HENRY DAVID THOREAU

CAPE COD

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

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Henry David Thoreau – A Biographical Primer

1817-1862 - American recluse, naturalist and writer, was born at Concord, Massachusetts, on the 12th of July 1817. To Thoreau this Concord country contained all of beauty and even grandeur that was necessary to the worshipper of nature: he once journeyed to Canada; he went west on one occasion; he sailed and explored a few rivers; for the rest, he haunted Concord and its neighbourhood as faithfully as the stork does its ancestral nest. John Thoreau, his father, who married the daughter of a New England clergyman, was the son of a John Thoreau of the isle of Jersey, who, in Boston, married a Scottish lady of the name of Burns. This last-named John was the son of Philippe Thoreau and his wife Marie le Gallais, persons of pure French blood, settled at St Helier, in Jersey. From his New England Puritan mother, from his Scottish grandmother, from his Jersey-American grandfather and from his remoter French

ancestry Thoreau inherited distinctive traits: the Saxon element perhaps predominated, but the “hauntings of Celtism” were prevalent and potent. The stock of the Thoreaus was a robust one; and in Concord the family, though never wealthy nor officially influential, was ever held in peculiar respect. As a boy, Henry drove his mother's cow to the pastures, and thus early became enamoured of certain aspects of nature and of certain delights of solitude. At school and at Harvard University he in nowise distinguished himself, though he was an intelligently receptive student; he became, however, proficient enough in Greek, Latin, and the more general acquirements to enable him to act for a time as a master. But long before this he had become apprenticed to the learning of nature in preference to that of man: when only twelve years of age he had made collections for Agassiz, who had then just arrived in America, and already the meadows and the hedges and the stream-sides had become cabinets of rare knowledge to him. On the desertion of schoolmastering as a profession, Thoreau became a lecturer and author, though it was the labour of his hands which mainly supported him through many years of his life: professionally he was a surveyor. In the effort to reduce the practice of economy to a fine art he arrived at the conviction that the less labour a man did, over and above the positive demands of necessity, the better for him and for the community at large; he would have had the order of the week reversed — six days of rest for one of labour. It was in 1845 he made the now famous experiment of Walden. Desirous of proving to himself and others that man could be as independent of this kind as the nest-building bird, Thoreau retired to a hut of bis own construction on the pine-slope over against the shores of Walden Pond — a hut which he built, furnished and kept in order entirely by the labour of his own hands. During the two years of his residence in Walden woods he lived by the exercise of a little surveying, a little job-work and the

tillage of a few acres of ground which produced him his beans and potatoes. His absolute independence was as little gained as if he had camped out in Hyde Park; relatively he lived the life of a recluse. He read considerably, wrote abundantly, thought actively if not widely, and came to know beasts, birds and fishes with an intimacy more extraordinary than was the case with St Francis of Assisi. Birds came at his call, and forgot their hereditary fear of man; beasts lipped and caressed him; the very fish in lake and stream would glide, unfearful, between his hands. This exquisite familiarity with bird and beast would make us love the memory of Thoreau if his egotism were triply as arrogant, if his often meaningless paradoxes were even more absurd, if his sympathies were even less humanitarian than we know them to have been. His *Walden*, the record of this fascinating two years' experience, must always remain a production of great interest and considerable psychological value. Some years before Thoreau took to Walden woods he made the chief friendship of his life, that with Emerson. He became one of the famous circle of the transcendentalists, always keenly preserving his own individuality amongst such more or less potent natures as Emerson, Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller. From Emerson he gained more than from any man, alive or dead; and, though the older philosopher both enjoyed and learned from the association with the younger, it cannot be said that the gain was equal. There was nothing electrical in Thoreau's intercourse with his fellow men; he gave off no spiritual sparks. He absorbed intensely, but when called upon to illuminate in turn was found wanting. It is with a sense of relief that we read of his having really been stirred into active enthusiasm anent the wrongs done the ill-fated John Brown. With children he was affectionate and gentle, with old people and strangers considerate. In a word, he loved his kind as animals, but did not seem to find them as interesting as those furred and

feathered. In 1847 Thoreau left Walden Lake abruptly, and for a time occupied himself with lead-pencil making, the parental trade. He never married, thus further fulfilling his policy of what one of his essayist-biographers has termed “indulgence in fine renouncements.” At the comparatively early age of forty-five he died, on the 6th of May 1862. His grave is in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery at Concord, beside those of Hawthorne and Emerson. Thoreau's fame will rest on *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston, 1854) and the *Excursions* (Boston, 1863), though he wrote nothing which is not deserving of notice. Up till his thirtieth year he dabbled in verse, but he had little ear for metrical music, and he lacked the spiritual impulsiveness of the true poet. His weakness as a philosopher is his tendency to base the laws of the universe on the experience-born, thought-produced convictions of one man — himself. His weakness as a writer is the too frequent striving after antithesis and paradox. If he had had all his own originality without the itch of appearing original, he would have made his fascination irresistible. As it is, Thoreau holds a unique place. He was a naturalist, but absolutely devoid of the pedantry of science; a keen observer, but no retailer of disjointed facts. He thus holds sway over two domains: he had the adherence of the lovers of fact and of the children of fancy. He must always be read, whether lovingly or interestedly, for he has all the variable charm, the strange saturninity, the contradictions, austerities and delightful surprises, of Nature herself.

Cape Cod

Introduction

Of the group of notables who in the middle of the last century made the little Massachusetts town of Concord their home, and who thus conferred on it a literary fame both unique and enduring, Thoreau is the only one who was Concord born. His neighbor, Emerson, had sought the place in mature life for rural retirement, and after it became his chosen retreat, Hawthorne, Alcott, and the others followed; but Thoreau, the most peculiar genius of them all, was native to the soil.

In 1837, at the age of twenty, he graduated from Harvard, and for three years taught school in his home town. Then he applied himself to the business in which his father was engaged,—the manufacture of lead pencils. He believed he could make a better pencil than any at that time in use; but when he succeeded and his friends congratulated him that he had now opened his way to fortune he responded that he would never make another pencil. "Why should I?" said he. "I would not do again what I have done once."

So he turned his attention to miscellaneous studies and to nature. When he wanted money he earned it by some piece of manual labor agreeable to him, as building a boat or a fence, planting, or surveying. He never married, very rarely went to church, did not vote, refused to pay a tax to the State, ate no flesh, drank no wine, used no tobacco; and for a long time he was simply an oddity in the estimation of his fellow-townsmen. But when they at length came to understand him better they recognized his genuineness and sincerity and his originality, and they revered and admired him. He was entirely independent of the conventional, and his courage to live as he saw fit and to defend and uphold what he believed to be right never failed him. Indeed, so devoted was he to principle and his own ideals that he seems never to have allowed himself one indifferent or careless moment.

He was a man of the strongest local attachments, and seldom wandered beyond his native township. A trip abroad did not tempt him in the least. It would mean in his estimation just so much time lost for enjoying his own village, and he says: "At best, Paris could only be a school in which to learn to live here—a stepping-stone to Concord."

He had a very pronounced antipathy to the average prosperous city man, and in speaking of persons of this class remarks: "They do a little business commonly each day in order to pay their board, and then they congregate in sitting-rooms, and feebly fabulate and paddle in the social slush, and go unashamed to their beds and take on a new layer of sloth."

The men he loved were those of a more primitive sort, unartificial, with the daring to cut loose from the trammels of fashion and inherited custom. Especially he liked the companionship of men who were in close contact with nature. A half-wild Irishman, or some rude farmer, or fisherman, or hunter, gave him real delight; and for this reason, Cape Cod appealed to him strongly. It was then a very isolated portion of the State, and its dwellers were just the sort of independent, self-reliant folk to attract him. In his account of his rambles there the human element has large place, and he lingers fondly over the characteristics of his chance acquaintances and notes every salient remark. They, in turn, no doubt found him interesting, too, though the purposes of the wanderer were a good deal of a mystery to them, and they were inclined to think he was a pedler.

His book was the result of several journeys, but the only trip of which he tells us in detail was in October. That month, therefore, was the one I chose for my own visit to the Cape when I went to secure the series of pictures that illustrate this edition; for I wished to see the region as nearly as possible in the same guise that Thoreau describes it. From Sandwich, where his record of Cape experiences begins, and where the inner shore first takes a decided turn eastward, I followed much the same route he had travelled in 1849, clear to Provincetown, at the very tip of the hook.

Thoreau has a good deal to say of the sandy roads and toilsome walking. In that respect there has been marked improvement, for latterly a large proportion of the main highway has been macadamed. Yet one still encounters plenty of the old yielding sand roads that make travel a weariness either on foot or in teams. Another feature to which the nature lover again and again refers is the windmills. The last of these ceased grinding a score of years ago, though several continue to stand in fairly perfect condition. There have been changes on the Cape, but the landscape in the main presents the same appearance it did in Thoreau's time. As to the people, if you see them in an unconventional way, tramping as Thoreau did, their individuality retains much of the interest that he discovered.

Our author's report of his trip has a piquancy that is quite alluring. This might be said of all his books, for no matter what he wrote about, his comments were certain to be unusual; and it is as much or more for the revelations of his own tastes, thoughts, and idiosyncrasies that we read him as for the subject matter with which he deals. He had published only two books when he died in 1862 at the age of forty-four, and his "Cape Cod" did not appear until 1865. Nor did the public at first show any marked interest in his books. During his life, therefore, the circle of his admirers was very small, but his fame has steadily increased since, and the stimulus of his lively descriptions and observations seems certain of enduring appreciation.

Clifton Johnson. Hadley, Mass.

I - The Shipwreck

Wishing to get a better view than I had yet had of the ocean, which, we are told, covers more than two-thirds of the globe, but of which a man who lives a few miles inland may never see any trace, more than of another world, I made a visit to Cape Cod in October, 1849, another the succeeding June, and another to Truro in July, 1855; the first and last time with a single companion, the second time alone. I have spent, in all, about three weeks on the Cape; walked from Eastham to Province-town twice on the Atlantic side, and once on the Bay side also, excepting four or five miles, and crossed the Cape half a dozen times on my way; but having come so fresh to the sea, I have got but little salted. My readers must expect only so much saltness as the land breeze acquires from blowing over an arm of the sea, or is tasted on the windows and the bark of trees twenty miles inland, after September gales. I have been accustomed to make excursions to the ponds within ten miles of Concord, but latterly I have extended my excursions to the seashore.

I did not see why I might not make a book on Cape Cod, as well as my neighbor on "Human Culture." It is but another name for the same thing, and hardly a sandier phase of it. As for my title, I suppose that the word Cape is from the French *cap*; which is from the Latin *caput*, a head; which is, perhaps, from the verb *capere*, to take,—that being the part by which we take hold of a thing:—Take Time by the forelock. It is also the safest part to take a serpent by. And as for Cod, that was derived directly from that "great store of codfish" which Captain Bartholomew Gosnold caught there in 1602; which fish appears to have been so called from the Saxon word *codde*, "a case in which seeds are lodged," either from the form of the fish, or the quantity of

spawn it contains; whence also, perhaps, *codling* (*pomum coctile?*) and coddle,—to cook green like peas. (V. Dic.)

Cape Cod is the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts: the shoulder is at Buzzard's Bay; the elbow, or crazy-bone, at Cape Mallebarre; the wrist at Truro; and the sandy fist at Provincetown,—behind which the State stands on her guard, with her back to the Green Mountains, and her feet planted on the floor of the ocean, like an athlete protecting her Bay,—boxing with northeast storms, and, ever and anon, heaving up her Atlantic adversary from the lap of earth,—ready to thrust forward her other fist, which keeps guard the while upon her breast at Cape Ann.

On studying the map, I saw that there must be an uninterrupted beach on the east or outside of the forearm of the Cape, more than thirty miles from the general line of the coast, which would afford a good sea view, but that, on account of an opening in the beach, forming the entrance to Nauset Harbor, in Orleans, I must strike it in Eastham, if I approached it by land, and probably I could walk thence straight to Race Point, about twenty-eight miles, and not meet with any obstruction.

We left Concord, Massachusetts, on Tuesday, October 9th, 1849. On reaching Boston, we found that the Provincetown steamer, which should have got in the day before, had not yet arrived, on account of a violent storm; and, as we noticed in the streets a handbill headed, "Death! one hundred and forty-five lives lost at Cohasset," we decided to go by way of Cohasset. We found many Irish in the cars, going to identify bodies and to sympathize with the survivors, and also to attend the funeral which was to take place in the afternoon;—and when we arrived at Cohasset, it appeared that nearly all the passengers were bound for the beach, which was about a mile distant, and many other

persons were flocking in from the neighboring country. There were several hundreds of them streaming off over Cohasset common in that direction, some on foot and some in wagons,—and among them were some sportsmen in their hunting-jackets, with their guns, and game-bags, and dogs. As we passed the graveyard we saw a large hole, like a cellar, freshly dug there, and, just before reaching the shore, by a pleasantly winding and rocky road, we met several hay-riggings and farm-wagons coming away toward the meeting-house, each loaded with three large, rough deal boxes. We did not need to ask what was in them. The owners of the wagons were made the undertakers. Many horses in carriages were fastened to the fences near the shore, and, for a mile or more, up and down, the beach was covered with people looking out for bodies, and examining the fragments of the wreck. There was a small island called Brook Island, with a hut on it, lying just off the shore. This is said to be the rockiest shore in Massachusetts, from Nantasket to Scituate,—hard sienitic rocks, which the waves have laid bare, but have not been able to crumble. It has been the scene of many a shipwreck.

The brig *St. John*, from Galway, Ireland, laden with emigrants, was wrecked on Sunday morning; it was now Tuesday morning, and the sea was still breaking violently on the rocks. There were eighteen or twenty of the same large boxes that I have mentioned, lying on a green hillside, a few rods from the water, and surrounded by a crowd. The bodies which had been recovered, twenty-seven or eight in all, had been collected there. Some were rapidly nailing down the lids, others were carting the boxes away, and others were lifting the lids, which were yet loose, and peeping under the cloths, for each body, with such rags as still adhered to it, was covered loosely with a white sheet. I witnessed no signs of grief, but there was a sober dispatch of business which was affecting. One man was seeking to

identify a particular body, and one undertaker or carpenter was calling to another to know in what box a certain child was put. I saw many marble feet and matted heads as the cloths were raised, and one livid, swollen, and mangled body of a drowned girl,—who probably had intended to go out to service in some American family,—to which some rags still adhered, with a string, half concealed by the flesh, about its swollen neck; the coiled-up wreck of a human hulk, gashed by the rocks or fishes, so that the bone and muscle were exposed, but quite bloodless,—merely red and white,—with wide-open and staring eyes, yet lustreless, dead-lights; or like the cabin windows of a stranded vessel, filled with sand. Sometimes there were two or more children, or a parent and child, in the same box, and on the lid would perhaps be written with red chalk, "Bridget such-a-one, and sister's child." The surrounding sward was covered with bits of sails and clothing. I have since heard, from one who lives by this beach, that a woman who had come over before, but had left her infant behind for her sister to bring, came and looked into these boxes and saw in one,—probably the same whose superscription I have quoted,—her child in her sister's arms, as if the sister had meant to be found thus; and within three days after, the mother died from the effect of that sight.

We turned from this and walked along the rocky shore. In the first cove were strewn what seemed the fragments of a vessel, in small pieces mixed with sand and sea-weed, and great quantities of feathers; but it looked so old and rusty, that I at first took it to be some old wreck which had lain there many years. I even thought of Captain Kidd, and that the feathers were those which sea-fowl had cast there; and perhaps there might be some tradition about it in the neighborhood. I asked a sailor if that was the *St. John*. He said it was. I asked him where she struck. He pointed to a

rock in front of us, a mile from the shore, called the Grampus Rock, and added:

"You can see a part of her now sticking up; it looks like a small boat."

I saw it. It was thought to be held by the chain-cables and the anchors. I asked if the bodies which I saw were all that were drowned.

"Not a quarter of them," said he.

"Where are the rest?"

"Most of them right underneath that piece you see."

It appeared to us that there was enough rubbish to make the wreck of a large vessel in this cove alone, and that it would take many days to cart it off. It was several feet deep, and here and there was a bonnet or a jacket on it. In the very midst of the crowd about this wreck, there were men with carts busily collecting the sea-weed which the storm had cast up, and conveying it beyond the reach of the tide, though they were often obliged to separate fragments of clothing from it, and they might at any moment have found a human body under it. Drown who might, they did not forget that this weed was a valuable manure. This shipwreck had not produced a visible vibration in the fabric of society.

About a mile south we could see, rising above the rocks, the masts of the British brig which the *St. John* had endeavored to follow, which had slipped her cables and, by good luck, run into the mouth of Cohasset Harbor. A little further along the shore we saw a man's clothes on a rock; further, a woman's scarf, a gown, a straw bonnet, the brig's

caboose, and one of her masts high and dry, broken into several pieces. In another rocky cove, several rods from the water, and behind rocks twenty feet high, lay a part of one side of the vessel, still hanging together. It was, perhaps, forty feet long, by fourteen wide. I was even more surprised at the power of the waves, exhibited on this shattered fragment, than I had been at the sight of the smaller fragments before. The largest timbers and iron braces were broken superfluously, and I saw that no material could withstand the power of the waves; that iron must go to pieces in such a case, and an iron vessel would be cracked up like an egg-shell on the rocks. Some of these timbers, however, were so rotten that I could almost thrust my umbrella through them. They told us that some were saved on this piece, and also showed where the sea had heaved it into this cove, which was now dry. When I saw where it had come in, and in what condition, I wondered that any had been saved on it. A little further on a crowd of men was collected around the mate of the *St. John*, who was telling his story. He was a slim-looking youth, who spoke of the captain as the master, and seemed a little excited. He was saying that when they jumped into the boat, she filled, and, the vessel lurching, the weight of the water in the boat caused the painter to break, and so they were separated. Whereat one man came away, saying:—

"Well, I don't see but he tells a straight story enough. You see, the weight of the water in the boat broke the painter. A boat full of water is very heavy,"—and so on, in a loud and impertinently earnest tone, as if he had a bet depending on it, but had no humane interest in the matter.

Another, a large man, stood near by upon a rock, gazing into the sea, and chewing large quids of tobacco, as if that habit were forever confirmed with him.

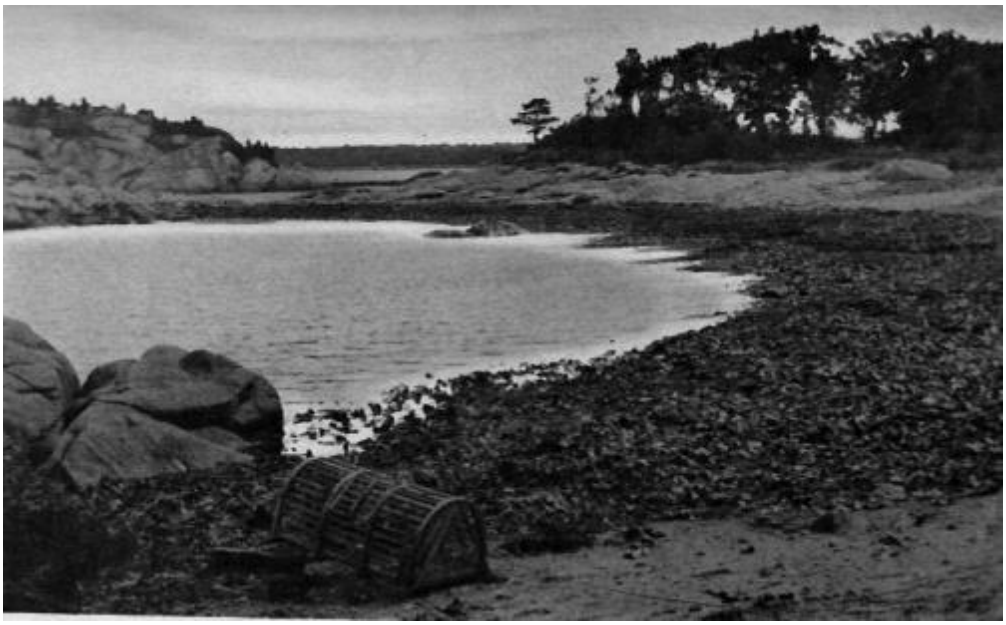
"Come," says another to his companion, "let's be off. We've seen the whole of it. It's no use to stay to the funeral."

Further, we saw one standing upon a rock, who, we were told, was one that was saved. He was a sober-looking man, dressed in a jacket and gray pantaloons, with his hands in the pockets. I asked him a few questions, which he answered; but he seemed unwilling to talk about it, and soon walked away. By his side stood one of the life-boatmen, in an oil-cloth jacket, who told us how they went to the relief of the British brig, thinking that the boat of the *St. John*, which they passed on the way, held all her crew,—for the waves prevented their seeing those who were on the vessel, though they might have saved some had they known there were any there. A little further was the flag of the *St. John* spread on a rock to dry, and held down by stones at the corners. This frail, but essential and significant portion of the vessel, which had so long been the sport of the winds, was sure to reach the shore. There were one or two houses visible from these rocks, in which were some of the survivors recovering from the shock which their bodies and minds had sustained. One was not expected to live.

We kept on down the shore as far as a promontory called Whitehead, that we might see more of the Cohasset Rocks. In a little cove, within half a mile, there were an old man and his son collecting, with their team, the sea-weed which that fatal storm had cast up, as serenely employed as if there had never been a wreck in the world, though they were within sight of the Grampus Rock, on which the *St. John* had struck. The old man had heard that there was a wreck, and knew most of the particulars, but he said that he had not been up there since it happened. It was the wrecked weed that concerned him most, rock-weed, kelp, and sea-weed, as he named them, which he carted to his

barn-yard; and those bodies were to him but other weeds which the tide cast up, but which were of no use to him. We afterwards came to the life-boat in its harbor, waiting for another emergency,—and in the afternoon we saw the funeral procession at a distance, at the head of which walked the captain with the other survivors.

On the whole, it was not so impressive a scene as I might have expected. If I had found one body cast upon the beach in some lonely place, it would have affected me more. I sympathized rather with the winds and waves, as if to toss and mangle these poor human bodies was the order of the day. If this was the law of Nature, why waste any time in awe or pity? If the last day were come, we should not think so much about the separation of friends or the blighted prospects of individuals. I saw that corpses might be multiplied, as on the field of battle, till they no longer affected us in any degree, as exceptions to the common lot of humanity. Take all the graveyards together, they are always the majority. It is the individual and private that demands our sympathy. A man can attend but one funeral in the course of his life, can behold but one corpse. Yet I saw that the inhabitants of the shore would be not a little affected by this event. They would watch there many days and nights for the sea to give up its dead, and their imaginations and sympathies would supply the place of mourners far away, who as yet knew not of the wreck. Many days after this, something white was seen floating on the water by one who was sauntering on the beach. It was approached in a boat, and found to be the body of a woman, which had risen in an upright position, whose white cap was blown back with the wind. I saw that the beauty of the shore itself was wrecked for many a lonely walker there, until he could perceive, at last, how its beauty was enhanced by wrecks like this, and it acquired thus a rarer and sublimer beauty still.



Cohasset—The little cove at Whitehead promontory

Why care for these dead bodies? They really have no friends but the worms or fishes. Their owners were coming to the New World, as Columbus and the Pilgrims did,—they were within a mile of its shores; but, before they could reach it, they emigrated to a newer world than ever Columbus dreamed of, yet one of whose existence we believe that there is far more universal and convincing evidence—though it has not yet been discovered by science—than Columbus had of this; not merely mariners' tales and some paltry drift-wood and sea-weed, but a continual drift and instinct to all our shores. I saw their empty hulks that came to land; but they themselves, meanwhile, were cast upon some shore yet further west, toward which we are all tending, and which we shall reach at last, it may be through storm and darkness, as they did. No doubt, we have reason to thank God that they have not been "shipwrecked into life again." The mariner who makes the safest port in Heaven, perchance, seems to his friends on

earth to be shipwrecked, for they deem Boston Harbor the better place; though perhaps invisible to them, a skillful pilot comes to meet him, and the fairest and balmiest gales blow off that coast, his good ship makes the land in halcyon days, and he kisses the shore in rapture there, while his old hulk tosses in the surf here. It is hard to part with one's body, but, no doubt, it is easy enough to do without it when once it is gone. All their plans and hopes burst like a bubble! Infants by the score dashed on the rocks by the enraged Atlantic Ocean! No, no! If the *St. John* did not make her port here, she has been telegraphed there. The strongest wind cannot stagger a Spirit; it is a Spirit's breath. A just man's purpose cannot be split on any Grampus or material rock, but itself will split rocks till it succeeds.

The verses addressed to Columbus, dying, may, with slight alterations, be applied to the passengers of the *St. John:*—

"Soon with them will all be over,
Soon the voyage will be begun
That shall bear them to discover,
Far away, a land unknown.

"Land that each, alone, must visit,
But no tidings bring to men;
For no sailor, once departed,
Ever hath returned again.

"No carved wood, no broken branches,
Ever drift from that far wild;
He who on that ocean launches
Meets no corse of angel child.

"Undismayed, my noble sailors,
Spread, then spread your canvas out;

Spirits! on a sea of ether
Soon shall ye serenely float!

"Where the deep no plummet soundeth,
Fear no hidden breakers there,
And the fanning wing of angels
Shall your bark right onward bear.

"Quit, now, full of heart and comfort,
These rude shores, they are of earth;
Where the rosy clouds are parting,
There the blessed isles loom forth."

One summer day, since this, I came this way, on foot, along the shore from Boston. It was so warm that some horses had climbed to the very top of the ramparts of the old fort at Hull, where there was hardly room to turn round, for the sake of the breeze. The *Datura stramonium*, or thorn-apple, was in full bloom along the beach; and, at sight of this cosmopolite,—this Captain Cook among plants,—carried in ballast all over the world, I felt as if I were on the highway of nations. Say, rather, this Viking, king of the Bays, for it is not an innocent plant; it suggests not merely commerce, but its attend-ant vices, as if its fibres were the stuff of which pirates spin their yarns. I heard the voices of men shouting aboard a vessel, half a mile from the shore, which sounded as if they were in a barn in the country, they being between the sails. It was a purely rural sound. As I looked over the water, I saw the isles rapidly wasting away, the sea nibbling voraciously at the continent, the springing arch of a hill suddenly interrupted, as at Point Alderton,—what botanists might call premorse,—showing, by its curve against the sky, how much space it must have occupied, where now was water only, On the other hand, these wrecks of isles were being fancifully arranged into new shores, as at Hog Island, inside of Hull, where everything

seemed to be gently lapsing, into futurity. This isle had got the very form of a ripple,—and I thought that the inhabitants should bear a ripple for device on their shields, a wave passing over them, with the *datura*, which is said to produce mental alienation of long duration without affecting the bodily health, [1] springing from its edge. The most interesting thing which I heard of, in this township of Hull, was an unfailing spring, whose locality was pointed out to me, on the side of a distant hill, as I was panting along the shore, though I did not visit it. Perhaps, if I should go through Rome, it would be some spring on the Capitoline Hill I should remember the longest. It is true, I was somewhat interested in the well at the old French fort, which was said to be ninety feet deep, with a cannon at the bottom of it. On Nantasket beach I counted a dozen chaises from the public-house. From time to time the riders turned their horses toward the sea, standing in the water for the coolness,—and I saw the value of beaches to cities for the sea breeze and the bath.

At Jerusalem village the inhabitants were collecting in haste, before a thunder-shower now approaching, the Irish moss which they had spread to dry. The shower passed on one side, and gave me a few drops only, which did not cool the air. I merely felt a puff upon my cheek, though, within sight, a vessel was capsized in the bay, and several others dragged their anchors, and were near going ashore. The sea-bathing at Cohasset Rocks was perfect. The water was purer and more transparent than any I had ever seen. There was not a particle of mud or slime about it. The bottom being sandy, I could see the sea-perch swimming about. The smooth and fantastically worn rocks, and the perfectly clean and tress-like rock-weeds falling over you, and attached so firmly to the rocks that you could pull yourself up by them, greatly enhanced the luxury of the bath. The stripe of barnacles just above the weeds

reminded me of some vegetable growth,—the buds, and petals, and seed-vessels of flowers. They lay along the seams of the rock like buttons on a waistcoat. It was one of the hottest days in the year, yet I found the water so icy cold that I could swim but a stroke or two, and thought that, in case of shipwreck, there would be more danger of being chilled to death than simply drowned. One immersion was enough to make you forget the dog-days utterly. Though you were sweltering before, it will take you half an hour now to remember that it was ever warm. There were the tawny rocks, like lions couchant, defying the ocean, whose waves incessantly dashed against and scoured them with vast quantities of gravel. The water held in their little hollows, on the receding of the tide, was so crystalline that I could not believe it salt, but wished to drink it; and higher up were basins of fresh water left by the rain,—all which, being also of different depths and temperature, were convenient for different kinds of baths. Also, the larger hollows in the smoothed rocks formed the most convenient of seats and dressing-rooms. In these respects it was the most perfect seashore that I had seen.

I saw in Cohasset, separated from the sea only by a narrow beach, a handsome but shallow lake of some four hundred acres, which, I was told, the sea had tossed over the beach in a great storm in the spring, and, after the alewives had passed into it, it had stopped up its outlet, and now the alewives were dying: by thousands, and the inhabitants were apprehending a pestilence as the water evaporated. It had live rocky islets in it.

This Rock shore is called Pleasant Cove, on some maps; on the map of Cohasset, that name appears to be confined to the particular cove where I saw the wreck of the St. J aim. The ocean did not look, now, as if any were ever shipwrecked in it; it was not grand and sub-lime, but

beautiful as a lake. Not a vestige of a wreck was visible, nor could I believe that the bones of many a shipwrecked man were buried in that pure sand. But to go on with our first excursion.

[1] The Jamestown weed (or thorn-apple). "This, being an early plant, was gathered very young for a boiled salad, by some of the soldiers sent thither [*i.e.* to Virginia] to quell the rebellion of Bacon; and some of them ate plentifully of it, the effect of which was a very pleasant comedy, for they turned natural fools upon it for several days: one would blow up a feather in the air; another would dart straws at it with much fury; and another, stark naked, was sitting up in a corner like a monkey, grinning and making mows at them; a fourth would fondly kiss and paw his companions, and sneer in their faces, with a countenance more antic than any in a Dutch droll. In this frantic condition they were confined, lest they should, in their folly, destroy themselves,—though it was observed that all their actions were full of innocence and good nature. Indeed, they were not very cleanly. A thousand such simple tricks they played, and after eleven days returned to themselves again, not remembering anything that had passed."—Beverly's *History of Virginia*, p. 120.

Ii - Stage Coach Views

After spending the night in Bridgewater, and picking up a few arrow-heads there in the morning, we took the cars for Sandwich, where we arrived before noon. This was the terminus of the "Cape Cod Railroad," though it is but the beginning of the Cape. As it rained hard, with driving mists, and there was no sign of its holding up, we here took that almost obsolete conveyance, the stage, for "as far as it

went that day," as we told the driver. We had for-gotten how far a stage could go in a day, but we were told that the Cape roads were very "heavy," though they added that, being of sand, the rain would improve them. This coach was an exceedingly narrow one, but as there was a slight spherical excess over two on a seat, the driver waited till nine passengers had got in, without taking the measure of any of them, and then shut the door after two or three ineffectual slams, as if the fault were all in the hinges or the latch,—while we timed our inspirations and expirations so as to assist him.

We were now fairly on the Cape, which extends from Sandwich eastward thirty-five miles, and thence north and northwest thirty more, in all sixty-five, and has an average breadth of about five miles. In the interior it rises to the height of two hundred, and sometimes perhaps three hundred feet above the level of the sea. According to Hitchcock, the geologist of the State, it is composed almost entirely of sand, even to the depth of three hundred feet in some places, though there is probably a concealed core of rock a little beneath the surface, and it is of diluvian origin, excepting a small portion at the extremity and elsewhere along the shores, which is alluvial. For the first half of the Cape large blocks of stone are found, here and there, mixed with the sand, but for the last thirty miles boulders, or even gravel, are rarely met with. Hitchcock conjectures that the ocean has, in course of time, eaten out Boston, Harbor and other bays in the mainland, and that the minute fragments have been deposited by the currents at a distance from the shore, and formed this sand-bank. Above the sand, if the surface is subjected to agricultural tests, there is found to be a thin layer of soil gradually diminishing from Barnstable to Truro, where it ceases; but there are many holes and rents in this weather-beaten garment not likely to be stitched in time, which reveal the

naked flesh of the Cape, and its extremity is completely bare.

I at once got out my book, the eighth volume of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, printed in 1802, which contains some short notices of the Cape towns, and began to read up to where I was, for in the cars I could not read as fast as I travelled. To those who came from the side of Plymouth, it said: "After riding through a body of woods, twelve miles in extent, interspersed with but few houses, the settlement of Sandwich appears, with a more agreeable effect, to the eye of the traveller." Another writer speaks of this as a *beautiful* village. But I think that our villages will bear to be contrasted only with one another, not with Nature. I have no great respect for the writer's taste, who talks easily about beautiful villages, embellished, perchance, with a "fulling-mill," "a handsome academy," or meeting-house, and "a number of shops for the different mechanic arts"; where the green and white houses of the gentry, drawn up in rows, front on a street of which it would be difficult to tell whether it is most like a desert or a long stable-yard. Such spots can be beautiful only to the weary traveller, or the returning native,—or, perchance, the repentant misanthrope; not to him who, with unprejudiced senses, has just come out of the woods, and approaches one of them, by a bare road, through a succession of straggling homesteads where he cannot tell which is the alms-house. However, as for Sandwich, I cannot speak particularly. Ours was but half a Sandwich at most, and that must have fallen on the buttered side some time. I only saw that it was a closely built town for a small one, with glass-works to improve its sand, and narrow streets in which we turned round and round till we could not tell which way we were going, and the rain came in, first on this side, and then on that, and I saw that they in the houses were more comfortable than we in the coach.