

GAY WATER NYMPHS.

Peeps at the Pretty Pittsburgh Ladies Who Are Learning to Swim at the Natorium.

MORE APT THAN THEIR BROTHERS.

They Float Light as Cork and Glide Along the Surface With the Grace of Mythical Mermaids.

EXPERTS IN THE RIVER BATHING POOL.

Tricks at Diving and Clever Performances That Astound the Beginners.

WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.

WOMAN is a natural floater. She proves her claim to that honor two days in every week down at the Natorium on Duquesne way.

Watch her as she stands poised upon the spring-board, ready for a dive into the swimming pool. Her whole attitude is one of grace, even though she is just a beginner.

With arms outstretched and partially raised, the palms of the hands touch each other, and with an airy leap, she makes the plunge. See how quickly her light body comes to the surface from the depths below.

The pretty arms and like limbs strike out with that peculiar, willow-like makes poetry out of motion.

Her buoyancy keeps her nearly to the top of the water, so that every stroke is discernable. A man would sink lower down, because of his heavier build.

The observed women, skimming almost on the surface; the feathery disturbance of the water touching her natty bathing suit with a soft tinge of spray; crystal ringlets encircling her neck as they widen and interlink with each beat of the water; liquid drops quivering on her tresses, like perfumed diamonds—she is a floater of exquisite beauty.

THEY'RE QUICKER THAN THE MEN.

But of course you don't see her yourself. You must take the word of the natorium instructors for it all. They will tell you that since the swimming school opened their doors to women, skimming is the order of the day.

Women learn to swim quicker than men. Not only are they light in form and sylph-like in motion, but they are pliable. They come to the water's edge perfectly ignorant of how to swim. They are willing to confess this, say they cannot hide it. A teacher takes them in charge. If this instructor is a man, they place perfect confidence in his ability to teach them, for he is strong and muscular, and swimming, after all, seems to a woman to be a part of a man's manly sports.

A man is hard to teach, because he generally has ideas of proper swimming, more or less fixed, or if he hasn't he learns very quickly to watch the men rather than to submit to routine instructions from practical master. It is hard for a man to handle a man in a matter of this kind, but the woman, knowing nothing, is willing to

learn from the water's "A" up. When they do learn they surpass the men, for the pretty reason set forth in the foregoing. The male swimmer must always display his muscular powers. The nymph, from the want of the same, is perfectly ignorant of the grace and ease of motion she possesses.

LACKING IN CONFIDENCE.

Of course a woman makes an awful lot of fuss in learning. But that is to be expected, and does not bother the teachers one bit. The prettiest swimmers in the school are the instructors at the natorium. They have saved three persons from drowning in the big salt-water pool there, and all three were these unfortunate female swimmers and one boy. So that with all their fuss the women get along admirably as far as swimming is concerned. The trouble with females generally is they lack confidence in themselves, and fear they are in danger when they are really as far away from it as possible. Mr. McCune tells me that one of the prettiest swimmers in the school on ladies' day is constantly bewailing the fact that she cannot learn to swim, and always fears she will sink out of sight. She swims well, but cannot bring enough confidence to bear in herself to believe that fact.

In river or ocean disasters this lack of confidence in herself is forcibly shown by women. She will cling with a death-clutch to her male rescuer, when, if she only would believe, she is calculated by nature to be an easier swimmer than man, and may learn to swim more readily. All women ought to learn to swim, but it would be of no use to them in emergencies unless they would also learn to exercise a presence of mind.

THE A. B. C. OF IT.

Girls and women of all ages come to the natorium to learn the art of swimming, given them by Messrs. McCune and Taylor are in the arm motions of the breast stroke. From pulleys in the ceiling ropes drop to the pool. These are fastened by means of belts around the bathing clothes to the waist. The rope is adjusted to support the body just high enough to let the head rest out of water. Then the pupils are shown how to stretch out the arms, bringing the palms together in front of the face. The second movement is to swing the arms back, and the third is, by a downward motion to carry them forward again. After the person is made familiar with these exercises, the instructors go into the water and by the peculiar frog-like motion of the limbs,

Just here occurs the greatest difficulty with all beginners, both male and female, although in this instance it is the woman who breaks herself quickest of the two. In swimming the body should be kept under the water at an angle of about 45 degrees. The limbs should be spread apart, straight, and the feet should be kept together. Taylor is a son of the well-known English commandant.

But, after all, Pittsburgh women must not get the idea because they are learning to swim quicker than men at the new natorium that they can outdo a man in a contest of the sort. She has not the power of endurance that a man has in the water. Miss Theresa Johnston made the quickest mile ever swum by a woman. It was in open water and took her 35 minutes. A mile in open water was also done by a man, J. J.

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Few women scream at the natorium. Twenty-five are noted down in this lady's memorandum as murmuring something about being "lost." One fat lady forgot herself and called lustily to bring her husband to her, that she was going down for the last time. She then found that the water was only four feet deep where she had lost her footing, and therefore contemplated her order, remembering that it was "ladies' day," and that gentlemen were tabooed.

I visited the natorium one afternoon when probably a dozen gentlemen were swimming. Two of them were preachers who were taking their first lesson. They had just come out on the promenade for an airing when an expert swimmer, who I think was a tall, well-built man, had a dive from the spring-board. He had twisted himself in a peculiar manner, as though indicating, as he struck the water, in what direction he intended to reappear. The preachers, joining a group of several other greenhorns, watched for the diver to come up in that corner of the pool. A full minute passed and the swimmer did not appear. They all got alarmed. Quickly they gathered around the corner, and as the seconds passed they grew excited. They looked for bubbles, and one man ran hurriedly down the steps to the water to examine the surface, thinking that the diver had killed himself by striking his head against the asphaltum bottom. It was two minutes and half and he had not yet come up. The group was breathless with anxiety when all of a sudden there came a loud guffaw from the extreme corner at the other end of the pool. The astonished group saw the diver sitting on the wall and he had locked across his knee, rocking with laughter. His dive had ended in another part of the pool than the crowd had been led to expect.

WHAT EXPERTS CAN DO.

Speaking about diving, Messrs. McCune and Taylor are expert themselves at that sort of thing. McCune will dive sometimes from the spring-board, and after swimming underneath the surface to the other end of the pool, will return the entire length of 67 feet, under water still, and reappear at the board from which he started. Mr. Taylor, who is only 21, ten years younger than McCune, will swim under water one length of the pool. Taylor is a son of the well-known English commandant.

But, after all, Pittsburgh women must not get the idea because they are learning to swim quicker than men at the new natorium that they can outdo a man in a contest of the sort. She has not the power of endurance that a man has in the water. Miss Theresa Johnston made the quickest mile ever swum by a woman. It was in open water and took her 35 minutes. A mile in open water was also done by a man, J. J.

THE FIRST FIVE STROKES.

When both the arm and limb motions are taught the pupils are suddenly swung loose from the rope, and supported about the belt by the instructor. The first feeble and timid strokes are seldom successful, but in a very short time, if the subject is at all confident of his or her powers, the learner will be able to swim alone for two or three strokes. This is increased one stroke at each swim possibly until the pupil masters 40 feet of the pool in about 20 strokes. An expert would do it in 15 strokes.

The time, of course, in which a person is able to learn swims differs. Some ladies learn in two hours, others not for two weeks. Last Friday a well-known society belle "mastered the breast-stroke in an hour, and, developing a peculiarity of holding her head straight up out of the water, won the title among her associates of being "a perfect swimmer."

The next style of swimming taught, if persons desire to learn the fancy methods, is the "side-stroke." A few Pittsburgh women thus far have accomplished this. The "overarm stroke" comes next. This is quite a difficult feat for women on account of the muscular power necessary, and has not yet been taught them. Neither is it a pretty movement to look at, being made directly for the purpose of speed and endurance by men. "Sculling" is a very pretty style of swimming, which some women have acquired a strong desire to learn. It involves the riding up of a screw propeller, the quick and oscillating beat of the water by the hands alone, or the feet alone, while the body is held almost perfectly rigid.

MAKING THE TURN.

The pool in the Pittsburgh Natorium favors one novel class of swimming accomplishments for women. That is what is called "turning." The pool is 67 feet long, and suppose a race was to be run for four or six lengths of it. The place where one opponent could get the advantage of another in the race is at either wall of the pool. Instructor McCune is an expert Scotch swimmer, and he showed me his method of turning. It is a strange combination of a push and a pull when he reaches the wall, which sends his body back through the pool with an impetus that carries him two or three yards without a stroke. He has a spring about the turn, where a novice would turn to go in the other direction as best he could, losing time and strength both. The "turn" can be readily learned by women, and would be capable of furnishing much sport.

An observant lady who has patronized the bath since it was opened tells me that she tried to study the way women express themselves when they get scared while trying to learn to swim. It is well known that when a person walking into gradually deepening water reaches a point where the water reaches up to the lungs, it will lift the body off the feet. Three women caught unaware in this fashion at the Natorium yelled out as if "taken home, oh, oh." And when two of them were helped to the wall they remained long enough to get their breath, and then floundered back into the pool.

THEY HARDLY EVER SCREAM.

ECONOMY IN PARIS.