BACK DOOR LIFE AT THE BEACH

BY MAY KELLY

FOR THERE is such a life, as peculiar to and typical of the beach as the chatting on the front porch Summer evenings and visiting from veranda to veranda is of existence in our Southern States.

This beach backdoor life is not revealed, of course, to hotel guests, but to the genuine cottager, who rents a completely furnished (?) beach house, and comes down with more or less lares and penates to establish therein.

All comme-il-faut beach cottages front the ocean, so our householder naturally arrives at the back porch first on her way from the train, and is glad to drop hand baggage, heavy lunch baskets, children, pet dogs and cats, etc., while she fumbles for the key and recovers from the shock of seeing the difference between a real beach cottage and an advertised one.

In sporting parlance, it's easy money that she has but forced the rusty lock and opened enough shutters to show the lone stewpan the cuisine contains when the swarm descends upon her. Even more pervasive than the iron-destroying rust or the whitening bleach of the salt air are the order-men from rival groceries at the beach. Long before the deliberate baggageman has shifted his pipe and deigned to look among the stack of trunks at the station for her impedimenta she is surrounded by purveyors of good things for the inner man.

The lucky first who climbs the back steps and helps her adjust the kitchen stovepipe gets a long order. Slightly hazy, perhaps, but one always needs such staples as tea, sugar, salt, etc., and as he finally leaves stumbles with self-satisfaction upon a hated rival.

HELPS HER ADJUST THE STOVE PIPE

The latter, nothing daunted, hands out a tide-table, mentions that his firm delivers twice a day and is glad to bring the mail, and with pencil in hand awaits the forthcoming, if somewhat distracted order.

"Yes, I forgot to tell the other man coal-oil. Yes . . . Yes. . . Yes, about a quarter's worth. Yes, some tea and coffee and . . . yes and salt. Oh, children, keep out of that lunch basket. Yes, some soap . . . . I think that's all today. Children! don't let Fido chase the cat!"

* * *

Then a bell rung a few times out in the road announces "Butch," whose sole object in life is to sell and deliver to you each day as much meat as he can prevail upon you to think you need. Also upon the rear wheels of "Butch's" chariot, comes a distressingly moon-faced Celestial with a wagon so full of succulent vegetables, that one must buy, both to prevent him from laying on any more adipose tissue, and also to watch his imperturbable expression as he weighs out three pea-pods for a pound.

By this time the new-comers have opened the front part of the house between knocks, and are now recalled by another rap, which reveals a third grocery man,—tall, broad-shouldered, brown clothes matching his tanned, brown face. An Apollo, also a detachable Centaur, judging from the fiery steed now browsing on fern and thistles while his master makes the circuit of the neighboring back porches.

"Oh, we've already ordered! Oh, you carry the Regal Bakery bread? Yes, we want that. And you have fresh fruit every day? Well, bring us some, and yes, some tea and sugar . . . and a sack of salt. That's all."

He says, "Thank you, miss," on leaving, which renders him persona grata in the future, for what youthful mother of three sturdy youngsters could withstand that tribute?

"I know we oughtn't to have so many grocery men, but really, Florence, it'll be almost like going through a picture gallery to see such a handsome brown face at the door every day."

* * *

But an emancipated streetcar gong rung vociferously at the back gate, claims attention, and proves to belong to a covered bakery wagon filled with millions of rusks, raisined cookies, fat little buns, questionable pies, and bread of every possible kind. Twenty-two tickets for a dollar is the open sesame to this traveling kaleidoscope of delight.

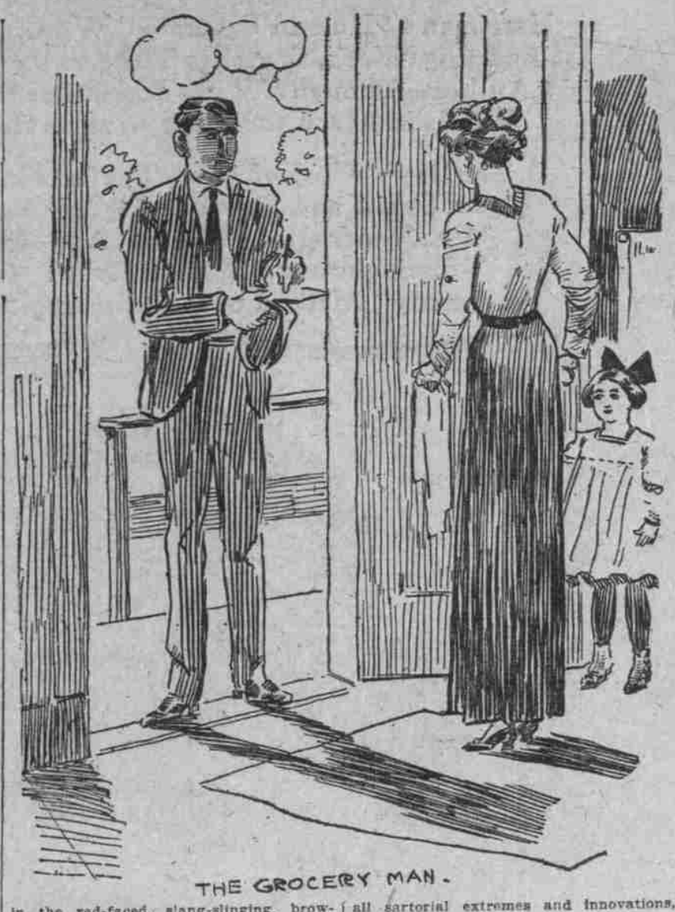
THE FOURTH GROCERY MAN VAULTS THE BACK FENCE.

And now the fourth groceryman vaults the back fence, fresh from belated encounters with other new or old arrivals. There's certainly no chance for him this late in the game—a slender, bashful stripling, with no assurance whatever, who stammers:

"Do—do you, is there—is there anything you—want this morning?"

His timid manner wins the day, and pitying his hesitancy and evident lack of worldly knowledge, our heroine gives him the longest order of all, having by this time collected some of her wits, and leaving out on this last occasion "tea, sugar and salt."

With sad blue eyes and innocent face, he, too, goes down the back steps, to return thence every day until the fatal Sunday when she learns that "men were deceivers ever," for inadvertently passing by the ball ground, she recognized him in the red-faced, slang-slinging, browbeating captain of the local baseball nine.



THE GROCERY MAN.

* * *

Then there are the milk man, fish man, garbage man, laundry man, vegetable man, clam man—any and all kinds of man except the Summer man so exploited in song and story—to call daily at the back door.

When the autobiography of an order man is written, there will be some interesting reading. Fortunately, they are all, all honorable men, and carry no snapshot cameras, which is much to be thankful for. Great command of countenance they have, and wonderful tact in ignoring all sartorial extremes and innovations, and the be-toweled head, or the one frankly bristling with curl-papers of all sizes, receives the same courteous attention as if the owner had stopped in her carriage late in the afternoon to give a gilt-edged order. Housewives don't go to the beach to arise early, so when the grocery man's knock wakens them from slumber, he must perforce take his order garnished or garbed as haste and eccentric fancy may dictate.

Acquaintance is also quickly made with one's neighbor at the back door, for either you will have to use her pump because yours is rusty, or she will use yours, because the water in her well tastes fishy.

WASHING IS DONE ON THE BACK PORCH

Washing is done on the back porch; clams and crabs are cleaned there; The Oregonian is thrown there—if it doesn't roll off and hide itself somewhere in the yard—discussions with various neighbors about what time will be high tide and when to go in bathing, are held there, and from there, if at North Beach, is heard the delectable, ineffable, indescribable, soul-penetrating screech of the whistle, as old No. 6 comes reeling around the curves.

* * *

Another attraction at the back door is the slow-moving, swarthy squaws, laden with baskets, who call almost daily, hoping to share in the general despoilment of your purse.

No trading for them! In vain do you show outgrown sweaters, bright golf-capes, heavy walking skirts. A shrug of the shoulders is your answer, or a returning toss of the garment with "That good for you."

Barefooted sometimes, stooped with age, faces scarred, leaning upon a stout cane, they pass along the beach, accompanied by gorgeously dressed grandchildren, of whom they learn about prices, and for whose bedizenment they are anxious to sell the baskets woven during the dark Winter days.

The hall-mark, coat-of-arms, crest, insignia, what you please, of a bona fide beach family is to be found—not emblazoned upon the back door, but—hanging in the back yard!

When you pass along, and see suspended from the clothesline, fat bathing suits, thin bathing suits, red suits, polkadot suits, puffy suits, torn suits, all fiercely battling with the breeze, you perceive that here dwells a family that knows what's what.

Rude Boreas mauls them, flaps them upside down, billows out the rotund ones and whips into rags the attenuated ones, but there they must stay, though like Hamlet's passion, torn to tatters, till the next bathing hour. Furthermore, try to traverse these yards after dark, and whether scraping the clothesline the length of your countenance, or wiping it with each consecutive, clammy garment—breathing them, tasting them, smelling them, fighting them, twining them round your neck, removing them from your eye—you get the quintessence of this same back-door life, and realize that however helpless the back door may be by day to the onslaughts of the needy, by night it is barricaded as effectually as ever military post on a lone frontier.

Long Beach, Wash., Aug. 18.

USES YOUR PUMP BECAUSE HERS IS RUSTY.

JOHNSTON BLAKELY, THE PAUL JONES OF THE WAR OF 1812

BY RICHARD SPILLANE.

THROUGH the long Winter of 1813 and the Spring of 1814 it seemed to Johnston Blakely that fate had marked him for one of its sorry victims. The men of the United States Navy were winning for themselves undying fame, but Blakely, it appeared, was doomed to have little or no share in it. Young, ardent, keenly ambitious, he bewailed what he thought was his misfortune. Ill luck had followed him throughout the war. In all the months that he had been in command of the Enterprise there had been no opportunity for a fight with the enemy. Less than two weeks after he was made master commandant and transferred to Portsmouth to take charge of the Wasp, the Enterprise met the Boxer. History tells us that the battle was one of the best fought of the war, and Lieutenant Burrows, who commanded the Enterprise, ranks high among the Nation's heroes. Mortally wounded, he would not go below, but when the Boxer surrendered and he received the sword of his adversary, he said: "I am satisfied; I die contented."

To Blakely, eating his heart out at Portsmouth while the country rang with the story of Burrows' glorious death, there was the added mortification that he could not hasten work on the Wasp. The sloop of war to which he had been assigned was the third of that name in the Navy. There was no need for transferring him from the Enterprise to the Wasp so early, for work on the construction of the new sloop had not progressed far when he got his orders to proceed to Portsmouth, but the Secretary of War had a high regard for Blakely's family and wanted him to not only superintend the construction of the vessel, but pick and train every one of his crew before he proceded to sea.

Held in the Blockader's Grip.

Although here and there American craft and American seamen were astounding the world by showing that England was not invincible on the sea, all the ports of the United States were blockaded by British ships, and a little boat such as the Wasp had no chance to get out through the blockading squadron except when storm scattered the fleet that watched the harbors. Around Portsmouth the blockaders were particularly vigilant. Once or twice, late in the Winter, Blakely thought he might get out, but it was no use. To add to his discomfiture, some other commanders, refitting at other ports, had managed to slip out, and, once through the cordon, had begun to harass British shipping.

In a letter to one of his friends Blakely poured out his soul just about this time.

"Alas," he wrote, "I shall ever view as one of the most unfortunate events of my life having quitted the Enterprise at the moment I did. . . .

"The Peacock has ere this spread her plumage to the winds, and the Frolic will soon take her revels on the ocean, but the Wasp, I fear, will remain for some time a harmless drone in the waters of her own country."

How little he knew of what was in store for him and for the Wasp!

But even if he feared the Wasp was to remain a drone he trained his crew as few crews had been trained up to that time. Every day he drilled them; every day he brought them nearer and nearer to perfection. It is declared on competent authority that the crew of the Wasp was the highest in point of efficiency of any in the war of 1812. Every man on the sloop except Blakely was a New Englander. Blakely was Irish. Born in Seaford, County Down, in October, 1781, he was brought to America when he was 2 years old. His parents settled in Wilmington, N. C., and when he was 10 years old he was sent to New York to be educated. Then he went to the University of North Carolina to be prepared for the law, but he had a predilection for the sea, and in 1800 became a midshipman. He served in the Enterprise in the Mediterranean under the gallant Commodore Preble, in the war with the Barbary States, and was made a lieutenant in 1807, and got command of the Enterprise in 1812. There probably was no better seaman in the service than Blakely and no more resourceful man. Though he chafed at delay and bewailed his luck, he never relaxed in his work.

Away at Last.

Half a dozen times in March and April Blakely tried to get the Wasp out, but the blockaders held him tight. Once in the night he almost got through without discovery, but again luck was against him. At last the door of opportunity opened. A storm arose that scattered the British watchers, and on the wings of that storm the Wasp went kiting out over the broad Atlantic.

It was on the 1st of May that the Wasp left Portsmouth, and the next few months were big with her doings. Straight across the Atlantic she went, headed for the enemy's country. The English Channel was patrolled by 35 British warships, but into the thick of the fleet went the Wasp. She was there to fight, to burn, to destroy, to terrify. John Paul Jones won a name for himself among the immortals by what he had done in neighboring waters 20-odd years before, but John Paul Jones was a slow sort of individual in comparison with Johnston Blakely. For 34 days Blakely ranged the English Channel. Then he went into a French port to refit. Back to the Channel he hurried as soon as repairs had been made. This time he remained six days. Into the 40 days of actual operations he crowded so much of action that the British marveled as to where his audacity would end. He fought, burned and sank two man-of-war brigs; he captured one ship, one bark, one galliot, six brigs and one schooner, and he destroyed two brigs and sent home one very rich prize. There seemed to be no limit to his daring. Some of the vessels that he captured or destroyed he cut out while they were under the protection of frigates. Chased off time after time, the Wasp would return again and again. One of the vessels the Wasp scuttled was particularly valuable, being loaded with cannon, muskets and military stores. This loss was more severe to the British than would have been the sinking of a frigate.

Whatever sorrow Blakely may have felt over his leaving the Enterprise just before the Boxer engagement surely must have been assuaged in those days in the British Channel. Great and glorious as was the fight between the Enterprise and the Boxer, that between the Wasp and the Reindeer was greater and more glorious. And then for good measure came the battle of the Wasp and the Avon. The Goddess of Fortune certainly smiled on Blakely in those days and made up for her frowns of the days before.

A Glorious Contest.

It was before daybreak on June 28, 1814, that the Wasp sighted the Reindeer, a brig-sloop of 18 guns, which came up while the Wasp was in pursuit of two merchant vessels. As the day broke the Reindeer made sail for the Wasp. While the vessels were of nearly the same tonnage, the Wasp being 509 and the Reindeer 477, the Wasp had a decided advantage in the weight of shot it threw. This made little difference to the captain of the Reindeer, William Manners, who was as courageous and competent a commander as there was in the British navy. And Theodore Roosevelt, who is inclined to be a severe critic, says in his "Naval War of 1812" that the crew of the Reindeer was made up of "as brave men as ever sailed or fought on the narrow seas."

From early in the day until midafternoon the rival captains maneuvered. The sky was overcast and threatening, but there was little wind and the sea was smooth. The combat was opened at 2:17 P. M. by the Reindeer, which was only 60 yards distant, but being on the Wasp's weather quarter, was able to use its shifting carronade without reply from the Wasp. Five times the British used this gun and then Blakely got the Reindeer abeam.

Roosevelt's Story of the Battle.

Here is the way Roosevelt describes the fight: "For 10 minutes the ship and the brig lay abreast, not 20 yards apart, while the cannonade was terribly destructive. The concussion of the explosions almost deadened what little way the vessels had on, and the smoke hung over them like a pall. The men worked at the guns with desperate energy, but the odds in weight of metal (3 to 2) were too great against the Reindeer, where both sides played their parts so manfully. Captain Manners stood at his post as resolute as ever, though wounded again and again. A grapeshot passed through both his thighs, bringing him to the deck; but, maimed and bleeding to death, he sprang to his feet, cheering on the seamen. The vessels were now almost touching, and putting his helm a-weather he ran the Wasp aboard of her port quarter, while the boarders gathered forward, to try it with the steel. But the Carolina captain had prepared for this with cool confidence. The marines came aft; close under the bulwarks crouched the boarders, grasping in their hands the naked cutlasses, while behind them were drawn the pikemen. As the vessels came grinding together the men hacked and thrust at one another through the open port holes, while the black smoke curled up from between the hulls. Then, through the smoke appeared the grim faces of the British seadogs, and the fighting was bloody enough, for the stubborn English stood well in the hard hand play. But those who escaped the deadly fire of the topmen, escaped only to be riddled through by the long Yankee pikes; so, avenged by their own hands, the foremost of the assailants died, and the others gave back.

"The attack was foiled, though the Reindeer's marines kept answering well the American fire. Then the English captain, already mortally wounded, but with the indomitable courage that nothing but death could conquer, cheering and rallying his men, himself sprang, sword in hand, into the rigging to lead them on, and they followed him with a will. At that instant a ball from the Wasp's maintop crashed through his skull, and, still clenching in his right hand the sword he had shown he could wear so worthily, with his face to the foe, he fell back on his own deck dead, while above him yet floated the flag for which he had given his life. No Norse Viking slain over shield ever died better.

"As the British leader fell and his men recoiled, Captain Blakely passed the word to board; with wild hurrahs the boarders swarmed over the hammock nettings, there was a moment's furious struggle, the surviving British were slain or driven below, and the captain's clerk, the highest officer left, surrendered the brig at 3:44, just 27 minutes after the Reindeer had fired the first gun and just 18 after the Wasp had responded."

It certainly was a savage fight. The Wasp lost in killed and wounded 26. Of the Reindeer's crew of 118 men, 33 were killed outright or died later and 34 were wounded, nearly all severely. Never was boat more valiantly defended. Every officer killed and the vessel surrendered by the captain's clerk! Surely Britain has nothing to be ashamed of in this battle. But while all fair men give the full measure of praise to Captain Manners, in giving it they bear testimony to the valor of the victor. Fenimore Cooper says it is difficult to tell which vessel fought the best in the short but gallant combat. Roosevelt says: "I doubt if the war produced two better single ship commanders than Captain Blakely and Captain Manners, and an equal meed of praise attaches to both crews."

Blakely made an effort to get the Reindeer into port, but it was no ust. Putting the wounded prisoners on board a neutral vessel, Blakely set fire to the wreck and then sailed for L'Orient for repairs.

And Next the Avon.

In August he was out again spreading terror through the channel. In the first three days he took two prizes. Then when he encountered the Armada, one of the biggest of the British line of battleships, convoying a fleet of merchantmen, he hung around, despite every effort the captain of the line of battleships made to chase him off, and at last cut out and sank the richest prize of the fleet, a vessel laden with military stores of great value.

As if the destruction of this craft did not suffice for a day's work, Blakely a few hours after sinking the prize went in pursuit of the nearest one of four ships that he sighted off his bow. Apparently it did not matter to him whether all four were cruisers. The Wasp was so fast that he felt capable of eluding almost anything in the chapnel if it came to flight.

The ship the Wasp was pursuing was the Avon of the same tonnage as the Reindeer, but throwing considerably more metal in her gun fire. As the Wasp approached the Avon began making night signals, but Blakely did not respond and the Avon opened fire. After pouring a broadside into the Avon's quarter the Wasp ranged up alongside and a furious engagement ensued.

The darkness didn't seem to bother the Americans to the degree that it did the British. Most of the rigging of the Avon was shot away and her hull was riddled. Some of her guns were dismounted, and even the mainmast went by the board. At 10 p. m.—the Avon having ceased to fire—Captain Blakely hailde to know if she had struck. There was no reply other than a few shots. Blakely thereupon renewed the battle. At 10:12 the Avon was hailed again. This time the reply came that she had struck her colors.

All told, the battle had lasted forty-three minutes— thirty-one up to the time of the first hail and twelve minutes after that.

Blakely was sending a boat's crew over to take possession of the Avon when he had to recall the men hurriedly and prepare for another fight. The Castilian, a big sloop of about the same size as the Avon, was bearing down on the Wasp. Within ten minutes Blakely was prepared for the newcomer. Before the Wasp and the Caiitian could get together the other two warships of the four Blakely had sighted when he started in pursuit of the Avon came bearing down on the Wasp. Then Blakely had to seek safety in running. The Castilian made an effort at purspit, but signals of distress from the Avon called her back.

The guns of the Wasp had turned the Avon into a slaughter-house. Forty-two of the crew were killed or wounded. (The loss on the Wasp was only three.) Hardly had the Castilian taken off the Avon's survivors than the vessel sank.

With a cruiser roaming the channel commanded by a man ready ten minutes after one engagement to enter into another, no wonder the British were alarmed. So heavy had been the damage wrought by the Wasp in her first expedition that the British Channel commanders determined at all odds to destroy or drive off the American. But while the British were planning to surround and destroy him in the channel Blakely left them behind, cruising off the southward and westward and traversing the line followed by English vessels bound for the West Indies and the Gulf. Two prizes he captured and scuttled the British brig Atalanta of eight guns. This was a particularly rich prize, and he put a prize crew aboard under command of Midshipman Geisinger, with orders to proceed to America. A few weeks later, while still in the course of the West Indiamen, the Wasp spoke the Swedish brig Adonis and took off of her two men of the Essex.

That evening the Adonis proceeded on her way to Europe and the Wasp, scudding along under a strong breeze, went booming toward the west. The Adonis, slow and lumbering, arrived in due season in port, but when the Wasp on that October evening sank below the horizon she was lost to the sight of man. Never has she been heard of since. Never until Judgment Day will her fate be known.

North Carloina, claiming Blakely as one of her greatest sons, educated his daughter and made her a ward of the state. Blakely's name stands high in the scroll of fame, for no soldier of the sea accomplished more with the means at hand.

(Copyright, 1909, by Richard Spillane.)

In Russia's Bastile.

(August McClure's.)

During my sojourn in the Schluesselburg Fortess, a memorable drama was enacted—on Christmas day, 1884. In the evening we usually received for supper a soup made from the remains of dinner. The prison director had, on that day, made his rounds of the cells, and, as usual, after visiting the lower ones, he mounted the staircase to the upper cells. He came to my door; the soldiers put a tin basin of soup on my table and left. I tasted it; it was absolutely cold and watery. A few leaves of sour-cabbage were floating on the surface.

"They might have given us something better in honor of a festival," I thought. "But they evidently had no time to think of us, and have not even made the soup warm."

I had scarcely formulated my thought when there came from a distant cell the noise of plates thrown on the floor, followed by shouts, angry voices, stamping of feet, and sounds of struggle, the whole noise being almost drowned by the cries and knocking at the doors by all the prisoners. I stood horrified. What was happening?

As it appeared later, it was Myshkin, brought here after his escape from Kara, who had broken out. He could not stand the severe regime, and, throwing himself on the prison director, demanded to be executed in accordance with the printed menace which was constantly staring him in the face from the wall. It was not long before he was put to death.

Elevation of the Muse.

New York Sun.

I, post wise, once sang of sea and sky
And Arcady,
But now I'm glad to sing the joys that lie
In soap and tea;
No more o'er zephyrs bland or leafy ways
My fancy broods,
My Muse is busy with all sorts of lays
On breakfast foods.
Time was when all my rhymes were spent
on Junes
And jocund Mays,
But now canned soups and such make up my
tunes—
Because it pays.
I have no doubt that you'll condemn and jeer
My Pegasus
For being such a practical and sheer
Commercial cuss,
But all too long I sang of youth and love,
Winds, waves and stars,
So now my Muse reigns near the ceilings of
the subway cars!

The Pantaloon Gown.

Minna Irving in New York Press.

Oh! have you heard the latest news?
It's Mme. Mode's decree
That pantaloons beneath the gowns
Not petticoats must be.
The pretty, fluffy, lacy things
Must now be laid aside,
And trousers baggy at the knees
The ankles neat will hide.
But if the female sex must steal
These garments that by right
Are man's especial property,
Why wear them out of sight?
Why not discard the trailing skirt,
Dear sisters, cousins, aunts,
And mothers, wives and sweethearts, too,
And boldly don the pants?