

THE MERMAID THAT LURED PERKINS

By Claude Matson

Perkins had not been drinking and there really was no reason why he should be "seeing things," but when he saw the mermaid emerge from the water he became very much alarmed about himself.

"By Jove, I didn't get away from the city a day too soon," he said, his eyes bulging and the cold sweat standing out on his forehead. "The doctor has been warning me for months that if I did not break away from business and take a good rest I was liable to go to pieces all of a sudden. I guess he knew what he was talking about and this is the first symptom."

He glanced at the vision which had emerged from the sea and plucked himself to see if he really were awake. Yes, he seemed to be awake all right and the mermaid seemed very real indeed, lying there not 20 feet from him.

Perkins had only been down to the seaside two days when this queer experience came to him. He had risen early to enjoy the bracing morning air, and he had sought a secluded nook around the bend where he had perched himself on a boulder, lighted his favorite pipe and proceeded to commune with Nature in one of her most delightful moods.

"This will make a new man of me," he said to himself. "The fact is I have neglected this vacation business too closely. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; there's no mistake about it. Who knows but if I drift about some place as this I will run across some fair maiden who will stir my bachelor heart. I suppose in the natural order of things I have to marry and set up an establishment some time."

It was just at this instant that Perkins caught a glance of the figure of a young girl in the water some distance off. She was a very pretty girl, too, and Perkins could not but notice the whiteness of her rounded arms and as they swept the water, and the perfection of her chiseled neck. The sun put a glint of gold into her masses of auburn hair and seemed to surround it with a halo.

She seemed to be laboring under some difficulty, although the sweep of her arms bespoke of the practiced swimmer. Yet she seemed to be making awful hard work of it and little progress. The shore shelved off rather abruptly at this point, and presently a great wave rolled in, caught her on its crest and landed her in the shallow water almost at Perkins' feet. As she lay there breathless and almost unconscious, her thin bathing waist clinging to the curves of her form, Perkins could not but note that nature had been lavish in its gifts to her. The bust, which would have been the despair of a sculptor, was surmounted by a face of rare perfection and sweetness.

Then, as the wave receded and the lower portion of her form was revealed, Perkins gave a gasp—and then came to him the doubts as to his own powers of perception. For from the waist down her body was that of a great fish splashed with spots of brilliant color and sparkling with dashes of silver and gold—the whole ending with a regular fish's tail.

As he sat spellbound, wondering what had happened to him—fearful even of his own reason, the mermaid opened her eyes and they met his—and such wonderful brown eyes were they and so full of intelligence and goodness and of promise, that the thought flashed across his mind that it was no wonder that men had been lured to death and to Hades by such a she—as told in classic tradition and story.

Then she spoke.

"Oh, sir," she said, "please help me out of the water."

In an instant Perkins had waded in, and gathering the mermaid in his arms, he carried her to a soft, dry spot in the sand. Then overcome with wonder and doubts he had retired to his boulder and given vent to the doubts and apprehensions with which this story opens.

In the meantime the mermaid was involved in the most wonderful series of contortions, which appeared to be to no avail. Presently, she turned once more to Perkins with flaming cheeks and said:

"Oh, please, sir, will you help me get it off?"

Perkins now was sure that he was lured directly for the asylum, but he could not resist the appeal, and leaped to the side of the struggling mermaid.

"Get what off?" he asked, thickly.

"Why, this terrible thing I'm hooked up in. The hooks have got twisted, and I can't undo them."

She indicated a place along the line where the maiden seemed to leave off and the mermaid to begin and Perkins saw that there was a sort of concealed hook which was twisted so it would not slip out of the eye. He loosened it in a minute, as he did several others, when, lo! and behold, the girl wriggled herself out of a sort of bag and stood revealed like any other damsel in a proper and regular bathing suit.

The fish end of the girl was simply a bag into which she had thrust her feet and fastened it cunningly about the waist. Perkins fairly shouted for joy. He was not insane after all. It was all nature!

"Then you are not a mermaid, after all," he remarked, lamely.

She laughed—a clear, silvery laugh which was good to hear.

"Only for the circus," she replied. "Father wants me to be a mermaid in the circus, and makes me learn to swim with this bag on. That's why I have to get up so early and come here where nobody comes. And, say, it's awful hard work to swim with your arms alone; did you ever try it?"

Perkins admitted that he never had. He also admitted that it must be a difficult feat.

"Who is your father?" he asked.

"Blimbley," she replied. "Blimbley's Great Consolidated Shows, you know."

Yes, Perkins did know. He knew Blimbley and he knew little good of him. He could not conceive that he should have a daughter so dainty and evidently so good.

"Why has he not taught you this before?" he asked.

"Oh, I never knew he was my father until a month ago. I have always lived with mamma until she died, three months ago, and then I went to live with Aunt Maria, and then father came and took me away with him, and told me that I was old enough to do something to help pay for my living. And, oh, sir, you will not tell what I told you, will you, because he will beat me—and he strikes so hard."

"Your father should be beaten for making you do such a thing," replied Perkins, warmly. "No, I will not hurt you, little one."

"Oh, I must go," she exclaimed, and gathering up the imitation fish, started for the hotel. In a moment she returned, and held out her hand shyly to Perkins and, looking with childish innocence into his eyes, said:

"Thank you for your kindness, sir. If you were my father, you wouldn't make me swim with my feet in a bag, would you?"

"Indeed I would not," replied Perkins, emphatically, holding the little hand in his a moment longer than strict etiquette demanded.

As she ran away, with the grace of a gazelle, Perkins muttered to himself: "Blimbley, indeed! I'll wager there's some mischief afoot. I think I'll take a hand in the game and see what it is all about."

All that day Perkins was very busy gathering information. That night he returned to New York, and the next morning he sat in the office of a very wise and very powerful lawyer. Presently the lawyer and he got into a cab and were driven to a tenement house on the east side, where they had a very serious talk with a very frightened woman. At the end of which they departed with certain signed documents in their possession.

That afternoon they went together to the seaside, and that evening paid a formal call on Blimbley, who did not seem overjoyed to see them. There was considerable loud talk and blustering, but when Blimbley realized the fact that they had absolute proof that the girl was not his daughter and had been turned over to him as the result of an iniquitous deal with her impecunious aunt, who in turn had betrayed him; and when the doors of the penitentiary were, figuratively speaking, shown him, he caved and turned over the girl to their keeping.

That night the mermaid was the guest of her hotel keeper's wife. On the following day she went to a high-class boarding school as the ward of the lawyer—but at Perkins' expense. Perkins' reward? Oh, that was three years ago. There was a quiet little wedding last month, and now Perkins lives no longer in bachelor quarters, but has one of the coziest flats adjacent to the park. His friends cannot understand why he persists in calling his wife "Mermaid."

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Freaks of Lightning.

Some curious freaks were played by the lightning during a recent great storm.

In Alhewick an old man and woman were sitting at dinner when a flash of lightning struck their house. It came through to the dining room between them, then made for a gun in the corner of the room, which it smashed to atoms, and finally went to earth through the floor. Neither of the occupants of the room was hurt.

In another case the lightning came down the chimney, bringing bricks and mortar on the top of a small boy who was playing in front of the fire. It then went across the room, killing a dog that was under the table, and out of the door. The boy was unhurt.

In appealing for help for sufferers from the storm, Rev. A. A. Hancock, rector of Little Staughton, St. Neots, writes: "Scarcely a window pane which met the force of the storm remains unbroken. The effect of the bombardment, for it was nothing less, is terrible. One end of the village presents almost the appearance of a battlefield. Crops are ruined, the wheat, barley, oats and beans just ready to reap, were literally thrashed as they stood, scarcely an ear retaining any grain."—London Mail.

NECESSITIES FOR SICK ROOM.

Sir e Precautions That Will Save Lives and Money.

A set of dishes should be selected for the sick room and these should be washed by the nurse and never mixed with the dishes used by the family. The nurse should disinfect all bed and body linen used by the patient and also keep the sick room and all belongings to it free from infection. Nothing contaminates the atmosphere more than dust and nothing creates worse air dust contamination than the spilling of foul discharges on floors, rugs and bed and body linen and allowing them to dry. All such foul matter should be wiped up at once with a moist disinfected cloth which should be burned. A broom is out of place in a sick room. It only scatters the dust into the air. The only safe disposal of the refuse from a quarantined room is cremation. The nurse in charge of a case of contagious disease should avoid direct contact with other members of the family, especially children. If needs be she must mingle with others she should have a special gown for the sick room which should be discarded with her cap on coming out and always worn in the room, and she should disinfect her hands before touching anything outside of the room. All these simple, commonplace quarantine regulations faithfully carried out would save thousands of lives yearly among the children of the land, and also greatly lessen the cost to common people for illness and funeral expenses. Nothing would pay better than for the heads of all American households to be their own health officers.—Dr. Kate Lindsay, in the Housekeeper.

Prof. Darwin said that if it had not been for insects we should never have had any more imposing or attractive flowers than those of the elm, the hop and the nettle. Lord Avebury compares the work of the insect to that of the florist. He considers that just as the florist has by selection produced the elegant blossoms of the garden, so the insects, by selecting the largest and brightest blossoms for fertilization, have produced the gay flowers of the field. Prof. Plateau, of Ghent, has carried out a series of remarkable experiments on the ways of insects visiting flowers. He considers that they are guided by scent rather than by color, and in the connection he is at variance with certain British naturalists. Whatever may be the attraction in flowers to insects—as yet, it appears undefined—it is certain that the latter visit freely all blossoms alike, making no distinction between the large, bright-colored ones and the less conspicuous blossoms like those of the currants, the lime, the planetree, the nettle and the willow.

Latest Fad in "Society."

The latest fad in certain eastern society circles is to be glum and cross. One phase of this more than usually absurd affectation takes the form of ignoring letters of introduction and this lack of consideration has roused family feuds in several cases. One wealthy young Italian, who is a member of one of the best Roman families, went to Newport this summer with many letters from prominent persons. But he has found it impossible to present them. "It is foolish to expect anything from social leaders these days and the stranger who asks to be received by letter has a hard time of it," said a young man whose letter to a society matron was ignored.

Some lawyers who fall at their practice imagine it is up to them to preach.

INTERESTING CONTEST.

Heavy Cost of Unpaid Postage.

One of the most curious contests ever before the public was conducted by many thousand persons under the offer of the Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., of Battle Creek, Mich., for prizes of 31 boxes of gold and 300 greenbacks to those making the most words out of the letters Y-I-O-Grape-Nuts.

The contest was started in February, 1906, and it was arranged to have the prizes awarded on Apr. 30, 1906. When the public announcement appeared many persons began to form the words from these letters, sometimes the whole family being occupied evenings, a combination of amusement and education.

After a while the lists began to come in to the Postum Office and before long the volume grew until it required wagons to carry the mail. Many of the contestants were thoughtless enough to send their lists with insufficient postage and for a period it cost the Company from twenty-five to fifty-eight and sixty dollars a day to pay the unpaid postage.

Young ladies, generally those who had graduated from the high school, were employed to examine these lists and count the correct words. Webster's Dictionary was the standard and each list was very carefully corrected except those which fell below \$600 for it soon became clear that nothing below that could win. Some of the lists required the work of a young lady for a solid week on each individual list. The work was done very carefully and accurately but the Company had no idea, at the time the offer was made, that the people would respond so generally and they were compelled to fill every available space in the offices with these young lady examiners, and notwithstanding they worked steadily it was impossible to complete the examination until Sept. 29, over six months after the prizes should have been awarded.

This delay caused a great many inquiries and naturally created some dissatisfaction. It has been thought best to make this report in practically all of the newspapers in the United States and many of the magazines in order to make clear to the people the conditions of the contest.

Many lists contained enormous numbers of words which, under the rules, had to be eliminated "Pegger" would count "Peggers" would not. Some lists contained over 50,000 words, the great majority of which were cut out. The largest lists were checked over two and in some cases three times to insure accuracy.

The \$100.00 gold prize was won by L. D. Reese, 1227-15th St., Denver, Colo., with 9941 correct words. The highest \$10.00 gold prize went to S. K. Fraser, Lincoln, Pa., with 9921 correct words.

A complete list of the 331 winners with their home addresses will be sent to any contestant enquiring on a postal card.

Be sure and give name and address clearly.

This contest has cost the Co. many thousand dollars, and probably has not been a profitable advertisement, nevertheless perhaps some who had never before tried Grape-Nuts food have been interested in the contest, and from trial of the food have been shown its wonderful rebuilding powers.

It teaches in a practicable manner that scientifically gathered food elements can be selected from the field grains, which nature will use for rebuilding the nerve centers and brain in a way that is unmistakable to users of Grape-Nuts.

"There's a reason."

Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich.

WHAT WE OWE TO INSECTS.

They Are of the Greatest Benefit to Growing Flowers.

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A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

How a Veteran Was Saved the Amputation of a Limb.

B. Frank Doremus, veteran, of Roosevelt Ave., Indianapolis, Ind., says: "I had been showing symptoms of kidney trouble from the time I was mustered out of the army, but in all my life I never suffered as in 1897. Headaches, dizziness and sleeplessness, first, and then dropsy. I was weak and helpless, having run down from 180 to 125 pounds. I was having terrible pain in the kidneys, and the secretions passed almost involuntarily. My left leg swelled until it was 34 inches around, and the doctor tapped it night and morning until I could no longer stand. I refused, and began using Doan's Kidney Pills. The swelling subsided gradually, the urine became natural, and all my pains and aches disappeared. I have been well now for nine years since using Doan's Kidney Pills. For sale by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y."

Kept Tax Receipts Long.

Charles King, of East Liberty, a suburb of Pittsburgh, is what might be termed a careful man. He has been a voter in the East Liberty district since 1857 and when asked on the last registration day if he had a tax receipt he pulled from a pocket tax receipts for the last 41 years. When asked by the registrar if he had any more he replied that if he went down deep in to his "strong box" at home he might possibly find a few dating long back before the oldest member of the board was born. Mr. King is now 78 years old, having been born in Baltimore in 1828, removing to East Liberty in 1857. His first presidential vote was cast for John C. Fremont and his last for Theodore Roosevelt. He is a staunch Republican and as a contractor and brick manufacturer for half a century has contributed much to the up-building and growth of East Liberty.

STATE OF OHIO, CITY OF TOLEDO, Lucas County.

FRANK J. CHENEY, Notary Public, do hereby certify that he is the partner of the firm of F. J. CHENEY & CO., doing business in the City of Toledo, County and State of Ohio, and that said firm will pay the sum of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS for each and every case of CATARRH that caused to be cured by the use of HALL'S CATARRH CURE.

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Brilliant Jamaican Fireflies.

Fireflies of Jamaica emit so brilliant a light that a dozen of them, inclosed within an inverted tumbler, will enable a person to read or write at night without difficulty. These flies are in size as large as a common hive bee, and perfectly harmless. Their appearance in unusual numbers acts as a barometer to the natives, and is an indication of approaching rain.

But the man who thinks he has a will of his own is apt to marry a woman who knows she has a won't of her own.

PUTNAM FADELESS DYES do not stain the hands or spot the kettle, except green and purple.

Some men haven't troubles enough of their own, so they get married.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures whooping cough, croup, and all the little ailments.

Want Them to Know Country. The Japanese war department has made arrangements to send teachers and students of the middle and higher schools and colleges to Manchuria and Korea free of charge during their vacation. More than 50,000 persons expect to make the trip.

Important to Mothers. Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it bears the Signature of *Dr. J. C. Winslow*.

In Use For Over 30 Years. The Kind You Have Always Bought.

Japanese Companies Make Money. Shipping companies are profitable in Japan. For the past year ending March 31 last the Nippon Yusen Kaisha wrote off \$401,500 for depreciation, \$169,000 for insurance, \$233,000 for repairs, carried \$56,000 to reserve, paid \$36,000 for directors' and auditors' fees, gave the managing director a bonus of \$30,000, gave employees generally \$200,000 in bonuses, paid \$825,000 in 15 per cent. dividends, and left \$492,000 at credit of profit and loss account.

THE BEST COUGH CURE

A well-known Rochester lady says: "I moved in the Adirondacks, away from friends and home, two winters before I found that by taking

Kemp's Balsam

I could subdue the cough that drove me away from home and seemed likely to never allow me to live there in winter." Kemp's Balsam will cure any cough that can be cured by any medicine. Sold by all dealers at 25c. and 50c.

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