

ADVENTURES UNDER SEA

A DIVER'S STORY ABOUT SUBMARINE WONDERS

Abram Onderdonk is the oldest submarine diver in the United States. During 37 of the 50 years of his life he has been continuously engaged in the pursuit of his vocation.

"Abe," as he is familiarly called, until recently resided in the old family homestead, beautifully situated on the hill back of Fort Tompkins, Staten Island, and commanding a sweeping view of the upper and lower bays with their shores, and far away beyond Sandy Hook, to the horizon. The old house was destroyed by fire about a year ago, and he is now in Philadelphia perfecting his new patent device for raising sunken vessels, a trial of which is soon to be made at the Mare Island Navy Yard.

"I have seen almost everything that is to be found under fresh, as well as salt water," said he, "and there are many very queer, beautiful and indeed, almost incredible sights—I assure you. I have often wondered why there has not been any amateur submarine diving explorations, because it is an unoccupied field in that line, and, although peculiar, need not be more perilous, with proper conditions and precautions, than some other ventures for amusement or scientific research. A man of education, enterprise, nerve and capital would realize intense pleasure in these subaqueous experiences.

"These travels under the waves have their terrors and dangers occasionally, but nerve, with prudence, are reasonable guarantees of safety. In some localities the greatest terror to a diver is a swordfish, whose short, bony sword protruding from its head is almost as strong as steel. Well, this fish swims along through the water, charging forward, and never veering from a straight course for anything except a rocky ledge or the iron hull of some large vessel. He seems to instinctively distinguish an iron hull from a wooden one. If he strikes a wooden craft, his sword almost invariably pierces through it.

"I thank my lucky stars that I never directly confronted but one of these frightful creatures, and that was a young one with a cartilaginous sword. I saw him coming for quite a distance, and working straight toward me. I guess my head stood up as straight and stiff as porcupine quills; anyhow, I was working with an axe on the deck of a sunken ship, and quickly raised the axe and made ready to hit him, but he glided past me out of guard's range, and you must imagine how much easier I breathed as I watched him forging his course far away from me.

"As to other kinds of fish, why, they are more than legion—they are only innumerable, but almost indescribable, and just as soon as the diver touches bottom they actually swarm around him. Hideous sculpins peep into the eye-windows of my helmet, grinning and blinking in a horrible manner; huge eels, that look like big snakes, glide over my feet and swim about my legs; crabs and lobsters snap at and claw about my diving suit in an exasperating manner, sometimes nipping so hard that it makes the flesh tingle. But the little fish are the worst pests, because they nibble at my fingers as sharply and voraciously as they do at the bait dropped down on fish-hooks. You see it isn't the fashion of divers to wear gloves, unless in very chilly water, because gloves diminish the delicacy of touch, and that is the main dependence in all northern waters, especially in harbors or rivers near towns and cities where the water is discolored

and murky, so much so that nothing can be seen at about 20 feet under the surface. Where there is a white or gray sandy bottom beneath the ocean, the range of vision extends to a considerable distance. In tropical seas, as in the West Indies, the water is so beautifully clear and transparent that the bottom is visible at a depth of from 60 to 100 feet below the surface.

"Along the coast of the island of Margueretta, and in many parts of the Caribbean sea, there are scenes of surpassingly lovely submarine wonders. In many places the bed of the ocean is as smooth and firm as a house floor, and the water is as transparent as crystal.

"The white sandy bottom acts as a reflector to the bright sunshine above the surface. If you have ever looked through a clean glass jar or bottle filled with clear water, and examined some object on the opposite side, which is about the same under the sea in clear water. Walking in a diving suit is an easy, gliding motion; it is slow, without being at all laborious, and the scope of vision is about an eighth of a mile. In certain localities there are acres upon acres of stony, scrubby marine vegetation, a growth somewhat like seaweed, and of bluish gray tinge. There are also clumps of fan-shaped fungus, of a spongy consistency, which, when dried in the sun (like the specimens in my parlor), are exceedingly beautiful. But the most wonderful growths in these gardens of the sea are the long 'kelp tubas,' resembling our fresh water 'pond lilies,' only of much larger size. Their stems are tough and hollow, and put forth pretty blossoms upon the surface, although their roots are in the bed of the ocean, sometimes at a depth of 60 feet.

"There are many very queer looking creatures. Some have horns and some have tails, and there is a peculiar kind having but one eye in the centre of the head. The largest, queerest and quaintest of all is the 'Jew fish,' averaging from three to five feet each in length. Bright green streaks extend over their backs, blue scales cover their sides, and their bellies are glistening white.

"Their heads are the most grotesque thing of that sort that I ever saw under water, being disproportionately large, of oval shape, with great bulging eyes, the whole effect suggesting some resemblance to human physiognomy. Occasionally they would circle around me, 'drawing' nearer, gradually, until they came close up to where I stood, peer into the windows of my helmet with a look that seemed to speak out: 'Say! where did you get that hat?'

"Sometimes they assume an almost perpendicular position, like a man 'treading water,' and then, I must say, they come nearer the ideal figure of a mermaid than anything I ever saw in my submarine experience. But for all that, there are, in reality, no such living creatures as mermaids or sea serpents.

"There are, however, some terrible sea monsters. The worst and most formidable of all is the octopus, or 'devil-fish.' They are a frightful, almost beyond description. When I was in New Zealand one of my men, Archie McGowan, while laying some wharf blocks, was suddenly surprised by an immense creature of that kind. Despite Archie's (and he was a powerful man), the monster completely overpowered him. He was locked in the tremendous claws of the devil-fish and fastened helpless against a submerged spile. The man realized his peril, and kept quiet until his assistant, whose arms measured fully nine feet,

loosened his hold. Then Archie signalled to be drawn up, and came to the surface with the hideous creature clinging to his back.

Divers sometimes look upon accidents and situations, some of them being frightful beyond expression. Human nerve cannot withstand some of these spectacles of horror—they are enough to drive the strongest nerved man stark mad. About three years ago an old mate of mine, Victor Hinton, was employed by the Pacific Coast Steamship Company of San Francisco, at the pay of \$150 per day, to dive and examine the steamship City of Chester, that had been sunk in a collision with the steamer Oceanic. He located the vessel in 50 fathoms of water. She had been cut in two, and if split by a single blow of an immense axe.

"While walking into the stern, the first object that met his gaze was the form of a man standing upright, entangled in a pile of rope. The ghastly face of the corpse was terribly distorted, and the tongue, protruding, hung from the mouth, while the body was a little farther aft he saw another victim of the wreck who had fallen on his knees and grasped a third man around the waist. This awful spectacle almost paralyzed his nerves, so he returned to the surface and reported what he had seen. Nothing would induce him to go down again on that wreck until accompanied by another diver.

I have done my share of that sort of work, but those are jobs that no man has any liking for. Inside of a wreck is a terrible lonely, gloomy—and I might say spooky—place, and dead fishes are not particularly agreeable companions anywhere, but especially there. I once brought up the bodies of nine men and two women from the wreck of the English steamer Albatross, sunk in the Caribbean sea.

"Some of these were in the staterooms, and the last corpse was that of a young woman. I found her in bed, lying on her side. Her eyes were wide open, glaring and staring right at me. One of her arms was thrust through the bed slats, with the hand clutching the berth frame. As I loosened her grasp, the body turned, then floated to an almost erect position, and leaned over toward me with a repelling look. The expression of that face and eyes, as well as her attitude, was the greatest scare I have ever experienced in a long time. I nearly fainted. It was a severe shock, but in a moment or two I regained nerve, clasped her about the waist and brought her up.

"I had almost forgotten to mention another and somewhat similar incident of the wreck of the Stoughton. I had to feel my way for it was dark (we had no electric submarine lights there), and my stateroom door had to be cut out to effect an entrance. I felt around until my hands came in contact with a corpse, which I took out and carried up to the surface.

"It proved to be a woman, and clasped to her bosom so firmly that no effect could separate them, was a beautiful babe. It was a picture that I can never forget. Both seemed to have died in sleep, and the expression of perfect peace and rest on their faces was remarkable. I heard that they were buried just as they were found, together.

"I have often felt dead bodies floating around and bumping against me as I groped through gloomy cabins, and those are gruesome sensations, as you may well imagine but cannot realize as I do. One becomes more or less accustomed to it, but it is never by any means a matter of unconcern.

That awful life-like expression from the wide open eyes of a drowned person, as they stare directly at you, just as if about to speak, is enough to strain the nerves of any one to the utmost and cause them to shudder and shrink. But business is business, and, as that sort of work occasionally comes in my line, I just brace up and fulfill my duty.

"Divers are in more or less of peril, and sometimes have to meet desperate emergencies. An instance occurred when I was prospecting inside of a wrecked steamship. While passing the engine room a heavy piece of machinery slid over upon my leg and pinned me fast. My signal brought down another diver, whose efforts, with mine, effected my release. But for a time I felt that I had met my doom.

"On another occasion I was sitting on the yards near the topmast of a schooner sunk in Chesapeake Bay, when the boat above that was pumping air to me dragged her anchor and came pounding along on the waves, right over where the sunken vessel lay, and thumped her several times on the mast to which I was then clinging. If I had just then been where I sat one minute previously (on the topmast yards) I should have been smashed as flat as a pancake.

"The first thing that I realized was the sensation of being dragged with furious haste through the water, and I tumbled up over the side and landed about the deck by my mates who were hurrying to get my helmet off. They thought that I was dead; but I was as alive as ever and more than usually vexed.

"I forgot to mention that now we use the incandescent submarine lamps, which light up the darkest places in sunken wrecks, so that we can see very distinctly. Light, especially electric lamps, under water magnifies to a wonderful degree and is of great advantage, although, while it assists us in our work, the brilliancy attracts vast numbers of fish, which become an annoying hindrance. It may be a jolly picnic to them, but it is an intolerable nuisance to us."

I had a severe cold, for which I took Norway Pine Syrup. I find it an excellent remedy, giving prompt relief and pleasant to take. J. Paynter, Huntsville, Ont.

"Shorter" Pastry and "Shorter" Bills.

We are talking about a "shortening" which will not cause indigestion. Those who "know a thing or two" about Cooking (Marion Harland among a list of others) are using

COTTOLENE

Instead of lard. Note that the purest, healthiest and cleanest ingredients go to make up Cottolene. Lard isn't healthy, and is not always clean. Those who use Cottolene will be healthier and wealthier than those who use lard—Healthier because they will get "shorter" bread; wealthier because they will get "shorter" grocery bills—for Cottolene costs so more than lard and goes twice as far—so is but half as expensive.

Dyspeptics delight in it!
Physicians endorse it!
Chefs praise it!
Cooks extol it!
Housewives welcome it!
All five Grocers sell it!

Made only by
N. K. FAIRBANK & CO.,
Wellington and Ann Streets,
MONTREAL.

1886-Tel phone 31-18 94

THE FAMOUS

Springwood Tea

in one quarter, one half and one pound packages

Fresh Dates and Prunes

GOLDEN SYRUPS

By the Gallon.

All kinds of Feed:

Cornmeal and Flour.

A nice variety of

Tea and Chamber Sets.

P. H. ROSS

LUNENBURG & HALIFAX STEAM SHIP CO., LTD

LUNENBURG SAILINGS

THE FAST STEAMER

LUNENBURG



BLACK'S WHARF Halifax

LUNENBURG

EVERY

Wednesday and Saturday

MORNING AT 9 O'CLOCK

Returning leaves

LUNENBURG

EVERY

MONDAY AND THURSDAY

MORNING AT SAME HOUR

Through tickets issued to Mahone Bay and Bridgewater.

BLACK BROS. & CO., Agents, Halifax.

J. J. McLaughlan, Agent, Lunenburg.



ALL-YEAR-ROUND SERVICE

BETWEEN

HALIFAX AND BOSTON

Canada Atlantic & Plant S. S. Line.

Commencing WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 29,

THE FAVORITE STEEL

S. S. "HALIFAX,"

CAPT. BROWLAND HILL will sail from PLANT WHARF, Halifax,

Every WEDNESDAY, AT 8 A.M.

and will leave the North Side of LEWIS WHARF Boston, to return EVERY SATURDAY, AT 1 P.M.

B baggage Checked Through from All Points. Tickets and all information can be obtained of J. J. McLaughlan, or

B. L. CHIPMAN, Agent, Plant Wharf, HALIFAX.

RICHARDSON & BARNARD, General Agents,

North Side Lewis Wharf, Boston, Mass.