

Swimming a Great Sport and Growing in Public Favor



"TURNED TURTLE"



OVERBOARD



AN INTERESTED AUDIENCE



SHOWING OFF



"ASLEEP ON THE DEEP"



A FAIR "HEADER"



DON'T you remember the sign, old boy? Wouldn't you be able to respond readily this minute if some friend flashed it on you? Sure, you say, and if you couldn't you have no claim to assert you were once a real boy.

When the master's back was turned in school, in the old days, haven't you often and often had two fingers stuck up before your eyes, and haven't you nodded with warm significance, at once, without the slightest hesitation? That is, if you were of the crowd whose mothers did not treat as piracy the desire to go swimming.

Who invented the swimming sign in universal use among boys? He is forgotten, like the man who invented sleep, or first measured the "hot dog" for his tight-fitting jacket; as lost to history's record as the man who drove the mysterious automobile that took the train robbers to Lane Cut-Off and hauled them away with their booty.

From the urchins in the little school alongside the "crick" way down in old Kentucky to the lads in the newest school out in the last-built town in Northern Canada; from Port Dalhousie to Lake Itasca, where the Mississippi takes its rise, there never was a truly, sure-enough boy who couldn't interpret two fingers raised and slightly separated.

It's the swimming sign—happy, reckless, adventurous boyhood's own sacred "high sign," of which all others bearing the name are mere imitations.

Fond Memory's Backward Hike.

Happy the boy-man who can recall the particulars attaching to the old swimming hole. He can live again as a carefree youngster if he meet some other boy-man who can reminisce with him about its delectable characteristics. Was it "sandy bottom"? Did it have a mud-covered slide where you went down head first, on your stomach, face raised and arms and legs spread wide and gesticulating like educated fingers? Was there a "float" on which to undress? God save the mark, how little trouble clothes were in those days. Just a hickory shirt, a gaiter and a pair of overalls. Of course this shuts out the poor chap who never went barefoot, never had a stone bruise, and never jumped in "clothes on" on a dare. Was there a springboard at your swimming hole, boy? Or a deep hole in the water that only yourself and one or two others would dare to get into? Or was your swimming place one of those desperate spots where you got muddy going in and forty times as muddy coming out?

Say, did you dive from a mossy bank or wade in? Were there trees handy, or bushes, under cover of which Satan-inspired friends (?) could approach and perpetrate tricks which would make you "chaw beef" with teeth and nails trying to get the tightest knots ever tied out of your pants legs and your shirt sleeves? And say, did you have to lay around in the sun and let your hair dry, so "ma" wouldn't suspect you had been in swimming. Gee, that knocked half the pleasure out of the event, except the after glow of victorious strategy if she never found out, until next time.

Swimming Hunch is Inborn.

And say again—when the urchin at your knee gets bitten by the swimming bug, at school or mixing with other hopefuls, and asks you if he can go swimming, do you frown and tell him he'll surely get drowned? And if you do, doesn't your worn old conscience hurt you, mister? Of course it does, for away back somewhere in the recesses of your mind where savagery still lurks, you know he comes naturally by the hunch, and will not be deterred for long.

Omaha boys of the old and young generation, with a swimming pond stretching for miles before the city, have been mighty lucky as to bathing spots, except that regulation (a word of which boys never did understand the sense) has made their watery frolics a trifle difficult. From Florence to South Omaha—and a goodly distance beyond in either direction—there be elegant places to "go in" amid wild natural scenery. Besides, there are the tame, conventional resorts, where you put on other folks' clothes after taking off your own. Right here rises the question, can "bathing" ever hold a candle to "swimming"? No, sir; no more than apples bought in the store can

compare to the apples you used to have to scheme for against man and bulldog. There ain't no such apples no more. The world is too good and high-toned to let the modern boy have his fling at capturing things as his stone-age ancestors used to do.

And yet this modern boy is doing fairly well in other directions. If he can't swim wild, and run the gamut of immemorial chances ordained to him by mother nature, he will find other strings to pull and let off steam.

Swimming Developed to an Art.

Swimming has been brought to the point, almost, of being an art in these days; and as a matter of fact many men, and women too, make their living by their cleverness in the water. Annette Kellerman, for instance, coming from the other end of the earth, has thrilled admiring thousands both in and out of the theaters; and numerous other professionals might be mentioned. Swimming is an accomplishment within the reach of all, literally, yet the number of people who have never learned to swim is surprising. This is being corrected, to a large extent, in recent years, since cities began establishing and managing open air bathing beaches and indoor natatoriums. The increase of facilities, especially notable in the east, has led to a greatly increased interest in swimming. To be proficient in the water is today a good claim to distinction among devotees of the many clubs having their summer homes by the water side. The Omaha clubs, like the Rod and Gun, the Dietz and others, encourage a lively interest in swimming exercises and water games; and the Young Men's Christian association and Young Women's Christian association also devote a goodly share of attention to this important accomplishment.

Joseph Herschberg, known locally as "Joe the Glacier," is typical of that class of men who acquired a love for swimming in the old land. England, Germany, Australia, have always been particularly keen to encourage swimming among their people, and in late years the United States has become known as the home of some of the best swimmers in the world. Swimming championships are honors eagerly sought and they enlist large numbers of contestants, from the juvenile class up to the professionals who swim against time.

Omaha Expert Lauds Accomplishment.

Mr. Herschberg quotes Moses and Jacob as believers in swimming and of course it is generally known to all Sunday school children that Moses was having a nice little swim along the edge of the bulrushes when Pharaoh's daughter thought he was in danger and pulled him ashore to save him for some work on dry land. "As all your pleasures cannot be confined to land, the pleasure you feel in the knowledge you can swim, if need be, cannot be expressed in words," says Herschberg, who is seen in one of the illustrations doing a stunt in the Missouri river at Douglas street.

"When you have such a grand river at your door," he said, "that received a gold medal at the Paris ex-

position, there is no excuse for anybody not knowing how to swim. It is pure mountain water, originally, mixed with a little clean mud as it travels to the sea, and cleanses you like a little baby. Why shouldn't the city of Omaha do as other cities situated on the great rivers have done, and construct a public bathing place on the river front? This could be done at small expense, for the cost of pavilion and a fence in the river. Many, like myself, would be glad to volunteer their services without cost, for instruction to those who might seek it. During the real hot weather, to go down to the Missouri and take a dip is a great pleasure, which thousands would avail themselves of if proper facilities were provided. Here is a grand luxury available to all, with the minimum loss of time. With the right kind of supervision, there would be no danger of drowning, since preventive precautions can easily be taken.

Venom of Toad Good Heart Stimulant

MODERN science is enlisting the toad in the battle for human life.

By an accidental discovery two professors of Johns Hopkins university have evolved from the venom of Bufo aguis, a gigantic toad of the tropical countries, a heart stimulant far more powerful than digitalis. They have named the new drug "bufagin," indicative of its origin.

And thus science, through the agency of Drs. John J. Abel and David I. Macht of Baltimore, has stumbled upon the truth of one of China's ancient traditions and has raised the croaking creature of the witches' chant to a place of pharmacologic value, says the St. Louis Republic.

For many ages Chinese physicians have tried to tell their western brethren of the remedial value of toadskins. They derived from it a preparation they called "senso," and declared it to be 50 to 100 times more powerful than digitalis. The west listened to them, made an ineffective venture or two, and went its way.

Various European nations, for a few centuries, gave the powdered toadskin a place among therapeutic agents. They said it was a remedy for dropsy, but they dropped it. In 1883 it was the joke of skeptics. But the venom of the toad has been recognized from the earliest times. As the "tzab" of the Talmud it was differentiated from the frog, and was abhorred as a creature whose touch contaminates. Among the primitive Indians of New Granada its poison was used on arrow heads employed in the chase for game. This venom was powerful enough to kill a stag in two minutes. The aborigines of the Amazon used it in place of the curara of other tribes. A few scientists made note of it, and proceeded to forget it.

So it remained to two American investigators to discover anew the pharmacologic value of the toad. They were interested in poisons of animal origin, and in the laboratory of Johns Hopkins university they

"To make good swimmers it is only necessary to remove fear, inculcate the knowledge how to reserve power and establish self-confidence. The exercise and enjoyment will keep people young and enable them to enjoy life to a grand old age.

Good Way to Save Drowning People.

"In my experience I have found it perfectly safe to grasp drowning people under the arms behind, so they have no chance to grasp you about the neck or arms; and any fair swimmer who will keep cool can outwit a flustered person who is gasping and swallowing water. When one takes cramps in the water it is vitally essential to maintain one's self-possession and rest, when relief will speedily come; also turn the cramped portion of the body to the sun, if possible. It should be kept in mind, too, that only one pound of power is required to move a 300-pound body in the water, which I demonstrate with a line of flags attached to a pole and kept above water with my foot. Yet even people who can swim will sometimes stand and look on, apparently helpless,

while persons are drowning before their eyes. That is the result of fear of their own power in the water.

"Three prominent women—one in America, one in England, one in Australia—some years ago competed as to the most effective way to develop a graceful body. The American woman adopted gymnasium methods, the English woman took to dancing, and the Australian practiced swimming. The latter received the gold medal. Women are the most natural swimmers and can most easily acquire the art."

Bidding for Swimming Contests.

At this time several cities are engaged in bidding for the American swimming meets. The New York Athletic club applied for the quarter-mile swim and fancy diving contest, which will probably be held at Travers island on August 19. The half and one-mile races were asked for both by the Pittsburgh Athletic club and the Missouri Athletic club of St. Louis. The ten-mile title will be competed for again in the Mississippi river on August 19 under the auspices of the Missouri Athletic club.

The metropolitan championships will also have several sponsors. The New York Athletic club has requested sanction for the half-mile race on September 2; the Deal Beach Swimming club for the fancy diving on August 15, and one other event for September 4.

The middle Atlantic titles will be competed for in Philadelphia on September 2. The 100-yards, half-mile and mile are on the program.

As to the central and western championships, there is still some doubt as to where they will be run off. The entry of George Hodgson of the Montreal Amateur Athletic association is promised for some of the titular events, and there is every prospect of his making the Americans huddle. He swam close to record figures in the Canadian championships and will take a lot of beating. His presence with that of the German cracks, Ritter and Behrens, the Austrian Tobias, and the Australian Smyrk, will give an international flavor of the big carnival.

Marathon swimming races of the annual Chicago river event will take place on August 12, and some easterners propose starting in it. The American Life Saving society will ask sanction for a five-mile race in Long Island sound in August.

Why Not Race in the West?

Some Omaha and Council Bluffs enthusiasts are fussy enough to raise the question, Why can't we have swimming races on Carter lake and Manawa, if not in the Missouri river? Still, it will very likely be some time in the future before the interior cities of the west will undertake competition for the swimming prizes. Indulgence in the sport for its own sake, instead of for reward, will probably be the rule in the west for a good many years to come.

Relative to municipal swimming places, under public control, the one at St. Paul, Minn., on Harriet island, is the most successful and best known. Detroit, too, has gone to a good deal of expense to provide facilities at small cost, at Belle Isle park. These are different altogether from the English swimming clubs, which undertake to teach school children to swim as payment for the privilege granted to erect club houses on the water front.