Treading Water.

I wish to show how drowning might under ordinary circumstances, be avoided, eyen iu the case of persons otherwise wholly ignorant of what is called the art of swimming. The numerous frightful casualties render every working suggestion of importance, and that which I here offer, I venture to think is entirely available. When one of the inferior animals takes the water, falls, or is thrown in, it instantly begins to walk as it does when out of the water. But when a man who cannot "swim" falls into the water he makes a few spasmodic struggles throws up his arms and drowns. The brute on the other hand treads water, remains on the surface and is virtually insubmergible. In order, then to escape drowning it is only necessary to do as the brute does, and that is to tread or walk the water the brute has no advantage in regard of his relative weight, in respect of the water, over man, and yet the man perishes while the brute lives. Nevertheless, any man, any woman, any child who can walk on the land may also walk in the water just as readily as the animal does, if only he will, and that without any prior instruction or drilling whatever. Throw a dog into the water and he treads or walks instantly and there is no imaginable reason why a human being under like circumstances should not do as the dog does.

LESSONS FROM BRUTES.

The brute indeed walks in the water instinctively, whereas the man has to be told. The ignorance of so simple a possibility—namely the possibility of treading water, strikes me as one of the most singular things in the history of man, and speaks very little indeed for his intelligence. He is, in fact, as ignorant on the subject as is the new born babe. Perhaps something is to be ascribed to the vague meaning which is attached to the word swim. When a man swims it means one thing, when a dog swims it means another and quite a different act. The dog is wholly incapable of swimming as a man swims, but nothing is more certain than that a man is capable of swimming, and on the instant, too. as a dog swims, without any previous training or instruction, and that by so doing without fear or hesitancy, he will be just as safe in the water as the dog is. The brute in the water continues to go on all fours, and the man who wishes to save his life and cannot otherwise swim, must do so too striking alternately, one, two, one, two, but without hurrying or precipitation, with hand or foot, exactly as the brute does. Whether he be provided with paw or hoof, the brute swims with the greatest ease and buoyancy.

MAN'S ADVANTAGE.

The human being, if he will can do so too, with the further immense advantage of having a paddle-formed hand, and of being able to rest himself when tired by floating, a thing of which the animal has no conception. Bridget Money a poor Irish emigrant, saved her own life and her three children's lives, when the steamer conveying them took fire on Lake Erie, by floating herself, and making them float, which simply consists in lying quite still, with the mouth shut and the head thrown well back iu the water. The dog, the horse, the cow, the swine, the deer and even the cat all take to the water on occasion and sustained themselves perfectly without any prior experience whatever. Nothing is less difficult whether for man or brute, than to tread water, even for the first time. I have done so often, using the feet alone or the hands alone, or the whole four many times, with perhaps one of my children on my back. Once I recollect being carried a good way out to sea by the receding tide at Boulogne, but regained the shore without difficulty. A drop of water once passed through the rima of the glottis, and on another occasion I experienced such sudden Indisposition that if I had been unable to float it must, I think have gone hard with me. Men and animals are able to sustain themselves for long distances in the water and would do so much oftener were they not incapacitated, in regard of the former, at least, by sheer terror, as well as complete ignorance of their real powers.

HINTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

The printed injunctions should be pasted up on all boathouses, on every boat, at every bathing place and in every school, "Tread water when you find yourself out of your depth" is all that need be said, unless, indeed, we add: "Float when you are tired." Every one of whatever age or sex, or however encumbered with clothing, might tread water with at least as much facility, even in a breaking sea, as a four footed animal does. The position of a person who treads water is in other respects very much safer and better than is the sprawling attitude which we assume in ordinary swimming. And then the beauty of it is that we can tread water without any preliminary teaching, whereas "to swim" involves time and pains, entails considerable fatigue and is very seldom adequately acquired after all.

The Indians of the Missouri river, when they have occasion to traverse that impetuous stream, invariably tread water just as the dog treads it. The natives of Joanua, an island on the coast of Madagascar, young persons of both sexes walk the water carrying fruit and vegetable to ships becalmed, or it may be lying to, in the offing miles awaw. Some Croomen whose canoe upset before my eyes in the seaway on the coast of Africa walked the water, to the safekeeping of their lives, with the utmost facility, and I witnessed negro children on other occasions doing so at a very tender age. At Madras, watching their opportunity, messengers with letters secured at an oilskin cap, plunge into boiling surf and make their way, treading the water, to the vessels outside, through a sea in which an ordinary European boat will not live. At the Cape of Good Hope men used to proceed to the vessels in the offing through the mountain billows, treading the water as they went with the utmost security. And yet here, on onr own shores and amid smooth waters, men, women and children perish like flies annually, when a little propperly-directed effort—treading the water as I have said—would haply suffice to rescue them every one.—*From Nature.*

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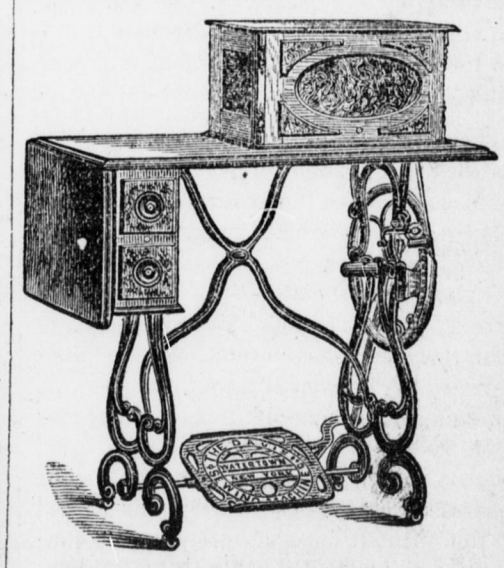

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