

The Young Bluenose.

—“MULNUM IN PARVO.”—

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Written for the Bluenose. DIVING FOR PEARLS.

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IT was once my good fortune about twenty years ago to be in the vicinity of the diving grounds near one of the largest of the South Sea Islands. Perhaps, after you hear my experience, you will think it was my bad fortune instead of good fortune, but I consider it one of the most pleasant reminiscences of my life. Perhaps my readers do not know how the process of diving for pearls was then conducted among the natives of those islands. I will tell you.

Early in the morning a boat, which we here in the States might denominate a barge, would leave the island with perhaps eighteen or twenty divers aboard, and would row for the diving ground, which at this time was about half a mile off shore to the West. The native divers were clothed in a very primitive costume such as we are told Adam and Eve were accustomed to don when they were in the full enjoyment of their property in the Garden of Eden. One of them bore at this time a paper collar and a delapidated stove pipe hat, and for this, and only this reason, was accounted quite a chief among his fellows. Although the collar was of a rich golden color, and under no possibility could have been suspected of ever having been white and although the hat did certainly have a rather care worn appearance, this made no difference. I

ges, a paper collar was like a piece of meereham(?) is with us, its value is enhanced by its color. However this may be, certain it is that from the moment any one of the natives donned any article of wearing apparel, he was then and there rated as a dandy of the first water.

Before the start from the island, the boat is loaded as heavily as possible with stones varying in weight from thirty to sixty pounds. The grounds reached, the boat anchored, and each one of the divers takes a stone either between his feet or in his arms and jumps into the sea. The weight carries him directly to the bottom, where he immediately employs himself in looking around for an oyster bed. This found and the diver proceeds to knock off as many of the attached pearls as he can see or until his breath gives out. These he stows away in a leather bag which is hung around his neck for the purpose, and after letting go the stone, he swims to the top and thence to the boat, where he deposits his treasures, and proceeds in a like manner for more. This is continued at short intervals until dark, when all operations must of course cease.

Although sharks abound in these waters, they will rarely if ever molest a dark skinned native, but the moment a white man is adventuresome enough as to mingle with the natives in the water, the sharks will at once be attracted in great numbers. Anything white seems to have something attractive to a shark's eye. Indeed, I have seen natives swimming in the sea, in

and out among the sharks, immediately a white piece of rag was thrown into the water, the sharks seemed to have their anger aroused and once in this condition would attack any one of the human persuasion be he black or white. Blood acts in a like manner, and once blood is drawn, be it in ever so small quantity, there is little hope for that man.

One day, however, the sharks seemed to have utterly deserted us, and I became fool-hardy enough to determine to try diving myself. I was then one of the proprietors of the boat, and the natives endeavored to dissuade me from making the trip to the bottom of the sea; but no, I wouldn't be dissuaded, and nothing would do but I must try it myself. I thought I couldn't come back to the States and not be able to say I had once tried diving for pearls.

The natives of course had to give in and stripping off my clothes and taking one of the smoothest stones I could find, they assisted me over the side of the boat and down I went. The sensation was peculiar to say the least, and it seemed to me hours before I reached the bottom. Once there, my breath was all gone and there was nothing for me to do but to drop the stone and swim up again.

After a few moments, nothing daunted, I took a larger stone and a longer breath and started downward again. When I reached the bottom this time I was too surprised at first to open my eyes, but when I did, I saw lying at my feet one of the nicest lot of pearls