



GREENWICH. CHELSEA

"I WILL not pretend to say," commenced Cuttlefish, "that the story I am about to relate is one of my own experience, for, as you all know, I am not fond of telling marvelous stories; but the observation of our friend Bottlenose, respecting Arctic Joe's mermaid wife, brought all at once into my mind a yarn that I have heard told at least a dozen times while I was on board the 'Endymion' frigate, by a messmate, of the name of Washington Brown, who was the great yarn-spinner of the ship.

"If he had told it only once, I should have put the story down as I have done some of our mates' here, as a lively bit of romance; or, if in the many times he has told it he had varied it in any of the incidents, I should have thought of the saying, that 'liars ought to have good memories,' but, as it was always given in nearly the same words, I believe that, although he must have dreamt some of it, yet the story in the main is true. Still I confess, some parts of it are hard to believe; but as I have never been in such a place as Brown describes myself, it is no more fair for me to say that there is no such place in existence than it would be to doubt the stories of Livingstone and Stanley's explorations in Africa.

"I must say, however, that the story is a long one, and if the company will consent I will divide it into two parts, the first of which I will relate to-night, and the second next week."

The required permission having been granted, Cuttlefish commenced as follows—

WASHINGTON BROWN called his story—

AN ADVENTURE UNDER THE SEA,

And always began it in this fashion—
Before I had the honour of serving in Her Majesty's navy I was employed in assisting my father, who was a fisherman at Polparrow, on the coast of Cornwall.

I was still a lad at the time I speak of, but having been at the business almost from my infancy I knew how to manage a boat as well as many an old stager.

Father and myself generally went out together, but on this memorable occasion the old man was laid up with rheumatism and could not accompany me.

"Never mind," said I, "of course I can take care of the boat, and myself too, and I warrant I'll bring home such a haul as will make you open your eyes!"

Youth is apt to be very confident, as you know, and I quite pooh-poohed all my parents' fears about my setting forth alone on the expedition.

Fortunately it was very fine weather when I started. For the first two or three hours all continued serene. I was getting a good haul, and there seemed every prospect of my carrying out my boast; but suddenly the wind arose in enormous gusts, the moon was darkened, and heavy mountains of cloud were banking up in the skies.

I saw that the weather was going to change for the worse, and began to feel a little uneasy at my position—many miles out and alone in the boat.

"It would be wise," thought I, "to be contented with what I've got, and make for shore before it bursts overhead."

But this was easier said than done. I put the boat about and began tacking, but the wind was so dead against me that I could make very little headway.

It was soon blowing very stiff indeed, and the waves, surging and frothing up like yeast, tossed my little craft about like a walnut-shell.

I saw that I should have more than all my work to keep her afloat; and would have given everything I ever had or was likely to have to have seen a comrade at my side to assist me.

I at last found it necessary to throw overboard a

good fourth of the fish I had been at such trouble to catch, for the vessel wanted lightening, and lightning she got with a vengeance—for it flashed across the seas in streaks of fire, while the thunder boomed and rolled like a sixty-thousand pounder.

Once or twice, taking advantage of the wind chopping about, I managed to get a little nearer shore; near enough to distinguish the outline of the headland, and to see plainly the light burning in our cottage window; but it was too dark to see anything more, and far too wild a night for any of my friends to get a chance of putting out a boat for my rescue. I must say my little craft battled bravely with the billows, but she gave in at last—sprang a leak—and then I knew that all was up with me.

Still I clung desperately to the broken mast, and then an immense wave, the biggest of its kind I had ever seen, rose up over me, descended with an enormous weight, swamped the vessel, turned her over, and down I went like lead.

From that moment I became insensible.

"Hulloa! where am I now?" I cried to myself, in great confusion and wonder. "When I lost my senses I was drowning as fast as I could drown, without any chance of rescue, but now—good gracious me! what place is this?"

It was a curious spot, truly; an immense cavern of hard rock, arched and hollowed out in all manner of fantastic forms, and with all kinds of curious plants and trees growing in it.

A kind of twilight came in through a hole in the roof. The cave smelt strongly of seaweed, which made me think I had been cast ashore on some wild part of the coast. I little thought that instead of being beside the sea I was under it.

"I must find out where I am, I murmured, struggling to my feet. "I can't have been drowned, or else I could not be alive now. Why, how's this? bless me, I can't walk!"

For I found myself utterly unable to keep my footing over the slippery, sea-weed-covered rocks, and, what was still stranger, the air seemed to press against me so heavily—not that it was the least windy—that I couldn't make my way through it. Added to this, something seemed all filmy, as if seen through a thick mist.

What did it all mean? At length the conviction flashed upon me. I was under the water!

Yes, I was actually right down beneath the sea, perhaps hundreds of fathoms, walking along with difficulty, but breathing as easy as possible. It was wonderful, and I thought I must be dreaming; but I was soon to be bewildered with things that were far more astonishing.

I struggled along to the entrance of the cave, and came in view of a scene that still further increased my amazement.

As far as I could see stretched immense masses of broken rocks, covered with all sorts of marine plants and shells of every possible size and form.

Perched upon an immense shell, which evidently served as a throne, was an enormous cod-fish, as large as a porpoise at least, round him swam about a dozen attendant dolphins, while fish of every species, from sharks to shrimps and sprats, were gathered round their monarch in thousands. Then there were sea-snakes and other monsters, so extraordinary in aspect that you would turn giddy if I were to attempt describing them to you.

Among the fishes I recognised every species that we fishermen were in the habit of catching, either with rods or nets, and while the eyes of the innumerable creatures were turned full upon me, those of these fish in particular seemed gleaming with fearful rage.

Every one of the fish seemed at least twenty times as large as any I had ever seen—the very shrimps being nearly as big as herrings, and the herrings themselves big in proportion (or rather out of proportion).

The whole population at once swarmed round me, glaring angrily, and debating among themselves what they should do with their prisoner—for a prisoner I found I was. Two large lobsters took me in custody, and bore me in triumph to the great cod, the king of the fish, as he reclined majestically upon his shell throne.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, his goggle-eyes glaring at me in a most ferocious and threatening manner, "this mortal is, to judge from his dress, one of those wholesale murderers and kidnapers called fishermen."

I was surprised to hear a fish talk (although I had heard of the "Talking Fish" before), and rather taken aback at the words he said.

All the others joined in assent, accusing me, with one voice, of being a fisherman—the sworn enemy of their race.

"Now then," said King Cod, sternly, "do you plead guilty to the charge of invading my dominions, seizing my subjects, and committing wholesale slaughter among the harmless populace of the ocean?"

"Please, your majesty," said I, "if you mean to ask me whether I catch and eat fish, or sell them to others, I must own I do, like all other fishermen; but I assure you we only do it from necessity, and without it we could not live at all."

"And what would it matter if you didn't live at all?" retorted the king, "a fish has as much right to live as a man, anyhow. Do we come on shore and seize your people to eat or sell?"

"No, certainly not," said I, "but sharks and some other fishes are in the habit of watching for any unfortunate men that may come within their reach, and then snap them up without mercy."

Two tremendous sharks close to me confirmed this assertion by snapping their jaws together in a horribly suggestive manner.

"And if they do eat them," said the royal cod,

"they only avenge the wrongs of fishes in general for one comrade you lose, we lose thousands. It is not often we catch a man alive, and when we do we make an example of him."

"If I was in for it; there was no gleam of mercy in the staring and fishy eyes of the great cod, as he gazed at me, and then turned to his equally merciless companions.

"Now we must have a trial," said his majesty. "My friends and advisers, form yourselves into a council. Lobsters, secure the prisoner once more; this is an important case. Is the prisoner here, who confesses he is a fisherman, guilty or not guilty of fish-slaughter, and, if so, is he, or is he not, worthy of death, according to the law made and provided?"

Here I implored his majesty first to hear the story of my life, and, when he agreed, I told him what I always tell to everybody—the simple truth. How I had been brought up to fishing, and taught to regard it as harmless, even creditable; how my father and grandfather before me had been fishermen, and were very good, kind folks, &c. &c.

I then dwelt upon my recent adventure; how I put out, caught a number of fish, but threw them overboard again, when I found myself caught in the storm. I drew a pathetic picture of the perils and terrors I suffered, and the fearful state of grief and anxiety my parents would be in if I were not sent back to them.

At times I fancied that the royal fish was somewhat touched by my solicitations, and thought I saw his hard eyes softening a little, so I resolved to try a little flattery.

"Your majesty, I'm sure, will spare me when you consider my weakness and insignificance," I said. "I am perfectly overwhelmed with the splendour of your majesty's court and companions; I never expected to see fish of such enormous size, and such glittering caverns, nor could I have believed the ocean contained mountains like that yonder."

All the fishes went into shouts of laughter as I pointed to the object last mentioned.

"Mountain, indeed!" exclaimed the king; "why, that is my friend the Prince of Wales; he's keeping very quiet, for he's not very well, poor fellow, having had a light lately with a boat's crew of your villainous race, who pierced him with harpoons. The fact is, thou ignorant and infelix mortal, that water is a magnifier to human eyes, and therefore, though none of us are larger than life, we appear so to you."

"And would your majesty please to inform me," I asked, wishing to keep him in a good humour, "how it is that I, being merely a land animal, find myself thus able to live and breathe beneath the water?"

"For a great depth below the surface," returned his sealy majesty, with an air of great wisdom, "the sea is so dense that human beings cannot breathe it; but, sinking down here, you have reached the purer elements, where no winds or storms can come, and where the water is so light that any kind of creature can live in it."

"And how far may I be from the surface, great king?" I said.

"Seven miles and a half," said he.

"Amazing!" I cried.

"But we are wasting time," said the king, resuming his stern demeanour; "I have to put the question of your guilt to a jury, and abide by their decision."

A regular legal court was now assembled; a grand jury of four-and-twenty fish of different species was formed.

A shark prosecuted and a John Dory undertook my defence. The king assumed the office of judge, and the trial began.

It was worse than being at the bar of the Old Bailey, for there I might have had some chance of escaping torture at least, but here, who could tell what sufferings my fishy enemies might not inflict upon me?

There were, of course, no witnesses to call as to character; I was to be judged only upon my own confessions as to my past life.

The shark made an eloquent speech, painting the deeds of fishermen in the darkest colours, declaring that they were nothing but bands of wholesale murderers, and especially quoting the fate of one of his relations, who was recently taken by them.

"In this case," said the shark, "my unfortunate relative fell a victim to malice only, since, as men do not eat or sell sharks, there can be no reason for catching and killing them. The very fact of being a fisherman is a crime deserving of death, by the laws of the sea; the prisoner himself confesses that he has for years been a fisherman—or rather boy—and therefore must, in his time, have destroyed thousands of your majesty's loving subjects. An example is required to put a stop to these outrages; justice demands that the culprit should be immediately consigned to condign punishment."

The John Dory defended me against this attack with great ability, dwelling upon the fact of my youth as a reason for mitigating the sentence; saying that I had been taught fishing by others, and did not take to it from enmity towards the fishes themselves, but in order to live.

"It would have been very different," pursued the Dory, "had the prisoner been one of those cruel anglers who catch fish for mere sport, and do not care what suffering they inflict—such culprits as those deserve no mercy, and I would show them none; but with this lad, so far from being a wholesale murderer of fish, it has been simply a matter of business; therefore I hold him not guilty of capital offence, and only guilty, if at all, of the more excusable crime of unintentional piscicide, or fish slaughter."

The jury, having heard both sides, retired into inner cave, while I was left a prey to the most racking anxiety.

(To be continued.)



GREENWICH. CHELSEA.

AFTER the company had been supplied Barnacle Bill called upon Cuttlefish to give the completion of his story. Cuttlefish proceeded.

AN ADVENTURE UNDER THE SEA.
(Continued from page 14.)

Never did I pass such a wretched half-hour in my life; it was worse, if possible, than waiting for a dentist.

At last the jury returned to court, and my anxiety reached sensation pitch.

A minute more and I knew the worst—the verdict was—"guilty."

"Is it guilty on all charges?" asked the king.

"On all charges, my lord," replied the foreman—or rather forefish—of the jury.

"And I must say I fully agree with your decision," was the royal response; "nothing remains now but to pass sentence in the usual form."

So he placed upon his head a large, black shell, and pronounced judgment, viz., "that the prisoner, being found guilty of fish-slaughter in the first degree, must be taken from the place of condemnation to the place of imprisonment, and from thence to the place of execution; where the said prisoner shall and will be killed, slain, slaughtered, executed, and put to death by being nipped by lobsters, after which he shall be eaten by eels, and, lastly, eaten by sharks."

On hearing this horrible sentence I was in despair, and, falling down at the king's feet—I mean his fins—I implored his mercy.

"Impossible!" was his reply. "It would be against the law, which even I have to respect; I would not respite you if I could. Guards, remove him!"

"Stay, great king," interposed the shark, "the sentence is not complete yet, for I find here, according to a statute made in the twentieth year of the reign of your late respected grandfather, a prisoner found guilty of these crimes must undergo the retributive torture."

"Ha!" said the king; "and what is that?"

"He must be served as he serves the fishes," replied the shark; "viz., must be caught by a hook and line, and then pulled along till he is nearly dead, then he must be bagged and tossed up in a net. In some cases, arrows may be shot into him, since fish are killed that way upon some parts of the earth."

"If that's the law," answered King Cod, "it must be carried out. What ho, there! I apply the retributive torture!"

Here was a prospect! entreaties and expostulations were vain.

I was seized in the arms of the horrible octopus, or devil-fish—one of his majesty's sworn torturers—who held me so tightly he nearly squeezed the life out of me.

Meanwhile, some other fish cast at me a long line—apparently the cable of some wrecked ship—having at the end a large hook, baited with a very rich piece of cake.

You may be sure that however delicious I was in no mood to snap at the bait, but I closed my mouth and my eyes in horror. I saw the hook and line coming to me; I also moved my head with a jerk. The cake came up against my lips and broke, the hook grazed my cheek, and at last caught in my hair; the octopus, letting me go at this signal, I was dragged along by my headpiece, and at last landed safe in the centre of the royal group. The sensation was fearful agony, and the only thing to be thankful for was that the hook had not caught me in the jaw instead.

"Now you have some idea how your victims feel," said King Cod, while the shark grinned in vast enjoyment; "apply the other tortures!"

Turning me round and round till I was giddy—the torturers then flung me into very deep and very cold water—a shock that knocked all the breath out of me.

I sank like a stone, and while I was struggling I found myself encompassed by an enormous net, which bound my hands and feet, and gagged my mouth and blinded my eyes; the more I struggled the tighter was I enveloped in its meshes, and at last I ceased to be able to move at all. Then I was dragged ashore (so to

to be three-quarters dead, and roughly pulled out of the net by the lobsters, who pinched me liberally during the operation, and tossed me up several times afterwards.

"Enough," said the cod-king, "that part of the sentence has been carried out, so now away with him to the condemned cave."

And they "away'd with me," accordingly. My prison was a small, dark cavern, many fathoms deeper than the one I had been in previously, and infinitely more unpleasant; the rocks were all jagged and sharp-pointed, impossible for me to walk upon without slipping down; and when I attempted to lie or sit, I found them very uncomfortable resting-places.

My gnawers did not bind or fetter me in any way, but it was not necessary, for they knew as well as myself that I had no means of escape.

Still, they took the precaution to keep continual watch outside the mouth of the cave.

I asked one of the lobsters how long I should be imprisoned in this place, but he could not or would not inform me.

I was supplied with certain marine plants by way of food; as for drink, I found I had no need for that at all, for I continually inhaled water as I breathed, and that answered the same purpose.

I could not help wondering at my being able to breathe so far below the sea; if anyone on land had told me it was possible I should never have believed them, and yet here I was, a living evidence of the fact.

"Who knows," I thought, "whether half the people who are supposed to be drowned may not sink down to these regions and meet with a similar fate to mine?"

But I had enough to think about in my own situation without pondering over that of others, and I found I had a very large amount of suffering to go through; in fact, I was no sooner in the prison than some most unexpected tortures began.

On looking around the cave more attentively, I saw to my horror that it was filled in every nook and cranny with all kinds of horrible marine monsters, the reptiles of the deep—as complete plagues as black-beetles and rats are on land; I never saw such creatures in my life; they were of the most varied, horrible, and grotesque shapes that could be imagined; some were like serpents or eels, and these twisted themselves around my limbs so tightly as to cause me great pain; some resembled frogs and toads, and these hopped upon me, and bedaubed me with their nauseous slime; others were in form like lizards, and they crawled up and scratched me with their scaly claws, and others again had quills like porcupines, and charged at me like an army of bayonets.

In short, the tortures I had to undergo were as various as the beings who inflicted them, and quite as difficult to describe.

No one except the great French artist, Gustave Doré, could give you an adequate idea of the grotesque and unearthly forms of these monsters.

I should have thought it was all a terrible dream, but that the continual tortures I suffered reminded me far too plainly that I was awake.

"How long is this to continue, I wonder?" said I to myself; "I don't know whether I wouldn't sooner be killed at once than have much more of it. The worst of it is there is not the slightest chance of my escape. Oh! why wasn't I drowned when the boat upset, instead of coming down here?"

But there was nobody to answer that question, and, as I could not do so myself, I left off thinking about it, and gave all my attention to the task of keeping off my pestering enemies.

Hours, and it appeared to me days, passed, and brought no change in my unhappy lot. The lobsters swam in every morning, bringing me what was intended for my food, but I never could get from them when I was to be executed.

I also implored them to let me be put in some more comfortable prison out of the way of the monsters who were killing me by inches; but they only clashed their claws together derisively, with a sound that very much resembled a laugh, and I have no doubt was intended for one.

Ever since I had been under the sea I had no sleep, although several days had passed—not that there is any distinction between night and day there, for the same kind of gloomy twilight is always gleaming.

I was incessantly tortured by the monsters around me, who had caused me so many wounds and pains and stings that I thought I should never recover again.

At length, able to endure it no longer, I made up my mind that I must either die at once or escape, though there seemed little chance in the matter.

There was a slight ray of hope in the fact that one of the lobsters had left his post, at the entrance of the cave, while the other, a little way off, seemed to be asleep in a corner.

"Now or never!" thought I.

I had found that wrapping myself round with soft seaweed was not only a protection against the attacks of my foes, but soothed the wounds they had inflicted, and the same means might aid as a disguise; so, enveloping myself so thickly around with it that I scarcely looked like a man at all, I made for the entrance, passed through it, and glided close by the lobster-sentinel.

He was not so fast asleep as I thought—at all events my presence roused him to the alert—and, sticking out his claws, he caught my seaweed covering.

"You shall have it, my boy!" said I; so I flung off all the weeds I could and threw them over him.

While the lobster was struggling to disentangle himself from the mass of seaweed I plunged through a hole in the rocks and entered a larger sea-cavern,

which had several outlets communicating with a larger cavern still.

On getting to that I found other caverns beyond it.

All was quiet and deserted, not a sole was in sight (or any other fish), and so I swam on and on, and rapidly put a considerable distance between myself and my late prison. The series of caverns seemed endless, though sometimes I came to parts of the open sea.

I met a few fish and some curious marine monsters, but none of them offered to molest me.

At last I suddenly came upon a beautiful place, a cluster of grottoes all shining like crystal or diamonds, and adorned with bright shells, green plants and sea-flowers of all sorts of colours. The light here was brighter also, and more like the sunshine of the upper day. The place looked so peaceful and pleasant that I felt an irresistible inclination to rest there for awhile.

I cast myself upon a bank of coral, covered with marine-flowers, and went off into the finest sleep I ever experienced.

When I awoke I felt much refreshed, and my wounds and hurts were a great deal less painful.

What was my amazement to behold a group of lovely female figures a little way off, with eyes fixed upon me with mingled curiosity and fear. They had green hair—which isn't a fashionable colour—but they combed it carefully with the aid of a hand-mirror each carried, and they were adorned with a variety of shells and marine-flower ornaments, which seemed to me to be their only costume.

I was amazed and delighted, for at last I had met with beings of my own race—perhaps these lovely creatures had once been wrecked and thus become inmates of the submarine kingdom.

But no, for as, frightened at my approach, they scooped off, I caught a glimpse of their fish-like extremities, and saw that they were mermaids.

Hitherto I had disbelieved in the existence of such creatures, but there was no mistake about it now, for I saw them as plain, I mean as beautiful, as the bottle-nose upon your face (by which, of course, I mean nothing personal, but quite the contrary).

I swam after them as quickly as I could, and, as I did so, could perceive that the tail of one was a kind of greenish blue, and the tail of the other a kind of bluish green.

On they went, and still I kept them in sight, and the chase grew quite exciting as well as exhausting.

"Beautiful beings!" I exclaimed, "fear me not; I come as your friend, if you will only prove the same to me by giving me directions as to the shortest cut to land."

But I might as well have cried to the winds, for the mermaids sped on quick as a hurricane; they seemed to be taking an upward direction, so I followed them.

Presently we came to a grotto, larger and more magnificent than any I had yet seen, and it swarmed with mermaids, and in the centre was one who appeared their queen; they all seemed much astonished and alarmed at my appearance.

I feared that they, like the fishes, might have some terrible tortures in store for a human intruder.

I resolved to sheer off.

Rising in the water was terribly difficult, so, seeing the two mermaids I had followed disporting above me, I caught hold of the blue-green tail of one and the green-blue tail of the other.

They shrieked, and all their comrades rose in pursuit; still I held on tightly, the mermaids kept running from me, rising as they did so with great rapidity.

At last she of the greenish-blue tail jerked herself away from me, but I clung to blue-green tighter than ever.

At this moment I saw a light in the water above me, which looked like sunshine, and increased at every yard we rose.

Suddenly blue-green made a violent effort, got away, dived down, and disappeared, and the violent push she gave me in doing so sent me upwards, and with a sudden shock I found myself—where? on the surface of the sea, about half-a-mile from shore, and within sight of my father's hut.

It was early morning, and a fine, clear day.

Some boatmen saw me struggling in the water, and picked me up.

I was carried ashore, but for several days was laid up by what I had been through.

When I got better I gave an account of my adventures—all marvelled, but I am sorry to say few believed.

My boat had been wrecked in the storm and found bottom upwards; of course my fate was regarded as certain, and here had I turned up three days afterwards.

From that hour I never touched a fishing-rod or net, but turned sailor instead.

The hearty thanks of the company were voted to Cuttlefish for his story, which Arctic Joe characterised as being an artful leaf out of his book, and the SILENT MAN having been appointed to tell the next story, the meeting separated.

Two men sat down in Junksville, Pa., the other day, to experiment on some new kind of non-explosive kerosene, and now the coroner's jury are sitting over a button.

The youngster who climbed up on the pelican's cage during a circus stampede wants to know how a fellow can rest without sitting down, and what's a good thing for sore legs.