

Musham's Essay

Blue
Ribbon
Fiction

By Will Payne

Staid Patent Attorney Lets
Himself in for an Un-
usually Interesting Ex-
perience.

JOSIAH MUSHAM of Musham & Maceldowney, patent lawyers, had let himself be persuaded to address the senior class of a Chicago law school—regretting his good nature as soon as he had yielded, for he detested making public addresses, or an appearance in public of any sort. The promise had been given, however, and he was now conscientiously composing the address.

His theme—not an original one—was loyalty to the law. There wasn't much of that in the United States, he wrote; for one thing, we were a hopelessly sentimental people; we insisted upon giving every criminal four chances of escape to one of conviction, and it was notorious that a pretty woman could murder any man she chose anywhere in the United States and go scot free.

As he wrote that, in his study at home of a Tuesday evening, he was thinking of one pretty woman in particular. Early Thursday evening before dinner he received a note from her asking him to call her up immediately at the Illinois hotel.

At the Illinois hotel, about that time, Captain and Mrs. Helm—as they chose to call themselves for the time being—were carefully rehearsing a scene. They occupied a parlor and bedroom on the third floor. The dressing table, against the east wall of the bedroom, supported a broad, three-leaved mirror. A tall pier mirror stood near the south wall. When Mrs. Helm sat at the dressing table her image, reflected from the three leaved mirror into the pier mirror, was clearly visible to Captain Helm as he sat in an easy chair by the center table in the parlor.

They tried it many times, changing the angle of the three leaved mirror and the position of the easy chair in the parlor; also, readjusting the filmy scarf thrown over one leaf of the dressing table mirror so that this scarf cut off the head and a slice of the shoulders of the image reflected in the pier mirror. Then Mrs. Helm put a corset on a pillow, slipped her rose colored kimono over that, and stood in the chair by the dressing table. Captain Helm sitting in the parlor, could not tell whether his wife or the pillow occupied the chair by the dressing table. Mrs. Helm would slide out of the chair, whip her kimono around the corseted pillow, and pop that into the chair. A witness sitting in the parlor and looking into the pier mirror would think that the lady at the dressing table had taken a step to one side and immediately resumed her seat at the table. At length, after many rehearsals, Captain Helm expressed himself completely satisfied.

At half past eight Horace Altman left his apartment on the third floor and went down to the cashier's office. Afterwards Captain Macready remarked to him that he would naturally be as careless of a hundred thousand dollars' worth of jewelry as of his life. That afternoon he had taken the jewels out of the safe deposit vault downtown, brought them to the hotel, and seen them put into the cashier's safe. He now got the jewel case from the cashier, opened it there to make sure nothing was missing, locked it again, and tucked it under his arm.

Going from the cashier's office to the elevators he met two men friends, like himself already dressed and waiting for their wives. He invited them up to his apartment.

Leaving his friends in the parlor, Altman carried the jewel case to his wife in her bedroom, where a maid was preparing to do her hair.

Altman's bedroom, last in the row, adjoined the bedroom occupied by Captain and Mrs. Helm. There was a door between, so that all the rooms along there could be thrown into one suite. The door was provided with a stout bolt on both sides so that an occupant on either side might be sure his neighbor did not trespass. Excepting this door between the bedrooms and the windows there was only one possible entrance to the Altman apartment—namely, by the door between the private hall and the parallel public hall.

About the time that Altman and his two friends were putting down half drained glasses and lighting cigars in agreeable anticipation of a snug three-quarters of an hour chat, Josiah Musham arrived at the main entrance of the hotel in a taxi. Nervously consulting gold watch whose large closed case had been worn smooth by a quarter century's use, he saw that it was 15 minutes to 9; so he was just in time.

There was a saying among those who knew that you never could tell about a patent until Musham & Maceldowney had given an opinion on it. Gold braided doormen might regard the senior member of that firm contemptuously, but the supreme court of the United States did not, nor did a long list of clients—especially when they saw his bills. But he was incurably unfashionable and unsocial. Even an appearance in court he regarded as a bore.

But clothes and momentary embarrassments were small matters tonight. Clutching his slouch hat in a bony hand, he strode across the bedecked lobby, where a few men and women in gala dress were beginning to gather, to the bank of elevators, and went up to the third floor. As on all the eight upper floors, there was a lounge in front of the elevator landing. Following the directions he had received over the telephone, he turned to the right, and to the left at the first angle, which brought him into the long hall upon which the Altman and Helm suites opened. Mr. Altman stood at the door of his apartment taking a box of flowers from a messenger boy. Passing, Musham nodded to him, and received a nod in reply. The box of flowers was addressed to Mrs. Altman. Her husband took it to the dining room and dropped it on a chair there, calling into his wife's

bedrooms, "Some flowers." He then returned to his friends in the parlor, shutting the door again after him.

The box contained a dozen roses and a calling card that read, "Mr. Arthur Spellman." At 45 Mrs. Altman had more flesh and less hair than she cared for; but there was a soft heart under the flesh and a great wish for domestic peace beneath the hair. At sight of the calling card her lips parted in a sudden alarm too acute for words, and a hunted look in her eyes appealed to the maid. Mr. Arthur Spellman was her nephew, and one of her chief affections—with a good heart, as she always forlornly maintained, but a weakness for stimulants and an inveterate carelessness in money matters. This last failing had caused a violent breach between her husband and her nephew, and she was under a strict prohibition not to have any intercourse or communication with the culprit. Yet he was her own sister's flesh and blood, and her heart was soft. Like many another woman under the iron hand of domestic tyranny, she had a confederate in her maid.

For some three months Arthur had been conducting himself respectably in New York, to his aunt's immense relief. These flowers, however, came from a Chicago florist, so unfortunately Arthur must be near at hand.

Musham, meanwhile, consulting the numbers on the doors, had gone on to the one that gave to Helm's parlor, at which he knocked. Captain Helm threw open the door, smiling cordially—a tall man of 35 or so, with a neatly pointed red beard and light blue eyes, dressed for the ball.

Musham acknowledged the smile with a grumpy nod, and strode in. The door to the adjoining bedroom was ajar. Thence a gay voice lifted at him, "Hello, Uncle Joe! Be out there in a minute." Nobody else had ever called him "Joe," let alone "Uncle Joe." He said he didn't care to be called that. Captain Helm was courteously steering him into the easy chair by the center table and inviting him to lay off his overcoat.

The bedroom door flew inward, wide open, and a woman in a rose colored kimono flitted in, white teeth and blue eyes flashing, a dimple in either cheek. Her wavy hair was the color of corn silk. Floating to the easy chair, she extended a round, white arm and shapely hand; and when Musham stood up, redder than common and frowning, to shake her hand ungraciously, she laid the tip of her tongue to the edge of her teeth in a little, merry, derisive bubble of laughter, saying:

"You know you can't help shaking hands with me, much as you want to!"

Musham was 61; had two sons and a daughter already married, and three grandchildren. Yet in spite of himself he acknowledged the pull. She sparkled with vitality. It was beautiful to see her move or even stand—like watching a bird of paradise flit and preen.

Like a bird's sailing, she moved to a chair, perched on the edge of it, bending toward him, clasping hands round a knee, a teasing twinkle in her eyes. It was so graceful that something oppressed his heart, and once more he said to himself, in mournful protest, "Thunder! If she'd only be square!" That was the direction which his enforced admiration of her took—an evangelical direction. Secretly he was always hoping that the play would end with her reformation.

But she was giving no sign of that now, and in a smother of anger he thrust his hand into his trousers pocket, drawing forth a thick roll of bank notes inclosed with a rubber band which he silently extended to her.

With a swift change of pose she took the roll and spread it out on her knee, not counting the bills but fluttering them admiringly as a pretty woman handles a bit of lace or ribbon.

"Too bad they don't grow on bushes," she commented, and laughed. "Nice of you, Uncle Joe." And, as though it were a sufficient apology, she added: "We had to have it, you know. They're going to put us out of the hotel unless we pay the bill tonight." She rolled the bills again deftly, slipped the rubber band around the roll, and tossed it to her husband with, "Better see about it now, Nick."

"I was a fool to bring it. I won't do it again." Red and angry, he flung at her uncompromisingly, "It's nothing but blackmail!"

But at that insulting word she only laughed and twitted him. "Why, Uncle Joe, you know you don't want me to go ragged and hungry. You ought to blame the pigs that run the hotel. They won't let us stay here without money. And what's 500 to Benny, now that he's married a rich wife?"

That marital reference was offensive, and he blurted, "You're just blackmailing him. He's a fool to submit. Week as a rag—that's the trouble with him. If his father and I hadn't been together 30 years—like brothers—if I didn't know the young blockhead was full of good intentions now—and scared out of his wits"—but he could hardly explain satisfactorily how he had got into this strange role of emissary in an affair of blackmail. Mainly it had been the well intentioned young bridegroom's white, frightened face. With that in mind he declared hotly, "You've got to let him alone!"

She tipped her golden head a little and sweet laughter rippled. "O, probably I was careless," she mocked. "I ought to have got run over by a truck or struck by lightning instead of bobbing up here, awfully alive, after Benny's married his rich wife!"

Then, swift as thought, the laughter vanished; she stooped toward him again, grave and accusing. "You're awfully hard on me, Uncle Joe—not fair. It's just as I've told you before. Benny treated me like a dog. We were engaged. I gave up my career on the stage when I had good prospects. We would have been married, only he was afraid of his father—a man 23 years old! Then he got me to go to New York; he was to come on and we'd be married. He just strung me along. I suppose he'd already got his eye on the rich girl and wanted to get me out of the way. With his letters and the rest of the evidence I could sue him for breach



He fairly saw her stooping to utter that quick, desperate whisper—

of promise and get a hundred thousand dollars. A good lawyer told me so. But I didn't want to break him up; I forgave him. Gracious! He mustn't think he owns Chicago and that I can't ever come back here. The money he's been paying me, you see, is really only a little bit of what he really owes me. If he doesn't know that's so why does he keep on giving it? It's his guilty conscience. That's the truth, Uncle Joe."

Musham's feeling about the woman may have been complex and not easily defined. But his feeling about the man was perfectly simple. Except to kick him he would no more have touched tail, immaculately dressed, distinguished looking Captain Helm—into whose pocket the roll of bills had gone—than he would have touched a dirty rag. It occurred to him that the quick look which passed between husband and wife as the captain dropped his cigarette was a look of understanding. He rather suspected that he was going to be fooled again.

Under that suspicion he waited a moment after the captain's shapely, black clad back had disappeared through the door, then turned to the woman with a brusque demand: "Give me the letters." That referred to the stipulation he had made over the telephone—the stipulation which had induced him to come that evening, as she had insisted he must.

Was it fear in her pleading blue eyes? Every line of her little body seemed to plead as she said, "Honestly, Uncle Joe, I can't. He's got them." Then, lower and swiftly, "I'm sick of this. I want to get out of it. He's got me, too. What can I do?"

"Honestly, I'm sick of it. I'll do anything to get out if you'll only help me a little—some kind of a start. I haven't a cent, you know. He's suspicious now. He's hidden the letters somewhere. But I'll get them for you. Really I will. I promise you. There's a woman on Madison avenue in New York—she has an awfully cute little doll and toy shop. She told me she made a good living at it. I

thought of something like that—here in Chicago, you know. I believe I could do it if I could get a start. Tell Benny to give me a thousand dollars for the letters. You pay me the money after I've handed the letters over to you. I'll never bother him again. With a thousand dollars—if you'll help me get a lease on a little shop. I've been thinking it over all the while. I've got to get out of this."

Her low, rapid utterance ran on. It was the penitent Magdalene. The little gilt clock on the mantel clicked off the minutes. She stood up abruptly.

"Wait for me two or three minutes. Don't go. He may be coming back. He's suspicious now. I don't want him to think we've been sitting here talking all the while. I'll give my hair a twist and slip on a dress—only a jiffy. Wait two or three minutes." She was moving toward the bedroom, her grave blue eyes upon him.

Musham, his aged heart expanded, gave an assenting nod. She fled into the bedroom, and at once he saw her headless image, as she sat at the dressing table, reflected in the pier mirror.

It was five minutes to nine by the little gilt clock on the mantel, which was set to the second, when Helm stepped into the public hall, looking up and down. The hall was empty at that moment. He glided along it and swiftly let himself into a vacant bedroom. The Illinois was a new hotel and there were half a dozen vacant bedrooms along that corridor. To get a duplicate of a chambermaid's pass key, so that he could enter any of those bedrooms at will, was an easy feat. He took up the telephone in the bedroom and called Altman's apartment.

In the parlor of that apartment Altman and his two friends were killing time agreeably with tall glasses, cigars and conversation. In Mrs. Altman's bedroom the maid was doing up her mistress' hair—much of it hers by right of purchase. The door between that room and the small dining room was open, but the door

between dining room and parlor was closed. The telephone was in the dining room. It buzzed, and Mrs. Altman said to the maid, "See who it is." Nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand that is exactly what would have happened.

The maid went into the dining room and returned a minute later looking excited. In the undertone that fellow conspirators use she said: "It's Mr. Arthur. He wants to see you—wants you to come downstairs. I tried to tell him, but they cut us off. I tried, but couldn't get him again. The lines are mixed up. He said he must see you."

Upon Mrs. Altman's fleshy maternal face a startled expression appeared. Arthur's sending the flowers, without any previous notice that he had left New York, was eccentric. As the confidential maid well knew, Arthur was given to eccentric behavior when under the influence of alcohol. If he was now downstairs in that state, like as not he would come blundering up here to the apartment—and touch off a grand family row. The sympathetic maid suggested: "I might go down and find him—see what he wants."

"Do!" her mistress replied eagerly. "Don't let him come up here." And she added, with a needless caution: "Don't go through the parlor."

Stepping into the public hall, the maid at once saw the tall, distinguished figure of Captain Helm walking toward her as though on his way to the elevator. She gave a little nod, which was unnecessary, and sped toward the stairway. Turning at right angles to gain the stairway, she threw a swift glance over her shoulder at the captain—also quite unnecessary. Captain Helm indulgently reflected that the maid, being an amateur at grand larceny, was nervous. He strolled on.

Earlier in the evening the maid had stepped into the bathroom between Mrs. Altman's bedroom and her husband's. Then she had run into the husband's bedroom and drawn the bolt on the door that gave to Helm's bedroom—which took her 20 seconds. When she returned from downstairs she was to go into the bathroom again, glide into Altman's bedroom, and rebolt the door to Helm's bedroom. The window in Altman's bedroom was up four or five inches. There was no fire escape, but an expert steeplejack or porch climber might—possibly—scale the rear roof brick wall of the hotel and get through the open window. That was the theory, according to Helm's plan, with which the police were to amuse themselves when the robbery was discovered.

But Helm presumed that police suspicion would fall upon himself and wife at first. Their record was dubious. Their bedroom adjoined Altman's. On this night of the big dance the hotel would be carefully watched. Probably the police would be reluctant to believe that a porch-climber had scaled the rear wall unseen. So Captain Helm had his own alibi carefully arranged. And, as for his wife, there would be the impeccable testimony of Josiah Musham that Mrs. Helm was under his eyes during every moment of the time when the robbery must have been committed. That was why Musham had been summoned to the hotel that particular evening at a particular hour.

Something had gone wrong—a little—in the apartment. Taking the jewel case from her husband, Mrs. Altman had put it in the second drawer of the dressing table, instead of putting it on the table as the maid had supposed she would do. That, however, seemed a trivial disarrangement of the plan, for Mrs. Helm, not seeing the case on the table, would, naturally, look for it in the drawers. Left to herself after the maid went downstairs to find Arthur, Mrs. Altman went on single-handed with the elaborate busi-

ness of doing her hair. At nine minutes past 9 the maid called the apartment over a downstairs telephone. Mrs. Altman heard the instrument buzzing in the dining room and, naturally, went in there to answer.

It was the maid's voice saying something or other about Arthur, but the telephone seemed to be working badly; Mrs. Altman couldn't make out the message. Then the connection was broken, and she had to wait for it to be re-established. Altogether the maid kept her at the phone nearly three minutes.

But Mrs. Altman had not been alone in hearing the buzz. At eight minutes past 9 a corseted and kimonoed pillow stood on the chair by Mrs. Helm's dressing table and was duly reflected to Musham's eyes in the pier mirror. Mrs. Helm herself, in white undress, lips apart, out of the caller's reflected line of vision, was standing at the slightly opened door to Altman's bedroom listening breathlessly. The maid had left the bathroom doors a little ajar. Mrs. Helm heard the telephone buzz and glided through Altman's dark bedroom to the bathroom. An instant after Mrs. Altman disappeared from her bedroom Mrs. Helm darted to the dressing table.

This was the crucial moment for her. Mrs. Altman might step back and see her. Her nerves were not as hardy as the captain's, yet sufficient. The jewel case was not on the dressing table. She attacked the drawers, but the top one stuck, giving her trouble, for she must be careful not to make a noise.

Nothing had happened to give Josiah Musham any suspicion of the plot. All that had occurred since he entered the room seemed to be a natural flow and sequence of events. He had been alone in the parlor two or three minutes, undreaming of a present plot; dreaming, indeed, something quite different.

Absorbed in that, his brow wrinkled, he mechanically stood up, from a long habit of thinking on his feet—tramping the floor over a knotty problem in law. Mechanically he rubbed his brow, took two steps, glanced up—and experienced a profound shock, for the pier mirror now showed him the image of a woman without legs, the rose-colored kimono dangling empty. For an instant he gaped in stupid amazement. Then a swift alarm flashed along his nerves—some trick here! He stepped to the bedroom door and looked in.

A glance revealed the trick. That was a pillow on the chair by the dressing table, with a rose-colored kimono over it. The beautiful penitent was not in the room. But the door at the end of the dressing table stood ajar. She must have gone in there.

It was a trick! She had been fooling him with the appeal in her eloquent eyes and on her pretty lips—some deviltry afoot. It came to him that he had seen Altman at the door a little way down the hall. Probably this open door led to Altman's apartment. In a surge of righteous anger he stepped over, closed the door, and shot the bolt; then stood stock still in a sort of paralysis. She was in there stealing something; he felt sure of that.

The knob of the door in front of him turned noiselessly, but, of course, the door did not open. That was her hand on the opposite knob; he could see that she was pressing against the door from the other side, trying to force it open. Then the pressure ceased; the knob turned quickly back and forth; she gave it a little shake. Signals—so she must have comprehended that the bolt had been shot and she was trapped on the other side. That turning and shaking of the knob was a plea. He stood motionless. A whisper came through the keyhole:

"Uncle Joe, let me in!"

So she guessed he had discovered the trick and shot the bolt!

In spite of the momentary surge of anger it shook Musham deeply. He fairly saw her stooping to utter that quick, desperate whisper—golden head, white shoulders, round, white arms; in a trap, and as beautiful a creature as ever the laws of a trap closed upon. In outline it was clear enough to him; the next suite belonged to Altman; she had gone in there to steal—a crime going on under his nose.

She was trapped, two feet away from him, with the hunters at hand. Holding her in the trap was almost like running a spear through her quivering body with his own hand. His heart trembled; and he had only to reach out and draw the bolt. The faint odor of cosmetics rose to him.

The natural color of his face faded to a patchy sort of yellow, the wrinkles deepened in dogged lines, his eyes were heavy with woe. But he turned sullenly from the bolted door and walked out of the room. Probably she was still shaking the knob and whispering through the keyhole. It was not yet too late; his finger was on the trigger, but he had not pressed it. He stood a moment, an aged mask of misery, wretched to the core. Doubtless she was still appealing. Miserably he turned to the telephone, took down the receiver and spoke brusquely:

"This is room 347. There's a robbery going on up here. Send a detective or somebody quick. Yes, 347. Be quick!"

Then he went over and sat on the arm of the chair, putting a hand to his brow, which was furrowed as though he had a severe headache.

The evening of that next day he sat alone in his study. She intrigued his heart. In an odd, honorable, ghostly fashion—hoping for repentance—he loved the pretty, sparkling creature. Yet he had handed her over to the hunters. For she was a criminal, an habitual, practiced breaker of the law—an engaging in crime under his nose, so that he had been obliged either to become an accomplice to the crime or to denounce it.

"Stoopy, maudlin, sentiment, disloyal to the law, soft, without the courage to strike home," he had written.

Sitting gauntly upright by the study table the old lawyer laid a bony hand on the manuscript—having justified a lifetime faith by works.

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BALLAD WRITTEN DEDICATING PRINCETON BATTLE STATUE

In Presence of President Harding and Other Notables Henry Van Dyke Reads Poem
Written for Dedicatory Services at Shaft.

PRINCETON—In the presence of President Harding and a group of notables assembled for the dedication of Princeton battle monument, Dr. Henry Van Dyke, recently, his poem, "A Ballad of Princeton Battle," written for the occasion.

It follows:
Along Assumpink's woody bank we left our
campfires broken
While like a fox with raddled feet we stole
away by night;
Cornwalls watched his Trenton trap,
And drained his glass, and took his nap;
But the ragged troops of Washington out-
flanked him in the night—
Up and away for Princeton,
By a secret road to Princeton—
We dragged our guns with muffled wheels
to win another fight.

The icy trail was hard as iron, our foot-
prints marked it red;
Our frosty breath went up like smoke to
the twinkling stars overhead;
By Bear Swamp and by Mory Run,
Our muskets weighed at least a ton;
We shivered, till o'er Stony Brook we saw
the sun rise red;
Weary we tramped to Princeton;
But all of us at Princeton,
Would follow the chief through thick and thin
till the last of us was dead.

We looked beyond the upper bridge, across
the swollen stream,
And there along the highway, we saw
the redcoats gleam;
"Twas Mawhood's regiment marching down
To crush us off at Trenton town!
"Go cut the bridge!"—and Mercer's men
crept up along the stream.
But the British turned towards Princeton,
Came bravely back for Princeton;
And all the rest of that dim hour was wild-
er than a dream.

They rushed thro' Will Clark's orchard,
among the naked trees;
With horse and foot they hammered hard;
their bullets sang like bees;
And Mercer fell, and Haslet fell;
The bayonets cut us up like hell;
The chain-shot mowed a bloody path be-
neath the twisted trees.
It looked all black for Princeton.
We lost our hopes of Princeton;
We wavered, and we broke and fled as
leaves before the breeze.

Then down the hill from Tom Clark's house,
rode Washington a flame,
With holy ire, through smoke and fire, like
mighty Mars he came,
"Come on, my men, parade with me,
"We'll make the bragart redcoats flee."
And up the hill, against the guns, rode
Washington a flame.
He turned the tide at Princeton;
The land was saved at Princeton;
And they who fought, and they who fell,
won liberty and fame.

Men praise our chief for weighty words, for
counsel calm and high,
For prudence and enduring will, for cool,
far-seeing eye;
One thing he had all else above—
Courage that caught the soldier's love,
And made the soldier's loyal heart in dan-
ger's hour beat high.
We saw it clear at Princeton;
'Twas written here at Princeton:
The men who make a nation great are men
who dare to die.
Avalon, May 22, 1922.

School Girls Whose Swimming Puts America First.

(Continued From First Page.)

Riggin and Miss Wainwright finished first and second as named, barely one point apart, displaying clean-cut international leadership, and they have improved very materially since. Yet last summer they were beaten decisively by their 16-year-old clubmate, Miss Helen Meany, who captured the national championships in both branches of the sport and thereupon was declared by experts the greatest all-around diver of her sex ever developed. Miss Meany's young sister Josephine, now 14, has figured in national title awards also, and would add strength to the diving contingent. The four of them would brook no foreign rivalry.

If plunging for distance were made a feature of the hypothetical international engagement, Miss Dorothy McWood of Northern high school, Detroit, would take a deal of beating. A few weeks ago she boosted the American record for a one-minute time limit of 66 feet 6 inches and

the world's record for women stands at 67 feet, so there is little doubt that she would prove a dangerous bidder for premier honors, particularly in view of the fact that Miss Hilda Dand of England, international holder, has not touched her best mark this year. Another potential scorer for the gliding event is Miss Helen Nolan of Junior school, Detroit, who set the national record wiped out by Miss McWood, 65 feet 10 inches.

The triumph of the American schoolgirl team in a world's all-around contest would be sweeping, for no other nation could gather together a group of women champions able to reap laurels in all slated events. Great Britain lacks free-style sprint swimmers and fancy divers of international caliber, and the former weakness, in particular, would be costly, for the relay race must be considered in addition to the individual swims. New Zealand might fare exceedingly well in the free-style races, yet be handicapped overwhelmingly in the rest of the programme. Sweden and Germany look strong in breast-stroke swimming and fancy diving, but trail far behind otherwise. On the other hand, our young girls would furnish the favorites, or possible winners, for practically every contest on the card.

The conspicuous place assumed by Uncle Sam's young mermaids in international water sports is the more amazing in that a very few years ago there was no organized aquatic competition for women in this country.

And not the least remarkable feature of the rapid development is that younger and younger mermaids pressed to the fore as time passed. Miss Claire Galligan, the first A. U. swimming girl champion ever crowned, was 20 years old when she achieved the distinction of capturing the women's all-around national title; Miss Charlotte Boyle succeeded her to the honor at the age of 19; Miss Ethelda Bleibrey assumed leadership next, when 17; now Miss Helen Wainwright has earned the all-around championship and she is barely 16.

Meanwhile, already numbered among the junior national champions or open-record holders are Miss McGary and Miss Ederle, the 14-year-old maids previously mentioned, and the Misses Ethel Baker and Doris O'Mara, child swimmers of 13, so it will not be surprising to see even younger water sprites garner senior laurels.