



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

Bryant, William Cullen

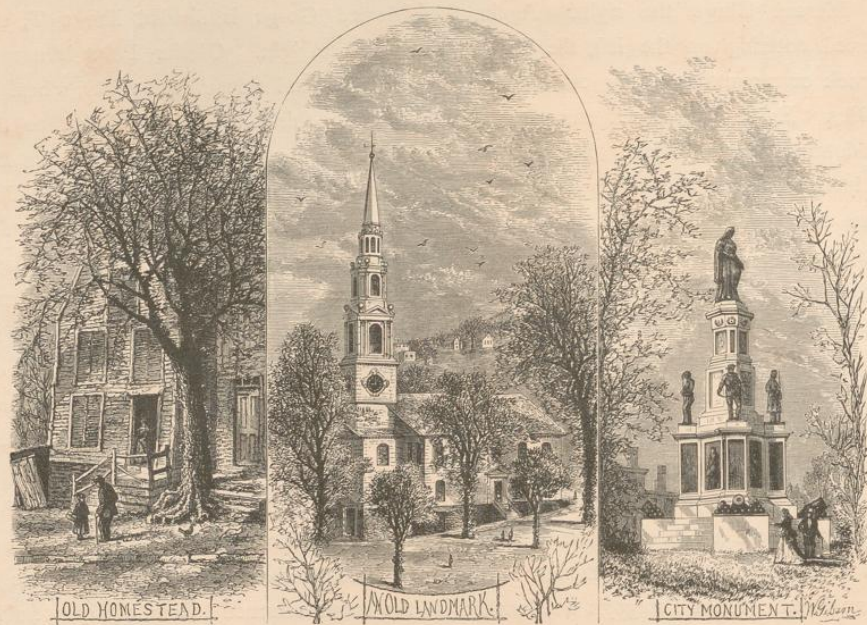
New York, 1872

Providence And Vicinity.

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PROVIDENCE AND VICINITY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM H. GIBSON.



IN the year 1635, the Massachusetts Bay Company thought it necessary to banish Roger Williams, then a minister at Salem, out of their jurisdiction, as his views of Church government, and fantastic notions about freedom of conscience and religious liberty, were regarded as unscriptural and dangerous. The exiled man found his way on foot to the Seekonk Plains, where he passed the winter with the Indians, whose steadfast friend and protector he remained to the end of his life. Late in the following spring, or early in the summer, he, with five companions, crossed the Seekonk River in a log-canoe, and landed on what is now known as Slate Rock, on the eastern boundary of Providence. The Narragansetts were at this time the most numerous and powerful tribe of Indians in New England; and it is the tradition that a group of these aborigines, who from a neighboring hillock had been watching the approach of the new-comer, saluted him on his arrival with the friendly greeting, "What cheer!"—words which have been perpetuated in Rhode Island in the titles of banks, public buildings, and various societies and institutions.

Williams, with his associates, at once proceeded to establish a settlement, about one

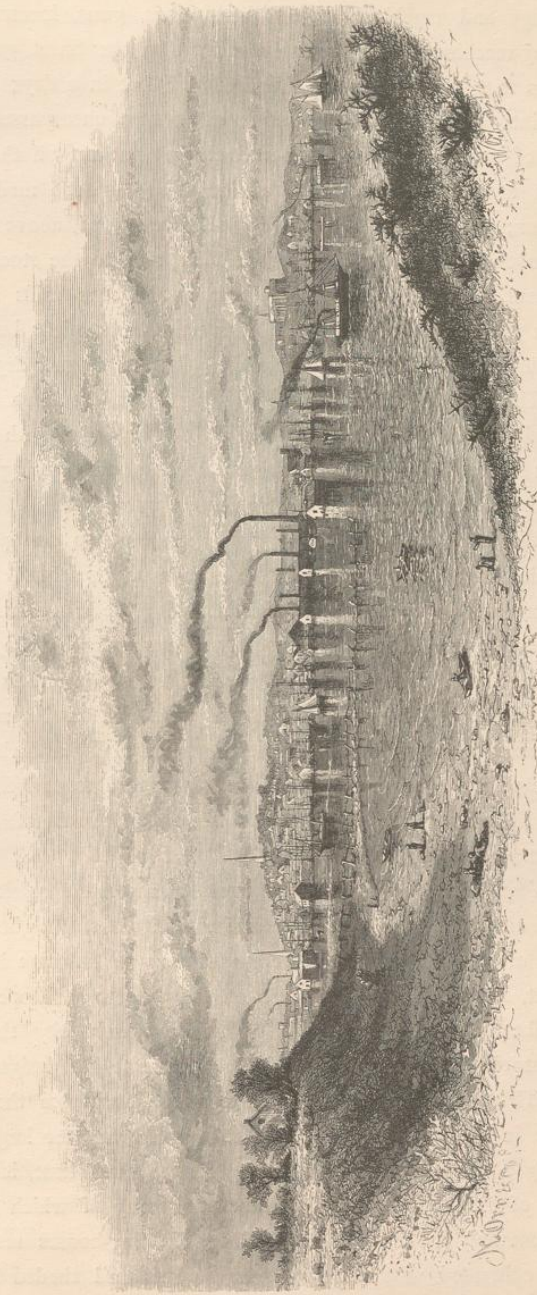


City of Providence
FROM PROSPECT HILL.

New York, D. Appleton & Co.

mile to the northwest of the spot where he landed, around which a population gradually collected, representing great varieties of opinion, and who, for the most part, wished for liberty to think as they pleased, and also to give free utterance to their sentiments, without fear or molestation. For nearly a century there were but few persons of eminence or wealth in the town, most of the people being engaged in husbandry and handicraft. This explains the fact that no buildings, public or private, appear to have been erected with any other than perishable material, or with any pretensions to architectural beauty, the rickety structure designated as the "Old Homestead" in our pictorial illustrations being a fair specimen of the only relics that remain of our more ancient houses.

From this humble beginning, Providence has come to take rank as the second city in New England for size, numbering, in 1873, about eighty thousand inhabitants. It is also proportionally one of the wealthiest cities in the land, and is surpassed by none in the variety of employments which occupy the



City of Providence, from Southern Suburbs.

people. Almost every thing is manufactured here—cotton goods and woollen cloths, castings and machinery of all descriptions, guns, locomotives, tools, steam-engines, and sewing-machines; jewelry, cheap and costly, the finest gold chains being made by machines that turn out some hundreds of feet in a day; tortoise-shell work that finds its way into all parts of the world; silver-ware, unsurpassed in beauty of design and delicacy of workmanship; cotton-seed oil and pea-nut oil that pass at the hotels, and sometimes at private tables, as genuine *olive*; patent medicines that cure or kill in all nations; cocoa-nut dippers by the ship-load; and, above all, *screws* that have driven all others out of the market, and yield a profit to the stockholders of five or six hundred per cent. on their original investment. All the mills in and about the city may not be as picturesque as that which our artist has copied; but, with few exceptions, they are of substantial material, and their size gives to them a degree of grandeur.

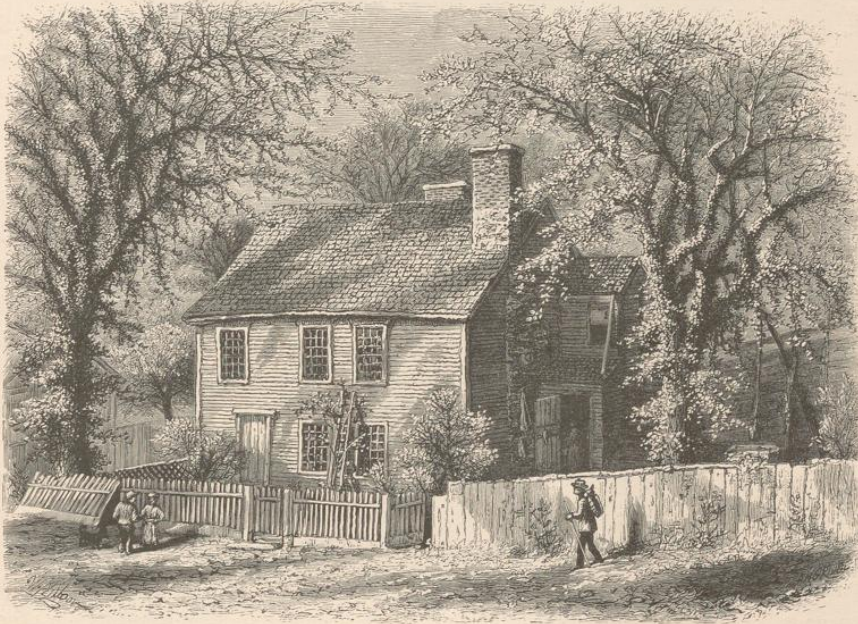
The foreign commerce, which imparted to the town its first impulse, has nearly died out; but the harbor is crowded with vessels, laden with timber and coal, and lines of ocean-steamers have been established of late, which bring this port into direct communication with the most important cities on our coasts.

The general lay of the land is such that no one picture can give a fair idea of the size and extent of the city, and the variety of hill and hollow brings the tops of the steeples in one quarter on a line with the lower windows of houses set upon the higher streets. From certain points of view, the buildings look as if they had been *inserted* into the sides of the hill, and some of the streets are so steep that railings have been placed on both sides to aid the pedestrian in his ascent and descent. In one or two cases, the passage of vehicles is arrested by a flight of stone steps, extending the entire width of the road. It is now proposed to tunnel the loftiest of these elevations, and thus bring the eastern and western portions of the city into easier communication.

Providence indicates, in its peculiar name, the spirit in which it was founded, and there are few places where the cardinal virtues and higher emotions are signalized in the titles of the thoroughfares as conspicuously as they are here. Thus we have Benevolent Street, Benefit Street, Faith Street, Happy Street, Hope Street, Joy Street, and others of like sort. Amsterdam is perhaps the only city that can go beyond this in the quaintness of the names by which the streets are designated.

There are more *wooden* buildings in Providence than can be found in any other place in the United States. One may travel over large districts of the city without seeing a house of stone or brick. At the same time, it may be noted that the proportion of beautiful and stately mansions, many of which are built of stable material, is uncommonly great; and these private dwelling-houses are often surrounded by spacious and cultivated grounds, filled with flowers and shaded by ornamental trees. Until a comparatively recent date, the humbler sort of dwellings were constructed after a very

uniform model, and that an exceedingly commonplace design. The same thing may be said of most of our older New-England towns, and it would sometimes seem as though an effort had been made to avoid every feature in their architecture that is seemly and picturesque. Our people are now beginning to see that an inexpensive and humble dwelling may be made attractive by a symmetrical arrangement of lines and a proper adjustment of the roof, and such trifling adornments as add very little to the cost and require no great amount of skill in their construction. As might be expected, while we are passing through the transition period from bald ugliness to grace and



The "Abbott House."

beauty, absurd and ambitious monstrosities are perpetrated, from which the cultivated eye turns away in disgust—pillars that look like an old-fashioned bedpost magnified, supporting a huge portico altogether out of proportion to the house; bits of Egyptian, and Grecian, and Saracenic, and Gothic, put together in awful defiance of all the rules of art, with combinations of incongruous coloring that make one shudder. But, before long, we shall be rid of these abominations; and, as men go to a good tailor when they want a good coat, so they will learn to call upon a real architect, who understands his business, when they would build a good house.

What is known as the "Abbott House" is an ancient structure, in which Roger

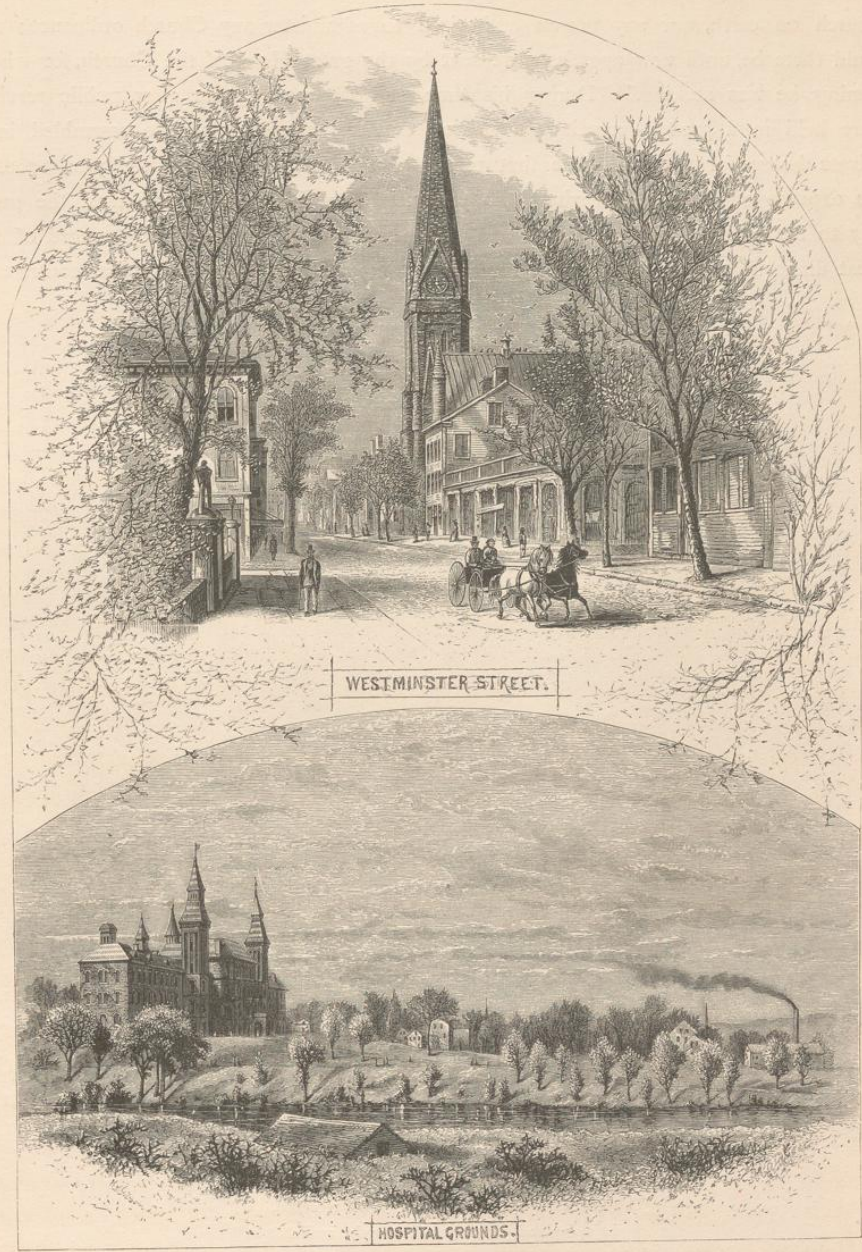
Williams is said to have held his prayer-meetings. It was erected by Samuel Whipple, one of the early settlers of Providence Plantations, and who was the first person buried in the old North Burying-ground. This house must be more than two centuries old, and it is the only structure in the State of which any fragment remains in any way identified with the memory of Williams.

If the sketch of Westminster Street had been extended to take in a longer range, one striking peculiarity of Providence would have been seen—and that is the singular mixture, in the business portions of the city, of ancient dwelling-houses, now converted into shops; temporary structures of wood, not more than ten or fifteen feet in height, which pay an annual rental about equal to their original cost; and lofty structures of brick, and stone, and iron, as costly and magnificent as can be found in any city of the Union. One such building has just been erected by Mr. Alexander Duncan, and known as the Butler Exchange, the proportions of which are colossal; and it is a model of beauty, as it is of practical convenience.

It is not altogether creditable to the city that there is no *civic* building of any description that deserves notice. The old State-House is an unpretending structure, inconvenient and entirely inadequate for the various uses to which it is devoted, and with no pretension to elegance. Measures, however, have been taken with a view to the speedy erection of a new edifice, which, it is to be hoped, will fairly represent the wealth and culture of the city and the State. The City-Hall is an old market-house, from which the stalls were excluded to make room for the municipal authorities, and consists of four plain brick-walls, with a roof above, and is a disgrace to the town. It is somewhat strange that, in a city which abounds in splendid private residences, there should never have been enough public spirit to erect a respectable civic edifice, or to build an hotel that is worthy of the name.

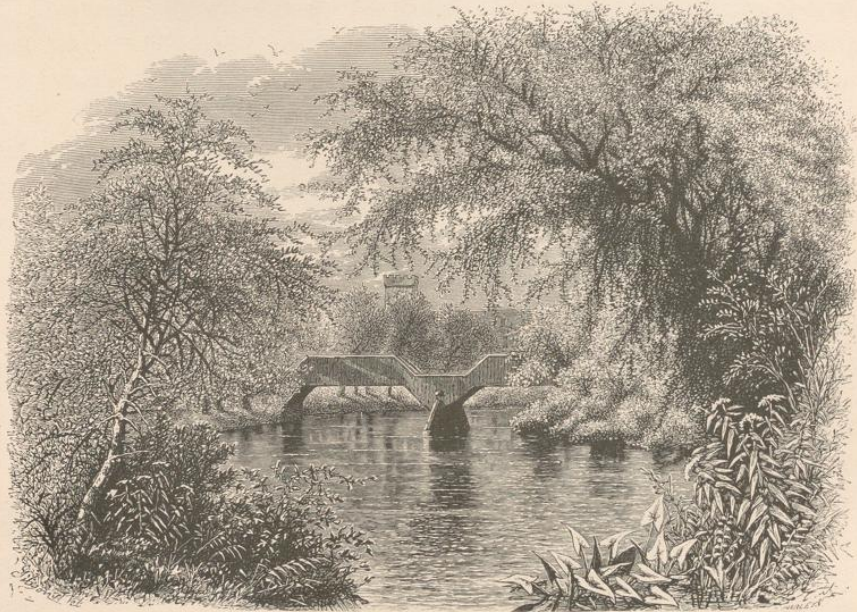
The ecclesiastical architecture of Providence is of a mixed character, some of the churches being plain and ugly, some approximating so nearly to a correct standard that one cannot help mourning over their incidental defects and spindling spires, while others are decidedly correct and somewhat impressive in their architecture.

The First Baptist Meeting-House, of which we have a sketch under the title of "The Old Landmark," was erected in 1774-'75, and is eighty feet square, with a spire a hundred and ninety-six feet high. The exterior has remained unaltered from the beginning, and presents a pleasing and picturesque appearance. The steeple is copied from one of Sir Christopher Wren's churches in London, and is singularly symmetrical and beautiful. The edifice stands in an open square, on the side of a hill, and is surrounded by trees. The society that worships here was founded by Roger Williams, on his arrival in Providence, and claims to be the oldest church of the Baptist denomination in America. Mr. Williams, however, continued to be its pastor for only four years, when he withdrew, not only from his official relations, but also ceased any longer to worship



SCENES IN PROVIDENCE

with his brethren, having come to the conclusion that there is "no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking." During his time, and for many years after, public services were held in a grove, excepting in stormy weather, when the people assembled in a private house for worship. The first meeting-house was built about the year 1700, at the expense of Pardon Tillinghast, the pastor, who at his death bequeathed the property to the parish. In 1726, a new and larger house was erected, and the record of the great dinner given on this occasion indicates a degree of frugality in striking contrast to

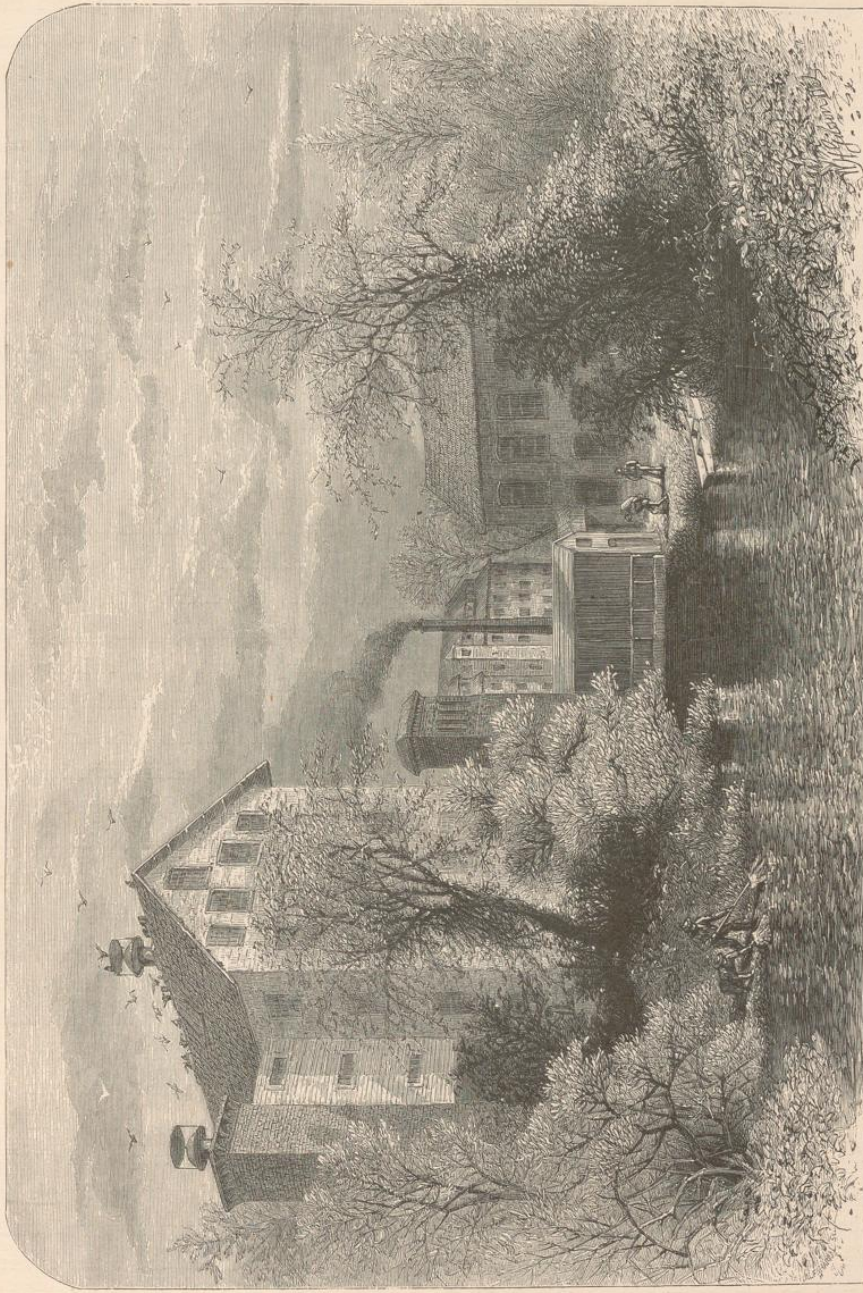


Whipple's Bridge on Blackstone River.

the lavish expenditure of our times. The bill-of-fare consists of one sheep, one pound of butter, two loaves of bread, and half a peck of peas—total cost, twenty-seven shillings. The bell which was originally hung in the tower of the present church bore this inscription :

"For freedom of conscience, the town was first planted;
Persuasion, not force, was used by the people.
This church is the eldest, and has not recanted,
Enjoying and granting bell, temple, and steeple."

In the course of a few years this bell was destroyed, and that which was substituted in its place gave such offence to the public that an attempt was made to break it with



MILLS ON BLACKSTONE RIVER.

a sledge-hammer, which, however, resulted only in knocking off a small chip from the edge. This may have resulted in restoring the right tone to the bell, for it continues to ring the hour of noon and the nine-o'clock vespers down to the present day, and is thought to be pleasant and musical.

Grace Church, of which we have a sketch in the picture of Westminster Street, was built in 1845, of brown-stone, after a plan furnished by Mr. Richard Upjohn, and is seventy-seven feet broad and a hundred and forty-seven feet in length. At the time of its erection it was regarded as one of the finest churches in New England; and, in solidity of construction and beauty of proportion, it is even now surpassed by few ecclesiastical structures.

We should exceed our limits if we undertook to describe other church edifices in Providence which are worthy of being noted; and therefore we pass at once to speak of the State Hospital, a distant view of which may be seen in an accompanying illustration. This noble structure stands on an elevation of about seventy feet above the sea, open to the breezes of the bay, and commanding a beautiful and extended prospect. The area which surrounds the buildings covers twelve acres; and its graceful undulations of surface, shaded walks, lofty trees, and artistic shrubbery, reflected in a miniature lake, combine to make it one of the most attractive spots within the circuit of the city. It was erected entirely by private munificence, not less than five hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars having been already contributed for building-expenses and endowments, and an expenditure of forty thousand more will be needed to complete the interior. "For the beauty of the exterior of the buildings we are indebted to the taste and talent of A. C. Morse, Esq., architect—not merely for the fineness of proportion and nobleness of effect, but for the admirable combinations of color and the skilful employment of the architectural material that New England produces. In this part of the world Nature has not been bountiful in the variety of building-material she affords. The everlasting but intractable granite is almost our only stone; bricks of excellent quality and of superior color constitute our chief means of durable building; a small quantity of red sandstone is furnished by the quarries of Connecticut. These three substances have been employed by our architect almost in the proportion that is here indicated—with what admirable and novel effect, we leave to the appreciation of every beholder. The style is a pure example of Italian Gothic; no more perfect specimen of this style can be found even in the old cities of Northern Italy, where, being confined to the same materials, the ancient Italian architects carried their use to such a degree of perfection that modern architects from all countries resort for the study of their art to the cities of Modena, Pavia, Mantua, and Verona." A careful inspection was made of the best hospitals in this country and abroad, before the plans for the interior were adopted; and in every respect this institution represents the most advanced improvements in construction, and is a model of completeness and excellence. The main front

extends a little more than four hundred feet. In the month of October, 1868, the hospital was opened with appropriate ceremonies, and is now filled with patients to its utmost capacity.

The Soldiers and Sailors' Monument stands in an open square adjoining the railroad-station, and was erected in 1871, in accordance with a vote of the State Legisla-



Mark-Rock Landing.

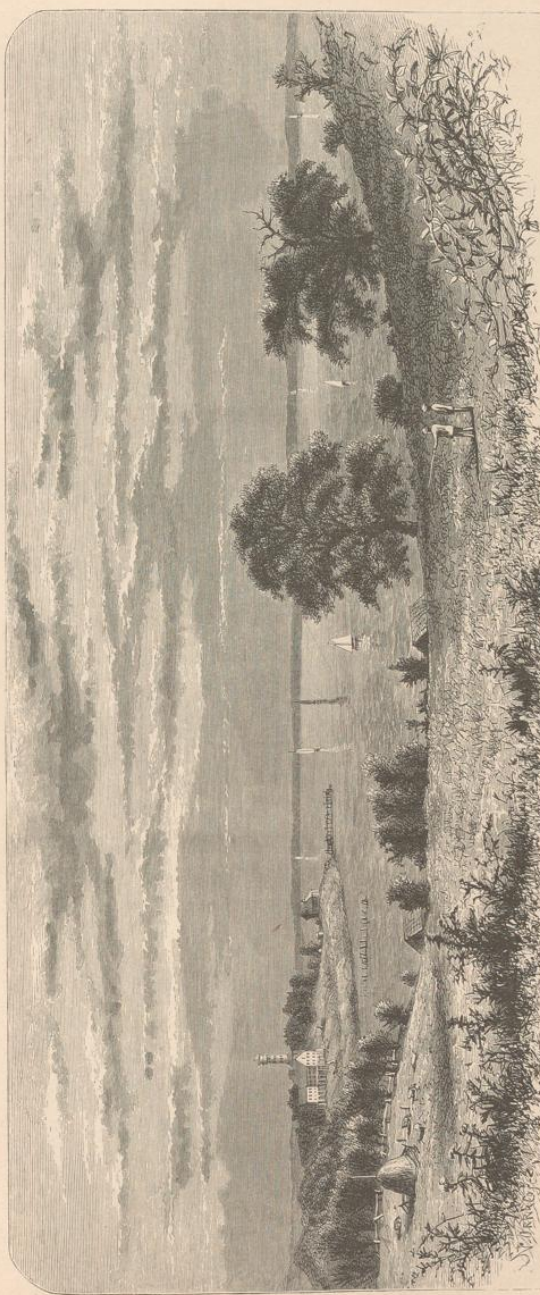
ture, at a cost of about sixty thousand dollars. It was modelled by Mr. Randolph Rogers, in Rome; and the castings were made in Munich, under his direction. From the level of the ground to the top of the monument it is forty-six feet, and the general appearance of the structure is very imposing. It is surmounted by a female figure in bronze, eleven feet high, representing America at the close of the late war. The left

hand is resting on a sword, and holding a wreath of *immortelles*; and the right hand, extending, holds a wreath of laurels, as if to crown the heroes of the war. The figure is draped in classic robes, hanging easily and naturally around the form. The face is benign, and full of expression. Beneath the plinth upon which the statue stands are stars and wreaths of oak and laurel in bronze. Upon the face of the next section are the arms of the State of Rhode Island, while in the rear are the arms of the United States. On the angles are fasces, indicating that in union there is strength. On the next section, at the front, are the dedication words: "Erected by the people of the State of Rhode Island to the memory of the brave men who died that their country might live." Upon the next section stand four bronze figures, seven feet and three inches in height, representing the infantry, cavalry, artillery, and navy. They are clad in appropriate uniforms, and bear the arms and insignia of their several departments of service. Four bronze *bassi-relievi*, size of life, appear upon the next section, representing War, Victory, Emancipation, and Peace. War appears with sword and shield, Victory as an angel bearing the sword and palm, Emancipation as a freed-woman with broken chains, and Peace with the olive-branch and horn of plenty. On the projecting abutments are twelve panels, containing bronze tablets on which are engraved the names of the heroic dead—in all, seventeen hundred and forty-one. There are few commemorative columns in the country as thoroughly artistic as this.

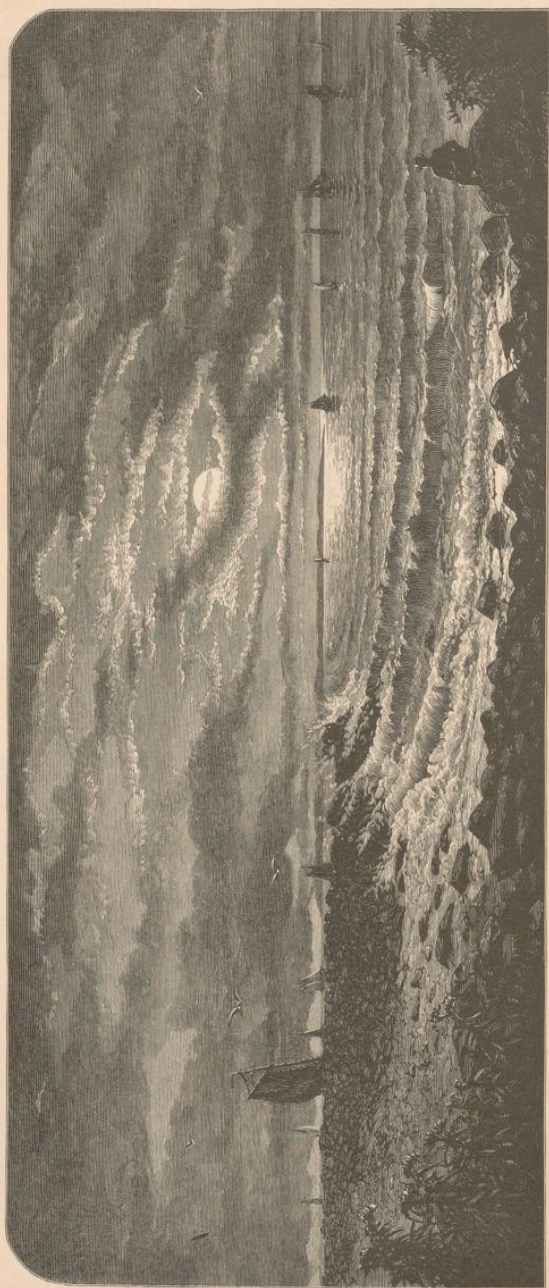
We now pass to the outskirts of Providence, in a northwesterly direction, and, as we drive through a small manufacturing settlement, we come upon a little, double-arched bridge, where we can get a fair idea of the general style of scenery which is peculiar to the region. It has no startling features, no striking contrasts in the landscape, no mountains, no bold horizon, but there are pleasant walks by the side of running streams, shady nooks and alcoves in the woods, with an occasional glimpse of the distant waters of the bay, which gives a cheerful life to a picture that would otherwise be somewhat tame and monotonous. The territory of this State is so limited, and what there is appears on the map to be so intersected by water, that people sometimes smile when we speak of the *interior* of Rhode Island, as if it must be all border, and still it is possible for one to drive a score or two of miles, in a straight line, without getting outside the limits.

But, apart from the regions which border upon Narragansett Bay and the ocean, there are few features in the landscape that would arrest the artist's attention. The broad sheet of water which opens directly south of Providence, and stretches for thirty miles down to the Atlantic, constitutes the great attraction of this Commonwealth. The rivers emptying into the bay, whose falling waters are used over and over again to propel the great wheels of our manufactories, are the main source of the marvellous riches of the State; while hundreds of thousands are drawn every year to the summer resorts which line the shores and adorn the islands of Narragansett Bay.

The sketch of Mark Rock Landing, with the steamer touching at the wharf, might be repeated almost indefinitely. For miles and miles on both sides of the bay, places of resort for summer visitors have been established; while the towns of Pawtuxet, East Greenwich, Warwick, Wickford, and Kingston, on the western shore, and Nayatt, Barrington, Warren, Bristol, Portsmouth, Middletown, and the world-renowned Newport, furnish salubrious and attractive residences for permanent as well as for temporary domicil. Let us linger for a while at Rocky Point, on Warwick Neck, about twelve miles south of Providence, and see what it is which attracts such multitudes to this spot. When we are told that, in the summer of 1872, not fewer than two hundred thousand persons landed here—there being more than twelve thousand visitors in a single day—and that steamboats, crowded to repletion with passengers, deposit their burdens here eight times every day; that one of the several dining-rooms connected with the hotel covers a space of



Rocky Point, from Warwick Pier.



Break-water, Narragansett Pier.

eighteen thousand square feet, and can seat fifteen hundred persons, while, in the height of the season, notwithstanding these liberal accommodations, many are sent hungry away, we may be certain that the place possesses some very peculiar attractions. Shady groves, pleasant walks, romantic caverns, a smooth beach, salubrious air, and beautiful views, are among the natural features which attract the weary and the seekers after pleasure and repose. From the high tower which appears in our artist's sketch, the whole bay, from Providence to Newport, with the Atlantic in the distance, comes within the reach of the observer's eye. All the resources of art have been levied upon to increase the attractiveness of the place—fountains within-doors, and others discharging their jets into basins in the open air; beds of flowers, and rustic flower-baskets and evergreens, set off with artificial floral decorations; ruins covered with running vines, and fish-ponds glittering with varieties of the most beautiful fish, to which is about to be added another pond for seals, and a deer-park.

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Indian Rocks

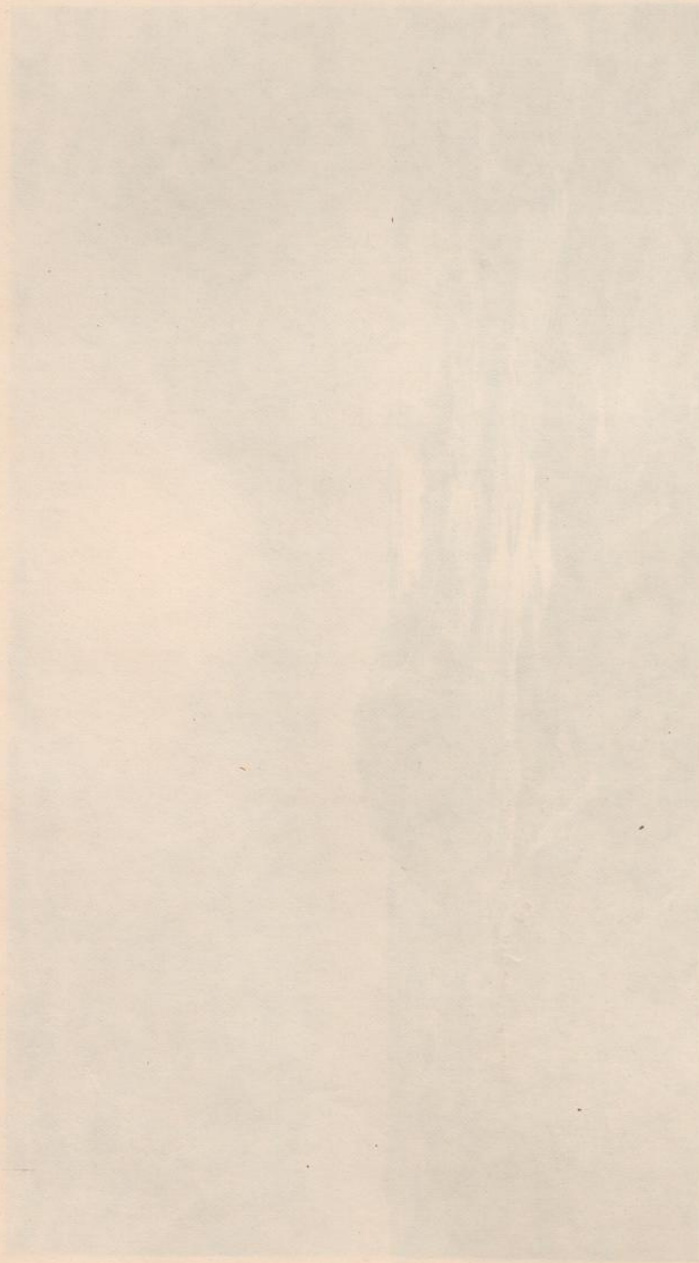
NATHANASETT.

New York, D. Appleton & Co.

But, after all, the great feature of the place is the abundance of shells. Rhode-Islanders are proud and eager to counteract the false notion of the Narragansetts, with whom it originated. The ordinary people here are much interested. A fire of wood is built in the open air, above a layer of large stones arranged in a circular form; and, when they have become sufficiently heated, the shells are swept off, and a quantity of them is thrown upon the stones, which are immediately covered with a thick layer of ash, as usual, and this is also protected from the cooling effects of the atmosphere by a layer of cloth. In due time the coals are removed and the burning stopped. Thousands of pounds of clams are thus prepared at Rocky Point during every season, and some of the finest from the neighboring shores are so abundant that they would seem to be the source for the many shell-fish to which we refer.

Passing down the coast, we next reached the point where we came upon Narragansett Pier, where the great rocks, which are the source of the shells that can be reached in an evening, have been a long time the source of shells. The shells we from which the region takes its name, and the shells at which may be seen in the picture, was erected a few years ago, as a memorial to the shells of heavy blocks of granite, stamped together with iron bolts. The purpose of it was to make a small harbor, where vessels might lie and discharge their cargoes, without the danger of being destroyed by the winds and waves. It was supposed that the massive pile of rock would be strong enough to defy the power of the sea, and that the heavy stones would be a barrier which it never recovered, and that the shells would be torn away the iron clamps and tumbled the huge stones into a heap of rubble.

Until it was comparatively recent years, the pier was a waste, and occupied only by a few fishermen's houses, but it has since been built up, and the scene is a beautiful one. A few houses may be seen, and a white building, which is the beach, that has been built up, and solitary, and not fewer than a hundred boats, the fishing-boats, have been placed along the shore, some of them of great size, and of various dimensions. People from all parts of the Union flock to this pier, for the sake of breathing the cool breeze, and plunging in the waves, and watching the boats, as they dash upon the high, jagged rocks that line the shore, and forming a path for the smooth, hard beach, when the boiling is done. There are many boats, and the scene is rich and varied in their coloring, as these boats are of various colors, and are of all sizes, and in the American shore, until you reach the pier of Providence, which is a view of a view on each side, and a view of Providence, which declares these are the shells of Providence, which the waves have never been able to wash away, and which are a great source of many other shells, and shells.



But, after all, the great feature of the place is the *clam-bake*, an institution of which Rhode-Islanders are proud, and regard as a connecting link that binds them to the old Narragansetts, with whom it originated. The culinary process may be briefly described: A fire of wood is built in the open air, upon a layer of large stones, arranged in a circular form, and, when they have become sufficiently heated, the embers and ashes are swept off, and a quantity of clams in the shell poured upon the stones, which are immediately covered with a thick layer of fresh sea-weed, and this is also protected from the cooling effects of the atmosphere by an old sail-cloth. In due time the coverings are removed and the feasting begins. Thousands of bushels of clams are thus consumed at Rocky Point during every season, and where they all come from is a mystery, for the neighboring shores are so constantly dug over that there would seem to be little chance for the infant shell-fish to attain maturity.

Passing down the west passage of the bay and reaching the open sea, we come upon Narragansett Pier, where the broad ocean rolls in full force, and there is no land that can be reached in an easterly line until we touch the shores of Spain. The structure from which the region takes its name, and the ruins of which may be seen in the picture, was erected a few years since, at considerable cost, of heavy blocks of granite, clamped together with iron bolts. The curve of the wall made a small harbor within, where vessels might lie and discharge their cargoes, without the danger of being destroyed by the winds and waves. It was presumed that this massive pile of rock would be strong enough to defy the power of the ocean, but the first heavy storm gave it a blow from which it never recovered, and successive tempests have torn away the iron clamps and tumbled the huge stones into a heap of ruins.

Until a comparatively recent date this place was a waste, and occupied only by a few fishermen's houses, but a strange change has now come over the scene. A thousand bathers may be seen, on a warm summer day, crowding the beach that was once so still and solitary; and not fewer than eighteen hotels and boarding-houses have been erected along the shore, some of them elegant and costly and of vast dimensions. People from all parts of the Union flock to this spot, for the sake of breathing the cool ocean-air, and plunging in the waves, and watching the breakers, as they dash upon the high, precipitous rocks that line the shore, at a little distance south of the smooth, hard beach where the bathing is done. Artists say there are no rocks on our coasts so rich and varied in their coloring as these—south of this ledge there are, indeed, no rocks at all on the American shore, until you reach the reef of Florida. "Indian Rock," of which we give a view on steel, from a painting by Hazeltine, is named from an old tradition, which declares there are red stains of Indian blood upon it, which the waves have never been able to wash off—a story almost as well founded as many other aboriginal legends.