

The Penal Colony of Deer Island.

GODIVA'S HEIR.—THE CHRISTIAN INDIANS.—ANCIENT MERRYMAKINGS.—
BOSTON'S PRISONS AND CHARITIES.



EVER was fairer site found for a convict-colony than Deer Island, at the mouth of Boston Harbor, which has at different times been the abode of thousands of unwilling guests, in its great municipal buildings,—the House of Reformation for juvenile offenders, the House of Industry, and the Alms-house. It is a little continent in itself, with the tall bluffs of North, East, South, and Graveyard Heads, and the high ridge of Signal Hill, with many an incipient cape and miniature bay. There are also two ponds of fresh water amid the environment of salty waves; whereof one is known as Ice Pond, since it yields large stores of ice for the summer use of the islanders; and the other as Cow Pond, because the cattle of this penal colony find in it their daily drink. The island is nearly a mile long, and covers 184 acres, with a broad margin of flats. It is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Long Wharf, and nearly a mile from Nix's Mate and Long-Island Head, across Broad Sound. On the west, Shirley Gut separates it from Point Shirley, in Winthrop, with a rushing strait of salt water, narrowed down at one point to 325 feet across, where occasionally a few of the more daring boys, tired of their island prison, have swam across, or drowned in the attempt. If safely landed on the opposite side, they are almost sure to be re-captured by the officials, when they always say, "We were only goin' home to see the folks, and comin' right back." On the side where the waves of the Bay dash against the bluffs, the National Government has built a costly and massive stone sea-wall. The *débris* from the bluffs, in stormy weather, had already formed two long bars; one running towards Point Shirley, and the other towards the Graves. The dark pyramidal beacon well out in the water towards Long Island marks the site of the southern tip of ancient Deer Island, which has been washed away for hundreds of feet.

"The waves unbuild the wasting shore:
Where mountains towered, the billows sweep."

Four years after Boston was settled, a traveller spoke of "Deare Ilande, so-called because of the Deare which often swimme thither from the Maine, when they are chased by the Woolves. Some have killed sixteen Deare in

a day upon this Ilande." About the same time Morton of Merry-Mount wrote thus, in similar vein: "On all these [deare] the Wolfes doe pray continually. The best meanes they have to escape the wolfes is by swimming to Ilands, or necks of land, whereby they escape; for the wolfe will not presume to follow them, untill they see them over a river; then being landed, (they wayting on the shore) undertake the water, and so follow with fresh suite." A more modern romancer gives a vivid account of Sir Harry Vane, Endicott, and Winthrop, and their Pequot slaves, hunting the deer here, with arquebuse and arbalest. Then there were high forests and grassy glades, swamps and thickets, all over the island. Although Motley speaks of moose on the South Shore, these were the common Virginian deer, such as now abound in the Plymouth woods. In 1634 this fine game-preserve was granted to Boston, together with Long and Hog Islands, for £2 a year; and a year later Spectacle Island was included, and the annual tribute reduced to 4s. Massachusetts has never reclaimed this valuable piece of property from Boston, in whose possession it has since remained. In 1636 the Bostonians were given permission to cut wood here; and so the gallant groves, which had so long breasted the north-easters, went down before the Puritan axes. Five years later the island became a pound, in which to keep stray domestic animals; and a building was erected to shelter them. In 1644-47 it was leased to Penn and Oliver, for £7 a year, which went to the school-fund; and later Bendall hired it for £14 a year. In 1655 the cutting of wood was prohibited; and seven years later the lease reverted to Sir Thomas Temple, a lineal descendant of Earl Leofric of Mercia and Lady Godiva of Coventry, and brother of the famous Sir William Temple. After his several years in New England, he returned home, and befriended the colonies at court. Once when King Charles was upbraiding Massachusetts for having coined money, a sovereign prerogative, Sir Thomas showed him a pine-tree shilling. "But what is this tree upon the coin?" exclaimed the irate monarch. To whom the knight rejoined, "That is the oak in which Your Majesty found shelter;" and Charles, greatly pleased, cried out, "They are a parcel of honest dogs!" Sir Thomas had a son born on one of the harbor islands, who afterwards became famous as Sir John Temple, Surveyor-General of Customs in England. A town in New Hampshire was named for him. Certainly it is a strange and noteworthy dispensation which makes of one of our islands the birthplace of a descendant of Lady Godiva. Robert Temple came to New England in 1718, and built a very handsome mansion on Noddle's Island. He married the daughter of Captain John Nelson of Long Island; and the granddaughter of this noble couple was the mother of the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, who renewed the family ties by marrying the daughter of Sir John Temple.

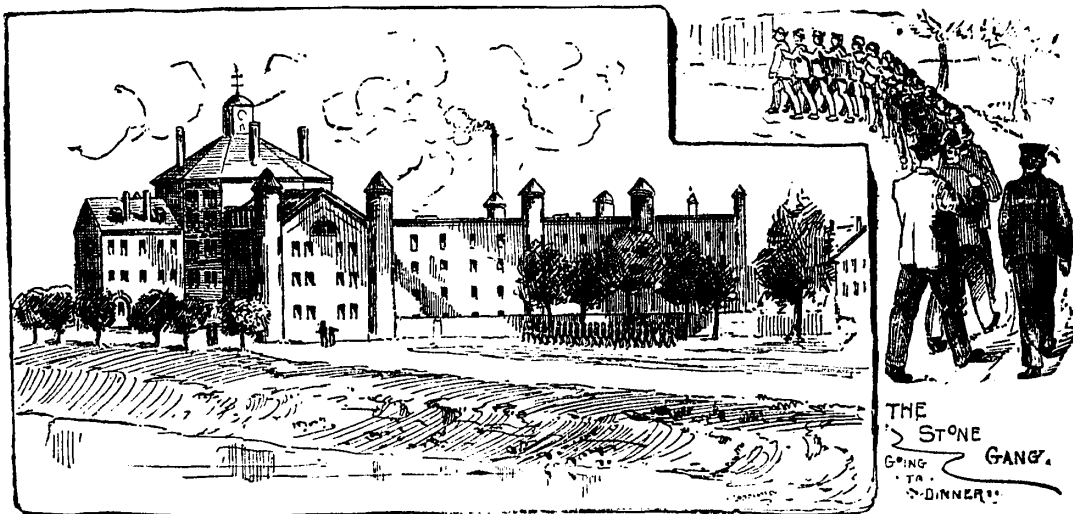
One of the native proprietors of Deer Island was Winnepurkitt, the last

sagamore of Lynn, who married the daughter of Passaconaway, the renowned chieftain of the New-Hampshire tribes. It will be remembered that Winne-pukkitt was the hero of Whittier's poem of "The Bridal of Pennacook," who dwelt where, —

"faint with distance came the stifled roar,
The melancholy lapse of waves on that low shore."

He became sachem in 1633, and in 1676 was transported to Barbadoes, — a deadly change from his cool and breezy northern shores. In 1685 the Indian chiefs Wampatuck (grandson of Chickataubut) and David (son of Sagamore George) were well paid to give a quit-claim of the island, which, however, Sir Edmund Andros endeavored to wrest from its tenant.

No sadder scene has New England ever witnessed than Deer Island



The House of Industry. Deer Island

in 1675-76, when, during the panic caused by King Philip's War, Massachusetts tore the Christian Indians from their inland villages, and confined them upon this bleak and dreary strand. The penalty of death was enacted against any who should leave this gloomy prison, and if any one should help them to escape he should be punished "as a man-stealer." Yet the Province appointed officials to go down regularly, and keep them well fed and supplied. Eliot, their saintly apostle, said that the Indian Christians went to their captivity "patiently, humbly, and piously, without murmuring or complaining against y^e English," sailing on the downward tide at midnight, from the present site of Watertown. Through the dreary winter, their chief sustenance was fish and clams; their only shelter the scanty thickets and the lee sides of the bluffs. Out of this 500 martyrs to English distrust very many died, and were sadly buried by the moaning and misty sea. Later in the winter, as town after town was destroyed by the hostile

tribes, and homeless fugitives poured even into Boston, the hard-pressed Provincials sent down to Deer Island, asking for volunteers. Many of the captives came forward, and were armed and sent to the frontiers (there were 50 in Capt. Hinchman's company alone); where they fought their red brethren with equal valor and skill, so that they slew 400 of them, and rescued many white captives. As Gen. Gookin then said, they "turned ye balance to ye English side, so that ye enemy went down ye wind amain." In May, 1676, the surviving women and children and old men were returned to their villages in honor. Thereafter the island was used as a prison for hostile Indians captured in war. Some of these Christian Indians, and many of the captured heathen, were sent into slavery in the West Indies, from whence they never returned. Others were sold at Tangier, and elsewhere on the African coast; and Eliot, the saintly apostle, followed them, even in their distant Saracen prisons, with his letters and counsels.

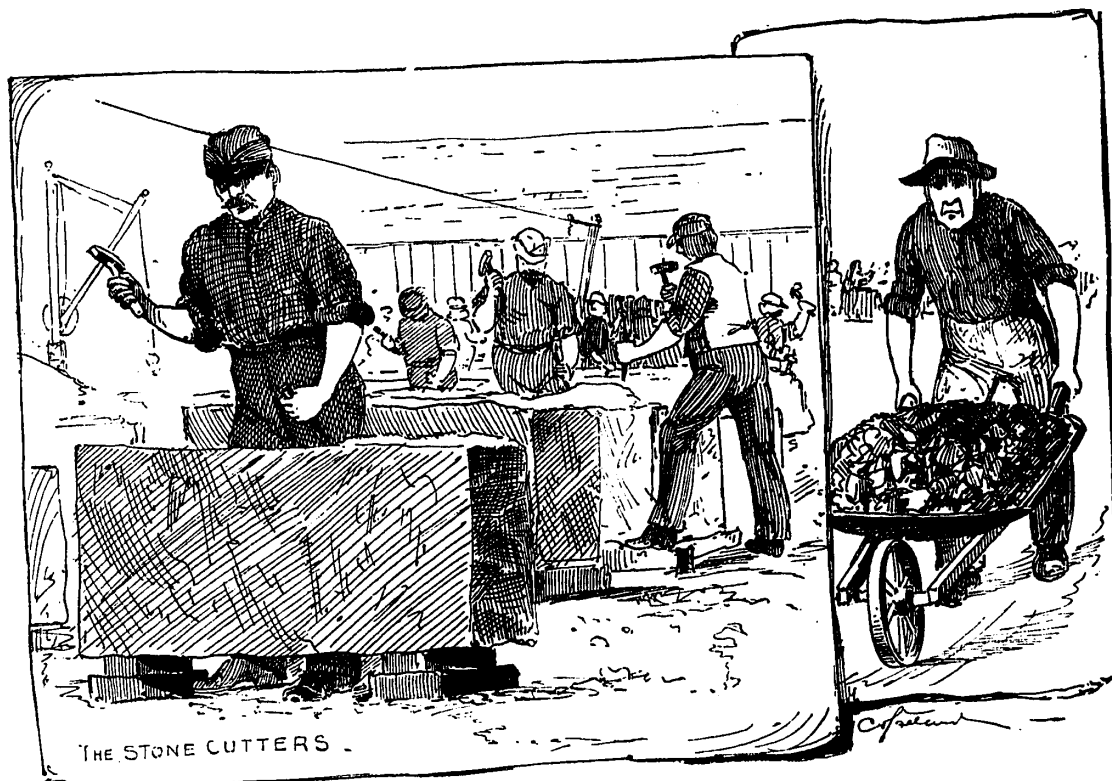
Eighty years later a nobler sight was seen, when a splendid naval procession emerged from Broad Sound, and, rounding the east point of Deer Island, bore away for the north-east, to the victorious siege of Annapolis Royal. It included the frigates *Success*, *Mermaid*, and *Siren*, and 33 transports, in which were upwards of 5,000 British and Provincial soldiers. Another score of years passed by, and the old comrades became antagonists, when His Majesty's army was blockaded in Boston. In June, 1775, Major Greateon captured a British man-of-war's barge and crew here, and carried from the island 800 sheep and many horses, — very useful supplies for the Continental army at Cambridge, and sorely missed by the hungry red-coats up the Bay. In 1813 fortifications were erected here by the Boston militia, to prevent a naval attack by Broad Sound or Shirley Gut. The island was then well known as a summer resort, and had a notable hotel and ballroom, with swings, bowling-alleys, and other familiar adjuncts of modern excursion life. This was a favorite resort of the picnic-parties of that period; and here frequently came the annual excursion of the West Church of Boston. In 1823 the last of these trips was made, "accompanied by a very large and respectable number of citizens. . . . The day was fine, entertainment very good, and agreeable to all." The interest of the locality was probably not lessened by its ghastly tradition, which was rehearsed with bated breath by the people of the lower islands. Dominie Brown thus hints at it:—

" For oft I've heard the story told,
How ghost, without a head;
Here guards some thousand pounds in gold,
By some strange fancy led."

In the spring of 1882 a band of Zuñi Indians from the mysterious pueblos of New Mexico visited Deer Island, to perform their strange religious cere-

monies on the shores of "The Ocean of Sunrise," and to fill their ancestral vases with the sacred water of the sea. They were attended by 300 citizens, including many prominent divines and scholars. Advancing far out on the rocks, they chanted strange songs of prayer, and offered sacrifices to the waves, praying, "Make the roads of life for ourselves and for our children to be prolonged." These ceremonials were continued upon the beach after the tide had driven them shoreward; and Mr. Cushing, who had long been a resident of Zuni, was there initiated into the high religious order of the Kaukau, an order which is many centuries old.

The construction of municipal institutions began in 1847, when Boston

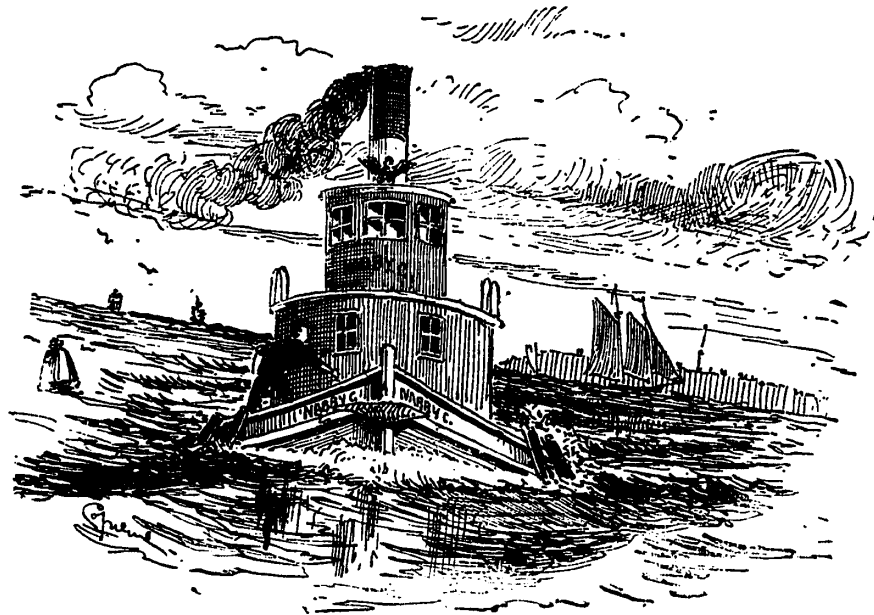


Convicts at Work.

built here several large buildings for sheltering Irish emigrants, of whom more than 10,000 landed between January and July. The terrible scourge of ship-fever made formidable ravages among these new-comers, hundreds of whom died upon the island, and were buried and forgotten. About three years later the large city building was erected, at a cost of \$150,000. In 1858 the House of Reformation was established; and the buildings of the farm-school and the asylum for pauper girls date from 1869.

The main building is a large brick edifice, with three wings projecting from a high central block crowned with a cupola, and is the most conspicuous object in the outer harbor. In its western front is the home of the superintendent, Col. Guy C. Underwood; and the nave and transepts of

this cathedral of Lucifer are occupied by the cells and dormitories, kitchens and dining-rooms, workshops and schoolrooms, of the army of the criminal classes. Here, also, is the spacious chapel, where religion finds a harder and more hopeless (but more necessary) task than under the splendid towers of Trinity Church, or in the solemn aisles of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. It is, however, a pleasing and pathetic sight when the long lines of uniformed boys file into the galleries, and sing their hearty songs to the music of the band which has been recruited from their own ranks. The schools connected with the reformatory institutions are widely famed for their efficiency and perfect equipment, and yearly give 300 or more boys and girls



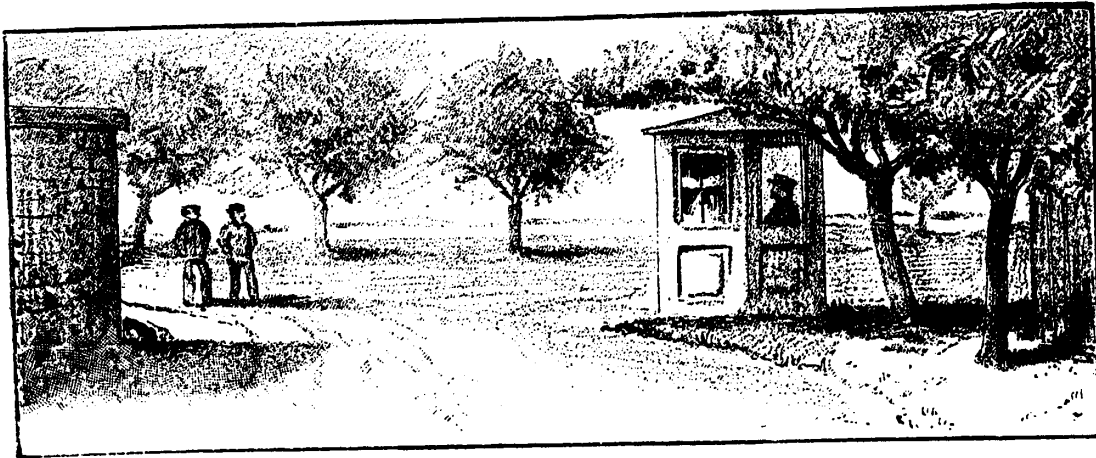
A Lively Sea.

(from 7 to 19 years of age) thorough instruction. Most of these are reformation children and truants.

From the main building a broad avenue nearly two miles long runs to the wharf and around the island, past the various buildings, each one of which, though sad and unpleasant in its suggestions, is full of interest. In the greenhouse, perhaps the only building free from a prison atmosphere, are beautiful flowers of all kinds and varieties, and a little family of pretty tame squirrels. In front of the nursery, one of the smaller buildings, is a pretty garden, where in early spring peep out long lines of graceful little snowdrops, and brilliant, many-hued crocuses. Here are the poor little children, left homeless almost as soon as born; but tenderly cared for, spending a part of each day in the airy kindergarten, loving their dolls, or driving their tin horses until wearied, when the bright sunshine and air of the island is

freely granted them in the play-grounds. Their ages vary from less than three to five or six; but all, from the smallest up, wear the dull uniform of charity. On the hill-slopes are the vegetable-gardens, abundant and successful; and here are raised enormous mangel-wurzel beets, some of which weigh twenty-five or thirty pounds each, and lie heaped up on the floor of the barn to assure the incredulous visitor. In the barns or on the hill are the gentle-eyed cattle; and, if one cares to see an endless number of pigs, an entire building is devoted to them on the southern point.

The drive around the island is everywhere beautiful, with the deep blue of the sea stretching out beyond, the distant isles dotted over the bay, and the white sails of vessels appearing upon the horizon, returning home from distant ports. The light-house stands out whitely, on its centre of rocky islands; and the flag over Fort Warren seems merely a speck of bright color. The eye returns again to the nearer surroundings, and perhaps rests



Scene at Deer Island.

on the queer brown seals sunning themselves on the rocks, and looking so much a part of them, that, but for their sudden disappearance into the water, one would not dream they were any thing else. Yet they come in such numbers to one of the rocky little coves of the island near the seawall, that the bay has taken their name to itself. Nearing the wharf again, the view at the sunset hours is very charming, when the sky is reddening over the golden-domed hill, the crown of Boston, and the gulls are flying away seaward, while the sails of vessels at anchor, or sailing home, brighten with color until their very hulls seem all ablaze. As the sun falls lower, the blue hills grow grayer and grayer while the twilight steals over them, until they are lost in haze, and the murmur of the sea alone remains to charm the night.

The dwellers on Deer Island number from 1,200 to 1,500; and they are maintained at an annual cost of \$150,000. The average expenditure for each person, deducting the amount earned in the work-shops of the institu-

tions, is \$1.96 a week. These are not the desperadoes of the Commonwealth, but rather its chronic unfortunates, the dregs of the great European immigration, — men and women who return here month after month, and year after year, having reached the mournful condition where all sense of shame and responsibility is lost. Perhaps the pure air and rigid decorum, the good food and safe shelter of the city institutions, afford a standing temptation to lure them from the gloomy squalor of the North End. Occasionally a delinquent American, grown uproarious in his cups, finds himself locked in with these thronging miserables, and spends penitential months in honest and monotonous labor. These crowded prison-halls are an example of the survival of the unfittest, — a sign of the growth of a fierce and formidable pauperism under conditions where it has no place and no apology. And yet — for each convict's elevation and purification Paul labored, and Washington fought, and (immeasurably above all else) Christ died.



The Deer-Island Ferry-Horn, Point Shirley.