoying the rich pasturage; the perfume of the noble forest on the adjacent Hingham shore came off on the land-breeze; and in the hollow, near the cold spring and the deep water on the south of the island, nestled the snug little house, among its vegetable-gardens.

This was one of the favorite haunts of the Indians, who, like their successors in the land, delighted in large and juicy clams, skilfully baked among hot rocks and fragrant sea-weed. Ring after ring of these stones has been found here, set up edgewise, with beds of clean beach-gravel in the enclosed spaces. Here the careful searcher may still find stone tomahawks, with which, in long-past days, the red epicures broke the clam-shells, while they enjoyed their jovial feasts, and made inscrutable and polysyllabic Massachusetts jokes. The esculent clams are still found in great numbers on the western bar.

In 1775 four small British vessels came down from Boston, and anchored off this point, to the intense alarm of the Old-Colony towns, over whose peaceful plains the roar of alarm-guns, the rapid clanging of guns, and the bickering of drums were quickly heard. The rumor fled down the countryside, that 300 red-coats were marching on Weymouth; and all the houses in Old Spain were deserted by the people. Nearly 2,000 well-armed minute-men assembled to cover the towns; and when they found that the object of the naval expedition was the hay on Grape Island, a strong force of rural musketeers put off in boats brought round from Hingham, intending to engage the enemy, and save the Yankee forage. But the raiding-party made haste to get upon their vessels, and sailed away to Boston, happy in the acquisition of several tons of fine hay. Meantime the whole country was aroused, the minute-men made hundreds of ineffectual pot-shots at the scarlet harvesters; and the British schooner-of-war cannonaded Eastward Neck with all her might.

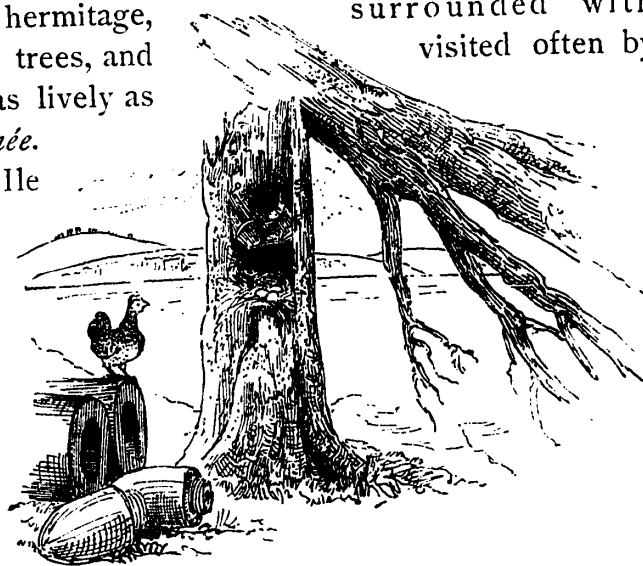
Slate Island, comprising about twelve acres, and nearly nine and a half miles from Boston, is difficult of access except at high tide; but when reached the aptness of the name is evident, for its slaty ledges run far out into the water, their black edges fringed by the light spray. The little beaches are covered with splinters and slabs of slate, which are ground and beaten to and fro by the waves, when they surge around these silent shores. The venerable divine who wrote "New-England's Plantation," in 1630, spoke with enthusiasm of the existence of "plentie of Slates at the Ile of Slate in *Masathulets* Bay." Yet a year later Government ordered that no slate should be taken therefrom without permission. In 1650 the island was granted to William Torrey, with a reservation that "any man shall be free to make use of the slate." It remained in his possession only two years, passing then by grant to Hull.

Around the coast rise the ragged and irregular ledges of slate, well-nigh concealed in places by a luxuriant growth of brown sea-weed and masses of kelp, which seem only floating upon the water's top, though they cling so closely to the rocks below, giving to the island an appearance as if hidden dangers were continually lurking around it. Clambering over the rocks, and across the tiny beaches covered with splinters and fragments of slate, and passing many ancient excavations, one suddenly gets entangled in the high bushes which cover and crown the little island, making of its crest a hopeless jungle. Here, in July, grow the rarest and sweetest raspberries, and the perfect golden-rod, —

"Graceful, tossing plume of glowing gold,
Waving lonely on the rocky ledge;
Leaning seaward, lovely to behold,
Clinging to the high cliff's ragged edge," —

and the sad little purple aster, which dares to stay later than either of the others, until the chilling frosty breezes come down the Bay. On the north and west, towards Grape Island, are low gray cliffs of slate-rock, tier after tier, standing upon edge, or slanting backward or forward like ancient time-worn and weather-beaten tombstones. Here schooners load with the slate; and one may see the quarries, all along, from which they have taken the material for countless cellar-walls and underpinnings. Were its quality better, who knows but that Slate Island, with its rocks and flowers, might vanish as utterly as Nix's Mate has done?

In a rude little hut near the southern shore long dwelt a strange hermit, whose lonely and sequestered life was the subject of many winter-evening stories among the peaceful farms of Hingham. Here was a solitude to which Thoreau's hermitage, friendly flowers and fraternal trees, and respectful Concordians, was as lively as Scollay Square after a *matinée*. In this poor anchorite "the Ile of Slate" may have found its romance, sealed to the world. Here was surrounded with visited often by



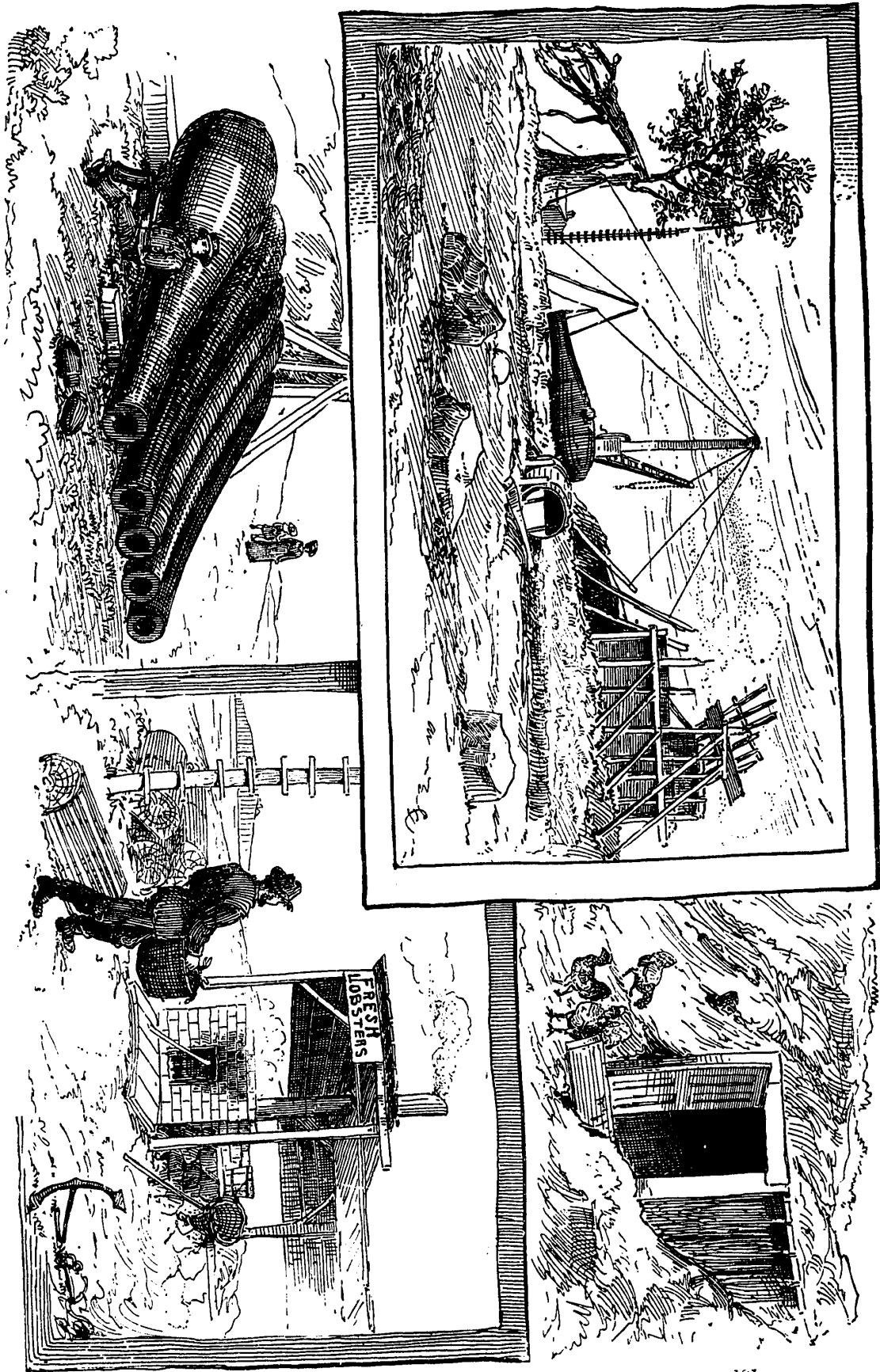
Peace and War, Nut Island.

Nut Island lies in Quincy Bay, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Boston, a little to the north of Great Hill on Hough's Neck, and was sometimes called Hough's Tombs on the queer old eighteenth-century charts. It rises sharply on one side into a tall, slightly concave highland, the top of which is fairly rounded and covered with green grass and summer flowers, and slopes gently down again to the water on the other side. Just at the foot of the cliff are one or two sturdy trees, a few deserted cannon, a wharf and track, and three fishermen's huts. The guns are immense, and some of them have been exploded by the great tests to which they were subjected. Yonder are the sand-banks which seem to have stood unyielding their heavy fire, though not so the iron plates lying thereabouts, bent, broken, and pierced through. Many experiments in ordnance have been tried on this sequestered islet; and one can see faintly in the distance on Prince's Head the bluff at which the shots were aimed, although they sometimes fell wide of their mark, ricocheting over the waters, and dropping into the waters about Hull. One of these huge missiles even cut the spile from the upper wharf, startling the good people of Hull, and disturbing the quiet of their peaceful little

cemetery on the hill-slope, where it finally landed. This shot weighed 400 pounds, and with great labor was hauled to the hotel, only to be reclaimed by the United States. In October, 1876, a Wiard gun fired a 531-pound shot through 12 inches of solid wrought-iron plates on the Prince's-Head target, 1,650 yards distant. Not far from half a million dollars were spent in the experiments made here by Norman Wiard, in endeavors to find the gun of the future. Here occurred the famous tests of the fifteen-inch breech-loading rifle, made at South Boston, and found to have a range of six miles, and power to drive a shot through twenty inches of iron plate. The newly adopted hydraulic gun-carriages also received their most efficient tests here.

It is very important to have such a testing-ground for heavy ordnance in this vicinity, since the chief manufactory of American fortress-guns is at South Boston. Here, at the famous Alger Foundry, the process of gun-making has been studied as a science for fifty years, during which time 2,000 pieces of heavy ordnance and 500,000 projectiles have been made for the United-States Government. Of these the number furnished during the late Secession War were 700 bronze guns and howitzers, 700 iron guns, 332 of the great Rodmans (of ten-inch calibre and larger), and a few heavy rifles. Here also were made the fifteen-inch Rodmans, weighing twenty-five tons each, with wonderful powers of endurance in long firing. Among these were the guns with which the *Monitor* fought the *Merrimac*, the splendid armament of the *New Ironsides*, and some of the heaviest pieces at Fortress Monroe.

A short bar connects the island with Hough's Neck on the south, and the shallow strait may be forded at low tide. Some years ago a merry party of summer pleasers drove down here, and essayed to navigate their horse and carriage to the island. But the tide was too far advanced; and the vehicle capsized in deep water, and left several of its occupants to drown. The view from Nut Island is very pretty towards Hough's Neck, across the fields and treetops, and past the towns and villages beyond to the distant Blue Hills; and the air is fragrant with the odors from the flowers and fruits of the shore. Morton, "the Lord of Misrule," wrote that "There are divers arematicall herbes, and plants, as Sassafras, Muske, Roses, Violets, Balme, Laurell, Hunnisuckles, and the like, that with their vapors perfume the aire; and it has bin a thing much observed that, shippes have come from Virginea where there have bin scarce five men able to hale a rope, untill they have come within 40 Degrees of latitude, and smell the sweet aire of the shore, where they have suddainly recovered." And he should certainly know, for he was familiar with every thing about his home, and especially with this locality. Morton tells this little story of himself and Bubbles, the berated "Master of Ceremonies" at Merry-Mount: "To-



SKETCHES ON NUT ISLAND.

gether Bubbles and hee goes in the Canow to Nut Island for brants, and there his host makes a shotte and breakes the winges of many. Bubbles in hast and single handed, paddels out like a Cow in a cage; his host calcs back to rowe two handed like to a pare of oares, and before this could be performed, the fowles had time to swimme to other flockes, and so to escape; the best part of the pray being lost, mayd his host to mutter at him, and so to parte for that time discontented." There are still many fowls at Nut Island, apparently not in the least disturbed by guns greater than Morton's; and could the jolly lord return now with Bubbles, he might perchance think more of the shooting and less of the fowls.

Hangman's Island stands well out in Quincy Bay, with open waters on all sides. It is hardly more than a reef, with deep channels all around, and a convenient strip of beach on the south. Here are several snug little huts of fisher-folk; and among the rocks are patches of corn, potatoes, and other vegetables in their seasons, among which the crickets chirp merrily during the long summer days. Here and there bloom clusters of wild flowers, leaning over the dark ledges, and outliving the gales; and occasionally an adventurous bird, flying from the mainland, rests on the beaten crags. The origin of the name of this inhabited rock is obscure, and hardly invites speculation. Perhaps some of the ancient pirates met their fate here, and the gloomy tragedy is thus commemorated. On a chart published in London in 1775, it is called *Hayman's Island*, and covers a much larger area than at present.

Far in-shore, on the broad flats which stretch out from Mount Wollaston, rises the narrow and singularly curved Half-moon Island; and on the east side of Hough's Neck is Raccoon Island, an irregular tract of ten acres, overlooking the broadenings of Weymouth Fore River. Well out in the centre of the Bay, east of Nut Island, Sheep Island breaks above the blue plain of waters, with its two acres of level ground, whereon, in ancient times, the farmers of the adjacent mainland kept their little flocks, securely fenced by the surges of Massachusetts Bay. Many years ago it bore the name of Sun Island, but it is difficult to imagine why. The snug little domain is now frequently occupied by camping parties, whose tents are visible from the Nantasket and Hingham steamboats, running close by to the eastward.

Less than a mile distant, across the channel, rises the high round hill of Pumpkin, Bumpkin, or Ward's Island, a conspicuous green dome, arabesqued with daisies and thistle-tops, and covering nearly fifty acres. It was bequeathed by Samuel Ward to Harvard College, in 1682, and still belongs to and yields an income to the University.