Will Cuppy

How to Be a Hermit

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I DISCOVER MY ISLAND

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All was excitement that June morning among the clams of Jones's Island (pronounced, by your leave, in two good healthy syllables, thus: Jone'-zez). Softies by the bushel dug themselves deeper into the shoreward mud, and whimpering little quahogs out in their watery beds clung closer to their mothers as they heard the dread news relayed by their kinsfolk of Seaman's Neck, Black Banks Channel, Johnson's Flats and High Hill Crick. To say that uneasiness pervaded the community would be putting it far too mildly. Those clams were scared plumb out of a week's growth; which, as the clam flies, is a lot of growth. In a word, panic reigned, if not pandemonium.

And well it might, for the scouts along the meadows, the deep water observers and the liaison officers on the sandbars had forwarded marine intelligence of no mean importance. As one clam they reported the swift approach by rowboat across Great South Bay of a sinister stranger, by every sign a very devil for chowder, raging and roaring in the throes of starvation and flying the strange device, "Jones's Island or Bust!" Yes, downright terror gripped even the hardest of the clams. "He ought to be here at any moment!" shuddered a visiting cherry-stone.

And see! Even now the hellish bark rounds Hawkins's Point, splashes its desperate way through the shallows and crashes into Savage's Dock with a sickening thud, hurling the oarsman from his position amidships to a point which

may be defined as galley-west. Dizzily the skipper regains his feet, and as he rises to the general view his singular and touching appearance sends thrills of relief up and down the calcareous shells of the bivalves still on watch. Dame Rumor is wrong again! Here is no demon with murder in his heart. Here is no devil incarnate. For there in the full sunshine, the cynosure of every clam, he weeps, the stranger weeps. Anon, he sneezes, and again his eyes drip blinding tears. 'Tis plain some nobler grief than the want of a square meal is bothering this chap. All told, it was pretty pathetic.

The sorrowful newcomer seemed, truly, a man distrait, as he stood there sniffling and snorting into his red bandanna, uttering violent and wicked words, shaking his free fist at nothing in particular and behaving generally as one bereft of all earthly solace and the greater part of the cerebellum. (But don't get too much worked up about this, dear reader; it turns out in a minute that it was only me, arriving at Jones's Island with my rose cold.) Ever and again he moved as though to cast himself and his afflictions into a low tide puddle, always he drew back in time. Then, extracting a small compass from his pocket, he made a few rapid calculations and, tossing a stray lock from a thoughtful brow, began running due South. And as he ran, he wept; and weeping, sneezed.

Some furlongs on his way, about where he would catch sight of something blue and wonderful between the beach hills, he was heard to shout, "*Thalassa! Thalassa!*" which is as much as to say in plain English, "The sea!" and repeat. "*Eureka!*" he cried next—"*Excelsior!*"—"*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres!*" So, naturally, the clams, after thinking

it over, decided that he was perfectly harmless. Each happy shellfish, according to his individual lights, sank back into a sort of nervous lethargy or went about his own or his neighbor's business, forgetting as best he could the horrid threat of a clambake. "I told you there was not the slightest danger," squizzed the visiting cherry-stone. "He's only another goof come to look at the ocean—probably a typical New Yorker," he added, tapping his forehead significantly. Whereupon he and the other clams, like the solitary horseman in novels, only rather more clammily, disappeared from the picture. I'm afraid I had ruined their day.

It was thus, or near enough, that I began my long and extremely pleasant relations with the Atlantic, an association which neither of us, I trust, has had cause to regret. You must forgive me for yelling "*Thalassa!*" and "*E Pluribus Unum!*"—especially "*Thalassa!*" since I have no Greek, and just got it out of a book. But I was all excited. I had waited so long! My early yearning for the sea had never been completely satisfied during my boyhood in the Middle West. Later I found Lake Michigan marvelous, but fresh; and seeing my ocean at long last, it struck me all of a heap, like. I hope my readers will permit me to skip what I saw that morning as I stood on the southern shore of Jones's and peered horizonward. I'm not so good in purely descriptive passages, and I believe the Atlantic has quite a number of sterling qualities which we need not argue about. Suffice it that stout Cortez hadn't a thing on me when with eagle eye he got into the wrong poem—it was really a couple of other explorers.

I, too, was silent and just stared. Strangely silent, it occurred to me, after letting my Viking spirit run wild for an hour or two. Mark you well—for here the plot thickens—I had not sneezed once in all that time, nor sniffed, nor sniveled, nor wished that I had ne'er been born, nor any of the things one does when one is subject to rose cold. I had arrived at Jones's Island a human wreck, if that; just one more poor, underpaid book reviewer harried and hunted by hay fever's hideous little cousin. And here I stood, my vision clear, my smeller busy with salt fragrance, whole in mind and nose, thinking in terms of high romance, all of a glorious June day; convinced for the mad moment, I confess it, that Pippa was not a half-wit at all. For a nickel I'd have burst into song. Some subtle seaside virus was coursing through my system, sweeping out dusty clouds of landlubberly notions and raising merry hell with my logical faculties—I always hated them. "It would be sheer foolishness ever to leave this sneezeless island with its own private ocean," I told myself. "And it is our bounden duty as reasonable creatures to shun and turn from folly, at least once in a while, especially when the avoidance is so pleasant as this." So I philosophized. Already I was half a hermit.

That afternoon I wandered back of the beach hills, seeking among the swamps and meadows of the interior some aspect of animate or inanimate Nature that might bring on a return of my tragedy, for as yet I could not believe that this Fortunate Isle contained no germs of rose cold. Though rose cold is mostly caused by the machinations of evil spirits, flowers are part of it, too, and the victim must watch them like so many wild animals.

Flowers are very pretty, yes; and don't they know it? But the best of them are full of pollen, a substance used by Mother Nature to produce rose cold and hay fever when she might be in better business. In a world where *Ambrosia artemistæfolia* turns out to be common ragweed, you can't be too careful.

Proceeding, then, upon my usual assumption that every leaf and bud that blows is my deadly enemy until it can prove that it isn't, I adventured boldly into the unknown hinterland. Each humble, nameless sprout of green I firmly challenged and encountered, sniffing to windward and leeward, reconnoitering stealthily from ambush, doubling in my tracks and charging suddenly to prevent trickery. I found no actual flowers, if memory serves; but one homely creeper, apparently some low and depraved form of sweet pea, showed a dangerous tendency to bloom. I walked straight up to it, looked it in the eye and gave it glare for glare. Nothing happened. I passed on, spasmless. Well, well!

Here, obviously, were none of my vegetable enemies, and a man might be at peace. A body might live here without an utterly ruinous supply of red bandannas. Later there might be goldenrod, but let it come. I am not affected by goldenrod, a fact which accounts for my cocky leers whenever I meet a mess of that flaunting, cruel plant; the joke is on the goldenrod, and so far as I'm concerned it may flaunt its head off. At that I am not one of those happy, carefree picnickers who carry heaping armfuls of goldenrod into railway trains and subways on the off chance of finding some poor hay fever addict and ending a perfect day with a good laugh. It might do these excursionists a great deal of

good if they sat down in a clump of poison ivy some time. Speaking of hot Sitz baths, I had my troubles that first day with the Jones's Island beach grass, a species of improved hatpin, but that thrill was as nothing compared to my epic discovery of the Zachs Inlet Coast Guard Station.

That's where I met Portygee Pete and Comanche and Pokamoke Benny and Buttercup and Uncle John and, in the ways of seven or eight years, some dozens of others who became my friends and privy counselors, financial advisers, pump fixers, putters-on of typewriter ribbons and bulwarks against melancholia. 'Twas there I first sampled the most excellent cuisine of Hot Biscuit Slim, the second of that honored name. Slim plied us all with stew, and afterwards stayed us with pancakes, his own special brew, compounded of main strength, a fertile imagination and a ladle of soda. Boy, that was food, and not merely something to titillate a jaded palate. If your palate is jaded at Jones's, you better move.

It was doubtless fate that drew me there; we cannot, the wisest among us, prove the contrary. And fate, as a great writer has put it, kept right on working. For towards evening, having dined at five, I came by a crooked little path to a crooked little house about three hundred yards from the station. I saw that it was my house, and had been mine from the dim beginnings. Somewhere it was written. In a kind of joyful amazement I opened my mouth and spoke, saying, "I have been here before"; and I care not if the alienists have a long, insulting name for that particular feeling. I added, for the benefit of the small black kitten following close at my heels, "This is my ancient home, from which I strayed long

since. But now I am back from my faring, and here I shall live and abide."

"Well, I'm glad you have come to your senses at last," said the kitten. "I picked you for a hermit all the time."

"Come on inside," said I to the kitten, who leaped ahead into the crooked little kitchen and settled politely on the stove.

"Do you like it?" demanded my inky familiar.

"I love it, all four rooms, furniture and all," I shouted from the parlor. "But just what do you mean," I inquired, returning from my hasty inspection, "you picked me for a hermit?"

"You'll have to take my word for things," smiled my companion. "You were born in Auburn, Indiana, on August 23, 1894, making you a Virgo character, with strong leanings towards Leo. Right?"

"The year's not quite right," said I; "but I can see you're a mighty smart kitten. What's your name, anyway?"

"Finnegan."

"Well, Mr. Finnegan—"

"Just Finnegan to you," said the kitten.

"But it *is* Mister, I suppose?"

"Yes, if you must know," said Finnegan. "Well, Mr.—"

"Call me Bill," said I.

"Well, Bill," resumed Finnegan, "I only meant that you are obviously the island type, not the ordinary, crude oaf one meets ashore in this darned old Riveting Age."

"You got out of that pretty nicely, you flatterer," said I. "What else?"

"You hate noise? I thought so. You have a slight touch of auditory hyperæsthesia, which might easily develop into

schizophrenia. In the quiet of Jones's Island you would probably write much better book reviews. Don't you want to?"

"Yes," I admitted. "I have a passionate, flamelike, all-consuming desire to do that very thing, so as to have my wages raised."

"You'll get over that," said Finnegan, "once you're a hermit."

"I'm not sure that I can be one," said I. "There's civilization to consider."

"I doubt it," said Finnegan. "Anyway, if you will pardon an epigram, a hermit is simply a person to whom civilization has failed to adjust itself."

"Did you think that up all by yourself?" I demanded, with mounting admiration.

"I may have seen it in the National Geographic," said Finnegan. "The Coast Guards saved a millionaire and his yacht from drowning here lately, and he sent us a few back numbers as a reward—wonderful reading, so broadening. As I was saying, let somebody else worry about civilization."

"But I hate to be called a misfit!" said I. "Even now science is hard at work on the cause and cure of hermits, and what with psycho-analysis and all, the poor hermits soon won't have a pillar to stand on."

"Nonsense!" laughed Finnegan. "Of course there are some hermits who haven't all their buttons, but we are speaking of the other kind. There have been some grand ones. It is, I assure you, in no idle vein that I mention such names as Theodosius of Cappadocia, James of Mesopotamia, Epiphanius of Salamis, Hospitius of Villafranca

and Claudius Apollinaris of Hierapolis, not forgetting Robinson Crusoe. There was also the Abbot Paphnutius—"

"The friend of Thaïs?" I interrupted.

"I didn't mean to mention him," said Finnegan. "It just slipped out. Too bad about him—a mere matter of glands, and no good doctors."

"Do you mean he had too many glands, or not enough, or what?" I inquired.

"We needn't go into that," said Finnegan.

"Well," said I, "I'm not so sure about the place of asceticism in modern life. Morality, you know, is essentially social. Life—"

"A lot you know about life," said Finnegan. "Life is within and no man hath seen it. I guess I read that somewhere, too. Anyway, you're not going to be so damned ascetic!"

"Right," I agreed. "I really don't want to be a cenobite or an eremite just at present. I want to be good, in moderation, but you'll have to let me go to literary teas in New York every few weeks. I suppose I must live in a cave?"

"Cave, nothing!" said Finnegan with some show of emotion. "You'll live right here in this house. That's exactly where so many hermits make their big mistake—living in caves. Caves are damp, dark and full of bats; it costs a small fortune to fix one of them so it's at all habitable. All thinking hermits to-day deplore the cave habit. Besides, I always say what is home without a house? It doesn't have to be steam-het, either."

"Steam what?"

"Steam-het," said Finnegan. "It doesn't have to be. You'll be perfectly comfortable with this kitchen range, and you

can write your book reviews on that table, and if any visitors come to disturb you, I'll bite them. I know the man who owns this shack, and I'll arrange the business end of it; just leave it all to me. You'll find after a few weeks that your auditory hyperæsthesia will clear up and you'll lose that pale onshore look; in no time we'll have you a *mem sana in corpore sano*, or near enough to it for all practical purposes."

"Maybe all I need," I replied, "is a good eye, ear, nose, throat and brain specialist."

"What is to be will be," said Finnegan. "And if you want any more cats, I have thirty-nine brothers and sisters—"

"The die is cast!" I exclaimed, and groped my way to the tattered blanket in the bedroom.

Soon we fell into a dreamless sleep, from which Finnegan was to wake a speechless but no less sapient cat. At dawn I struck for the mainland, returning at sunset with all that was mine or that my friends would spare. And the evening of that day was the morning of my hermiting. By and large, that was about how the fit took me. Some think it passing strange that I should change my way of life so completely because of a silly rose cold, a mere ocean, more or less, the twilight look of a little crooked house in the sand and the ravings of a temporarily enchanted cat. They say it doesn't stand to reason. I reply, what does? But how can you argue with people who have never loved at sight?

Sure, it's only Jones's where I live; just good old homely Jones's. It isn't the Balearics, though it has often occurred to me that there is something decidedly Balearic about the place—there are ways of looking at islands. We have no

slingers, and maybe that's just as well; book reviewers have enough on their minds without Balearic slingers and Gaditanian dancers and such. Life can't be all slinging and dancing.

Time was when I planned to cast anchor not nearly so close to the mainland. I started for some unsuspected isle in far-off seas; the Cyclades, perhaps, if not the Hyades, and why not even Atlantis, if I had to fish it up myself? Then the wind shifted, as the wind will, and I'd have compromised on the Greater and Lesser Antilles. Anyway, I got to Jones's, and that's something. Hermits cannot be choosers, as Singapore Sam, just up from Hatteras, brought home to me as I was writing this very piece.

"Have you ever been to Coney Island, Bill?" he inquired—he's saving up for the trip.

"Yes," I told him, truthfully; "but only once, and that was years ago."

"Well," said he, "I suppose that's more for the upper classes."

Let's leave it at that.

BE IT EVER SO HUMBLE

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There has been much loose talk about my hermiting shack. I can't see where it's so awful. Various persons from New York who have dared the waves and the weather for a view (through no fault of my own, I may say) have compared it, seldom to its advantage, with the Parthenon,

the mansion of Krazy Kat and the original home of the Jukes family. I like it.

What seems to worry these people is art. Conventional painters, including the house-and-barn type, generally greet my shack with frank smiles of incredulity, followed by partial coma. And the architects! I hear there's a movement among them to use my bungalow as a textbook example of what's wrong with their business. The sooner the better—that will give the dome of St. Paul's a rest. One expert tells me that my home, in the small space of 20 by 20 feet and up a ways, exhibits in a hitherto unknown mixture all but three of the worst features of the Early Greek, Byzantine, Gothic, Egyptian and Chester A. Arthur schools of thought, at the same time lacking every essential mentioned in Ruskin's "The Seven Lamps of Architecture." I still like it.

Well, fun is fun, and my villa seems to do its share in that way. One amateur wit, somehow asked for the week-end, dropped his suitcase and rolled on the sand in strong hysterics when I proudly announced, "There it is!" He pretended he had just seen an extremely comical cow in a nearby pasture, but I saw through that—we have no cows. Later, he described his visit in the madcap line, "I came, I saw, I went"; but I noticed he stayed his time out, ate like a horse and tried to come again. He also invented that crack about the Jukeses. Jukeses, indeed! I have met some very nice Jukeses, by and large, with better manners, too.

As for art, my house represents the practical rather than the abstract side of that subject. It may be said to serve, however faultily, the eternal principle of utility; it is, or comes near being, in some respects, adequate to the

purpose for which it was erected—to shelter an insolvent mortal from the blast. Let us admit that somehow the lines, spaces and masses failed to jell. It was built for comfort; if something went wrong, we can't have everything. If it does not figure forth the vaulting spiritual aspirations of the carpenter, it keeps most of the rain out, anyway. If it does not evoke the cathedral mood, at least it's a place to flop. A snippy author is fond of remarking that its architecture shows a quality of brute force rather than an association of many intellects. Yes, and I have more than a suspicion that if the intelligentsia had designed my residence it wouldn't be here to tell the tale.

Who did build it? Scoff if you will, but I have felt, ever since I first came to Jones's, that maybe Inigo was guilty. Or is it only a strange coincidence? If I am right in my little daydream, it is probable that my shack betokens Inigo's earlier phase, before he had got the knack of constructing human habitations, or perhaps some later period when he was suffering from a nervous breakdown. Still, why hang it on Inigo, when many another Jones, alive and able to defend himself, is fully capable of the deed? Besides, Inigo would hardly have survived this youthful error, and he became a famous man. Maybe one of the Chippendales did it, Heaven knows it's wabbly enough. Whoever he was, I am sure that my unknown architect was a genius. No disaster less complete and irremediable will account for the symptoms. Looking upon his handiwork, the thoughtful observer can but realize that even genius can be badly bent by a few decades of constant exposure to Mother Nature at her worst. At least, it can here on Jones's Island.

Perched none too securely upon a slight eminence, a good yard and a half above sea level, as far as possible from the boardwalk of a small and transient summer colony and within hailing distance of the Coast Guards (without about nine of which as near neighbors a hermit would be in a pretty pickle), the site of my shack combines the advantages of frequent assistance with comparative safety from flood tides and company. Shielded from the distant view by the government station and the bayberry bushes, my Castle in Spain bursts suddenly upon the sight of occasional explorers with results already indicated. Oh, these hilarious trippers! They seem to think that hermits are deaf, or have no feelings, or both.

Doubtless my chimney causes some of the wisecracks. True, it leans four ways at once and rather dominates the substructure and the landscape; but the jokers simply show their ignorance of hermiting and of air currents, especially during blizzards. How else would it look, composed as it is of two lengths of tile, two pieces of stovepipe and an extra bit of bonnet, all fighting desperately for their very lives in all kinds of weather, and the devil take the hindmost? How would these people themselves look in similar case? To me that chimney's anything but funny. The mere hanging together of its component parts, half-seas over as the effect may be, strikes me as a noble and heartening instance of *esprit de corps*, moral uplift and civic betterment.

And here I beg leave to deny a report circulated by some enemy, presumably on the evidence of the spectacular wire network which prevents my chimney from blowing, as the saying goes, to hell and gone. The charge is that I have a

radio. I need not assure my close friends, who know how I adore the perfectly silent arts, that that is a plain, unvarnished lie. When hermits take to radios we shall, indeed, have reached a fine state of affairs.

I should have the whole house described by this time, of course, but there's little to describe. Moreover, in all stories dealing with horror—and that's the way the world chooses to look at my house—one avoids the crassly concrete. Too, I'm sensitive. About all I care to admit is that my bungalow is growing old, and none too gracefully, that it has known adversity in many forms, that it has repeatedly arisen from the blows of destiny with badly wrenched timbers and with a head unbowed, that it leaks, sways in the passing breeze, sometimes seems about to rise on its hind legs and end it all in the ocean or the bay and that I'm very fond of it. It's not what it was. Its marked departures from the vertical and the horizontal speak all to poignantly of a youth that is fled, of an autumn lurking round the corner. At that, it's a long way yet from senile decay.

I find it possible to cope with these few weaknesses. When it rains I keep reasonably dry by moving myself and manuscripts hastily from spot to spot according to the whims of the dear old roof. In a wintry hullabaloo I fool the icy drafts that whiz through the floor by wrapping my feet in my overcoat and hot bricks. Some day I plan to repair the roof, the walls, the four sides and the underpinning, not from love of unbridled luxury, but in answer to insistent warnings of my instinct to survive. My shack is a house, all right, but you could just as well call it the great outdoors.

Speaking of weather, I must explain that my hermitage occupies a strategic point. My little hill seems to be the meeting place of the winds mentioned in Gayley's "Classic Myths," and that includes everything from a moderate breeze (fishing smacks carry all canvas with good list), through a fresh gale (all smacks make for harbor) to a storm, what I mean storm (just hope for the best and keep your kindling dry).

If, gentle reader, you have ever noticed a goofier than usual paragraph in one of my book reviews, ten to one it was due to the sudden collapse of a portion of my home, with resulting fierce effects upon the critical frenzy. Too often in the midst of literary labors I have to rush out into the night to hold down the parlor, to anchor the bedroom more securely to the clothes pole, to see whether that fearful racket is a herd of mad bull elephants trying to break into the kitchen, or only the mizzen-mast at it again. How can I keep my mind on a book when the loud tempests rave in such a place? How follow the rajah's ruby with my starboard braces twisting, the deck at an angle of fifty degrees, the buckets awash, lee scuppers drowned, shipping water with every lurch, expecting each moment to be on our beam ends, me and mine sunk without a trace in thirty fathoms of sand? Why, rounding the Horn is child's play! And it certainly raises Cain with one's onomatopœia. No, I have no quatrefoils, rosettes, gussets, gargoyles or Mexican drawnwork on my house, not even a caryatid. And a good thing, too, for some young, inexperienced caryatid—she'd last about two minutes.

Small wonder, I suppose, that city folk shudder at and in my house. I suggest that all those who cannot cope with a few rough, untutored elements remain snug at home in the inglenook with their loved ones and their aspirin. That would save them telling me stories about the Aged Recluse Found Frozen in Hut. I wonder if they haven't an eye out for that million dollars hidden inside my mattress, the bags of gold under the flooring and the bank books showing deposits in seventeen banks! Well, they won't get a penny of mine unless they change their ways. What hurts is that my shack does rather resemble the hut where the Aged Recluse was found, if not the spot where the cyclone reached its maximum violence. I thought paint would fix that, but the trouble is, people never give hermits enough paint of one kind—always remnants. So now I have blue sides, a yellow roof, an apple green rear and a bright red piazza. And all it got me was another headline about an Aged Color-Blind Recluse.

Sure, I own it; why wouldn't I? I bought it. Not outright, you understand. By fits and starts. Nor do I regret the long, lean years spent in the paying. Starting with dollar book reviews, my affairs prospered, just as Finnegan had predicted, until to-day, with a ten or a fifteen dollar check arriving every couple of weeks, I can afford to laugh at those early struggles. Came the day when the last of that two hundred dollar debt was canceled and the property was in my possession. Now it is mine, all mine, and will so remain until somebody comes along and kicks me off. Titles to land being what they are out here, and the rage for turning God's pleasant places into picnicking dumps for people with Fords

being what *it* is, it begins to look as though that might be almost any day now.

For the moment I'm sitting pretty on my own domain, consisting, I should say, complete with grounds and outbuilding, of several square rods; of course, the ocean goes with it. There are times, naturally, when one feels land poor. Only last year, during a spell of black famine, I came near burdening the estate for the purpose of buying vitamins. The urgent need for something to put in my pantry drove me to approach a wealthy summer colonist about a mortgage. He thought it was only one of my jokes and laughed fit to kill, so there I was. And that very evening, as luck would have it, I got a birthday cake from shore. The crisis was safely past.

One word more, patient reader, about the æsthetic aspects of hermiting. If art is what you seek at Jones's, take a look at my brick outbuilding, out back of my bunkhouse. Not so bad. I built it to shelter my rejected and unfinished manuscripts from fire, flood, moths, rust and infantile traumas in general; 'twill serve. It's a home for my brain-tots, bless their hearts, all three dozen! Ocean may bear me away in the night on a perigy tide, meadow blazes scorch me to cinders, and welcome, but if anything happens to those brain-tots, I'm sunk. Myself, I live rather sketchily, but the children of my fancy are something else again. As long as I can wield a brick and a hod they shall have the best of everything, if I have to do without chocolate almond bars. I'm going to give them what I missed.

I swore I'd house those kiddies comfortably, and I did. I began to build, not unambitiously, with the Temple of

Karnak in mind, but switched to the Petit Trianon for reasons having to do with a limited foundation—5 by 6 feet, to be exact. I wanted it to look something like a Norman keep, too, but who knows what that looks like? Then the bag of cement gave out when the walls had risen no more than a yard and a half, and it developed that Portygee Pete, my assistant, had been using the Coast Guard potato cellar as a model, anyway. Mere fragment of a dream that it is, the great curved roof, with its round arch composed of galvanized iron, old tin, tar-paper, pebbles and putty, strikes me as nothing short of swell. They call it Cuppy's Folly, but on moonlit nights it reminds me a lot of the Taj Mahal. Sometime, when the dust and strife are o'er, when I've reviewed my last detective tale, when I've said good-by to the clams—who knows? We can't all wind up in Grant's Tomb.

Meanwhile the brain-tots rest in peace, awaiting the millennial dawn of a new kind of magazine, one devoted fearlessly and sacrificially, if need be, to the small joys and sorrows of Jones's Island. Sunshiny days I open the door of the coop, brush off the mildew, administer tonics to the ailing tots and soundly drub the worst examples of arrested development. Then we go for a walk on the beach, proud father bowing to right and left and informing the curious that we are the complete works of Ralph Waldo Emerson—the children must have their little joke! Regular little hermits, all of them! So I suppose our home is a happy home, as such things go. And not so *darned* humble, at that.

LIVING FROM CAN TO MOUTH

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Supposing you lived, so to speak, on such a sandbar as mine, far from the beaten track of travel, chain stores and one-arm lunches, in order to ponder in peace some of the easier riddles of our curious planet—supposing all this and more, how, where and what would you eat? You may reply that in such a fix, God forbid, your keeper would probably feed you; but I mean *alone*. Starting the lesson all over again, I repeat: If you lived where I said, what, if anything, would you eat? And, if so, why?

Well, I seem to make out. Indeed, people ashore are always asking me how I manage to look so fit (meaning fat), implying that any one who would move to Jones's in the first place couldn't possibly have enough sense to think of proper food. Apparently these persons have never heard of the Sea Dyaks of Sarawak, the Winamwanga of Northern Rhodesia, the Whazzits of the Torres Straits and the M'Benga of the Gaboon. Besides, I am only seven pounds overweight, just as I have been these many years, yet the cruel rumor persists that I breakfast, dine and sup entirely upon dried apples and water. Some, noting my crimson countenance among the landlubbers, give out that I batten upon blubber, raw polar bear, codliver oil and maybe Mellin's Food, when it's all due to actinic rays or ultra-violet or something. Of course, that leads to worse and more of it: I that have always longed to look pale, thin, hurt and a little wistful—in a word, poetical!—I am pointed out when ashore as one of the chief modern examples of the sanguine temperament, as opposed to the phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic. As