

# LONG ISLAND TOWNS.

## MONTAUK AND SURROUNDINGS.

THE TRIP FROM GARDINER'S ISLAND—AN ANCIENT CONTRACT WITH THE INDIANS—A TALK WITH THE KING OF THE "MEANTAUKS"—FRIENDS OF THE INDIANS—THE DECLINE OF THE TRIBE.

EAST HAMPTON, Long Island.

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 1875.

After you have made a careful study of Gardiner's Island and its surroundings, it behooves you to run down to Montauk Point, where, although you find no old houses and none of the other ancient landmarks of man's making which go so far to gladden the heart of the antiquary, are at least points enough, including the Point itself, to interest the most stolid tourist.

You pass through Amagansett, as you did on your tramp to the Fire Place; but instead of turning thence to the north you continue eastward. Six or seven miles from Amagansett you strike Napeague Beach, a long stretch of fine white sand that marks the beginning of Montauk Land. I need not tell you that the pull through this dry, barren, desolate region is enough to try the patience of the most indefatigable pedestrian; and when I said that in order to get over it in safety it is necessary for you to wear a net over your head to protect you from the myriads of mosquitoes that attack you at every step you will understand that this part of the trip can in no sense rightly be called a pleasure trip. But when the sand reach is passed, and you leave Napeague Bay on your left, and strike the solid ground of Montauk, and have a chance to enjoy in comfort the pure air of the ocean, as it comes to you with its boisterous greeting, you forget the wearisome walk and the worrisome mosquitoes, and tramp along with the light-heartedness of a troubadour bound for the tower wherein his fair lady awaits his coming.

The road over Montauk is not what you may call interesting. It is, in fact, rather monotonous. On one side is the water of the ocean, on the other that of Gardiner's Bay; but when Gardiner's Island lies like a speck to the north of you, and you have naught else in sight on either hand, I don't know that there's much difference between the bay and the ocean, except that the latter comes to you with a roar, while the former approaches with the sweet, soft whisper of a doubting sweetheart. Ten miles out you come to Stratton's, one of the three houses, properly so called, on Montauk. Here you take dinner—a good one, too—and after an hour's rest start for the jumping-off place.

The next point of interest you meet is Great Pond Bay, which cuts so far into the neck that it leaves but a narrow strip of land for you to walk over. This bay opens to the north, and needs only a breakwater to make it at once the safest, the most commodious harbor in the country. Here, perhaps in time will be the great watering-place of the Northern States; and here, if I do not greatly overestimate the advantages of the situation, before many years vessels from foreign lands will discharge their cargoes, to be forwarded New-Yorkward by a railroad to be built as a continuation of that to Sag Harbor. Two or three miles beyond the bay is Montauk Point Light-house, one of the finest on the Atlantic coast.

The light is visible in ordinary weather fifteen miles, but it has been plainly seen at the distance of forty. There is also a first-class fog signal—two 24-inch engines and a Daboll trumpet—which was put in operation in the Spring of 1873, and has been in successful operation since. You may have heard horrid sounds in your career, but you surely have never listened to anything which could equal in the intensity of wildness and weirdness the tones of this fog signal sending forth its blast of sound into the thick mists of the quiet night.

At the extreme end of Montauk dwell in little huts five or six families, the remnant of the once powerful tribe of the "Meantauks." They are ignorant and poor, and bear about as much resemblance to their noble ancestors as the lazzaroni of Naples do to the old Romans who once governed the world. They have a King and a Queen, but the King is "King rather in name than in fact," and the Queen is only his washerwoman and maid of all work. The last Queen, as I told you in a late letter, was a meek servant in the Dayton family at East Hampton. This fact is at once laughable and sad—more sad, I think, than laughable. For my part I cannot think of it without recalling the noble acts of her ancestor, Wiandanch, Sachem of all the Long Island tribes, who many and many a time interposed his authority to prevent outrages against the whites, and aided, even though unconsciously, in building up a Government that was destined to have its influence upon the reformation of the world.

In 1661 there was a covenant made between the Indians and the whites of East Hampton, which requires attention. Here is the contract from the original manuscript:

Be it knowne unto all men by these presents, that I, the Sunk Squa of Meantauk, wife of Wiandanch, of late yeeres Deceased, and also I Wiokombone, Sonne of the foresaid Deceased partie, Sachem of Long-Island, together with Pokkatoun, Chief Counsellor, and the rest of or trusty Counsellors and associates, send greeting. Know ye, that Whereas there was a full and firme Indenture made between Mr. Thomas Baker, Mr. Robert Bond, Mr. Thomas James, Mr. Lion Gardiner, Mr. John Mulford, John Hand, Benjamin Price, Together with their associates, the Inhabitants of Easthampton upon Long Island, yeome partie, and I Sunk Squa, and also me Wiokombone, with the full Consent of my Counsellors and Servants, as also of my two Guardians, left by my deceased Father, viz.: Mr. Lion Gardiner of Easthampton, and Mr. David Gardiner, of ye Isle of wight, ye other partie, in ye yeere of or Lord One Thousand Six Hundred Sixtie, upon ye sixt day of August, whereby we did fully and firmly sell unto the Said parties, our neck of land called Montaukut, from sea to sea, from ye utmost end of that neck Eastward Called wopenant, to our utmost bounds westward. Called Napeague, with all priviledges and appurtenances belonging to the same, upon Condition there and then specified in that foresaid Indenture, and a Counterbond, bearing ye same Date, signed and sealed to us by ye foresaid parties, Inhabitants of East-Hampton, by virtue of which Counterbond we had free libertie granted if wee see cause to Sit Down again upon ye said Land, this being the full purpose of us the Sunk Squa, of Wiokombone, Sachem, together with our associates, in Convenient time to sit down to live at ye Said Montaukut; know ye also, that whereas of late yeeres, there having bene Sore Distress and Calamities befallen us by reason of ye Cruel opposition and Violence of or most Deadly Enemie Ninnicraft, Sachem of Narhigganset, whose Cruelty hath proceeded so far as to take away ye lives of many of or. Deare friends and relations, soe that we were forced to flee from ye said Montaukut for shelter to our beloved friends and neighbors of Easthampton, whom wee found to be friendly in our distress, and whom wee must ever owe and acknowledge as instruments under God, for ye preservation of or. lives and ye lives of or. Wives and Children to this Day, and of that Land of Montaukut from ye hands of or. Enemies, and since or. Coming amongst them ye relieving of us in or. Extremities from time to time; and now at last wee find ye said Inhabitants of Easthampton, our Deliverers, Cordial and faithful in their former Covenant, leaving us freely to or. owne libertie to go or stay, being ready to performe all conditions of ye foresaid agreem't. After serious debate and deliberation, in Consideration of that love which we have and doe bear, unto these our trustie and beloved friends of Easthampton, upon our owne free and Voluntary motion, have given and granted, and by these presents do give and grant and Confirm unto these our friends, ye Inhabitants of Easthampton, Excepting such as have Exempted themselves from ye former agreement; and shall from this our grant, all that peice or neck of Land belonging to Montaukut Land, Westward to a fresh pond in a beach on this side, Westward to that place where the old Indian fort stonde on ye other side, Eastward to ye new fort that is yet standing; the name of ye pond being Quantawunk on ye North and Koukhangauk on ye south, to gether with all priviledges and appurtenances belonging to the for-said land from south to north, To have and to hold ye same at free Commorage, to be ordered and disposed of for the benefit of ye foresaid Inhabitants of East-Hampton, themselves, their heirs, administrators, Executors and assignes forever; to possess the same freely and quietly, without any matter of Challenge, claime or demand of us, ye said Sunk Squa, and Wiokombone Sachem, or our associates, or of any other person or persons whatsoever, for us, or in our name, or for our cause, means or procurement. And without any money or other things to be yielded, paid or done only for ye said Land, to us or our heires forever, and shall Justifie the possession of this foresaid Land, by these said Inhabitants of Easthampton, against any small Question their properties in the same. Know ye also, yt this is not only the Deeds of mee, ye Sunk Squa, and Wi nokombone Sachem, but also the Act and Deede of all our associates and subjects, who have hadd formerly any proprietie in ye foresaid Land.

In April, 1669, an extraordinary panic occurred. The Indians of Meoutawket, or Montauk, who had been subject to Ninnicraft, or Ninnicraft, Sachem of the Narragansetts, were in arrears with their tribute. They collected a quantity of wampum, and sent this with an old gun-barrel to the chief, who received the messengers graciously, and gave pardon to the defaulters. This fact at once became known among the white settlers, who put it down as positive evidence of

an Indian plot. The people of East Hampton were especially excited, and the Constable, acting under the orders of the "freemen," required the Montauks to give up their arms, which they reluctantly did. Minister James, of whom I have already spoken, wrote to Major John Mason, of Connecticut, one of the heroes of the Pequot war, and to Gov. Lovelace, charging Ninnicraft with having organized an extensive conspiracy to exterminate the English. Lovelace at once communicated with the Rhode Island authorities, who directed that Ninnicraft should be brought before them at Newport for examination. But the sachem explained everything satisfactorily, and the court "saw no just grounds of jealousy as to his intentions." Soon afterward the Montauk chiefs acknowledged the Governor of New-York as their "chiefest sachem," and all panics or fears were set at rest.

The ground that forms Montauk Land was evidently thrown up during some violent convulsion of nature, as the irregular and chaotic condition of the surface sufficiently indicates. The scenery at the Point is not altogether attractive, except to the student of nature not carried away by enthusiasm; but I think no one can make the journey from Napeague to the Light without finding a great deal to interest him. The hills on the Point are not the Alps, with their upper world of lilac-white melting into the clouds in the distance, with softened shadows of viscid ice and rifts of gray gneiss, and with death crouching in the treacherous snow-drift beneath and the avalanche poised threateningly above. They are ordinary hills that overlook the commonplace ocean, whose roar is constant, and whose breath is ever laden with the cooling odors of health. Here you run no risk that a false step may make you a waif for the *Limmergeters*, or a badly calculated leap land you away down among the buried villages of the last century. There is nothing here to excite the enthusiasm or stimulate the ambition of the mountain tourist with alpenstock and haversack; but to him who loves the music of the billows, and who glories in the ever-changing light of ocean wave and overhanging cloud, Montauk Point offers a wealth of delight. The endless and measureless world of the deep is before him, the glorious Summer sky above him, with its hypermyriorama of weird figures and wondrous fairy scenes, and to his ears are borne from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn again, the wild, wild songs of the mystic sea-world—songs that have been sung since the beginning of time—that shall be sung uninterpreted till time shall be no more.

I come down from the clouds to commune with the spirits of earth for a while, and first I talk with the King of the Montauks. He is a real Yankee, in that he speaks through his nose and answers no question without due deliberation. His manner is Yankee, his accent is Yankee, and were David to be placed where Yankee push and enterprise could avail him, he would make his mark in the world. The land of Montauk, he tells me, is held by the inhabitants of East Hampton as a grazing place for their cattle. The beasts are driven down and kept here until killing time, when they are taken back as fat as butter. The land is held in thirty-eight shares, and various efforts have been made by New-York capitalists to get possession of it, but thus far I believe in vain.

One of the great friends of the Montauks in the old time was Rev. Mr. James, who not only tried to civilize and educate the Indians, but actually translated the catechism into their language and worked hard to have it printed. This, I believe, was never done, although in his efforts he was instrumental in having one of the first printing presses brought from England to the New-York colony.

Another of their white friends was Capt. John Dayton, a lineal descendant of Ralph, the first East Hampton settler of that name. He was one of nature's noblemen, reckless, daring, sanguine, earnest, and honest. When the British beset East Hampton, his house was often attacked. On one occasion, when all alone, he seized his gun, sallied out into the night, called upon a score of imaginary troopers, and put his enemies to flight. On the following day he drove a British officer from his place with a pitchfork. During the Revolution a part of the British fleet anchored off Montauk, and it was supposed that the intention was to land and steal the cattle that were then, as now, pastured and fattened there. The Captain, thinking that he could prevent the landing, offered to lead forty of his neighbors, and the volunteers marched off to Montauk. He selected a hill, marched over it at the head of his company, and descended into a hollow, where, out of sight of the fleet, he caused every man to change his coat, and then marched them back to the starting place and over the hill again; and thus the company continued their march over and around the hill. The manœuvre was successful, and the British, thinking that there was an army on shore ready to meet them, did not land, and the flocks were saved. Capt. Dayton died in 1825 at the age of ninety-eight years.

Another staunch friend of the Indians was Deacon Joseph Osborn, 3d, a man of most unflinching principle. In the Revolution he was a firm Whig. It was related of him that one Sunday morning while on his way to church he was accosted by a British officer, who ordered him forthwith to appear at a designated place with his team and do service for the British Army. "By what authority?" said the Deacon. "By authority of the King," replied the officer, with an oath. "What King do you serve?" asked Deacon Osborn. "King George III." was the reply. "I serve under a greater King," answered the old man. "My King is King Jesus. He commands me to go to church, and I shall go." So giving rein to his team, away went the old patriot to meeting.

Among the traditions concerning the East Hampton men who were most prominent in their efforts to improve the condition of the Indians are several touching Samuel Mulford, who died in 1725. He was the leader of the opposition against Gov. Hunter, and went to England for the purpose of effecting his removal from office. While at the Court of St. James, Mulford was much annoyed by pickpockets. He became wearied with their tricks, and after having lost a number of pocket-handkerchiefs and other small articles, he went to a tailor and had a handful of fishhooks sewed in the inside of his pockets. It was not long before a *chevalier d'industrie* put his hand into Mulford's pocket. The thief could not extricate himself, and the quaint old Long Islander took the fellow to prison followed by an admiring crowd. In 1716 Mulford delivered a scathing speech against Gov. Hunter, which the Assembly ordered to be put into the hands of the Speaker. Mulford published the speech and circulated it. It was in denunciation of the corruption of the Administration, and was terribly bitter. The Governor began an oppressive and harassing lawsuit against Mulford in the Supreme Court, whose Judges he himself had appointed. The House, in sympathy with the outspoken patriot whose little fortune had been amassed by daily toil, waited upon the Governor, and presented to him a resolution they had passed soliciting Mulford's discharge from the suit. The suit was suspended. The occasion for his visit to London was to procure a bounty for the encouragement of whaling. Being fearful that if his design should become known he would be arrested by the Governor, he sailed to Newport, walked to Boston, and thence embarked for the Court of St. James, where he met with the most gratifying success. On his return the whalers of Suffolk County, says Lyon Gardiner, in his manuscripts, gave him a most enthusiastic reception "on account of his having succeeded in having the King's share given up."

The Montauks were once tributary or allied to the Pequots. When the whites settled on Long Island a war was raging between the Pequots and the Narragansetts. The Montauks were with the Pequots, and the Block Island Indians with the Narragansetts. In this war the Montauks received their death-blow. Here is the story as I find it in the manuscript memoranda of John Lyon Gardiner, of Gardiner's Island:

"Both parties set out in their war canoes on the same evening. It was in the Summer season, and at the full of the moon. They met half way, but the Block Island Indians being so situated in the glades of the moon could not be seen, while at the same time, looking westward, they saw at a distance their enemies silently approaching in Indian file. The word was given and they hurried back to Block Island, laid in ambush for their enemies, and secreted their wives and children. The Montauks, unsuspecting, arrived at their landing place, hauled up their canoes, and they were silently, and as they thought, sure of success, approaching the wigwams of their enemies while, as they supposed, asleep. They fell into the ambush that was laid, and while one party was killing them another was destroying their canoes and slaying such as attempted to return. They were all either taken or killed, except a few who escaped in one canoe. These brought the melancholy news to their friends. The Montauks then moved on to the parsonage lands at East Hampton and continued there a long time. Their Sachem was taken alive and carried to Narragansett. A large flat rock was heated by building fires upon it. He was then ordered on it with his bare feet. He sang his death song, walking several times compositely across it, till his feet were burned to a coal. He fell, and they finished the scene as usual in such cases. This was the last of their wars."

The tribe continued to decrease. Severe laws were enacted to prevent intemperance among them, yet other causes operated to reduce their number, and now there is but a handfull left. The small-pox must have had something to do with their decimation, as would appear by the

following, which I take from the town records of East Hampton:

"March 2nd, 1663.—It is Ordered that noe Indian shall come to Town into the Street, after sufficient notice, on penalty of paying 5s, or be whipped; untill they be free of the small pox."

As I have said, there are but five or six families left, the broken, dispirited, unambitious remnants of a once numerous and powerful race. For many years their residence has been confined solely to what is known as the "Indian Field," the tract of land lying between Great Pond and Oyster Pond. Their interest in the ancient inheritance is a mere personal right, not transferable. The noble blood that once flowed through the veins of the race has been long adulterated, and among the descendants of Wyandanch, the great Sachem, is not to be found a single Indian of pure descent.