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The Perils of Diving.

(‘Child’s Companion.’)

Many attempts have been made in recent years to photograph objects at the bottom of the sea. A series of interesting experiments has been carried out by Dr. Bouton at the French Zoological station on the Mediterranean, near the Spanish frontier.

The apparatus is of the simplest kind. Besides the camera, all that is necessary is a barrel filled with oxygen, with which a bell-shaped glass is connected, and in this burns a flame from a spirit lamp. By a mechanical contrivance magnesium powder can at any moment be scattered into the flame thus

it is to be wondered at that accidents are not more frequent.

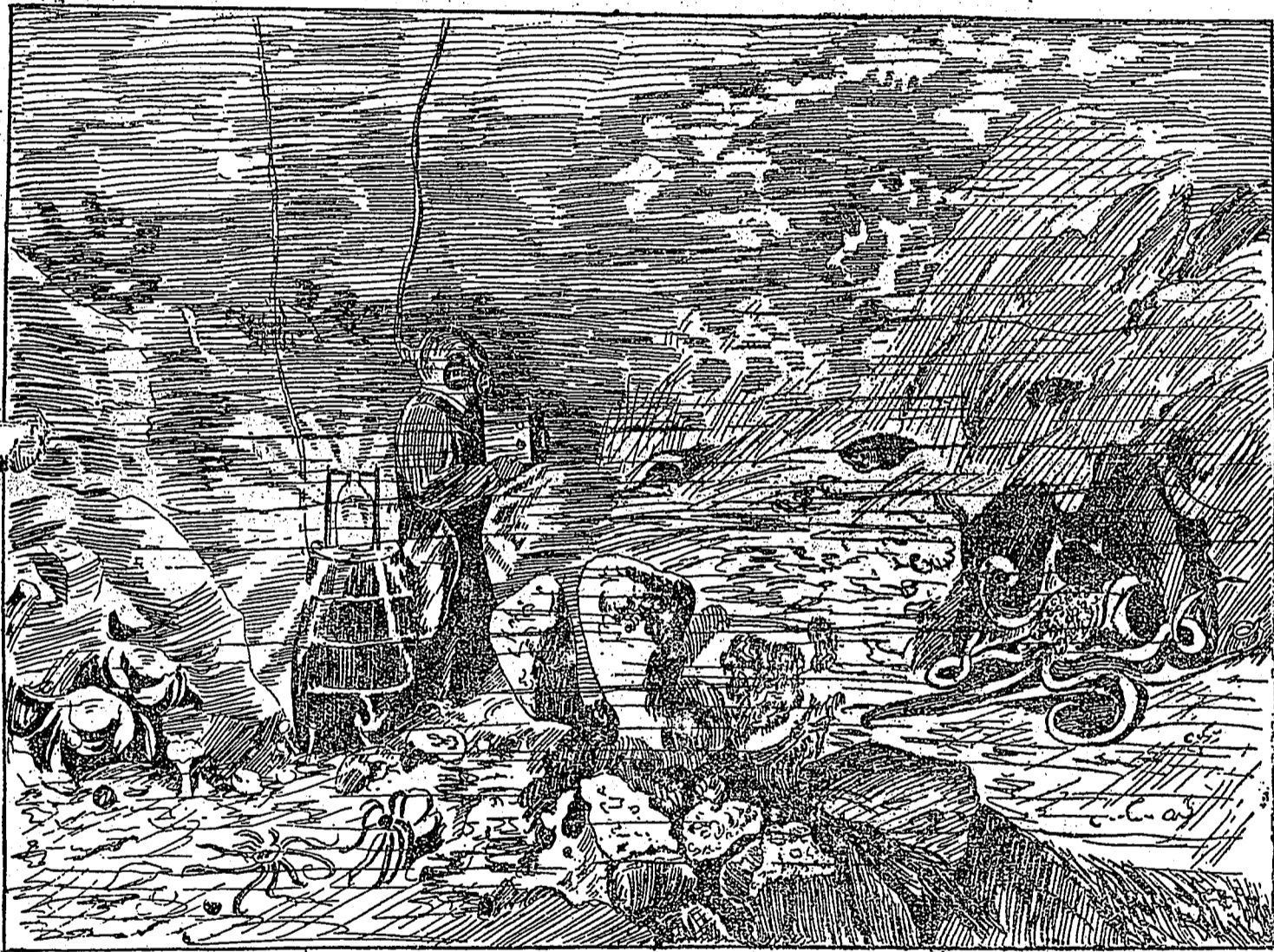
A writer in a recent number of the ‘Strand Magazines’ gives the following interesting incident in his own experience:—

‘I had been working all day, and about “knock-off” time, having a full bag of shells, I screwed up the escape valve in order to fill the dress with air and make myself lighter, and gave the customary signal to ascend. The life-line tautened, and I was soon lifted from my feet and being drawn toward lighter water above. The angry frame of mind that attends the diver at work gradually passed away as I was raised to the surface, and I was just getting good tempered at the

I reasoned out the cause of my dilemma.

As the strain of the air-pipe was downward, and that of the life-line upward, I concluded that the pipe must be fast below, and that the only thing to be done was to go down and clear it. First, I regulated the air in the dress, letting out as much as I could spare, for in my present position all the air went into my legs, and kept them floating straight upwards, and then I tried to make the “boys” understand that I wanted them to lower me.

‘All my shakes and jerks on the life-line, however, were without avail. By that time all hands, except those pumping, had tailed on, and were doing their level best to pull



producing the brilliant illumination necessary for instantaneous photography. Apertures in the cask allow of the gradual admission of the sea-water in proportion as the oxygen is consumed.

Dr. Bouton's experiments seem to point to quite a new branch of scientific research; and perhaps it will not be long before we shall be looking with interest at our albums of submarine photographs.

Diving, and particularly pearl diving, is an exceedingly dangerous occupation, and accidents on the pearling grounds are of common occurrence. There are so many things about a diver's work that cannot be foreseen, and, therefore, guarded against, and there is so much uncertainty as to where one is below, or in what direction one is moving, that

thought of a mouthful of fresh air, when I felt a sudden jerk under my left arm, and at the same instant my progress was stopped.

Before I realized what was the matter, the air-pipe was torn from the check that held it under my arm, slipped over it, and pulled my head downward; while the hauling of the “tender” above on the life-line round my waist raised the lower part of my body and left me suspended heels up.

In the first few moments of my surprise and terror I did not stop to consider what had happened. My presence of mind deserted me, and I struggled and screamed like a madman.

After a little while, having kicked myself into a state of exhaustion and common sense,

me in halves. Fortunately, all my gear was in good shape, or they might have accomplished it. Finally, after hanging betwixt the top and the bottom about half an hour, my “tender” had sense to signal for another diver, and I was at last hauled up more dead than alive.

The cause of this accident was simply that the careless holder of the pipe, instead of keeping it taut, had allowed it to drag on the bottom until it fouled around the base of a coral cup. Had the tide not been slack at the time, the weight of the boat, which was practically anchored by the air-pipe, would have torn the helmet from my shoulders, and the result would have been different.

The quality that a diver needs more than any other is presence of mind. Unless a