

THE SEA AND ITS LIFE

by
SPARTACUS

I like Provincetown in July. Then it is that our friends from Quebec and Honduras Nassau and California, St. Louis and Texas, begin to drift into town. Then it is we sit on our bit of grass and with not-so-good Manhattans but nice Martinis made with Duff Gordon dry Sherry, visit with Janet and Robert Nathan, Louise and Bill Gerdon, and Bill Gilman, and wonder how we may get Lazlo Havas out of Budapest. And then some of Dorothy's Lobster Newburg, salad with herbes fines, and rhum baba. Then it is we spend a morning and lunch with Robert de Ropp, talking of how science workers might be better, and a morning with Grace DesChamps, who heard we were on our last legs and wanted an article before that happened. Which, God willing, will be postponed for some time.

For a long time I have wanted to spend a summer in Provincetown. And now, after 17 years, that boon has been vouchsafed me. For I no longer have to trip it out to Great Hollow Road three times a day to see if things are going all right at the Laboratories. Now I can do my stint of work here at home, and then sit me out in the sun with a can of beer or a Tom Collins, and visit with my friends. To talk over Town affairs with Charlie Alexander as he cuts the hedges better than they have ever been cut before. To visit with Harry Kemp as he trudges into town intent on getting out the second number of his magazine which contains some of the best personal writing I have ever seen. To pass the time of day with Irving Freeman and scold along with him over what seems to us to be unnecessary expenditures. To visit with Nick Padis, the real physician from Philadelphia, and his lovely family, Kiveley, Daphne and Rhea. And to snicker as the exuberant 10-year-old Daphne tells of her ideas of how her mother manages things. And to be invited to a quarter-century wedding anniversary in the oldest house in North Truro, there to meet again Lilli Marx, who pleases me inordinately by calling me Sparti right off the bat. And Dick Magee, who has been laying some cement, colored green, and Leroy Cook, the professor of French at Dartmouth, and both getting nicely agog—some-what frenetically conversing about nothingnesses in French. And la jeune McKenna and la jeune Allen asking again which is the best college to go to to learn how to do cancer research. Both so young and lovely that long before they get into cancer research they will be snatched off by some young males to make a home. As they should be. And LaForce Bailey, on from Illinois and running the Beachcombers Ball and insisting I do a couple of posters, which with the help of a magic lantern I have started by projecting the comic onto the poster and drawing it off and then coloring it to my fancy.

And so I do not wonder why all these folks from far and near come to Provincetown, for it is because we give them something they can get nowhere else. It isn't the light ochre dunes alone, it isn't the clean sky, it isn't the long yellow beaches, it isn't the green and

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blue waters alone. Far from it. It is the folks who live here that bring the folks from afar and anear (to quote, inadvertently, James Joyce).

For here they find friendliness and sense, friendliness free from perkicketiness. They see Joe Sears watering the lawns in the East End year after year. They find Amos glad to stop and talk of the time he was champion sculler on the Schuylkill. They find the bus running on or off schedule, but still the bus. They see our roses, our astilbe, our honeysuckle, our white houses all abloom. They like the smell of the flats on a hot noon, they like the breezes which tangle their damp hair, they like the crunch of their feet in the wild cranberry cushions of the moors over which they tramp. They find fun in the Atlantic House which Frank Barnett is doing so well by. They know the Flagship is real and built with the fine artistry of Pat Patrick from timbers washed ashore from wrecks on our bars. They like the fish right out of the water, with its fine flavor. They like Bill Boogar's forge—Bill Boogar whose bronze birds are gracefully frozen in action.

And, if they drift across the street into the Art Association Gallery, they like Ada Reynher's delicate picture of our wayside broom, and the clean sketch of Sam Charles. And those who have discrimination cannot help but enjoy the water colors of George Yater, who catches the mysteriousness of the tidal flats.

They know Provincetown is no transplanted Greenwich Village, or Drexel Hill; no Coney Island or Newton Center; no Hollywood or Tia Juana. But just Provincetown. Cheerful, bright, friendly, earthy. Than which there is no equal anywheres. And if they have insight, which they must have, else they would not come back year after year, they know that those of us who have chosen to come here to live out our lives do so because of these things and many others. The things that Joe Lincoln never caught in his books, the things the Upper Capers envy us for, the things that are found in Mary Heaton Vorse's TIME AND THE TOWN, and Harry Kemp's LOVE AMONG THE CAPE ENDERS. The things that are found week after week in THE CAPE CODDER. The experiences old and new, the reminiscences, the pleasantries, the anxieties, the tellings of the beauties of grasses in bloom. The ways of thinking, of living, which have made us a people with whom others from all over the world wish to live.

Some who come to live with us, in our country, and in Provincetown, would seem to want to change our ways. But how foolish they come because they like our ways; think them better than those of where they lived before. But soon, like a young wife, or a young husband, they want to make us over. Why? What we are is what made them come to be with us. Just as what the young feller and the young gal were is what made them want to get married. If they make us over to their image we will no longer be what they came for. We can't be half fish and half fowl. Trying to make folks over to your way of thinking is no betterment, even if you have all the wisdom in the world, which you don't have.