

THE SEA FENCER.

HUNTING SWORDFISH IS EXCITING AND DANGEROUS.

Plunges at the Hunter--Frequently the Sharp, Slender Snout Pierces the Yawl and Impales the Harpooner.

Some fifteen miles off the Rhode Island shore and almost directly south of stormy Point Judith, a flock of queer, double end fishing boats are cruising briskly to and fro these days. They are in pursuit of the swordfish, which abound at this season in the waters thereabouts, and whose flesh the world has just begun to esteem. Arduous and perilous, but desperately fascinating is this marine hunting, for the savage prowlers of the deep, who carry their sabers in their snouts, do not always come out second best in their fight for life.

A few of the fishermen hail from the adjacent ports of Stonington and Noank, on the southeast Connecticut shore, but by far the largest numbers put out from the ragged coast of Block Island, where each resident is farmer and fisherman. As quaint and old fashioned an ocean resort as the American coast affords is Block Island. It is a miniature world, in which the customs and habits are those of 150 years ago. Every knoll is capped with a small, one story farmhouse, whose shingled walls are thickly coated with whitewash, the only wash that will withstand the intensely vaporous, salty air, which melts the contents of the salt cellars on the family tables into a thick, lumpy mass. Some of these dwellings are 150 years old, and the "old windmill" was built of lumber from trees that grew on the island early in the last century.

Completely isolated in winter from the rest of the world, they take little interest in any except their own concerns; a Bible, a few books of sea stories, a weekly newspaper, and Daboll's ancient almanac furnish all the reading they wish, and stories of hobgoblins and sea wraiths are the gossip of fireside and forecastle.

Far out on the bowsprit of each fishing schooner there is a little iron banded "pulpit," where stands the harpooner, harpoon in hand, riding up to his fearless game. A swift and accurate whirl into the monster's side, and away he bounds, furious with rage and pain, with a floating keg attached to the iron dart by fathoms of rope. The vessel sails after him like a tireless hound on the trail of a fox, and the marine hunters have only to keep sight of him until he has exhausted himself with his mad rushes through the sea.

When the time comes, however—it may be in half an hour and it may be double that time—for the plucky spearsman to deal the finishing stroke to the doughty warrior, then, if ever, hunter and game meet on fairly even terms.

The harpooner quits the vessel in a yawl, armed with ax, spear and club, and pulls his frail craft over the rough waves to the side of the dying fish. It may be that the moribund giant is breathless and really exhausted; if so, the harpooner has only to draw up where is measured his bulky length upon the surface of the ocean, plunge his sharp spear into heart or brain, or deal a crushing blow upon the head.

But if the big fellow be only feinting there is likely to be trouble. Sulkily and warily, but motionless, he notes the harpooner's advance, and when the latter has driven his boat to a point not half a dozen rods away, suddenly the great fish arouses himself, shakes the lethargy out of his bones and the brine out of his glimmering eyes, measures the place of his foe for an instant, and then rushes on him like a whirlwind. Rarely does he miss his drive, and the luckless fisherman is impotent to evade it. The fish cleaves the waves with the speed and fury of a war horse. A sudden dip beneath the waves, and, lo! he has gone.

But the next instant the oarsman, leaping into the stern of his boat, hears the rush of waters, as of a submarine volcano beneath him, and, with the sound of ripping timbers, a long slender, black, hairy rapier is driven through the boat from side to side, as if the lance of a galloping Cossack had cleft it. Lucky it is, too, for the boatman if he be not in line with the irresistible straight thrust. If he is the sharp bone will pierce him as swiftly and easily as a cook skewers a chicken.

An exciting encounter with a wounded and maddened swordfish was that of Henry Chesebro some time ago. He had harpooned the big fish from the deck of his sailing vessel, and after waiting the usual length of time got into his yawl to deal a finishing blow to the apparently dying fish. As soon as he approached his captive, however, and commenced hauling in his line, the fish suddenly awoke, and began operations by diving so as to spear the little craft. Missing his aim, the armed leviathan went under the surface for a second attack.

It was too late for Chesebro to retreat, and, utterly defenceless, he awaited the onslaught. In a moment the fish shot out of the water, and with deadly aim, drove his sword completely through the boat. It entered the craft about three feet from the bow, on the port side, and came out through the thin plank on the starboard side. Chesebro had retreated to the stern of the yawl in the nick of time, and thus escaped being transfixed. His plight was seen from the schooner, and the vessel headed for the scene. By constant balling Chesebro kept his disabled boat afloat until succor arrived.

A blow on the head then finished the fish, which weighed 338 pounds.

Even more perilous was the experience of Captain L. R. Stadman, of the smack Bessie Fish. He had speared a large fish and went out in his small boat to secure the prize. While bringing him to the surface Stadman was turned upon like a flash by the swordfish, who drove his saber completely through the bottom of the dory, it projecting into the craft about a foot.

The ready witted Block Islander immediately grasped the sword with both hands. The fish struggled fiercely, finally snapping off its sword, and diving for the bottom of the ocean. Keenly alive to the danger of his position, Captain Stadman ripped off his vest, and plugging his perforated vessel, which had begun to fill with water, put back to the schooner. A canvas patch temporarily repaired the damage, and rowing back to the scene of the conflict, the now defenceless but still infuriated fish was landed quivering on the deck of the smack.

The most successful trip after the great fish so far was that of the lively schooner Hattie J. Hamlin. She was gone seven days, and bagged just sixty-six fish, which averaged three hundred pounds each. The Hattie's captain and crew sold their harvest for \$1,200, a little fortune to them, and the money was divided equally among them. The next best catch ever scored was that of a far down East boat years ago, it being fifty-six in number.

ANTIQUE GLASS.

Priceless Bits That Have Survived All Other Art Forms.

In the Century, Russel Sturgis describes the famous "Coleman Collection of Antique Glass," a collection made by an American artist in Rome, and one of the richest of its kind in the world. Mr. Sturgis says:

The world of the Mediterranean Sea, eighteen centuries ago, was rich in works of art and decoration beyond our experience, and beyond our flights of imagination. It is an effort which few of us can make with success to picture the wealth in beautiful art of a great city of the empire. The marbles have been burned to lime, the bronzes have been melted into *gros sous* or their equivalent, the stuccoes have crumbled from the walls, the paintings have gone down with their walls to ruin, the shattered pottery has been used in filling and grading and building, and its remaining fragments are of no value except for an inscription or an impressed name—mere potshreds, with now and then a scrap of antiquarian interest. The shattered glass alone contains in its very substance such beauty, and such completeness even in ruin, that its fragments are treasured up and studied. These broken bits point to a general use of vessels of decorative glass, used as we use porcelain for the finer vessels of table and toilet, and also a great abundance of objects of pure ornament, of wall-linings and floor coverings, made of the same splendid material. No other substance is like that—beautiful in itself, in its every essence. Fragments of glass have often the value that fragments of pottery sometimes have—the partial figure, the incomplete pattern on the surface; and they have also what no pottery and no other artificial substance has—the beauty we generally think of as peculiar to natural stones, to agates, and to jaspers. As a collector fills his cabinet with pieces of precious and semi-precious stones, with here and there a piece which has, as it happens, a head or a piece of a head carved upon it, so the enthusiastic vitreologist collects glass as glass, loving its substance and its surface, its color and its texture, its translucency and its opacity, its set patterns and its vague cloudings; here and there a stamped or a wheel-ground pattern adds its own attractiveness, but the glass itself is the thing! Precious and beautiful is glass, even in fragments.

The Awakening Tiger.

Between the drowsy sleep of the nocturnal animals and the hyper sensitive sleep of those which spend their lives in constant fear of their enemies, a place must be found for the form of slumber enjoyed by the large carnivora and that of domestic animals; the former have no enemies to fear except man, and the latter, protected by man, enjoy to the full the blessing of natural rest.

Tigers are frequently found fast asleep in the daytime. Native hunters have been known to track them after a "kill" to the place in which they were lying fast asleep and gorged with food, and to shoot them as they lie. When taking his mid-day repose in districts where it is little disturbed, the tiger does not always retire to a place of security, like the bear, or even the leopard, which usually sleeps on the branch of a tree. It just lies down in some convenient spot, either shady or warm, according to the weather, and there sleeps, almost regardless of danger. They have been found lying in dry nullahs, under trees, and even in the grass of the hillsides, unobserved, until their disturber came within a few yards of them.

General Douglas Hamilton, when shooting in the Dandilly forest, came upon a tiger and two cubs lying fast asleep on their backs, with their paws sticking up in the air, under a clump of bamboos. When he was within a few yards of the group, one raised its head, and without moving its body quietly looked at him along the line of its body between its paws. Tigers kept in captivity awaken gradually, stretching and yawning like a dog.

THE KIND-HEARTED MAN.

He Was Deluded by His Sympathy for Beauty in Distress.

A man had occasion to go to the Union depot yesterday afternoon to meet his wife, who had been out in the country for a time. When he got to the station he found his train was half an hour late, and he bought a paper and sat down on one of the benches.

Not long after he had seated himself a rather pretty girl, who wore a pink waist and had nice red cheeks and clear blue eyes, and who looked to be not over seventeen, came and sat down next to him. The man who was waiting for his wife took a casual look at the girl and went back to his paper.

Pretty soon another pretty girl who also wore a pink waist and had blue eyes and a fresh complexion and all that sort of thing came along and stopped in front of the first girl. The second pretty girl looked as if she wanted to cry. She said with tremulous voice, "Why, Nettie, what do you think? The fare's a dollar."

"A dollar?" gasped Nettie. "A dollar! And she told us it was only 50 cents, and I haven't got enough to get the tickets; and, oh! dear, I don't know what we will do!"

She sank down beside Nettie and the two looked at the tiled floor with very solemn faces. Presently Nettie looked up and said: "I'll take a walk around the room. Perhaps there is somebody here I know." She made the tour of the room and came back with her face gloomier than before. "Nobody here I ever saw before," she said, brokenly. The other girl sprang to her feet. "I'm going to tell the ticket man just how it is," she said. "Perhaps he will take what we've got and let us send him the rest." She came back with tears in her eyes. "He won't," she said, sadly.

The man who was waiting for his wife heard all of this. His heart was touched. So he leaned over and said: "I beg pardon, but, ladies, I—that is—will you allow me to help you in your hour of trouble?"

The pretty young girls started and looked at the man with frightened eyes. The man hastened to reassure them that his intentions were honorable and, after many protests and arranging for repayment and exchange of names and all that, he gave the pretty girls \$1.15 and they thanked him prettily and went to get their train.

It so happened that the man's wife did not come on that train and he went down to another train in the evening. While he was sitting on a bench waiting for the train he got to thinking of his afternoon experience, and concluded that he had done a right worthy act. As he was in the midst of this train of thought a pretty girl in a pink waist sat down beside him. Pretty soon another girl, looking all too we gone, came along and said: "Why, Nettie, what shall we do? The fare's a dollar."

The man who was waiting for his wife got up and walked slowly to the door. He had seen a great light. They were the same girls.

She Meant Business.

A certain clubman, who attempted to play a practical joke, was non-plussed in a very unexpected way. He says: "I am very particular about fastening the doors and windows of my house. I do not intend to leave them open at night as an invitation to burglars to enter. You see, I was robbed once in that way last year, and I never mean to be again; so when I go to bed I like to be sure that every door and window is securely fastened."

Last winter my wife engaged a big, strong country girl, and the newcomer was very careless about the doors at night. On two or three occasions I came down stairs to find a window up or the back door unlocked. I cautioned her, but it did no good. I therefore determined to frighten her. I got some false whiskers, and one night about 11 o'clock I crept down the back stairs to the kitchen, where she was. She had turned down the gas, and was in her chair by the fire fast asleep, as I could tell by her breathing, but the moment I struck a match she woke. "I expected a great yelling and screaming, but nothing of the sort took place. She bounced out of her seat with a 'You villain!' on her lips, seized a chair by the back, and before I had made a move she hit me over the head, forcing me to my knees. I tried to get up, tried to explain who I was, but in vain. Before I could get out of the room she struck me again, and it was only after I had tumbled up the back stairs that she gave the alarm. Then she came up to my room, rapped at the door, and coolly announced: 'Mr.—please get up. I've killed a burglar.'"

Extensive Peat Bogs.

The peat bogs of the United Kingdom are roughly estimated by Mr. P. F. Nurey at 6,000,000 acres, having an average depth of 12 feet, and being capable of yielding 3,500 tons of dried peat per acre. In Ireland are 2,880,000 acres, or nearly one-seventh of the entire area of the island. More than half of the Irish peat is of the best quality, and, reckoned at one-sixth the value of coal, the total supply in Ireland is thought to be equivalent to 470,000,000 tons of coal.—Trenton (N. J.) American.

Roman lamps were of gold, silver, bronze, iron, copper, lead and earthenware.

UNCLE SAM'S AGENTS.

HUNDREDS OF SECRET ONES IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

Trained Diplomats Sent on All Sorts of Missions--The World Never Hears of Them or Their Labors.

The activity of American diplomats in the affairs of the world of late, both regarding our own interests and those of other countries, suggests some information and interesting facts about a branch of the diplomatic service of which little is known to the general public. This is the secret service of the State Department more especially, through which millions of dollars have been expended in bettering our relations with other parts of the world, but of which the people usually know very little until the result of months or years of labor is announced.

Every few months, or sometimes more frequently, the country is treated to a surprise by the announcement that a treaty with this country or that, or some new commercial relation of some sort has been consummated. Sometimes these are accomplished through the minister to the country in question, but often by a special and secret representative, sent for that specific purpose. Take, for instance, the visit of Blount to Hawaii, or the tour of Trescott and Walker Blaine to Peru and Chili, or the special mission of ex-Secretary Foster to Spain, a few years ago, to negotiate the commercial treaty. These and many others are the work of "special agents" of the State Department.

Congress has recognized from the first the importance of a secret service fund for the State and Treasury Departments. For many years the appropriation bills have set aside a special fund of a hundred thousand or two hundred thousand dollars for these departments, out of which money is paid without being accounted for in detail. Ordinarily every dollar expended by the officers of the government must be accounted for in detail, showing for what specific purpose it is paid out. But if you look over the accounts of the State Department or the Treasury, you will note occasionally items which indicate that large sums have been paid out "on approval of the President." So it is in the War Department during the war, and occasionally at present. So it is in the Navy Department, almost all the time, but especially in time of war.

What becomes of the millions paid out for secret service, and who gets it? What is it expended for, and what are the results? To tell the inside of the secret service of the State or Treasury or War or Navy Department would make a book of mighty interesting reading. It cannot be told in a newspaper column. Yet there are some facts worthy of mention, well known to those able to discuss matters of this sort; many that cannot be told, and which will remain forever a secret, or until that great day when all books are opened and all secrets made known.

Usually men selected for these secret missions of the State Department are persons skilled in the diplomatic art. Perhaps they have been connected with the State Department in this or other capacity before; perhaps they have been ministers or consuls or employes of the department in Washington; perhaps they are merely men of extraordinary intelligence and schooled in statecraft or legal lore by a service in Congress or elsewhere; perhaps, by some blunder on the part of the appointing power they are none of these. Sometimes they go openly, often secretly, but their work is conducted in private, and the world knows nothing of their doings until they open their paper some fine afternoon for a surprise.

Probably the first special and secret mission in the history of this country was when Silas Deane was sent by the Continental Congress as a political agent to France, during the revolutionary war, to try to obtain the recognition of the United Colonies by that country. He was directed to go disguised as a merchant. He was to talk about trade in tobacco or other matters of this sort, and to enter upon such business speculations as would give "verisimilitude," so to speak, to his "otherwise bald and uninteresting narrative." He carried out his instructions, and later was joined by Franklin and by Arthur Lee, and the result was the treaty by which France recognized the struggling colonies as an independent power—our first treaty.

Another and a very interesting secret mission was that of Gov. Morris, to London, who was sent there shortly after the close of the revolutionary war to see that the terms of peace were carried out. There was a great deal of trouble with Indians, and a failure of the British to abandon certain forts, which was according to the agreement, and the trip of Morris was to look into this, and at the same time see if the British government would not send a minister to the United States. It was felt that if there were a minister here, who could be talked with face to face, the facts developing from day to day would be more easily adjusted. The mission of Morris was successful, and the first British minister to this country, Hammond, was appointed.

Another important secret mission was that of Theodor Bland, Caesar Augustus Rodney and Mr. Graham to South America in 1831. Prior to that time we had no commercial treaties with any of the South American countries. They

spent a good deal of time, and some money, but reported to the State Department a series of facts of extreme value, and which are to this day the admiration of those familiar with them, for their accuracy and instructiveness. The result of their mission was the formation of a commercial treaty with Colombia, which served as a basis for nearly every commercial treaty since made by the United States.

Another important secret mission undertaken about that time was that of A. Dudley Mann to Hungary, at the time that country was struggling for independence. He was instructed to examine into the conditions and surroundings, to learn whether or not the country could probably maintain itself as an independent nation, what its commercial and political relations and prospects were, and matters of this character.

Coming down to a later period there are numerous instances, some of which have proven successful, some otherwise. There was the mission of General Grant and Mr. Trescott to Mexico, for instance, which was successful in the matter of treaty making, but unsuccessful as to final results. The treaty which they framed was so worded that it should only become operative on the enactment of certain legislation by their respective governments, and as this involved tariff legislation in this country it has, of course been like a red rag before a bull whenever flaunted in the faces of either party in Congress. This is, perhaps, the only occasion in the more recent history of the country at least, in which an ex-President entered upon a duty of this sort. Another mission in more recent years is that of President Grant's private secretary, Babcock, to Port-au-Prince in the interests of annexation. Still another was the trip of Trescott and Walker Blaine, to Peru and Chili, several years ago, which attracted attention at the time; also Mr. Trescott's peace negotiations between Peru and Chili, which were brought to a somewhat sudden and unsatisfactory ending by a recall and an announcement of the same at an unexpected moment.

Of course the more recent developments are fresh in the minds of the public, especially that of Special Commissioner Blount to Hawaii. Ordinarily the missions of special agents, or secret agents, are undertaken without the knowledge of the public, but in the case of Mr. Blount the facts leaked out to the press in some way and absolute secrecy was impossible.

Special agents are a costly luxury. Their expenses of travel and living are necessarily high, and they are a class of men, as a rule, who must be well paid for their services. The sums under the significant title of "approved by the President," are usually large, and the secret history of their expenditure would be extremely interesting in many cases.—St. Louis Star-Sayings.

A Curious Clock.

A curious clock has been made by a clockmaker at Warsaw named Goldfaden, who has worked at it six years. The clock represents a railway station, with waiting rooms for the traveler, telegraph and ticket offices, a pretty, well lighted platform and a flower garden, in the center of which is a sprinkling fountain of clear water. Past the railway station run the lines. There are also signal boxes, signals, lights and reservoirs—in fact, everything that belongs to a railway station, to the smallest detail.

In the cupola of the central tower is a clock which shows the time of the place, two clocks in the side cupola show the time at New York and Pekin, and on the two outermost towers are a calendar and a barometer. Every quarter of an hour the station begins to show signs of life. First of all, the telegraph official begins to work. He dispatches a telegram stating that the line is clear. The doors open, and on the platform appear the station master and assistant; the clerk is seen at the window of the ticket office, and the policemen come out of their boxes and close the barriers.

A long line of people forms at the ticket office to buy tickets; porters carry luggage; bell is rung, and then out of the tunnel comes a train, rushing into the station, and after the engine has given a shrill whistle, stops. A workman goes from carriage to carriage and tests the axles with a hammer. Another pumps water into the boiler of the engine. After the third signal with the bell the engine whistles and the train disappears in the opposite tunnel; the station master and his assistant leave the platform, and the doors of the waiting room close behind them; the pointsmen return to their boxes, and perfect stillness prevails, till, in a quarter of an hour, the whole is repeated.—New York Advertiser.

A Washington Relic.

Mr. George Henry Rattenbury, of Detroit, believes that he has a unique relic of one of the ancestors of George Washington in a parchment deed written in Norman French, dated June 9, 1590, signed by Richard Washington, and sealed by him with the Washington seal, from which the Stars and Stripes of the American flag are supposed to have been derived. Relics of the Washington family in England prior to 1657, when two of them came to Virginia, are scarce. Mr. Rattenbury's deed is said to be unquestionably authentic, and he believes it to be valuable, especially on account of the seal, which he thinks is the only impression of the old Washington family seal in existence.

SAD MARRIAGE BELLS.

An Occasion for Lamentation in Western China.

For the bride and her friends to regard marriage as an occasion for sorrow rather than rejoicing is not uncommon. A few years ago a paper by E. Colborne Baber, describing, among others, the marriage ceremonies of the independent Lolos, who inhabit an almost unexplored corner of Western China, was read before the Royal Geographical Society. Marriages for their children are contracted by heads of families in the market places, just as cattle are bargained for. The wedding ceremony of the Lolos is elaborate and suggestive.

The bridegroom, if he is a Black-bone—that is, an aristocrat—and is marrying a girl of his own social station, invites the bride with her relations to a banquet spread on the hillside. After the feast the bride goes home with her friends, and it is only after the third wedding breakfast that the happy pair are united. Presents are interchanged, the family of the bride receiving the larger number. Mr. Baber quotes the following account of the ceremony as coming from a source which may be relied on:

"The betrothal is ratified by a present from the husband's family of three vessels of wine and a pig. On the wedding morning the parents of the bride assemble their friends, and the ceremony is opened by the bridesmaids with the melancholy song: 'In spite of all the affection and care your fond parents have lavished upon you since the day you were born, you must now desert them. Never again will you sit beside them at work or at meals. You will not be nigh to support them when they grow old, nor tend them when they feel sick. You must leave them, and go away to the house of a stranger.' Whereunto the bride responds, also in song, broken with bitter weeping: 'Leave them I must, but not by my desire or fault. They must bear with my absence. My brothers and sisters will support them. I go to my husband, and my duty will be to help his parents, not, alas! my own. But if any trouble befall my dear father and mother, I shall pine to death: I am sure I shall. Seldom can I visit them; but when they are sick let them send for me, and I will come, I will come.'"

Mr. Baber then describes the general sorrow, which may be simulated or real. While the bride is being arrayed in her richest garments and choicest ornaments, a wailing prayer is started by her friends to the effect that the bridegroom may not prove unkind to the dear girl. Tears flow freely, and in the midst of the lamentations the male friends and relatives of the husband rush in and seize the bride. A scene of great confusion ensues as she is carried off. She is then mounted on a horse and taken to her new home. Sometimes the friends of the bride repel the attack, employing for that purpose heavy sticks and other weapons, which inflict on the bridegroom's party blows that they will not forget for many a day.

Another custom said to obtain among some of the tribes in this part of the world seems, as Mr. Baber says, too grotesque to be credible. The bride is placed by her parents on the upper branch of a large tree while the elder ladies of the family cluster on the lower branches. The bridegroom literally storms the tree. As he attempts to climb up the trunk he is vigorously opposed by the defenders; and it is easy to imagine the fight he has ere he can touch the foot of the girl, and so establish his right to claim her as his bride.

Immense Salt Deposit.

C. E. Bidolph, in his "Travels in Persia and Transcaucasia," gives a curious account of the great salt plains in the neighborhood of the Black mountains. He says: "I obtained from thence one of the most peculiar sights it has ever been my fortune to look on, and that was an immense sea of what looked like ice, but which was really salt deposit, which entirely filled the hollow in the plains toward the south and stretched away as far as the eye could reach on either side, glittering in the sun like a sheet of glass. I sat for hours looking at this strange spectacle through my field glasses, and listening to the tales of my guides regarding the peculiarities of its composition and the dangers to be encountered in traversing it. According to their account, this vast deposit of salt was of the consistency of ice, and, like the latter, formed a coat of varying degrees of thickness upon the surface of the water which was underneath it, so that in places where the coat attained a thickness of several feet, as was the case in many parts, laden mules and camels could cross this plain with perfect safety, while in others, where this is not the case, this crust of congealed salt would break beneath their weight, and they would be engulfed in the morass beneath."

An Old Railroad Bond.

In 1855 Bath county, Kentucky, issued a lot of thirty year railroad bonds, bearing 7 per cent. interest. The road was never built. The bonds, amounting with interest to some \$800,000, were compromised and paid off, with the exception of one \$1,000 fellow. A few days since this one, which had been held in Europe, turned up for collection. With interest it now amounts to nearly \$3,800.