

and warm. After a plunge in the river, a steaming cup of coffee, and a small mountain of flapjacks, we took our chairs out on the porch for a sun bath. The warm Indian summer sunshine, combined with the gentle rocking of the boat, produced a feeling far from disagreeable. Our house lay facing the open river, with the sidewalk jutting out like a miniature wharf on the side. All the scows lay either alongside or else facing one of these walks. There were houses of various sizes and designs from the log bottom lean-to, built of scraps of corrugated tin and the frame "floaters" to the more pretentious "scow." Not a few showed clearly that they had been designed in accordance with the material at hand rather than by an architect's plans. The builders had each worked out his own design as he built and the result was a queer conglomeration of floating huts. Some were painted a gaudy color, some a dark green, and a goodly number without any paint at all. All were surrounded with porches, and on this particular morning the scow dwellers seemed to have followed our example for almost every porch was occupied. Beaumont fell to telling me some of the characteristics of his neighbors. This man never worked, but lived a life of leisure and comfort while his wife supported the family; that one was out of a job and his family was scraping along as best they could with little or nothing. This man was an invalid who a couple of years before had held a good position as engineer on one of the railroads and had lived in a comfortable cottage in one of the suburbs, but through sickness had been forced to give up his position and had been pulled down till now he was in the lowest stage of poverty.

As I sat looking about me at the various men and women and listening to my friend's comments on their lives and habits, I could not help thinking of the great and mighty ocean of life with its undertow, dragging the weak and careless down and down to the end. Here were families of eight or ten persons, all living in two, or at the most three stuffy rooms out on the water. It seemed as if they were tottering, for an instant, as it were, on the brink of bottomless depths, and if through carelessness or some grave misfortune, they should be unable to pay the meagre rent, demanded by the greedy landlord, or should fail to fill the meal bin, the strong and merciless current would unbalance them and the undertow would carry them under and out of this selfish world of ours.

My thoughts were interrupted by the appearance of a stranger. He was a tall fellow but badly stooped, and his features, though