

### III

#### THE PLAINS OF NAUSET

THE next morning, Thursday, October 11, it rained as hard as ever; but we were determined to proceed on foot, nevertheless. We first made some inquiries, with regard to the practicability of walking up the shore on the Atlantic side to Provincetown, whether we should meet with any creeks or marshes to trouble us. Higgins said that there was no obstruction, and that it was not much farther than by the road, but he thought that we should find it very "heavy" walking in the sand; it was bad enough in the road, a horse would sink in up to the fetlocks there. But there was one man at the tavern who had walked it, and he said that we could go very well, though it was sometimes inconvenient and even dangerous walking under the bank, when there was a great tide, with an easterly wind, which caused the sand to cave. For the first four or five miles we followed the road, which here turns to the north on the elbow, — the narrowest part of the Cape, — that we might clear an inlet from the ocean, a part of Nauset Harbor, in Orleans, on our right. We found the traveling good enough for walkers on the sides of the roads, though it was "heavy" for horses in the middle. We walked with our umbrellas behind us since it blowed hard as well as rained, with driving mists, as the day before, and the wind helped us over

the sand at a rapid rate. Everything indicated that we had reached a strange shore. The road was a mere lane, winding over bare swells of bleak and barren-looking land. The houses were few and far between, besides being small and rusty, though they appeared to be kept in good repair, and their door-yards, which were the unfenced Cape, were tidy; or, rather, they looked as if the ground around them was blown clean by the wind. Perhaps the scarcity of wood here, and the consequent absence of the wood-pile and other wooden traps, had something to do with this appearance. They seemed, like mariners ashore, to have sat right down to enjoy the firmness of the land, without studying their postures or habiliments. To them it was merely *terra firma* and *cognita*, not yet *fertilis* and *jucunda*. Every landscape which is dreary enough has a certain beauty to my eyes, and in this instance its permanent qualities were enhanced by the weather. Everything told of the sea, even when we did not see its waste or hear its roar. For birds there were gulls, and for carts in the fields, boats turned bottom upward against the houses, and sometimes the rib of a whale was woven into the fence by the roadside. The trees were, if possible, rarer than the houses, excepting apple trees, of which there were a few small orchards in the hollows. These were either narrow and high, with flat tops, having lost their side branches, like huge plum bushes growing in exposed situations, or else dwarfed and branching immediately at the ground, like quince bushes. They suggested that, under like circumstances, all trees would at last acquire like habits of growth.

I afterward saw on the Cape many full-grown apple trees not higher than a man's head; one whole orchard, indeed, where all the fruit could have been gathered by a man standing on the ground; but you could hardly creep beneath the trees. Some, which the owners told me were twenty years old, were only three and a half feet high, spreading at six inches from the ground five feet each way, and, being withal surrounded with boxes of tar to catch the canker-worms, they looked like plants in flower-pots, and as if they might be taken into the house in the winter. In another place, I saw some not much larger than currant bushes; yet the owner told me that they had borne a barrel and a half of apples that fall. If they had been placed close together, I could have cleared them all at a jump. I measured some near the Highland Light in Truro, which had been taken from the shrubby woods thereabouts when young, and grafted. One, which had been set ten years, was on an average eighteen inches high, and spread nine feet, with a flat top. It had borne one bushel of apples two years before. Another, probably twenty years old from the seed, was five feet high, and spread eighteen feet, branching, as usual, at the ground, so that you could not creep under it. This bore a barrel of apples two years before. The owner of these trees invariably used the personal pronoun in speaking of them; as, "I got *him* out of the woods, but *he* does n't bear." The largest that I saw in that neighborhood was ~~one~~ <sup>nine</sup> feet high to the topmost leaf, and spread thirty-three feet, branching at the ground five ways.

In one yard I observed a single very healthy-looking tree, while all the rest were dead or dying. The occupant said that his father had manured all but that one with blackfish.

This habit of growth should, no doubt, be encouraged, and they should not be trimmed up, as some traveling practitioners have advised. In 1802 there was not a single fruit tree in Chatham, the next town to Orleans, on the south; and the old account of Orleans says: "Fruit trees cannot be made to grow within a mile of the ocean. Even those which are placed at a greater distance are injured by the east winds; and after violent storms in the spring, a saltish taste is perceptible on their bark." We noticed that they were often covered with a yellow lichen like rust, the *Parmelia parietina*.

The most foreign and picturesque structures on the Cape, to an inlander, not excepting the salt-works, are the windmills, — gray-looking, octagonal towers, with long timbers slanting to the ground in the rear, and there resting on a cart-wheel, by which their fans are turned round to face the wind. These appeared also to serve in some measure for props against its force. A great circular rut was worn around the building by the wheel. The neighbors who assemble to turn the mill to the wind are likely to know which way it blows, without a weather-cock. They looked loose and slightly locomotive, like huge wounded birds, trailing a wing or a leg, and reminded one of pictures of the Netherlands. Being on elevated ground, and high in themselves, they serve as landmarks, — for there are no tall trees, or

other objects commonly, which can be seen at a distance in the horizon; though the outline of the land itself is so firm and distinct, that an insignificant cone, or even precipice of sand, is visible at a great distance from over the sea. Sailors making the land commonly steer either by the windmills, or the meeting-houses. In the country, we are obliged to steer by the meeting-houses alone. Yet the meeting-house is a kind of windmill, which runs one day in seven, turned either by the winds of doctrine or public opinion, or more rarely by the winds of Heaven, where another sort of grist is ground, of which, if it be not all bran or musty, if it be not *plaster*, we trust to make bread of life.

There were, here and there, heaps of shells in the fields, where clams had been opened for bait; for Orleans is famous for its shell-fish, especially clams, or, as our author says, "to speak more properly, worms." The shores are more fertile than the dry land. The inhabitants measure their crops, not only by bushels of corn, but by barrels of clams. A thousand barrels of clam-bait are counted as equal in value to six or eight thousand bushels of Indian corn, and once they were procured without more labor or expense, and the supply was thought to be inexhaustible. "For," runs the history, "after a portion of the shore has been dug over, and almost all the clams taken up, at the end of two years, it is said, the <sup>are</sup> are as plenty there as ever. It is even affirmed by many persons, that it is as necessary to stir the clam ground frequently, as it is to hoe a field of potatoes; because if this labor is omitted, the clams will be crowded too closely together, and will be pre-

vented from increasing in size." But we were told that the small clam, *Mya arenaria*, was not so plenty here as formerly. Probably the clam-ground has been stirred too frequently, after all. Nevertheless, one man, who complained that they fed pigs with them and so made them scarce, told me that he dug and opened one hundred and twenty-six dollars' worth in one winter, in Truro.

We crossed a brook, not more than fourteen rods long, between Orleans and Eastham called Jeremiah's Gutter. The Atlantic is said sometimes to meet the Bay here, and isolate the northern part of the Cape. The streams of the Cape are necessarily formed on a minute scale since there is no room for them to run, without tumbling immediately into the sea; and beside, we found it difficult to run ourselves in that sand, when there was no want of room. Hence, the least channel where water runs, or may run, is important, and is dignified with a name. We read that there is no running water in Chatham, which is the next town. The barren aspect of the land would hardly be believed if described. It was such soil, or rather land, as, to judge from appearances, no farmer in the interior would think of cultivating, or even fencing. Generally, the plowed fields of the Cape look white and yellow, like a mixture of salt and Indian meal. This is called soil. All an inlander's notions of soil and fertility will be confounded by a visit to these parts, and he will not be able, for some time afterward, to distinguish soil from sand. The historian of Chatham says of a part of that town, which has been gained from the sea: "There is a doubtful

appearance of a soil's beginning to be formed. It is styled *doubtful*, because it would not be observed by every eye, and perhaps not acknowledged by many." We thought that this would not be a bad description of the greater part of the Cape. There is a "beach" on the west side of Eastham, which we crossed the next summer, half a mile wide, and stretching across the township, containing seventeen hundred acres, on which there is not now a particle of vegetable mould, though it formerly produced wheat. All sands are here called "beaches," whether they are waves of water or of air that dash against them, since they commonly have their origin on the shore. "The sand in some places," says the historian of Eastham, "lodging against the beach grass, has been raised into hills fifty feet high, where twenty-five years ago no hills existed. In others it has filled up small valleys and swamps. Where a strong-rooted bush stood, the appearance is singular: a mass of earth and sand adheres to it, resembling a small tower. In several places rocks, which were formerly covered with soil, are disclosed; and being lashed by the sand, driven against them by the wind, look as if they were recently dug from a quarry."

We were surprised to hear of the great crops of corn which are still raised in Eastham, notwithstanding the real and apparent barrenness. Our landlord in Orleans had told us that he raised three or four hundred bushels of corn annually, and also of the great number of pigs which he fattened. In Champlain's "Voyages," there is a plate representing the Indian corn-fields hereabouts, with their wigwams in the midst, as they ap-

peared in 1605, and it was here that the Pilgrims, to quote their own words, "bought eight or ten hogsheads of corn and beans" of the Nauset Indians, in 1622, to keep themselves from starving.<sup>1</sup> "In 1667 the town [of Eastham] voted that every housekeeper should kill twelve blackbirds, or three crows, which did great damage to the corn, and this vote was repeated for many years." In 1695 an additional order was passed, namely, that "every unmarried man in the township shall kill six blackbirds, or three crows, while he remains single; as a penalty for not doing it, shall not be married until he obey this order." The blackbirds, however, still molest the corn. I saw them at it the next summer, and there were many scarecrows, if not scare-blackbirds, in the fields, which I often mistook for men. From which I concluded, that either many men were not married, or many blackbirds were. Yet they put but three or four kernels in a hill, and let fewer plants remain than we do. In the account of Eastham, in the "Historical Collections," printed in 1802, it is said that "more corn is produced than the inhabitants consume, and above a thousand bushels are annually sent to mar-

<sup>1</sup> They touched after this at a place called Mattachiest, where they got more corn; but their shallop being cast away in a storm, the Governor was obliged to return to Plymouth on foot, fifty miles through the woods. According to Mourt's Relation, "he came safely home, though weary and *surbated*," that is, foot-sore. (Ital. *sobattere*, Lat. *sub* or *solea* *battere*, to bruise the soles of the feet; v. Dic. Not "from *acerbatus*, embittered or aggrieved," as one commentator on this passage supposes.) This word is of very rare occurrence, being applied only to governors and persons of like description, who are in that predicament: though such generally have considerable mileage allowed them, and might save their soles if they cared.

ket. The soil being free from stones, a plough passes through it speedily; and after the corn has come up, a small Cape horse, somewhat larger than a goat,<sup>1</sup> will, with the assistance of two boys, easily hoe three or four acres in a day. Several farmers are accustomed to produce five hundred bushels of grain annually, and not long since one raised eight hundred bushels on sixty acres." Similar accounts are given to-day; indeed, the recent accounts are in some instances respectable repetitions of the old, and I have no doubt that their statements are as often founded on the exception as the rule, and that by far the greater number of acres are as barren as they appear to be. It is sufficiently remarkable that any crops can be raised here, and it may be owing, as others have suggested, to the amount of moisture in the atmosphere, the warmth of the sand, and the rareness of frosts. A miller, who was sharpening his stones, told me that, forty years ago, he had been to a husking here, where five hundred bushels were husked in one evening, and the corn was piled six feet high or more, in the midst, but now fifteen or eighteen bushels to an acre were an average yield. I never saw fields of such puny and unpromising-looking corn, as in this town. Probably the inhabitants are contented with small crops from a great surface easily cultivated. It is not always the most fertile land that is the most profitable, and this sand may repay cultivation as well as the fertile bottoms of the West. It is said, moreover, that the vegetables raised in the sand, without manure, are remarkably sweet, the pumpkins especially, though when their seed is planted in the interior they soon degenerate.

I can testify that the vegetables here, when they succeed at all, look remarkably green and healthy, though perhaps it is partly by contrast with the sand. Yet the inhabitants of the Cape towns, generally, do not raise their own meal or pork. Their gardens are commonly little patches that have been redeemed from the edges of the marshes and swamps.

All the morning we had heard the sea roar on the eastern shore, which was several miles distant; for it still felt the effects of the storm in which the *St. John* was wrecked, — though a school-boy, whom we overtook, hardly knew what we meant, his ears were so used to it. He would have more plainly heard the same sound in a shell. It was a very inspiriting sound to walk by, filling the whole air, that of the sea dashing against the land, heard several miles inland. Instead of having a dog to growl before your door, to have an Atlantic Ocean to growl for a whole Cape! On the whole, we were glad of the storm, which would show us the ocean in its angriest mood. Charles Darwin was assured that the roar of the surf on the coast of Chiloe, after a heavy gale, could be heard at night a distance of “21 sea miles across a hilly and wooded country.” We conversed with the boy we have mentioned, who might have been eight years old, making him walk the while under the lee of our umbrella; for we thought it as important to know what was life on the Cape to a boy as to a man. We learned from him where the best grapes were to be found in that neighborhood. He was carrying his dinner in a pail; and, without any impertinent questions being put by us, it did at length appear of

what it consisted. The homeliest facts are always the most acceptable to an inquiring mind. At length, before we got to Eastham meeting-house, we left the road and struck across the country for the eastern shore at Nauset Lights, — three lights close together, two or three miles distant from us. They were so many that they might be distinguished from others; but this seemed a shiftless and costly way of accomplishing that object. We found ourselves at once on an apparently boundless plain, without a tree or a fence or, with one or two exceptions, a house in sight. Instead of fences, the earth was sometimes thrown up into a slight ridge. My companion compared it to the rolling prairies of Illinois. In the storm of wind and rain which raged when we traversed it, it no doubt appeared more vast and desolate than it really is. As there were no hills, but only here and there a dry hollow in the midst of the waste, and the distant horizon was concealed by mist, we did not know whether it was high or low. A solitary traveler whom we saw perambulating in the distance loomed like a giant. He appeared to walk slouchingly, as if held up from above by straps under his shoulders, as much as supported by the plain below. Men and boys would have appeared alike at a little distance, there being no object by which to measure them. Indeed, to an inlander, the Cape landscape is a constant mirage. This kind of country extended a mile or two each way. These were the “Plains of Nauset,” once covered with wood, where in winter the winds howl and the snow blows right merrily in the face of the traveler. I was glad to have got out of the towns, where I am wont to

feel unspeakably mean and disgraced, — to have left behind me for a season the bar-rooms of Massachusetts, where the full-grown are not weaned from savage and filthy habits, — still sucking a cigar. My spirits rose in proportion to the outward dreariness. The towns need to be ventilated. The gods would be pleased to see some pure flames from their altars. They are not to be appeased with cigar-smoke.

As we thus skirted the back side of the towns, — for we did not enter any village till we got to Provincetown, — we read their histories under our umbrellas, rarely meeting anybody. The old accounts are the richest in topography, which was what we wanted most; and, indeed, in most things else, for I find that the readable parts of the modern accounts of these towns consist, in a great measure, of quotations, acknowledged and unacknowledged, from the older ones, without any additional information of equal interest; — town histories, which at length run into a history of the Church of that place, that being the only story they have to tell, and conclude by quoting the Latin epitaphs of the old pastors, having been written in the good old days of Latin and of Greek. They will go back to the ordination of every minister, and tell you faithfully who made the introductory prayer, and who delivered the sermon; who made the ordaining prayer, and who gave the charge; who extended the right hand of fellowship, and who pronounced the benediction; also how many ecclesiastical councils convened from time to time to inquire into the orthodoxy of some minister, and the names of all who composed them. As it will take us an hour to

get over this plain, and there is no variety in the prospect, peculiar as it is, I will read a little in the history of Eastham the while.

When the committee from Plymouth had purchased the territory of Eastham of the Indians, “it was demanded, who laid claim to Billingsgate?” which was understood to be all that part of the Cape north of what they had purchased. “The answer was, there was not any who owned it. ‘Then,’ said the committee, ‘that land is ours.’ The Indians answered, that it was.” This was a remarkable assertion and admission. The Pilgrims appear to have regarded themselves as Not Any’s representatives. Perhaps this was the first instance of that quiet way of “speaking for” a place not yet occupied, or at least not improved as much as it may be, which their descendants have practiced, and are still practicing so extensively. Not Any seems to have been the sole proprietor of all America before the Yankees. But history says, that when the Pilgrims had held the lands of Billingsgate many years, at length, “appeared an Indian, who styled himself Lieutenant Anthony,” who laid claim to them, and of him they bought them. Who knows but a Lieutenant Anthony may be knocking at the door of the White House some day? At any rate, I know that if you hold a thing unjustly, there will surely be the devil to pay at last.

Thomas Prince, who was several times the governor of the Plymouth colony, was the leader of the settlement of Eastham. There was recently standing, on what was once his farm, in this town, a pear tree which is said to have been brought from England, and planted

there by him, about two hundred years ago. It was blown down a few months before we were there. A late account says that it was recently in a vigorous state; the fruit small, but excellent; and it yielded on an average fifteen bushels. Some appropriate lines have been addressed to it, by a Mr. Heman Doane, from which I will quote, partly because they are the only specimen of Cape Cod verse which I remember to have seen, and partly because they are not bad.

“Two hundred years have, on the wings of Time,  
 Passed with their joys and woes, since thou, Old Tree!  
 Put forth thy first leaves in this foreign clime,  
 Transplanted from the soil beyond the sea.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

[These stars represent the more clerical lines, and also those which have deceased.]

“That exiled band long since have passed away,  
 And still, old Tree! thou standest in the place  
 Where Prince's hand did plant thee in his day,—  
 An undesigned memorial of his race  
 And time; of those our honored fathers, when  
 They came from Plymouth o'er and settled here;  
 Doane, Higgins, Snow, and other worthy men,  
 Whose names their sons remember to revere.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

“Old Time has thinned thy boughs, Old Pilgrim Tree!  
 And bowed thee with the weight of many years;  
 Yet, 'mid the frosts of age, thy bloom we see,  
 And yearly still thy mellow fruit appears.”

There are some other lines which I might quote, if they were not tied to unworthy companions, by the rhyme. When one ox will lie down, the yoke bears hard on him that stands up.

One of the first settlers of Eastham was Deacon John Doane, who died in 1707, aged one hundred and ten. Tradition says that he was rocked in a cradle several of his last years. That, certainly, was not an Achillean life. His mother must have let him slip when she dipped him into the liquor which was to make him invulnerable, and he went in, heels and all. Some of the stone bounds to his farm, which he set up, are standing to-day, with his initials cut in them.

The ecclesiastical history of this town interested us somewhat. It appears that “they very early built a small meeting-house, twenty feet square, with a thatched roof through which they might fire their muskets,”—of course, at the Devil. “In 1662, the town agreed that a part of every whale cast on shore be appropriated for the support of the ministry.” No doubt there seemed to be some propriety in thus leaving the support of the ministers to Providence, whose servants they are, and who alone rules the storms; for, when few whales were cast up, they might suspect that their worship was not acceptable. The ministers must have sat upon the cliffs in every storm, and watched the shore with anxiety. And, for my part, if I were a minister, I would rather trust to the bowels of the billows, on the back side of Cape Cod, to cast up a whale for me, than to the generosity of many a country parish that I know. You cannot say of a country minister's salary, commonly, that it is “very like a whale.” Nevertheless, the minister who depended on whales cast up must have had a trying time of it. I would rather have gone to the Falkland Isles with a harpoon, and done with it. Think of

a whale having the breath of life beaten out of him by a storm, and dragging in over the bars and guzzles, for the support of the ministry! What a consolation it must have been to him! I have heard of a minister, who had been a fisherman, being settled in Bridgewater for as long a time as he could tell a cod from a haddock. Generous as it seems, this condition would empty most country pulpits forthwith, for it is long since the fishers of men were fishermen. Also, a duty was put on mackerel here to support a free school; in other words, the mackerel school was taxed in order that the children's school might be free. "In 1665 the Court passed a law to inflict corporal punishment on all persons, who resided in the towns of this government, who denied the Scriptures." Think of a man being whipped on a spring morning, till he was constrained to confess that the Scriptures were true! "It was also voted by the town, that all persons who should stand out of the meeting-house during the time of divine service should be set in the stocks." It behooved such a town to see that sitting in the meeting-house was nothing akin to sitting in the stocks, lest the penalty of obedience to the law might be greater than that of disobedience. This was the Eastham famous of late years for its camp-meetings, held in a grove near by, to which thousands flock from all parts of the Bay. We conjectured that the reason for the perhaps unusual, if not unhealthful development of the religious sentiment here, was the fact that a large portion of the population are women whose husbands and sons are either abroad on the sea, or else drowned, and there is nobody but they and the ministers left

behind. The old account says that "hysterical fits are very common in Orleans, Eastham, and the towns below, particularly on Sunday, in the time of divine service. When one woman is affected, five or six others generally sympathize with her; and the congregation is thrown into the utmost confusion. Several old men suppose, unphilosophically and uncharitably perhaps, that the will is partly concerned, and that ridicule and threats would have a tendency to prevent the evil." How this is now we did not learn. We saw one singularly masculine woman, however, in a house on this very plain, who did not look as if she was ever troubled with hysterics, or sympathized with those that were; or, perchance, life itself was to her a hysterical fit, — a Nauset woman, of a hardness and coarseness such as no man ever possesses or suggests. It was enough to see the vertebræ and sinews of her neck, and her set jaws of iron, which would have bitten a board-nail in two in their ordinary action, — braced against the world, talking like a man-of-war's-man in petticoats, or as if shouting to you through a breaker: who looked as if it made her head ache to live; hard enough for any enormity. I looked upon her as one who had committed infanticide; who never had a brother, unless it were some wee thing that died in infancy, — for what need of him? — and whose father must have died before she was born. This woman told us that the camp-meetings were not held the previous summer for fear of introducing the cholera, and that they would have been held earlier this summer, but the rye was so backward that straw would not have been ready for them; for they lie

in straw. There are sometimes one hundred and fifty ministers (!) and five thousand hearers, assembled. The ground, which is called Millennium Grove, is owned by a company in Boston, and is the most suitable, or rather unsuitable, for this purpose of any that I saw on the Cape. It is fenced, and the frames of the tents are at all times to be seen interspersed among the oaks. They have an oven and a pump, and keep all their kitchen utensils and tent-coverings and furniture in a permanent building on the spot. They select a time for their meetings when the moon is full. A man is appointed to clear out the pump a week beforehand, while the ministers are clearing their throats; but probably the latter do not always deliver as pure a stream as the former. I saw the heaps of clamshells left under the tables, where they had feasted in previous summers, and supposed, of course, that that was the work of the unconverted, or the backsliders and scoffers. It looked as if a camp-meeting must be a singular combination of a prayer-meeting and a picnic.

The first minister settled here was the Rev. Samuel Treat, in 1672, a gentleman who is said to be "entitled to a distinguished rank among the evangelists of New England." He converted many Indians, as well as white men, in his day, and translated the Confession of Faith into the Nauset language. These were the Indians concerning whom their first teacher, Richard Bourne, wrote to Gookin, in 1674, that he had been to see one who was sick, "and there came from him very savory and heavenly expressions," but, with regard to the mass of them, he says, "the truth is, that many of

them are very loose in their course, to my heart-breaking sorrow." Mr. Treat is described as a Calvinist of the strictest kind, not one of those who, by giving up or explaining away, become like a porcupine disarmed of its quills, but a consistent Calvinist, who can dart his quills to a distance and courageously defend himself. There exists a volume of his sermons in manuscript, which, says a commentator, "appear to have been designed for publication." I quote the following sentences at second-hand, from a Discourse on Luke xvi. 23, addressed to sinners:—

"Thou must ere long go to the bottomless pit. Hell hath enlarged herself and is ready to receive thee. There is room enough for thy entertainment. . . .

"Consider thou art going to a place prepared by God on purpose to exalt his justice in; a place made for no other employment but torments. Hell is God's house of correction; and remember God doth all things like himself: When God would show his justice, and what is the weight of his wrath, he makes a hell, where it shall indeed appear to purpose. . . . Woe to thy soul when thou shalt be set up as a butt for the arrows of the Almighty. . . .

"Consider, God himself shall be the principal agent in thy misery. . . . His breath is the bellows which blows up the flame of hell forever: . . . and if he punish thee, if he meet thee in his fury, he will not meet thee as a man; he will give thee an omnipotent blow."

"Some think sinning ends with this life; but it is a mistake. The creature is held under an everlasting law; the damned increase in sin in hell. Possibly the

mention of this may please thee. But remember there shall be no pleasant sins there; no eating, drinking, singing, dancing, wanton dalliance, and drinking stolen waters; but damned sins, bitter hellish sins, sins exasperated by torments, cursing God, spite, rage, and blasphemy. . . . The guilt of all thy sins shall be laid upon thy soul, and be made so many heaps of fuel. . . .

“Sinner, I beseech thee, realize the truth of these things. Do not go about to dream that this is derogatory to God’s mercy, and nothing but a vain fable to scare children out of their wits withal. God can be merciful, though he make thee miserable. He shall have monuments enough of that precious attribute, shining like stars in the place of glory, and singing eternal hallelujahs to the praise of Him that redeemed them, though, to exalt the power of his justice, he damn sinners heaps upon heaps.”

“But,” continues the same writer, “with the advantage of proclaiming the doctrine of terror, which is naturally productive of a sublime and impressive style of eloquence (‘Triumphat ventoso gloriæ curru orator, qui pectus angit, irritat, et implet terroribus.’ Vid. Burnet, *De Stat. Mort.*, p. 309), he could not attain the character of a popular preacher. His voice was so loud, that . . . it could be heard at a great distance from the meeting-house, even amidst the shrieks of hysterical women, and the winds that howled over the plains of Nauset: but there was no more music in it than in the discordant sounds with which it was mingled.”

“The effect of his preaching,” it is said, “was that his hearers were several times, in the course of

his ministry, awakened and alarmed;” and on one occasion a comparatively innocent young man was frightened nearly out of his wits, and Mr. Treat had to exert himself to make hell seem somewhat cooler to him; yet we are assured that Treat’s “manners were cheerful, his conversation pleasant, and sometimes facetious, but always decent. He was fond of a stroke of humor and a practical joke, and manifested his relish for them by long and loud fits of laughter.”

This was the man of whom a well-known anecdote is told, which doubtless many of my readers have heard, but which, nevertheless, I will venture to quote:—

“After his marriage with the daughter of Mr. Willard [pastor of the South Church in Boston], he was sometimes invited by that gentleman to preach in his pulpit. Mr. Willard possessed a graceful delivery, a masculine and harmonious voice; and, though he did not gain much reputation by his ‘Body of Divinity,’ which is frequently sneered at, particularly by those who have not read it, yet in his sermons are strength of thought and energy of language. The natural consequence was that he was generally admired. Mr. Treat, having preached one of his best discourses to the congregation of his father-in-law, in his usual unhappy manner, excited universal disgust; and several nice judges waited on Mr. Willard, and begged that Mr. Treat, who was a worthy, pious man, it was true, but a wretched preacher, might never be invited into his pulpit again. To this request Mr. Willard made no reply; but he desired his son-in-law to lend him the discourse; which being left with him, he delivered it

without alteration to his people a few weeks after. . . . They flew to Mr. Willard and requested a copy for the press. 'See the difference,' they cried, 'between yourself and your son-in-law; you have preached a sermon on the same text as Mr. Treat's, but whilst his was contemptible, yours is excellent.' As is observed in a note, "Mr. Willard, after producing the sermon in the handwriting of Mr. Treat, might have addressed these sage critics in the words of Phædrus, —

'En hic declarat, quales sitis judices.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Treat died of a stroke of the palsy, just after the memorable storm known as the Great Snow, which left the ground around his house entirely bare, but heaped up the snow in the road to an uncommon height. Through this an arched way was dug, by which the Indians bore his body to the grave.

The reader will imagine us, all the while, steadily traversing that extensive plain in a direction a little north of east toward Nauset Beach, and reading under our umbrellas as we sailed, while it blowed hard with mingled mist and rain, as if we were approaching a fit anniversary of Mr. Treat's funeral. We fancied that it was such a moor as that on which somebody perished in the snow, as is related in the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life."

The next minister settled here was the "Rev. Samuel Osborn, who was born in Ireland, and educated at the University of Dublin." He is said to have been "a man of wisdom and virtue," and taught his people

<sup>1</sup> Lib. v. Fab. 5.

the use of peat, and the art of drying and preparing it, which, as they had scarcely any other fuel, was a great blessing to them. He also introduced improvements in agriculture. But, notwithstanding his many services, as he embraced the religion of Arminius, some of his flock became dissatisfied. At length, an ecclesiastical council consisting of ten ministers with their churches sat upon him, and they, naturally enough, spoiled his usefulness. The council convened at the desire of two divine philosophers, Joseph Doane and Nathaniel Freeman.

In their report they say, "It appears to the council that the Rev. Mr. Osborn hath, in his preaching to this people, said, that what Christ did and suffered doth nothing abate or diminish our obligation to obey the law of God, and that Christ's suffering and obedience were for himself; both parts of which, we think, contain dangerous error."

"Also: 'It hath been said, and doth appear to this council, that the Rev. Mr. Osborn, both in public and in private, asserted that there are no promises in the Bible but what are conditional, which we think, also, to be an error, and do say that there are promises which are absolute and without any condition, — such as the promise of a new heart, and that he will write his law in our hearts.'"

"Also, they say, 'it hath been alleged, and doth appear to us, that Mr. Osborn hath declared, that *obedience* is a considerable *cause* of a person's justification, which, we think, contains very dangerous error.'"

And many the like distinctions they made, such as

some of my readers, probably, are more familiar with than I am. So, far in the East, among the Yezidis, or Worshipers of the Devil, so-called, the Chaldæans, and others, according to the testimony of travelers, you may still hear these remarkable disputations on doctrinal points going on. Osborn was, accordingly, dismissed, and he removed to Boston, where he kept school for many years. But he was fully justified, methinks, by his works in the peat meadow; one proof of which is, that he lived to be between ninety and one hundred years old.

The next minister was the Rev. Benjamin Webb, of whom, though a neighboring clergyman pronounced him "the best man and the best minister whom he ever knew," yet the historian says, that,—

"As he spent his days in the uniform discharge of his duty [it reminds one of a country muster] and there were no shades to give relief to his character, not much can be said of him. [Pity the Devil did not plant a few shade-trees along his avenues.] His heart was as pure as the new-fallen snow, which completely covers every dark spot in a field; his mind was as serene as the sky in a mild evening of June, when the full moon shines without a cloud. Name any virtue, and that virtue he practiced; name any vice, and that vice he shunned. But if peculiar qualities marked his character, they were his humility, his gentleness, and his love of God. The people had long been taught by a son of thunder [Mr. Treat]; in him they were instructed by a son of consolation, who sweetly allured them to virtue by soft persuasion, and by exhibiting the mercy of the Supreme Being ;

for his thoughts were so much in heaven, that they seldom descended to the dismal regions below ; and though of the same religious sentiments as Mr. Treat, yet his attention was turned to those glad tidings of great joy which a Saviour came to publish."

We were interested to hear that such a man had trodden the plains of Nauset.

Turning over further in our book, our eyes fell on the name of the Rev. Jonathan Bascom of Orleans : "Senex emunctae naris, doctus, et auctor elegantium verborum; facetus, et dulcis festique sermonis." And, again, on that of the Rev. Nathan Stone, of Dennis: "Vir humilis, mitis, blandus, advenarum hospes; [there was need of him there ;] suis commodis in terrâ non studens, reconditis thesauris in coelo." An easy virtue that, there, for methinks no inhabitant of Dennis could be very studious about his earthly commodity, but must regard the bulk of his treasures as in heaven. But probably the most just and pertinent character of all is that which appears to be given to the Rev. Ephraim Briggs, of Chatham, in the language of the later Romans, "*Seip, sepoese, sepoemese, wechekum,*"—which not being interpreted, we know not what it means, though we have no doubt it occurs somewhere in the Scriptures, probably in the Apostle Eliot's Epistle to the Nipmucks.

Let no one think that I do not love the old ministers. They were, probably, the best men of their generation, and they deserve that their biographies should fill the pages of the town histories. If I could but hear the "glad tidings" of which they tell, and which, per-

chance, they heard, I might write in a worthier strain than this.

There was no better way to make the reader realize how wide and peculiar that plain was, and how long it took to traverse it, than by inserting these extracts in the midst of my narrative.