

SPAWN OF THE DEEP.

For The Public.

IV. The Beaching of the Squids.

Strange squelching and spurting sounds, mingled with spasmodic squeakings, draw attention to the edge of the incoming tide, where the spreading waters that before had been smooth as quicksilver in the amber radiance of sunset, are now threshed to tumult by some vigorous sea life.

Thirsty horses eagerly drinking at a trough would not surpass the vehemence of the persistent sucking and wallowing noises, while the cheeping of gulls or scolding of squirrels is suggested by the accompanying shrill protests that rise from the sand each time that a wave recedes.

The surprised observer hastening to the tideline finds it strewn with stranded squids or calamaries trying to struggle back to the deep. Distending the flexible tissues of their tubular flanks, till from the usual shuttle or cigar-shape their bodies become more like smooth pineapples, with the tuft of tentacles as crown-leaves, they violently compress them again, blowing forth through the vents at the base of the neck lusty jets of water, or where the wave leaves them uncovered, ejecting stertorous blasts of air that furrow the wet sand.

Absurd and yet pathetic as these efforts, are the contortions of the tentacles writhing and tugging in the attempt to help, with the body sometimes nearly somersaulting over them, while here and there two strugglers grapple each other with the tenacity of drowning human swimmers.

Along the beach, people who have been drawn by the commotion feel the pathos in common, and are hastily throwing the helpless things out before they perish, though as they turn in the air their cry is more like a rat's protest in a trap than delight or gratitude, and if they strike headed shoreward they rush back to their jeopardy again.

But it is worth the rescuer's trouble when one of the little living torpedoes falls with pointed form directed seaward and darts fleetly away as though discharged from a tube, and the triangular fins on either side of the prow stretch and fold down rapturously as the wings of a liberated bird; while out from among the trailing tentacles are emitted parting gushes of the creature's obscuring sepia ink, to prevent pursuit by the mysterious peril that had relentlessly gripped them and was so hardly escaped.

With discernment the constructors of racing craft and projectiles, for air or water, have adopted the shape of this humble swimmer as their model, capable of such facile speed as it instantly develops in its own medium, where the slightly extruded point draws a thin lance-head of ripples far along the calm ocean surface.

But the life-savers on the shore find their task too great, for, perhaps chased in by hungry fish, new companies of the squid frequently dash

ashore, wheeling like some erratic maneuver of submarine war craft that disastrously beach themselves, with the useless engines beating the air in clamorous unison of distress.

Like interplaying streams of a fountain the expelled water jets leap and cross above each sprawling group, as the members indignantly dilate and contract their muscular syringes, renewing the desperate sputtering, snuffing and wet wheezing like a burlesque epidemic of influenza, while the shrill crying in chorus that doubtless earned the little cuttle fish its colloquial name of "preke," drolly resembles the collapse of children's balloon pipes or the remonstrance of trodden rubber toys. Yet perhaps after all this may be a stave of Caliban's uncouth whistling, or even attain the plain-tive dignity of a salute from Pan's own pipes.

And lest the hasty observer should dare pronounce these grotesque offspring of the sea, in their bewilderment, ugly and despicable, among the somber brown forms with an almost black stripe along the back, appear here and there those that rival translucent chrysoprase in shifting hues, where through the backs is revealed a strange, restless pulsating of liquid beneath, suggesting the thin flow of water under ice in the thaws of earliest spring, or the play of light waves in a fluorescent tube.

The bellies of these when turned to view display a lustrous, exquisite iridescence of fused pale greens and blues beyond all power to record, surpassing the splendor of those glass vessels from ancient tombs and exhumed cities, that secret processes of the vanished artificers glorified with their marvelous "reflet." Though these remain the stimulus yet almost despair of modern skill as it creates vases and bowls of favrile ware, after prolonged toil and costly experiment, they nevertheless must yield in magnificence of adornment to these easily disdained ocean denizens, that are swept into the nets of fishing smacks to be cut to pieces for bait, or lie here on the strand gasping out their frail life, like priceless lost treasures of some forgotten collector, unwittingly jostled and spurned in a turbulent bazaar.

Did the Indians who once ranged these same dunes at the sea brink, from which we were just now drawn to investigate the strange disturbance, exchange laconic comments of surprise and descend the sandy slopes for a closer view of this tragi-comedy of the calamaries' plight? Did they perhaps see the likeness between these slender shapes ending in the fleshy tufts of prehensile tentacles, and the quivers full of plumed arrows at their own shoulders?

And were they, too, moved to help the perishing creatures back to the deep, with feet slipped out of their moccasins, or with sinewy hands holding them for closer scrutiny, so that for a moment the pulsating back and resplendent flanks of an iridescent among the captives would gleam

against the dark human flesh, like a great throbbing opal in a ruddy ironstone matrix, or a humming bird of gorgeous plumage hovering in the calyx of a somber Brazilian flower?

Certainly this full moon just risen free of the horizon vapors must have witnessed unnumbered repetitions of such forlorn wreckage of the gelatinous living shuttles, as they fling themselves in rash self-destruction out of the rippling patterns they wove on the ocean's immense loom, where now with ever brighter sheen its fluent fabric is assuming a delicate, bluish-white glamor from the dazzling lunar disk.

With the same perplexing silence and impartiality the moon's gaze rested on the portentous combats of saurians, and the struggles of prehistoric man, through vast evolutionary epochs, as tonight on the mingled agonies and delights of the world's tumultuous cities, and the animal life of jungles and seas, even to this vagrant episode of the squids' frenzied suicide.

It is no wonder that the quaint, blotched semblance of a visage in the orb's radiance comes to seem, to certain moods, the inscrutable aspect of a sphinx, from which as archetype that of Egypt may have been sculptured, but so much older as to make the pyramids' hoary consort dwindle in age to a baffling-faced infant.

Whether, then, it be the plains of Mesopotamia, the shores of the Nile, the Athenian Acropolis or the Roman forum, strewn with the wrecks of bygone civilizations and religions, or the sands of Sahara flecked with the caravans' bleaching bones, or even this beach overspread with the deep's eructation of its strangling progeny, everywhere the insistent human queries are stirred by the drama of creation and dissolution, regardless of the scale on which it is enacted.

And always Nature's response is the obdurate blandness, beyond all provocation and emotion, that seems itself a counter question—wrought into a terrestrial symbol, by hands of men unknown, in the battered stone sentinel of the African desert, and celestially presented in the hinted features of the moon-face, all but drowned in its own refulgence, at the frontier of unimaginable wastes of space.

ELIOT WHITE.

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THE WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE.

Alice Henry in the Dispatches of the Service of The Survey Press Bureau.

You have all heard of the Strike of the Forty Thousand, when the shirt-waist girls in New York and Philadelphia left their machines in the depth of winter and stayed out till the employers accepted their terms.*

*See The Public of June 24, p. 588.

Why did they strike, when it was so hard for them? That was what the public asked. That was what some employers asked, too, when driven to distraction by silent machines and unfilled orders. The answer of one little Jewish girl was to the point. "How can you live," said her former employer, "if you won't come back to work?" She said slowly in her queer, formal English:

"I lived not much on forty-nine cents a day."

Would not you strike too, if you had forty-nine cents a day; if you were fined a day's pay for being five minutes late; if you were charged for a worn-out presser-foot; if you had to pay for power to run your employer's machine?

These were the conditions which the words of one girl, "I am tired of talking, let's do something," changed from an ordinary petty dispute to a struggle of national importance.

This girl is typical of the finest material of the strikers. She is a young Russian Jewess, not yet out of her 'teens, who had in her own country a good schooling. She herself did not strike because of personal hardship, but because many of her sister-workers were paid so poorly and treated so badly.

It was at this stage that the New York Women's Trade Union League was of such service. It more than any other one body brought this story before the public, and linked together socialists, suffragists, lawyers, clergymen and society women, to raise money to keep this enormous body of workers from starvation, to enroll the girls in the Shirt-waistmakers' Union, to rent halls in which they could meet, to provide speakers in English, Yiddish and Italian, and to aid in drawing up agreements as fast as employers were willing to make terms.

Thus organized and thus expressed, the restless dissatisfaction of the girls was focussed on certain simple clear demands, and these in the end were gained: A 52-hour week; a limit to night work; increased pay, and a contract with each shop drawn up by the union.

The Strike of the Forty Thousand is a mirror of conditions common in the life of working girls. The part taken by the Women's Trade Union League is typical of that which the organization is beginning to play in the lives of our young girl workers.

It is but six years since the League began its work in Boston. The national headquarters are in Chicago, and the president is Mrs. Raymond Robins. She is fired with a religious enthusiasm for the welfare of the young working girl. There are now local branches in New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, Springfield (Illinois), and Philadelphia, Cleveland and other cities are coming in line.

The League is an expression of the mother spirit of the women of this continent, watching over