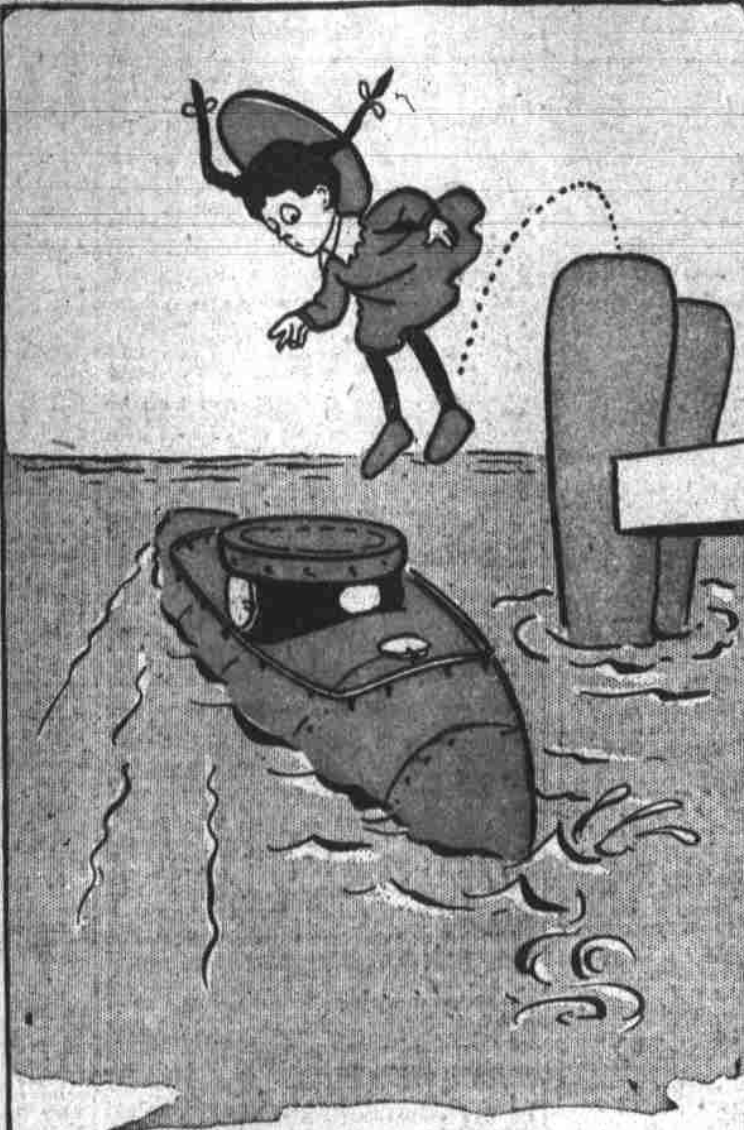


BESSIE BUSYBODY HAS AN ADVENTURE UNDER WATER



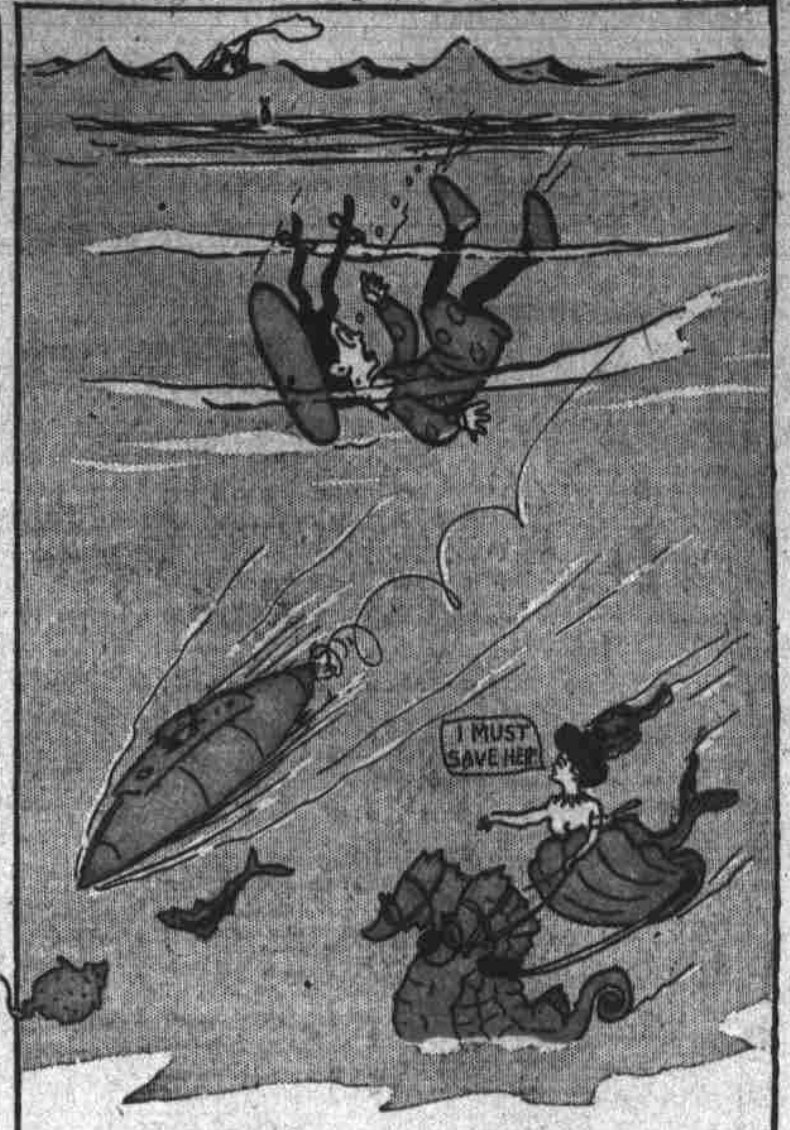
WHEN I RAN away from home to-day I jes' knew there was trouble ahead. I went down to the wharf and saw a funny looking boat. The men said it was a boat, but it looked more like a whale. I heard 'em talking about going to find a Submarine Pearl Cave, whatever that is. "Can I go long, mister?" I asked. "Why, of course, kid," they said. Then they got down inside the thing and shut the lid.



THEN THE THING STARTED to move through the water. They couldn't fool me that easy. I jes' jumped aboard the thing in a jiffy. They said I could go, and you bet I wouldn't get left. When we got out to sea the waves got higher and higher, and began to wash all over the boat, and me too. I tried to get inside, but the lid was screwed down.



BUT THAT WASN'T the worst of it—no sir-ee! I hung for dear life to the cheesebox on top of the boat. I knew I couldn't stick much longer, and I began to wonder how I would feel being swallowed by a whale, like Jonah. Then all of a sudden the Submarine—that's what they called it—threw its tail up in the air and dove down, down, down.



I TURNED FIFTY somersaults as I was drawn down, after it. I could see all kinds of fishes and slimy things as I tumbled slowly over and over, and kept sinking all the time. Then I was so terribly sorry I ran away. Wouldn't you be, eh? When I looked down I saw a pretty water sprite, of fairy, or something like that, sailing along in a shell chariot hitched up to two funny looking wiggles.



I TRIED TO SHOUT for help, but all I could say was, "Bubble, bubble, bubble." I shut my eyes and thought it was all over with Bessie Busybody, but it wasn't. Miss Water Sprite whipped up the Wiggles and whisked me into her chariot. When she touched me I opened my eyes as if by magic, and found I felt just as much at home in the water as on the land. "Come with me, Little Lady of the World People," said she, "and I will take you to my crystal palace."



WELL, MEBBE THAT 'Crystal Palace' wasn't the finest ever! The crystal walls sparkled like diamonds through the greenish water. The Fairy Fish Lady told me I could stay there as long as I liked, and could do anything I pleased, with one exception. That was never to touch, or even go near to, a little old Rusty Chest she showed me. "Well, if I don't try to see what's in that chest, the first chance I get, my name isn't Busybody!" thought I.



AS SOON AS THE Good Lady was out of sight I tried the lid and found it locked tight. Then I searched and searched the whole palace over, until at last I found the key and threw open the lid to the Mysterious Chest. Oh, why can't I do as I am told? It would keep me out of jes' heaps of trouble. As soon as the lid was raised there was a rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning, and with a terrible roar out popped the Terrible Wizard of the Pearl Cave.



HE JES GAVE ME one ugly look, and then whisked me out of the Crystal Palace and through the water so swiftly I didn't know what was doing. We shot into a long, narrow cave, and at the end of it there was a big heap of the Beautifullest Pearls you ever heard of. Then the Cruel Wizard put an 'Iron Collar' around my neck and fastened it to a chain. Then he set me to work counting that big pile of pearls.



I COUNTED AND COUNTED until I could hardly see. He told me I would have to keep that up the rest of my life. Now wasn't that a cheerful thing to say? Suddenly the wizard said, "Look! What's that Black Monster?" and he fell to the bottom crazed with fright. I looked, and saw coming along toward us a whale-like thing, but I did not recognize the Submarine at first. Yes, sir! That's it! What it was! Then I remembered how the Submarine men had said they were going to find the Sunken Pearl Cave.



THEN I KNEW I WAS saved. The boat stopped near us, and two men-like things, with iron heads and big goggle eyes, came out of the cheesebox and hurried toward us. When they saw me chained up they looked as if they would kill the Wicked Wizard, but instead they took the collar off my neck and put it around his, and chained him up.



THEN THEY GATHERED up several baskets of the Precious Pearls and carried them inside the Submarine, and took me in with them. After they shut the top they took off their diving helmets, and mebbe they wasn't surprised when they saw it was me, the little girl who had talked to them on the wharf that morning. When I told 'em my story you ought to see their eyes bulge out.



THEN THEY SERVED a nice dinner, and we started for home and dry land again. I thought I never wanted to see a pearl again, but when the Submarine picked out a dandy bag full of them and gave them to me, mebbe I wasn't glad to get 'em. We had a dandy time sailing home through the deep water, and soon were landed at the pier we started from.