

H A P P Y-G O-L U C K Y B E A C H.

BY CURRIAN RICE.

“**W**HERE is that place of yours at the seashore?” I answered her evasively. “*Where*, did you say?” I hailed a passing car and with a “Beg pardon, Mrs. Mc-Flimsey; I have a train to catch,” I was gone. No, she is not the kind we want at Happy-Go-Lucky Beach. It is the one perfect place in the State—well, let US say in New England, where, during the hottest of summers, we have not even a reminder of what the rest of the world is suffering at the hands of unregenerate and unrelenting thermometers.

A bluff fifty feet high slopes back three hundred feet to the cool, green meadows, and it is covered with tall pines and oaks which grow over the face almost to high-water mark. Among the trees nestle the cottages, while at the foot of the bluff the great granite boulders lie in the wildest confusion. From low-water mark there stretches out a beautiful beach, where bathers can go for a hundred feet without getting out of their depth, and where little children may play in the water with perfect safety. The bay is crescent-shaped, ending with Moose-a-tuck-a-luck-ma-gun-tic Point on the east and Point Hassock on the west. Clams, lobsters, oysters, mussels, fish, wild duck and plover! They are all to be had for the picking. You need not trouble the butcher if you can handle a lobster-pot or a fish-hook, or have sense enough to dig clams on the point with the unpronounceable name, or pick up oysters at the other end of the bay. It is the one spot on the Atlantic coast that leaves nothing to be desired. Think of it!

Country and seashore plighting their troth in the shadows of those great trees. The cool, green woodland, with its ferns and mosses and its quiet, steadfast beauty, lying in the arms of the restless, ever-changing sea. A rocky coast crouching at the foot of a beautiful bluff, now drenched in surf and spray, now sitting in the still moonlight with its feet on the smooth, white sands and dallying with the little waves as they come and go;—was there ever a fairer combination, a sweeter wedlock?

If you don't believe it, come and see.

No, gentle reader; do not draw forth that plethoric pocket-book and spread out that how-much-a-foot smile. The lots are all disposed of, and a Happy-Go-Lucky Beacher would as soon part with his immortal soul as to forfeit his claim to the ground that stands under his modest cottage, or the trees that bend over it, or the rocks that lie in front of it. No, you must cultivate the acquaintance of one of us who dwell there if you would see our Arcadia. One such favored individual said last summer, “I did not know that there was such a place on earth—or in heaven.”

The people? Ah! there is the crowning glory of Happy-Go-Lucky Beach. Nature has done all she could for that matchless spot, but a kind Providence deliberately selected the inhabitants. Not an empty head among them; not a parvenu suddenly come to riches; not a dowager with daughters in the market; not a single cross-grained, gouty old person who groans and complains until you are forced to wish that cholera-infantum had been more prevalent sixty years ago. Not one of these bugbears of the typical summer resort, but a lot of healthy, happy, young people, full of fun and love of adventure, keen as razors and as full of spirits as a shad is of bones. True, there are gray-haired college professors and one or two doctors of divinity among them, but they leave their dignity at home, in their lecture-rooms and pulpits, and at Happy-Go-Lucky Beach they don their flannel suits and slouch hats and are as young and merry as the youngest.

You should have been behind the wood-pile where I—but never mind, I will tell you the story. Professor Dan Rivers wanted the roof of his cottage painted, and after trying in vain to get a man to do it, he and his brothers Hen and Ben donned overalls and went to work in good earnest. Dr. Rivers came out and, after watching them for a minute or two, said, “If I only had something to wear I would come up and help you.” “Ask Fanny,” was the response, and soon the doctor appeared transformed as to the outer man and, climbing to the roof, all four were soon painting as if for dear life.

"Can you tell me where I can find Professor Rivers?" It was a gentleman in a dog-cart who spoke, and as Professor Dan looked over the edge of the roof and wiped a spot of paint from his cheek he could not repress a smile as he quietly answered, "I am the man."

"Oh! ah! yes, you are the man; but excuse me, my good fellow, it was Professor Rivers I wished to see." Henry looked up and said, laughing, "Perhaps I am the one; I am Professor Rivers." "Or me," said Benjamin; "I, too, am Professor Rivers." "Oh!" said the gentleman, growing sarcastic, "and probably you, too," addressing the Doctor, "are Professor Rivers, also?" "Well," was the laughing reply, "they don't call me Professor. I am Dr. Rivers, president of—College, of which two of my sons are professors. This one," turning to Dan, "is principal of the Morton High School; probably he is the one you wish to see."

When it dawned upon the aspirant for a position on the teaching force of the Morton High School that the four men on the roof were really what they claimed to be, there was a hearty laugh and an invitation to dinner, at which Professors Daniel, Henry, Benjamin and the good doctor appeared, clothed and presumably in their right minds.

We called our place Arcadia, but everything did not always go serenely there, and this little incident gives the keynote to one of our grievances. It was impossible to get any one to work for us. And yet, and yet—there was Brer Johns. Shades of Abraham Lincoln and John Brown! what had Happy-Go-Lucky Beach done that it could not be blessed by the presence of an African gentleman of negro descent who was willing to work? As we read the dispensations of Providence, Brer Johns was placed on that beach for the especial purpose of splitting our wood, digging our flower-beds, and wheeling off such rubbish as we were unable to carry in our arms. Were we Happy-Go-Lucky-Beachers above manual labor ourselves? Not that I am aware of. We came from our class-rooms, our pulpits, and our offices, and on our arrival there we straightway forgot what manner of men we had been, and we took up the shovel and the hoe and the rake, and for the time we turned cleaners-up of the ground.

Verily, it was needful, for the autumn failings and the winter blowings had covered up matters so that it was not always easy to locate our cottages. We rose early and we raked leaves and pulled weeds and dragged away the branches that had been blown down by the winter storms, and the very novelty of the thing made it seem exceeding good in our eyes. But there was a limit. We could not split logs or haul stones. Here was where the dispensation of Brer Johns came in. The farmers around were too busy to come to our rescue.

Brer Johns lived with his wife and six pickaninnies in a small hut on Moosattuckahopetodieif I can pronounce it Point, and he had nothing to do but to fish and catch eels. We wanted him. We all wanted him. We all wanted him at once. We all wanted him at once badly, and there were coins in our pockets that were fairly dancing to get out and pass into his in exchange for his services. After he had worked for us all da we were perfectly willing he should catch eels all night, if he felt like it, but that was not the order of Heaven's first law with Brer Johns. He wanted to catch eels on every available night, and it was only when he couldn't go eeling, and he "felt like it," or he didn't "forget it," or didn't "have to work for some man down the beach," that we could secure his priceless services for an hour or two.

No entreaties or persuasions had ever induced Brer Johns to work more than two hours at a time within history, except for one man. At that period, no matter what stage in his work he had reached, he would "quit," as he called it, because he "had to split wood for a man up the beach," or he "had to go home for a while," or he had "promised to get some clams for a lady down the beach." It was of no use to plead with him, to shed tears as you depicted to him the misery of a front walk all dug up, or a wood-house disemboweled of its rubbish, which was scattered far and near, preparatory to a "clarin'up." He only gave a sort of submarine gurgle and said he'd "come to-morrer an' finish up the job." "To-morrer!" May I make a pilgrimage on my bare feet to the tomb of Ananias and Sapphira if that "to-morrer" ever came. The only times he ever worked for me were when I pounced

upon him in the road and dragged him off to my lair before he could invent any excuse, and then he worked so faithfully and so well that I was willing to forgive him for all the lies he had ever told and all he was likely to tell for a week to come—and that was taking a big contract.

There was one of our number, however, who had wrought some spell upon Brer Johns and he could get him whenever he wanted him, and this fact tended to cause a distinct coolness between us. It was Mr. Jellaby. He owned the worst looking cottage in the grove, and it was so shabbily built that it was in constant need of bolstering up to keep it from falling into innocuous desuetude. Whenever he wanted Brer Johns to do this he could have him. On several occasions he got that man out from under our very noses, so to speak, and when we were perishing for the want of a little firewood, and kept him working for him *all day*. How did he do it? That was the point we longed to know, and our wrath waxed hotter and hotter. How did Mr. Jellaby bewitch him so he would work for him from sunrise to sunset? We cornered Mr. Jellaby. We coaxed and we wheedled; we offered him candy and cigars; we threatened him with the thumb-screws and the rack; we offered him the choice between death and disclosure, and he only laughed in our faces. Perhaps his cottage was "the meanest on the beach"; perhaps it had "three roofs and yet it rained harder inside than it did outside"; perhaps "the floors were not planed," and "a stove-pipe stuck through the kitchen partition served for a chimney." Perhaps "the brave plans for a new cottage which had been on exhibition for five years had not materialized"; never mind, he could get Brer Johns when he wanted him and could keep him until the work was done; hoped he might never have a new cottage if he couldn't do it every time in spite of us. Finally, he hoped the old cottage might drift out to sea and the land pass into the hand of his worst enemy—indicating me with a jerk of his thumb—if he ever told us how he did it. On such occasions there was nothing more to be said, and to cool the fires that were raging within us we usually shouldered our baskets, started for Moosa—nevermind the rest Point, and went clamming.

There is something about clamming that is unlike fox-hunting. It is calmative and cooling, especially about the ankles when the tide is coming in. Everybody knows that a cold, saturated solution of NaCl, properly applied, acts as a revulsive and withdraws red cells from congested brain tissue in the most magical manner. This is a most merciful and Providential arrangement; for, difficult as it may be for a non-clamming public to believe, there is such a disease as clam-mania. It is more prevalent when clams are large and clams are plenty, and the delusion consists in the belief that not a clam must be left on the bank that morning; that all must be "removed at the one sitting," as the doctors say. Entreaties and persuasions of friends are alike useless; promises of a good breakfast; the already bursting condition of the clam baskets, threatening to swamp the boat; the knowledge that the patient has already gathered more than he and the five thousand can eat; sore finger-tips and aching knees are of no avail. The prognosis becomes grave in the extreme; but when the creeping, crawling tide comes in and first soaks his feet and ankles, then fills up his holes and finally threatens to carry him and his clam basket out to sea unless he gets up and leaves that clam bank, that is the all-convincing, mind-redeeming argument; and if the tide only will come in before complete insanity is established, clamming is a safe and healthy amusement.

A good story is told of a tall lumberman from Maine, who came to Happy-Go-Lucky Beach one summer, and who enjoyed the clam-chowders immensely. He was anxious to know how the clams were obtained. He was told that they grew on bushes and had to be picked after dark, when the dew was on them, to secure their best flavor. He acquiesced blandly, and his hosts chuckled inwardly. By-and-by the conversation turned on lumber, and the question was asked how old a pine-tree had to be before it was fit to be used for ship-building. "Wa-al," said the Maniac, "where I cum from, ef it's a bad year we don't git more'n one crop of pine-trees; but ef it's a good growin' year we git two or three." The company dispersed without the benediction.

We are a simple, unpretending com-

munity at Happy-Go-Lucky Beach. Whatever of society manners we ever had, we leave in the city until our return, and whoever ventures to air any contraband article of that sort is made to pay such heavy duty that he ceases therefrom in the future. Hen Rivers says: "When the Beach gets so that we cannot wear our flannel shirts all day and go clamming in our bathing-suits we are going to move out." Bonnets, gloves and stove-pipe hats are laid aside on our arrival, and not resumed till the owners start for the great world again.

Invitations to sailing parties, straw rides or picnics are given verbally and in the most informal manner. Sometimes they are shouted at us from the stern of a hay-wagon, where our would-be host is stealing a ride; or they are sent by the mouth of one of the children, who proceeds to mix up things so that we are compelled to sally forth to find out whether we have been invited to a botanizing excursion, an autopsy, or a clambake.

Any attempt to put on style is met with hoots of derision. We are there to rest and have a good time, and we are bound to accomplish our purpose. We do have a good time, an uninterruptedly good time. There are only one or two drawbacks. One, I have mentioned, is Brer Johns. The other is the difficulty of reading the tags on some of the cottagers, our neighbors. I think I have mentioned a family by the name of Rivers in this narrative of mine. They are sober and industrious, though not poor, but they try the soul of every H.-G.-L. Beacher for a year or two after his arrival. Mrs. Rivers? There are four of them, besides two Misses Rivers. You cannot go outside of your cabin without stepping on one of them. The thing is to find out which man belongs to which woman, and which two are as yet undesignated, and after you think you have them all sorted out and labeled, some trifle mixes you up and the whole thing has to be done over again. The Rivers, however, are but as a drop in the bucket, compared with the Plums. There are four brothers who look exactly alike, with thirty-seven children, more or less, among them. They never all come to the Beach together, and that makes it all the harder. After days of solemn study, interspersed with private quizzes,

when you think you really know them apart and have their children all apporportioned out, in will pop another brother and his family, and there is nothing left for you but to rend your clothes and sit down on the ash-heap again. We studied them all of two summers, and in the pride of our youth we imagined ourselves capable of passing a regent's examination on them. We felt positive that we had the William, the John and the Andrew Plums all located and anchored in our wandering minds, when one day we were suddenly driven out to sea without compass or chronometer. Here was a Mr. Henry Plum and three small plumlets, with a tall daughter of Mr. John Plum, whom we had never seen before; all fair haired, sweet faced, gentlevoiced, tender mannered; so much alike that it was simply maddening. We counted nineteen of them one morning going to the station with the husband of one, the father, uncle, brother, brother-in-law and cousin of the rest of them, and positively you couldn't tell which children belonged to which parents.

I have said nothing about the sailing and boating at Happy-Go-Lucky Beach, but that constitutes one of the chief attractions of the place. Children of ten years can row and sail all over that sheltered bay in pleasant weather without fear of sudden squall or treacherous current, while outside of the islands and the points the yachtsman can have all the rough water he wants. The women of our Arcadia leave their pianos, easels, and fine needlework in the city, and when they come to us they bare their white arms and show equal skill in the use of a pair of oars, a tiller rope, and even the reefing-points. Swimming, diving, driving, clamming, fishing, hauling boats out of the surf—they are equally at home in or out of the water, and Happy-Go-Lucky Beach is proud of their achievements, whether in the ordering of and presiding at a good shore-dinner, or in their enthusiastic assistance in the procuring of the materials for the feast.

Such is the Arcadia which a kindly and beneficent Providence has given to some of us to enjoy. Can you wonder that we bless our happy stars all summer, and through the long cold winter count the days before our feet may again tread that earthly paradise?