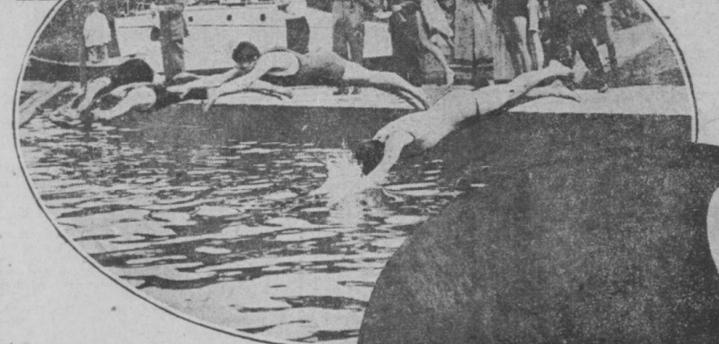


# C. M. DANIELS, THE HUMAN MERMAN

**CHAMPION of America for Eight Years and Winner of 520 Races Out of 520 Starts Tells of His Two Narrowest Escapes from Defeat and Laughs at His Marvellous Skill**



The Start of a 100 Yard Swim.

**A** LONG, lithe young man stood on the edge of the swimming pool in the New York athletic club. His physical architecture, his smooth movements, the slipping of the flat muscles, almost snakelike, under his skin, reminded one of the agility and quickness of a panther.

There was a streak and a flash. The man cleaved the water as a knife blade might. There was no hint of a splash. The smooth surface of the pool was hardly rippled by his entrance. There came a working of arms as the propeller kicks over in a speed boat. His legs churned and he moved through the water like a long, low motor craft, with his head for the prow. No wasted energy was there. Every action was clean cut. Only once did he lift his head out of the water for air before he reached the far end of the pool. There he crawled out and stood smiling in his scanty suit.

The man was C. M. Daniels of the New York athletic club, for eight successive years the swimming champion of America. Never before was there a swimmer like him. He seems to be part fish. The water is surely his home. Twice he has won the hundred yard championship of England. Only twice he has tried. After this year he is going to retire, while the glory of his swimming is in full bloom. He is not going to see himself fade until he is finally beaten, not by a better man but by age, which beats them all some time if they stay long enough.

Daniels is the most approachable man in the world. He laughs at his swimming ability, says that it is nothing. His modesty is ingrowing. Try to talk to him about swimming and he will endeavor to discuss chess. He is one of the few persons who do not think he is a marvelous swimmer.

"Speed?" he said, in reply to a question. "I don't know how I get speed. I simply kick my feet up and down as fast as I can and pull my arms out and dip them in again as rapidly as possible. It's a sort of knack that I seem to have. You see, by working the legs up and down there is no pull back to stop the progress through the water. It is the American crawl."

"Did you invent it?"

"Well," replied Mr. Daniels, "I couldn't exactly say that I invented it, but I used it first."

"There is another thing I want made plain. I did not learn to swim because my father would not let me go fishing until I did. That story has been printed several times. It is not true that he threw me off a pier. I never cared for fishing anyway. There is too little action on the far end of the pole. The fish have to do too much and the man too little to supply real entertainment. I like action—lots of action."

"How did I really learn to swim? The instructor in Gebhardt baths, which used to be at Fifth avenue and Forty-fifth street, taught me. I was 12 years old then, and I learned in 12 lessons. You see, an ever dozen was my lucky number. I had always wanted to be a speed swimmer, but I never showed any tendencies that way until the fall of 1903. It came to me all of a sudden. In the fall I was a very mediocre swimmer, and in the spring of 1904 I won the national championship. I slipped from the bottom to the top in three months. Since then I have never lost a race. The speed came to me all in a flash. It was so sudden that I hardly recognized it or realized that I had acquired it until I was beating all the first class men. I was as surprised as they were, and you may take my unadorned word for it that some of them got a start, it had been so easy to beat me before."

"Swimming," continued Daniels, "is a sport that gives a man all around development. He has to be sleek and trim. He can not bulge there and be weak here, for it exercises every muscle in the body. That, perhaps, is the reason why there are so few successful swimmers. A big muscled, big boned, oppressively robust man seldom makes a fast swimmer. Big knots of muscles and speed in the water do not go together."

Daniels seemed to be a living example of his theory as he stood there in his bathing suit, slim and straight, without a knot or kink in his smooth sliding muscles. It was all hidden power, not the potentiality of the truck horse, but that of the thoroughbred.

lowed mine almost as the shadow does the object which casts it. I had won by perhaps three inches. The crowd gave me a great ovation. There is something sentimental about a crowd, I guess. It hates to see an old champion go. It has been so often proved that one never comes back.

"But I'll fool the public if I last through this season. I am going to stop racing after this spring. The only time that I am going to swim after this season is for pleasure. The only influence which could be brought to bear on me would be the upsetting of a boat in which I am a passenger a mile or so from shore with no life preservers available. Understand, after I retire. If there are life preservers enough to go around I shall simply crawl into one and float until some kind hearted soul picks me up. No, siree; I won't even swim ashore."

"When was the other close squeeze that I had? It was in the 100 yard championship in England in 1906. I won that by about a foot, but I didn't know the pool. That makes a lot of difference. A swimmer may have all the speed in the world, but if he has not acquired the knack of turning quickly he will be beaten every time. To do this well one must be intimate with the pool and know exactly how many strokes will carry one the length of it. Then one knows just when to prepare for the turn and when to kick off. That kick from the end means a lot. But

next alley to try to make the man lose his temper."

"What would you do if a man did that to you?"

"If a man was such a poor swimmer that he had to try to win in that way I think that I would swim away from him where he could not squirt water at me. Later I would bring the matter to his attention in the dressing room delicately, but still in such a way that he would not try to repeat it. Swimming is a clean sport—no, that is not a pun—and I hate to see a man try to do a thing like that. The men in the game, for the most part, are the best fellows in the world."

"What makes the difference in the time of races in the same pool at the same distance for the same men?"

**SWIMMERS' SLOW TRACKS**

"A slow track. That sounds like a paradox, but it is true. That water seems to vary at different times and is either fast or slow. It does not mean that the pool is dirty," added Mr. Daniels, with a smile. "Most pools are very clean. But what swimmers know as a fast track depends on the quality of the water. It is an indefinable something that a swimmer can not explain. It may be the hardness or the softness of the water, but all swimmers speak of a slow or fast track. Of course, I am referring to pools now. All the big races are held indoors at short distances. Outdoor conditions depend on the weather. A rough day makes the going slow, or 'muddy,' as we say. I seldom swim out of doors."

"I have never trained at all since I started racing. Of course, you understand that I don't abuse my body, but I never train. I smoke all the time, and if I want to take a drink I do it. It doesn't seem to hurt me at all. You see, I swim only the short distances. I never swam more than a mile in my life. What's the use of a man making a ferry boat of himself? There is no particular speed and skill in swimming 15 miles, for instance, and heaven knows that it is no fun. Life is too short for those long races, and I believe that it shortens a man's life to swim for 15 miles. It takes everything out of him—all his vitality and strength."

"Sometimes I swim half a mile, but seldom. I don't like to do more than 220 yards. That is the limit distance at which I can go and use the American crawl stroke, the fastest way for a man to propel his body through the water. Above the 220 yards mark I use the trudgeon stroke. That is over with the hands, but one must draw the legs up. I don't like the stroke half as well as the American crawl."

"Does it do any good to grease the body?"

"As far as getting more speed by doing it I think

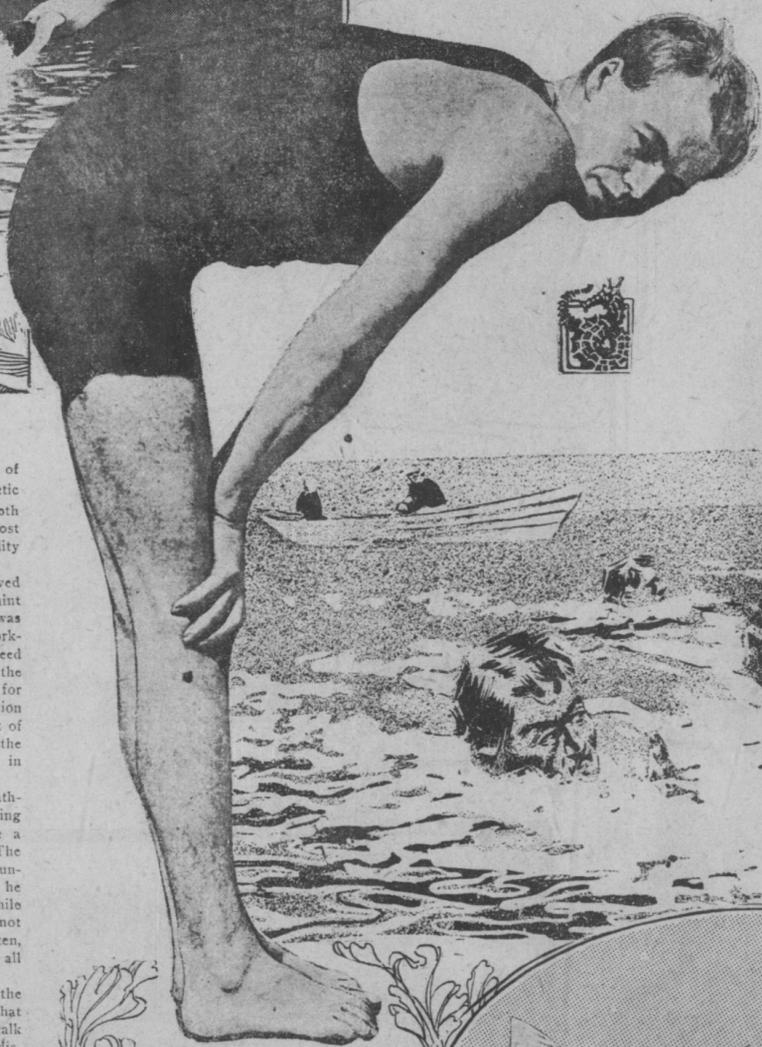
ness downtown, and swimming has not so much interfered with his work that he can not drive his own car. He is an automobile enthusiast, but no one ever hears about that because his swimming so far eclipses all his other accomplishments. He says that after this spring he is going to try to get people to forget that he is a great swimmer and have them recognize him as something else. There is a great chance of his admirers forgetting what a swimmer he has been. They call him "Danny." Generations will probably pass before another man with his speed in the water is found. Many experts declare him to be the greatest swimmer that the world has ever known.

In direct contrast to Mr. Daniels' brilliant, dashing style of swimming are the long, plugging strokes of the life savers who hold the annual swim to Coney island each year. These men might be called the ocean liners of the sport. Mr. Daniels is the speed boat. Most of them are necessarily big and husky, with endurance that seems to be inexhaustible. They are the men who are supposed to be able to keep afloat and make speed under any conditions. Not the greyhounds, but the St. Bernards who bring help to those who need it. They are the men who can swim for miles with the weight of one or two persons on their backs—the men who can keep afloat all day. Many interesting anecdotes are told of these men in their annual race to Coney island.

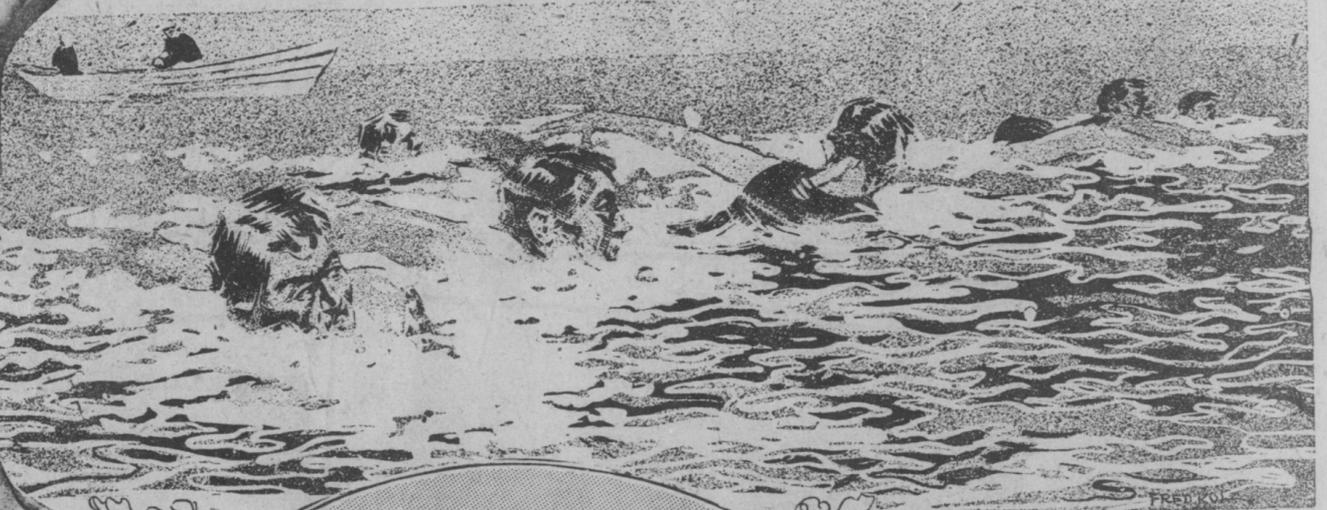
In 1907 a life saver, John Kerns, attached to one of the stations along the south shore of Long island where three or four times each winter some wrecked schooner washes up on the bar in a gale and a volunteer is asked to go out through the surf in the breeches buoy to the ship—this John Kerns had the Coney island race all but won. He was a big, powerful man, and he was swimming easily one-half mile from the finish, with his nearest rival more than a quarter of a mile behind. It was a rough day, with the sea rolling in from the southeast and splashing the swimmers in the face. A party in a sailboat was watching the race. Suddenly the boat heeled under a puff and a girl went over.

**THE RACER'S DILEMMA**

The skipper was an amateur, and before he could bring his boat up into the wind his erstwhile passenger was left far astern. She came up struggling and kicking. It was evident that she could not swim. Her idea of the way to maintain buoyancy was to open her mouth and try to scream, only to swallow a lot of water and go down struggling. Kerns saw the whole proceeding. The girl was perhaps 50 yards from him, directly away from the finish boat. Without hesitating at all, he turned and swam back over the long,



CHARLES M. DANIELS



The Start of a One Mile Swim.

"Of course, in a race a great deal depends on the take-off," he resumed. "As in any other race, a man can not be left at the post and hope to be successful against competitors of almost equal ability. I do not try to dive a great distance into a pool, simply a clean dive, and I start to kick as soon as I hit the water. The force of the dive gives a man his initial velocity if it is clean. I know just how many strokes it will take me to reach the other end of the pool in the New York athletic club here. I breathe only twice in a 50 yard race, and as I come up for air I glance around to see where the other contestants are. If I see some man almost on even terms with me or ahead then I dig down into the water and shovel. I put more force into my kicks and strokes. As I said, I have never been beaten, but I have had two close squeezes."

**HIS NARROWEST VICTORY**

"Just a few weeks ago, in the national championships, in this very pool here, Perry McGillivray of Chicago almost beat me in the hundred yard race. I only won by the touch, about three or four inches. A man doesn't hear the cheering when he is swimming except when he pulls his head out of the water. In the national championships this year I got away to a good start. With the report of the gun I grabbed a couple of lungs' full of air and hit the pool. In a hundred yard race I breathe twice going up the pool and twice coming back. I know just how many strokes it will take me to reach the end of this pool. I know in any pool after I have swum in it two or three times."

"The first time that I breathed in the championships this year McGillivray was right at my shoulder, but I was not worried. His lane was next to mine. We turned and kicked off at the end of the pool almost together, and I started back even with him. I expected him to die on the return. The first time that I pulled my head out of the water on the way back he was just a little ahead. I could hear the crowd shouting at me."

"For the first time in my life I was scared—that is, for the first time since I had won the championship. I put my head down under the water and dug as I never had before. I'll hand it to him. He made me extend myself to my very limit. I never looked up until I touched the end of the pool. His hand fol-

practice gives it to a man. As I say, I did not know the pool for the English championships and I misjudged the number of strokes that would be required to give me transportation to the terminus. I got a bad turn and it almost cost me the race."

"How many races have I won since I have been swimming? Altogether I have nosed home first 520 times."

"That is out of a possible 520?"

"Yes."

"What do you do with your medals?"

"I keep them in a cabinet."

"Should think you would need a freight car for the purpose."

"Oh, no," answered Mr. Daniels. "They are small."

"Are there any tricks to swimming?"

"Well, of course, there are tricks in getting the best takeoff and the best turn, but as for little, unfair tricks, there are very few. You see, so little opportunity is offered to a man for this sort of thing on account of the very nature of the sport. Each man has his own lane, and he has to keep in it. A man can not josh a competitor or try to get him to lose his temper by means of conversation, as in other sports, because he needs all the breath that he can suck in for purposes of locomotion and has none to spare for repartee."

"The only really unsportsmanlike trick that I think I ever saw tried in a race took place in the half mile swim in St. Louis in 1904. A Dutchman—what is the use of mentioning names?—drew a mouthful of water and squirted it into the face of a competitor in the

that it does not help at all, although there are swimmers who believe that it does. I can't see that the body slips through the water any easier, and it stops up the pores, which is a bad thing. I tried it once and I shall never do it again. Many swimmers who are going a long distance outdoors do it to keep warm. It closes the pores and makes the body warm. That is the great danger in a long swim—the cold. Grease prevents a swimmer feeling the cold as soon, but as for giving him more speed, I should say that it decidedly didn't."

Refusing to talk any more about himself and his art, Mr. Daniels slipped into the water as noiselessly as any native of the deep could. With a few strokes, apparently without effort, he swam back to the far end of the pool. Perhaps there are no mermaids, but he, in the smoothness and grace of his motions, seemed to be a merman.

Mr. Daniels is 26 years old, lithe as a panther and straight as an arrow. There is a spring in his step that implies the athlete. He has the strength of slowness—not robust, but sloping, powerful shoulders. His summers are spent in the Adirondacks, where he swims in the lakes. He says that he does not like salt water. He came down to New York for only a few races last summer and declares he will be seen in none at all this year. So if one cares to get a glimpse at this wonderful swimmer in action against rivals one must see him before he goes away for the summer. He says that he will have swam in his last race then.

Mr. Daniels is married. He is in the insurance busi-

hard yards that he had gained, to the sinking woman. He was the first to reach her. With the professional's knowledge of such things he grabbed her by the hair as she went down. With deftness as she tried to close in on him with the instinct of a drowning woman he held her out at arm's length, with one hand under her chin. In this way he brought her to one of the boats that followed. He saved the woman, but he lost the race, that victory coveted by all life savers. This man, who had come 14½ miles, when within sight of his goal had abandoned easy victory to save a woman whom others might have rescued.

"Why did you do it?" he was asked when he was pulled into the boat, too.

"That's the helluva question," he answered in his gruff way. "It's my profession. Winning a race is only fun, and I am still old fashioned enough to put business before pleasure."

Almost every one can swim a little—that is, splash about and keep afloat, but there are few persons who know the fine points of the game. The graceful speed swimmer is a rarity. The man with endurance is seldom found. Not only does the man who takes a long swim have to combat the natural fatigue of the body, but he has to fight the cold as the muscles begin to get numb and cramped.

There are almost as many strokes as there are swimmers. It is funny to watch the throng at Atlantic City on a warm Sunday in August and see the variety of ways in which a human being can keep his head above the water. There are the swimmers splash along like the Mary Powell, with a sort of side wheel action that makes as much wash as a Lackawanna ferry boat. Others use their arms like fins, giving the impression that if the water was not there it would be just as easy for them to fly.

Still others paddle, dog fashion, and here and there a fat man floats about on his back, like some great log, with one of those beach straw hats on his head, smoking a cigar, which by its aroma hints that what-ever friend presented it to him did not get enlargement of the heart when he purchased it. In near shore you see the beginners. And there just a little further out one sees a thin man with every confidence in himself as a swimmer in a most up to the minute bathing suit. He is making as much effort with his arms and legs as a windmill does with its wings in a gale. Grimly he sets his teeth. He thinks that he is going somewhere and moving fast. Theoretically he should be leaving a burning point and watch him water. Yet take some stationary point and watch him pass it. He appears to be on an aquatic treadmill. He is getting absolutely nowhere, standing as still as a tombstone. But his wife or his sweetheart or his sister comes down the beach. He stops his splashing and confidently agrees to teach her how to keep afloat.

Watch this heterogeneous mass of kicking and puffing humanity some day and then look at Daniels in the water. There seem to be rhythm and music and poetry in his swimming. Somehow this mob of furious swimmers with the wild strokes and discordant kicks gives one the shudders after watching Daniels.