

THE LIGHTKEEPER'S TALES

BITS OF HISTORY IN NEW-HAVEN'S OLDEN DAYS.

HOW CASSIUS M. CLAY HELPED A FRIEND — MR. DODD'S "REGISTER" — A SHREWD CLERGYMAN—A WONDER- FUL STORM OF SALT.

NEW-HAVEN, Conn., Jan. 10.—Capt. Elizer Thompson, the keeper of the old white lighthouse at the entrance to New-Haven Harbor, is now in his eighty-first year, but with the preservation of his physical strength to a remarkable degree and with mind and memory yet undimmed, he is interesting and entertaining.

He is a notable man on account of the experiences of his long life and for his acquaintance with famous men. The Yale professors have long been frequent visitors to the lighthouse, and among the Captain's warmest friends was the late Prof. Johnson T. Piatt. In his early boyhood the Captain assisted the villagers of East Haven in their reception to Gen. Lafayette, and since that time he has enjoyed the friendship of many whose names are well known throughout the country, having entertained them at the lighthouse as Yale students or encountered them in his extensive travels.

One of the stories which the Captain ever delights in telling to visitors, and there are thousands who have heard it, is in regard to a hoax that Cassius M. Clay perpetrated on the people of New-Haven when he was a student at Yale. Clay, like a majority of the students at that time, was fond of spending his leisure hours at Kemp & Hardy's restaurant, close to the lighthouse, where shore dinners and excellent liquors were dispensed. One day the proprietors of the restaurant complained that trade was dull, and in response the future statesman inquired why the place was not better advertised. The discussion of the matter resulted in Clay's determination to show what could be done by calling the attention of the public to the shore resort.

Accordingly, on the following day, the people of New-Haven were astonished to see in the papers the account of a capture of an immense whale in the harbor—so large a whale, indeed, that twenty pairs of oxen were required to haul it up on the shore at the old lighthouse. The report was printed in good faith by the papers and had all the appearance of a truthful account. There was no lack of visitors to the lighthouse then. Telephones had not been invented, and there was no immediate way of learning that the story was a hoax. Crowds hastened to the shore to see the captured monster, and when there found nothing to do but to regale themselves at the restaurant. Those who returned early to the city were loth to tell how they had been fooled, and many of them related stories about the whale that went far beyond the invention of young Clay. It was several days before the real facts were established and the crowds ceased to congregate at the lighthouse. The restaurant men made a small fortune, and Clay thereafter had the complete freedom of the place.

A warm friend of Capt. Thompson, and his pastor for a long period, was the Rev. Dr. Stephen Dodd, a locally noted and picturesque preacher in the Congregational church, who died in 1851 at his home in East Haven. Dr. Dodd, in addition to his religious calling, was a man of literary aspirations, and his principal work was a history of East Haven, entitled the "East Haven Register," which was printed in 1824. This work was issued in a very limited edition, and as it is an excellent history, it is now highly valued by the few old families who possess copies of it. There is an unpublished epitaph of this historian-preacher preserved only, perhaps, in the memory of Capt. Thompson, as the others who knew it are not now living. When the preacher died an East Haven poet took upon himself the duty of writing a suitable epitaph, and here is what he presented, with due respect, to the widow:

"Here lies the body of Dr. Dodd,
Have mercy on his soul, O God;
Almighty God, do unto Dodd
As Dodd would do if he were God."

The relatives, says Capt. Thompson, were at first offended by the verse, but they were finally satisfied that it was intended only as a sincere tribute to the preacher's character.

The copy of the "East Haven Register" which Capt. Thompson possesses is interesting on account of records which the Captain has added during the past half century, and to its owner the work is priceless. The book contained a complete list of the members of the old stone church at East Haven about the time that Capt. Thompson joined it, and as these have died their names have been marked. Only a few of the names are now unmarked, and of about fifty on one page that of Capt. Thompson is the only one that remains to be checked.

Capt. Thompson and Dodd's "Register" are both excellent authorities on the history of East Haven and this vicinity in general, and so far as the more ancient history is concerned they may be considered as contemporary. Various interesting land records are contained in the book, but one in the possession of the Captain cannot be surpassed as an evidence of the shrewdness with which the Yankee fathers conducted their business with the Indians. It is as follows:

EAST HAVEN, 10th June, 1692.

Whereas, there was a formed agreement between New-Haven town and the Indians for a highway through the Indian field to George Pardee's land, yet for peace sake the inhabitants of South End and George Pardee have given to George the Sagamore twelve shillings in Money, for which I, the underwritten do ratify and confirm the same and do grant the same highway to be on record, beginning at the dirty Swamp by the Iron worke path, which was Mr. Gregson's land, for which I do further engage that there shall be but two pare of bars or gates throughout my land to George Pardee's, which I, the foresaid Sagamore George will make and maintaine forever, and do further engage myself, my heirs, to secure the same highway to them, their heirs and assigns forever, from me, my assigns, or any from under me. As witness my hand and seal—dated as above.

Testors—
UMBESA, HOSOWAUG,
JOHN POTTER, JOHN COOPER.

INDIAN M. GEORGE.
mark.

One of the quaintest business transactions which is recorded in the old traditions of the Thompson family and interestingly narrated to visitors at the old lighthouse, is in regard to the engagement of a preacher for the church at East Haven. The story is also told in Dr. Dodd's history. The Rev. Jacob Heminway, in 1704, was invited to settle in East Haven, and "to ward his encouragement" the people engaged "to allow him after the rate of forty pounds by the year in pay," after they had received "a taste of his gifts in preaching the Word." The clergyman was willing to wrestle with the brethren in East Haven, but he had an eye to business and endeavored to obtain a better salary than had been offered to him. His reply to the church was as follows:

GENTLEMEN: Whereas you have given me notice by two men that you desire me to carry on the work of the ministry in order to settlement among you, I do, therefore, hereby give you notice that, so far as God shall enable me thereunto, I am heartily ready and willing to gratify these your desires upon these conditions: 1. That you give me £50 yearly and my wood. 2. That you build me a good, convenient dwelling house within two years' time, or give me money sufficient to do the same, one half this year ensuing and one half the next. 3. That when it is in your power you give me a good and sufficient portion of land.

From my study, 2d Dec., 1706. Yours to serve,
JACOB HEMINWAY.

Of course these were ordinary and business-like propositions from both parties, but in the compromise that was made the parishioners exhibited characteristic shrewdness, and the preacher got a clause into the contract which most ministers of the present day would like to make with their churches. Mr. Heminway was engaged at £50 a year, and he was given the house and land on condition that it be returned to the village if the preacher left "by his own fault," while if he left "by request" he was to own the place.

Many interesting bits of odd local history are contained in Dr. Dodd's history. One which is pointed out by Capt. Thompson is this:

"Gov. Gurdon Saltonstall was elected in 1708. There is a tradition that he commonly opposed town privileges. The people of the village kept geese, and these geese greatly offended the Governor by passing over his farm. Finally Gov. Saltonstall proclaimed war, and he personally attacked and routed the feathered army. The people thought it a 'cruel and unnecessary war,' and at the next election no vote was cast for Saltonstall in East Haven."

Nearly two centuries later the Legislature of Connecticut has vindicated the course of Gov. Saltonstall by the passage of the vagrant hen law. The Governor had lived too early.

Of Beacon Hill, the picturesque eminence overlooking the Sound and the city, which has just been purchased by New-Haven for a public park, this account is given:

"The great burying place of the Indian tribes in this town and vicinity is on the north end of the hill on which the fort stands, which, anciently, in allusion to this place, was called Grave Hill. Some of the graves have been leveled by the plow, but many of them are yet visible. In the year 1822 I examined three of these graves. At the depth of three and a half feet the sandstone appears, on which the bodies were laid, without any appearance of a wrapper or inclosure. They all lay in the direction of the southwest and northeast, the head toward the west. Of two of them, the arms lay by the side; the other had the arms across the body after the manner of the white people. The large bones and teeth were in a sound state. The thigh bones of one measured 19 inches in length, the leg bone 18 inches, and the arm from the elbow to the shoulder 13. By measuring the skeleton as it lay it was concluded to be that of a man 6½ feet high. No article of any description appeared with the bones. It is said that about fifty or sixty years ago some of these graves were opened and a number of Indian implements of the kitchen and of war were found in them. Few Indians have been buried there within a century past. The Indians had a fort on the hill in the burying ground, and from that circumstance it

was called Fort Hill. The appearance of shells shows that they had a village on that spot. The same indications appear in the woods of South End. Great quantities of oyster shells (now decayed) show where the weekwams stood."

Capt. Thompson says that the name "Beacon Hill" resulted from signals given at night during the war of 1812.

A sketch of the oyster trade for about the year 1800 shows that the annual product of those times was from 60,000 to 100,000 bushels, or about the average weekly product of the present. The art of growing oysters was then unknown and the stock was entirely imported from Virginia, opened here and shipped in kegs to the various parts of the country as "Native Fair Haven" oysters. The total income to the oyster dealers in 1800 was about \$25,000.

Capt. Thompson distinctly remembers a great "salt storm" which occurred Sept. 3, 1821, the only storm of the kind that has been recorded in the history of New-England. The Captain says: "I remember it well, for it was on Monday, our training day. A terrific gale came on and with it a salt spray that extended as far north as Wallingford. Everything was thoroughly coated over with salt, the crops were ruined, and the trees felt the effects of the salt for years. Small trees and the limbs on the windward side of all the trees pretty much were killed. Corn was torn in shreds and vegetation was almost totally destroyed. That Fall, after the immediate effects of the storm had disappeared, the trees all blossomed again, the lilacs and various flowers came out, and we had a short Spring over again. Nobody was ever able to explain the storm and nobody ever heard of anything like it. And it was not a small local storm, for it extended all along the coast and about twenty miles back into the country, with slighter effects further away. It was even hard for a man to live out in that storm on account of the nauseousness of the atmosphere."

Capt. Thompson is now leading a quiet life at the old lighthouse, his Government duties being merely the maintenance of a signal station, and he expects that soon the work of a Government auctioneer will take away his old home altogether. But while he remains at his station the people will continue to enjoy the hospitality of the place and listen to his stories of the older days. He is still sturdy and strong, and only a capsized boat in the harbor or a wreck on the Sound is needed to inspire him to most remarkable activity.

OF NAVAL INTEREST.

Orders have been issued for the whole force of employes in the Ordnance Department of the Washington Navy Yard to at once commence work on extra time. The order affects 900 workmen. Heretofore the ordnance workmen have been employed from 8 in the morning to 5 in the evening. The new order will compel them to work from 7 in the morning to 7 in the evening. This is equivalent to increasing the amount of work done per day by one-third. The order has caused a commotion at the Washington yard. The immediate reason for the spur is not understood unless it be to rush to completion the guns for the new ships. In consequence the armaments for the Concord, Bennington, Newark, and Miantonomoh will be ready almost as soon as needed. The Miantonomoh is the only one of the above ships that has been kept waiting for her battery. The Miantonomoh will carry four ten-inch breech-loading rifles. The battery of the Concord will consist of six six-inch breech-loading rifles. The Bennington will carry eight five-inch breech-loading rifles, and the Newark twelve six-inch breech-loading rifles. It is said that the workmen at the Washington yard are much pleased at the new order, inasmuch as the longer day brings with it more money.

The last number of the Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute contains an exhaustive treatment of Lieut. Fullam's recent paper on "Naval Reorganization." The subject of the paper is favorably supplemented by notes from Lieuts. Seaton Schroeder, J. C. Colwell, William L. Rodgers, William G. Cutler, H. S. Knapp, R. C. Smith, Charles E. Colahan, and H. O. Riffenhouse; also from Lieut. Commanders Knox, Leutzé, and Sperry, Commodore James A. Greer, Commanders Glass and Sigbee, and Ensigns Ackerman and Niblack. Lieut. Fullam's paper is critically considered by Lieut. Barry, and opposed by Commander Terry, Capt. Bartlett and Fagan of the Marine Corps, and Lieut. Paul St. C. Murphy of the Marine Corps. The proceedings of the institute also contain an able paper on "The Movements of the Atmosphere" by Lieut. E. Fournier of the French Navy. The translation is by Prof. J. Leroux of the United States Naval Academy. The address of the Hon. J. R. Soley, recently delivered at Annapolis on the occasion of the unveiling of the Jeannette Monument, is given in full. The "Professional Notes" are contributed to by Lieut. Commander C. S. Sperry and Commander Edgerton of the British Navy.

The report of the survey recently had on the corvette Galena has been returned by the Navy Department to the Construction Department of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, with orders for the latter department to re-examine the survey. It is believed that the amount called for in the survey is excessive. The Galena will be ordered repaired as soon as the Navy Department is satisfied with the survey report. The Galena is at present lying at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When again commissioned the Galena will be supplied with forced draught. It is not known as yet to what station the corvette will be sent. As a representative of the old wooden ships of the navy, the Galena is one of the most handsome ships in the service. The corvette will be good for another three years' cruise.

According to the Army and Navy Journal Chaplain James J. Kane, who obtained three years' leave of absence last March, with permission to accept a professorship at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, recently tendered his resignation from the Faculty and requested the Navy Department to cancel the unexpired portion of his leave. This request having been granted, he has been ordered to the receiving ship Franklin, at Norfolk, Va. Haverford College is a Quaker institution of a conservative character. The hostility to the combatant force of both the army and navy was of such a pronounced type that the Chaplain severed all connection with his "friends," the Quakers.

Up to Jan. 1, 1891, 1,578 74-2,240 tons of plates and frames have been worked into the new armored cruiser Maine. In addition, the hull of the new ship contains to the above date 83 1,646-2,240 tons of rivets. The total weight of material in the Maine, when completed, will amount to 4,400 tons. This includes armor. The displacement of the Maine will be over 6,000 tons. Ordinarily, the weight of a vessel's hull is 42 per cent of the weight of the water she displaces. The per cent. is greater in the case of the Maine.

Up to Jan. 1, 1891, the new cruiser Cincinnati had worked into her hull 292 1,058-2,240 tons of plates and frames. In addition, the rivets in the Cincinnati weighed 9 1,830-2,240 tons. The total weight of the Cincinnati's hull, when completed, will equal 2,000 tons. Both the Maine and Cincinnati are building at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The yarding of the bottoms of the cruisers Chicago and Yorktown has been finished. Both vessels were ready yesterday morning for undocking. The work on the Chicago was effected in the stone dock, the work on the Yorktown in the new Simpson Dry Dock.

The sailing of the cruiser Philadelphia, flagship of the North Atlantic Squadron, has been delayed by the breavement in Admiral Gherardi's family. The cruiser has been ready to sail since the first day of the year.

Capt. O'Neill is now Inspector of Ordnance at the Washington Navy Yard. This position was previously held by the present chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, Commodore Folger.

The dynamite cruiser Vesuvius is lying at the Brooklyn yard. No Survey Board has as yet been ordered to examine the vessel's damaged stem.

GOMPERS STRIKES BACK.

Samuel Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labor, has made a sharp reply to the attacks of the Socialistic politicians who have been abusing him because he opposed their attempt to gain control of the Federation.

In his reply Mr. Gompers charges that most of the leaders of the Socialistic Labor Party are tricksters and wirepullers of the lowest order and false to the cause of labor. As to the charge that he is anxious for political preferment, Mr. Gompers declares that when a nomination was tendered him he would do nothing in the matter until he learned the feeling of the organized workmen of New-York and then he declined. He also declined the nomination for Congress which was offered him before the last election.

If the Socialists succeeded in overthrowing him, he concludes, it would not benefit them, as his successor in the office could take no different stand on the question of admitting politics into trades unions.