

Messrs. Editors:—I have read in the two last numbers of Putnam's Magazine a pretended description of Cape Cod, by a writer who has given some evidence of a bewildered mind. It seems by his own account, that in the year 1849 he spent about ten days on the cape, travelling, part of the time in rainy weather, in a stage coach; and one would think he had but a poor opportunity to see the towns through which he passed. He took for his guide book a volume of the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and in it he found a description of Cape Cod, written by the Rev. Dr. Freeman, of Boston, about sixty years ago. This undoubtedly was a true description of the appearance, at that time, of the several towns which are mentioned; as it is believed Dr. Freeman wrote it when on a visit which he made to Eastham, his native town, on the cape, where some of the name still continue.

In mentioning the town of Dennis, Dr. Freeman says that the view from the hills near the meeting house, over sea and land, as far as the eye can reach, "is more sublime than beautiful." This writer takes the idea from his guide book, and endeavors to enlarge upon it, by saying that he liked Dennis well, better than any town he had seen on the cape, "it was so novel and so sublimely dreary." He wonders where all the enterprising sea captains, for he had read, somewhere, that there were about a hundred and fifty in that town, could find shelter for themselves and their families in this almost houseless place. Dr. Freeman describes the Rev. Nathaniel Stone, who was at that time the only clergyman of the town, as being "Vir humilis, mitis, blandus advenarum hospes; suis commodis in terra non studens, reconditis thesauris in celo." Now, what is the comment which this dreamy traveller makes upon so just and classic an eulogy? "Mehinks," he says, "no inhabitant of Dennis could be very studious about his earthly commodity, but must regard the bulk of his treasures in heaven."

As the object of every well conducted journal is to inform as well as to amuse the reading public, by circulating correct information, it is a matter of some surprise that such a false description of Cape Cod—a more fabulous account could hardly be given—should find a place in so respectable a publication.

When Dr. Freeman wrote, Dennis, which was formerly a part of Yarmouth, had been but a few years a separate town. It then contained about a thousand inhabitants, and had but one parish. Now it is one of the most enterprising towns in the county of Barnstable, being the fourth in population, and contains nearly four thousand inhabitants. It has four parishes, presenting handsome and flourishing villages, and in the town are eight churches or meeting houses—and yet, this writer would convey the impression that it is a place wearing the appearance of decay, with here and there a few dwelling houses to be seen.

I should like, Messrs. Editors, to see copied into your widely circulated paper the following communication, which has lately appeared in the Yarmouth Register. It is the most suitable notice which I have yet seen of the articles relating to Cape Cod in Putnam's Magazine:

The longer I loiter among the townships and villages of the Cape, the more convinced am I that such writers as the author of the article "Cape Cod," which appears in the June and July numbers of Putnam's Magazine, have but dim eyes for the picturesque, and pens which are all but pointless in description. They are those who would travel from Dan to Sterrehebe and exclaim, "All is barren!" Mr. Thoreau, to whom the articles alluded to are attributed, may do very well to write dreamy books about "Life in the Woods," but when he comes to write sketches of travel, he utterly fails. Witness his two articles on this part of Massachusetts. Five years ago, it seems, he took it into his head to visit the Cape, and as a guide book what does the reader think he adopts? Why, an old volume of the Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections. Armed with this, he ventures among the Sandwich people, who, for all he says in their praise, may be Sandwich Island cannibals, and commences his tour of investigation in the interior of a stage coach—rather a confined place for observation—and not the best position for a look-out, either, inasmuch as, during the first twenty miles or so of his ride, mist and storm prevailed. And yet, under such disadvantages, the daring tourist of Putnam gives his views upon men, women and scenery, as glibly and confidently as though he beheld all "the landscape o'er" with the eye of a Lydard or a Humboldt! We imagine there is not an intelligent person on Cape Cod who has not perused the articles in question with something like pity for the ignorance, and contempt for the qualifications of their author.

Of course the traveller passed through North Dennis. Now a person travelling in a confined vehicle, on a misty evening, could scarcely be expected to know much about the place through which the wheels were rolling. What matter—the Putnam man, in a free and easy manner, declares that Dennis is quite a contemptible sort of place, consisting but of few houses, and these mean enough. There are not his exact words, but they faithfully convey his meaning. Strangers, therefore, are led to think very differently to what they ought to think of one of the most flourishing sections of the Cape; and so on with all the other places he visits. Following the example of like prejudiced persons, he casts a most undeserved slur on a beautiful neighborhood, and a noble-hearted population, thus adding to the already existing ignorance with regard to Cape Cod, and not only that, but actually distorting facts and misrepresenting nature itself.

Therefore, after reading the articles in question I was not much surprised on visiting Dennis, to find it, in each of its cardinal divisions, full of beauty and even grandeur. I say I was not much surprised, because I had long been used to hear the most extravagant notions preached about this "right arm of Massachusetts." The fact is, few persons off the Cape have any but vague ideas respecting it, and nearly all who have visited it, have only seen it like our author, from the windows of Stage Coaches. I have "footed" almost every part of it, from Sandwich to Long Point, and hesitate not to say, that for variety—beauty of landscape—the most lovely miniature lakes and bold shores, few places surpass it.

This morning I determined to visit South Dennis, (North Dennis, where I recently spent a delightful Sabbath, I shall speak of next week.) Leaving Yarmouth by stage, one hour brought us to this south side of the cape. We passed South Yarmouth, Bass river and West Dennis, and having entered this tree-embowered village, I dropped from the stage box almost into the hospitable domicile of my friend, the Reverend Isaiah G. Thayer, the highly esteemed pastor of the Orthodox Church. On entering his pretty parsonage, I having a hearty welcome and somewhat of an appetite, for it had been sharpened by the bracing and pure cape air, addressed myself to the good things provided for me by the amiable lady of my friend, and that important affair disposed of, jumped into the minister's vehicle, and away we went.

Over a wooden toll-bridge, along a capital road, and through woods we bowled along, until we reached the summit of High Hill—and what a magnificent prospect gladdened the eye! Before us stretched the undulating road, bordered by trees, and far away lay West Dennis, its churches and houses dotting the landscape. The sun was clouded, causing the distant woods to form a purple background to the picture. To the right of South Dennis stretched away to western namesake, and still farther to the right hands gleamed the ocean. All the elements of landscape beauty lay before me—wood, water and sky, and all finely harmonized in tone and coloring. Descending from this elevation, we skirted some ponds, and then again entered the village.

It is a charming collection of dwellings; before some of which flaunted the scarlet poppy, bloomed the fragrant rose, and clustered the space-perfumed honey suckle. Noble trees here and there threw graceful shadows; and blent with the hum of bees and the songs of birds was the ring of the blacksmith's hammer and the G "lang" of the passing teamster. In short it was just one of those places of which the song-writer dreamed when he wrote the Hare:

"And I said, if there's peace to be found in the world,
The best that is warty may hope for it here."

There are two churches in South Dennis—one belonging to the Orthodox, and the other to the Universalist society. The Orthodox church is an elegant structure, capable of containing nearly six hundred people; and under the exemplary Pastorate of Rev. Mr. Thayer, is, I hear, in a most prosperous condition. This society, I have been told, recently spent a truly glorious Fourth of July, when the Pastor delivered a timely oration, its subject being the Sabbath School as an Evangelist of the District School. It was ably written, well delivered, and received general commendation. How much better this than glorifying eagles and fluttering stars and stripes. A right merry banquet in a neighboring grove formed not the least pleasant part of the proceedings of the day.

I could write a good deal about South Dennis, but must forbear; and there is the less necessity for my being minute, as in the forthcoming History of Cape Cod, this charming place will, I know, have that justice rendered it which it so well deserves.