



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 skinned 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! 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 so exhausted as

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 gaolers 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 sheered 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.

"Beauteous 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.