

We sat wondering the other evening about those who go out to the dunes of Provincetown.

Not about those who strike out for a few hours of adventure over those wind-cleaned hills of sand, but about those who turn their backs on the rest of us, and all that we have, and all that the world has, to live out there in a silence made quieter by the ocean's consistent business.

Here there is comfort, candle-light, lamp-light and fire-light. Water comes quickly at the tap and the neighbors next door have a cup of flour to lend or borrow.

Out there, why, out there are miles of endless desolation. The gulls squawk by day, old Highland flashes through the night, and far, far away a mournful bell tolls over a reefed cemetery of ships and men. That is all, absolutely all.

So we sat wondering near the radio about Harry Kemp and his ilk who turn their backs on the rest of us, and all that we have, and all that the rest of the world has, to live out there in the dunes. It was quite incomprehensible.

Here in this lovely room we are able with a quick wrist to dial off a too-insistent swing band for a touching rendition of a hill-billy song which is pleasantly interrupted by a dispatch citing the casualties in the latest Jap bombing, and concluded by a "stirring health drama" about something which should flow at the rate of two pints a day and when it does truck-drivers are extremely courteous when they crash. And the next number opens with a story about a young wife who has eaten too much stewed tripe and so can not go to the movies with her husband. But he gives her some little pills that he always carries in his pocket and in an amazingly few minutes she is at the flickers watching Benito give Hitler the wink.

Why do they go out to that desolate solitude?

Here we have, every now and then, sometimes oftener, a good husky blast from an automobile horn and punctually the postman brings the bills in the morning. In the bathroom are the shelves covered with the bottles and boxes and tubes that make youth inevitable and marriage a success.

Out there—why, out there—we'll gamble they have none of them.

Perhaps not even any shelves, maybe not even a bathroom! We doubt that they even have pockets enough to carry with them all the little bottles and things that have become essential to right living.

There are people like Bill and Marion Hannum who can't wait until school lets out to leave a city like Fall River with its paved streets and hot and cold running water and crowds, just to get out to a camp hidden away in dunes that hold the hot sun through the evening and the night coolness through the early morning. It's the same hot sun that beats down through the day, seeping into the very core of things, and butter melts, water turns tepid and skin brown.

Why, here we can get, and so could they, sunlight by washing with a certain kind of highly scented soap, or by eating a certain kind of bread and the irradiated butter doesn't have to be brushed on it.

It is incomprehensible that men, and women too, want to leave behind them all that we have, and all that the world has, to go to the dunes. Why they should turn their backs upon all that has been built with such toil, such hope and such imagination, and look with eager, hungry eyes toward the dunes for a haven of simplicity, and a refuge from the noise of their creations—we wonder and cannot understand.



The reclaiming of the Province Lands containing about 3290 acres by the Board of Harbor and Land Commissioners and the work of planting beach grass, shrubs and trees was begun in 1893.



John R. Smith