

Hooked an Octopus

Terrifying Experience of a Party of Tourists at Tenerife.

An Exciting Battle In the Moonlight When Hideous Monster Was Hauled Up From the Depths.

Jared Thompson, master of the English tramp steamer Red Lion, which recently docked at Philadelphia, related a rather amusing if exciting experience which he had while fishing with a couple of English passengers on his steamer off the coast of Tenerife.

The steamer lay at anchor, and toward evening, the wind having dropped, the two English passengers desired me to keep my promise of taking them fishing. This accounted for our presence on board her gig, which lay heaving inside a reef on the coast of Tenerife, in the Canaries. There are 10,000 feet of water around that island, and occasionally portions of curious and gigantic creatures which have probably perished in mortal combat far down in the icy depths are washed up on its cool black beaches.

The great white peak towered above fleecy mist 12,000 feet overhead, tremendous crags rose over our starboard head, and close ahead the blue Atlantic rollers crumbled upon the hammered reef. Inside it lay clear, smooth water, and we could see the hideous shape of an octopus gorging itself upon fish offal perhaps two fathoms beneath our keel. There are pulps of all sizes in these waters, and Spanish fishers say a large one will on opportunity drag down any incautious wader venturing near its lair. From the uncovered portion of the reef rose a low whistling, which showed that another of the long armed brutes lay half dry, basking.

"The very sight of that creature sets my ear drums quivering," said one tourist. "Hello! It seems scared now, and here's a thing like a serpent coming."

After seeing many I could never look upon an octopus without a sense of nausea myself, and the small, baglike body and mass of wriggling tentacles was not pretty as it sidled toward the fairy weed which draped the steep rock wall. Then a streak of black and yellow clove the sea, and I said: "That is a morone eel, as fierce as a tiger. You will see a fight worth watching."

The pulp was not fast enough, for its beautiful, slender enemy, some four feet long, we guessed, hurled itself upon it like a lance, though eight long, snaky arms wound around and enveloped it. I knew that if their rows of thorn armed suckers once closed on human flesh nothing short of tearing them apart piecemeal would extricate their victim, but presumably the eel's skin afforded a poorer hold, for during a few seconds one could see the morone tearing at the flaccid sack of body. Then as it backed clear with something in its jaws the water grew foil with stirred up sand or the tint some



THE SNAKY TENTACLES THRASHED AIMLESSLY.

pulp eel. I do not think altogether voluntarily, in the grip of an enemy. The tide cleared it a little, and one watcher said: "That thing is enough to give one a nightmare. But the eel is going in again."

We had another brief and nauseating vision of swaying, twining tentacles and darting eel. Then the brine grew cloudy, and the end of the struggle was hidden.

I consulted with the barefooted quartermaster, Miguel, and we moved the boat to where a great black gully had been rent out of the sea bottom by a volcanic fire. Though the brine was as clear as crystal, the eye could not gauge its depths, and our anchor went down and down, taking with it almost the last fathom of line. Vitriolized rocks, blood red and black as ebony, hemmed the pit in, and because the cuttlefish bite at night we waited with some anticipation for moonlight to see what a cast into its depths might bring.

Miguel said there were things more striking than pleasant in such depths, but that he did not wish to see any of them, and when the calamity ceased biting we lay smoking for a time until our tourist shouted: "Get hold and help! Something is tearing my line from me!"

The tourist was a strong man, but when I laid hold behind him the hemp sawed through my fingers so that it seemed to burn them. A faint wringing of the moonlit swell also suggested that the boat was moving. Then as the others took hold the motion ceased, and the line led down rigid as an iron bar. It remained so for several minutes, and the puzzled angler said, "It certainly moved, or I could have fancied I had fouled a rock."

"Submarine cliffs don't move," said the doctor dryly, and I held up my abraded hands. "There is something living down there, and we are going to bring it up."

A combined heave was followed by a yell from Miguel, and the line nipped the doctor's leg as it ripped across the boat, while, when the quartermaster had jammed a turn of it, the craft moved backward unmistakably. Three of us by this time were curious and eager, and, though Miguel looked doubtful, he aided us gallantly. Four



THE OCTOPUS WAVED ITS ARMS.

backs were bent together, and still it seemed we were hauling at a cliff. Then one tourist sat down with a bang, and the doctor shouted, "Whatever the thing is it's coming to the top."

The line was a very long one, and several times it taxed all our strength to resist the retrograde progress of our mysterious quarry, for the creature's movements in no way suggested those of a fighting fish until, when arms were aching, we halted, breathless, as Miguel said that another few fathoms would bring it to the surface. There was clear moonlight, and green phosphorescence flamed about the straining hemp and sides of the swayed down boat. Miguel, I noticed, appeared uneasy, the others flushed and excited.

"I can see the first of it. Heave!" shouted the doctor, and when we hauled together with a will something rose in the scope of our vision. We could see the brine shimmer about it, but that was all at present, though there was no more resistance. The thing was coming to the surface of its own will, and rapidly. In another few moments it had reached it, and Miguel grabbed the boat hook, while the doctor gasped, and I turned both cold and sick. A horrible head with great lambent eyes looked up at me not a fathom away, and all round it rippling, contracting tentacles struck a weird green, sparkling out of the phosphorescent sea. There was no doubt it was a pulp or octopus of formidable size. I also remembered that the curved brass spikes were probably fast in it, and it could not let go.

For the space of several seconds we stood gasping, staring spellbound at the horrible apparition, which looked as large as the boat. The sinuous movements of those awful arms and the pale brilliancy of the saucer eyes set my flesh creeping. Then one suckered tentacle rose into the air, and when another following curled forward in our direction one of the tourists yelled: "Cut the brake loose! It's coming on board the boat!"

The man's voice was hoarse with fear, but it recalled our scattered senses, and old Miguel drove his long shafted boat hook into the center of the quivering mass, while the doctor drew his seaman's knife across the tight strained hemp. The great arms rolled together about the boat hook staff and spread out again. Several of them struck the boat, but I had an ear out now and drove the craft ahead. As I did so there was a sudden rippling, and the loathsome creature sank, taking our extemporized harpoon with it to the depths from whence it came. Then the others slipped the cable, and we did not cease rowing until the lights of our steamer shone out round a head. We rested upon our oars then, looking at one another, four startled and slightly shamefaced men, until the nonmedical tourist said, "I don't know if the thing meant to crawl in or not, but I've had enough fishing for one night at least and never want to see a large sized octopus so close again."

GOLD CANNON BALLS.

The Jungle Hidden Treasure of an East Indian Princess.

Not long ago an old peasant was wandering in the jungle about half a mile from the city of Ahmadnager, in India, when he found a round ball of metal. It was black and looked like an old iron round shot, but when the old man lifted it he was struck with its immense weight. He carried it home and found on scratching it that it was a lump of solid gold. It weighed eight pounds and its sale made the finder rich for life.

There are many more of these cannon balls, each worth a small fortune, lying hid or buried in the recesses of this jungle, and their story is a curious one. At the end of the sixteenth century Akbar, the greatest emperor Hindustan ever saw, was at the height of his glory. At the head of his conquering army he summoned Ahmadnager to surrender. The city and its rich treasure were then under the rule of the Princess Candu. Knowing that resistance could be but short, and in bitter rage against the oppressor, she caused all the treasure of gold and silver to be melted down. She cast the metal into cannon balls and engraved upon each maledictions against the conqueror. These were fired into the jungle and when Akbar entered the city, instead of the rich hoard he had hoped to win, he found a treasury absolutely empty.

That this is not the only occasion upon which cannon balls of gold have been cast is proved by the fact that in the treasury of the shah of Persia there may be seen in the same room where stands the famous peacock throne two small globular projectiles of gold. They were estimated by a recent visitor to weigh about thirty-one pounds each and are roughly made. Their origin or purpose is, however, totally forgotten. It is only known that they are very old.—Chicago Chronicle.

Ancient Beds.

In ancient times the beds we read about were simply rugs, skins or thin mattresses which could be rolled up and carried away in the morning. At night they were spread on the floor, which in the better class of houses was of tile or plaster, and as the shoes were not worn in the house and the feet were washed before entering a room the floors were cleaner than ours. After a time a sort of bench, three feet wide, was built around two or three sides of the room about a foot above the floor and, covered with a soft cushion, was used during the day to sit or lounge on and as a sleeping place at night. The bench was sometimes made like a settee, movable and of carved wood or ivory.—London Standard.

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THE SHANK OF THE SHOE.

What the Glazed, Metallic Marks Thereon Told the Broker.

Half a score of clerks in one of the largest brokerage houses in New York were astounded one morning when one by one they were called into their employer's private office and asked to hold up their feet and show the shanks of their shoes. They thought the "old man" had gone quite mad. Each young man as he entered the office was told to sit down and put his foot up on a corner of the desk where it could be examined. Then the head of the house put on his glasses and very carefully scrutinized the shank of the shoe.

When all had been put through this examination he called the entire force of clerks into his office and explained to them why this unusual examination had been made.

"You are well aware," said he "that I will not have a drinking man in my employ if I know it. For some time I have had good reasons for believing that several of the young men before me have been indulging quite too much. Now I know it. Here are the marks of the bar rail on the bottoms of your shoes."

Several of the young men braced themselves against the wall and lifted their feet as a blacksmith lifts the foot of a horse. Sure enough, there were the glazed, metallic marks on the dry leather. They were the evidences of guilt, and the young men's faces showed it.

"It's unmistakable proof," said the head of the house. "You may fix up your breath at the drug store and the barber can clean up your eyes and face, but you neglect the shanks of your shoes."

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