

When Phil May Sketched a Man-Eater

By H. K. CHAMBERS

AN old swimmer's memories of alarms and escapes on distant coasts were revived the other day by a shark scare in waters near New York.

Along the New Jersey coast and on both sides of Long Island Sound, fishermen, yachtsmen and important citizens with piers at the foot of their lawns, were excited over an invasion of sharks—"schools" of them, it was said. Beaches were being patrolled by coast guard vessels, and bathers were advised, in effect, to trust in God and keep their skins dry.

The old swimmer was listening to a motor-cycle policeman of King's Point, one of the several incorporated villages of Great Neck peninsula. A telephone flash to the village hall had reported a "school" of sharks from eight to ten feet long running riot in Manhasset Bay, just around yonder headland. It would be plain suicide, the policeman said, for the old swimmer to start off on one of his long aquatic rambles.

A crew of young rowdies in a dory came paddling in with a tale of a "school" of sharks out near Stepping Stone light.

"Sharks don't go in schools," objected

thrown from ships, were suffering short commons like the rest of the world.

One specimen nosed inland, up a meadow creek at Mattawan, into a neighborhood swimming hole, where it snipped a boy's foot off. A man plunged into that devil's hole to save the boy, and was killed. The shark, marooned by the outgoing tide, was slaughtered with frantic enthusiasm, and human bones were found in its stomach.

The old swimmer had rewritten one of the newspaper accounts of that imbroglio. He recalled each vivid detail, and then his mind drifted back to earlier casual glimpses of the man-eater family. He had grown up on a shark-infested shore, that of the east coast of Australia. Some of his earliest swimming had been in the shark-proof baths of Sydney harbor, otherwise Port Jackson, famed for its beauty and its man-eaters.

At Lavender Bay, across the harbor from the city proper, were Cavill's Baths, run by a fat Frenchman who used to promote swimming races and give exhibitions with his large and amphibian family. His eldest son, Ernest Cavill, a terra-cotta Adonis, became the most famous swimmer of his time, and revolutionized the art with his invention of the crawl stroke. And the man-eaters used to bump against the palisades which shut in so much appetizing flesh.

Out in the harbor, with its picnicking, yachting and weekly regattas for all kinds of sail-boats, hardly a week passed without a few shark horrors. In one case a man-eater knocked a young man off a low landing-stage with a blow of its tail, then turned and seized him, and bore him to the bottom in two fathoms of water, while eight feet of the shark's rear emerged erect for half a minute, as described at the inquest by the victim's chum.

Phil May Sketches a Shark

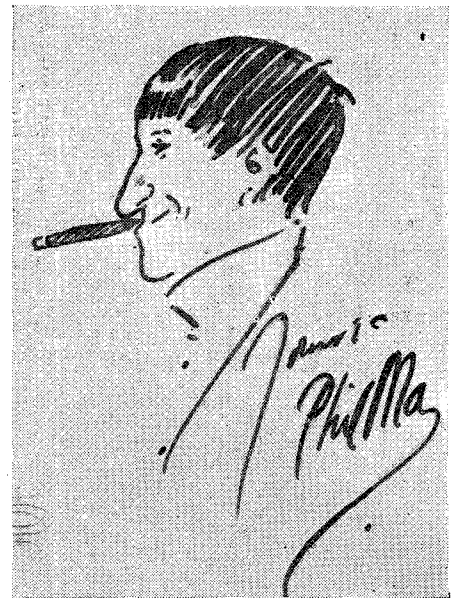
And yet the old swimmer, who was then a young swimmer, never laid his own eyes on a shark until he faced the one that awaited him while Phil May sketched it.

That was not in the harbor, but at Coogee Bay, a dent in Sydney's ocean coast. There the Pacific, in rank behind rank of shattering combers, assaults a crescent beach between two rocky headlands. Phil May, coming from London to make cartoons for the pink-covered *Sydney Bulletin*, had brought messages from a brother of the young swimmer in England. They had been lunching convivially with three other fellows before riding out to Coogee Bay on top of a steam tram-car, just for a lark. It was rather a solitary spot then, on week-days, in contrast to the little Coney Island it has since become, with watch-towers and sirens for shark alarms. There was practically no bathing in Phil May's time, unless one bobbed up and down in pens attached to some newfangled bathing machines.

Phil and the other fellows didn't want to go in, but the young swimmer, having a passion for the surf, and perhaps for showing off, hired a bathing machine, got into

a pair of red calico trunks, climbed out of the pen and swam out through one after another of the crashing lines of combers. In his enjoyment of the buffeting, he didn't think much about sharks. They were supposed never to come inside the surf. At the same time he was rashly doing his best to get beyond it to the open sea.

Turning on his back to ride up one of the



Phil May, by Himself

outermost parapets of unbroken indigo, he got a sudden panorama of the beach, and there he saw Phil May and the other fellows vigorously waving their hats and sticks in his direction. He knew they were shouting, but the surf drowned their voices. Then the land was blotted out as he sank into the next valley.

With a troubled feeling, he turned over and faced the sea. Across this valley rose another dune of glassy ocean, and within it, like a fly in amber, hung a shark, its snout toward the top of the wave, its body swaying downward in sensitive attunement with the motion of the water. Its color was the precise tawny shade of the wet beach. It seemed to be waiting for him.

How the young swimmer started back for the shore, what a tremendous distance it now seemed, how slow his progress, how dismal the thought that he might lose a leg at any moment—all this, it seemed to the old swimmer in retrospect, would give enough material for a whole chapter in a stream-of-consciousness novel. But he got back at last among the white horses, and worked his way out to the beach.

Phil May was sitting on the dry sand, fiddling at a sketch-book. Two or three pages were sprinkled with fragments of shark—here a snout, here a dorsal fin, here the sweep of a tapering body.

"I haven't got the life in that tail," he confessed cheerfully. "It had the movement of an eel. If you had only kept on another half-minute, old chap, I'd have caught that bloke alive."



A Typical Phil May Jest

the old swimmer. "I'll bet those were porpoises."

The Reports Substantiated

However, it appeared later that enough sober accounts had come in from practical watermen to show that there really had been an unusual visitation of sharks—probably ground sharks, or some other variety lacking the dental equipment to take a bite out of a bather. None was reported more than ten feet long, and that's a pee-wee size for a shark.

Man-eating sharks, the old swimmer recalled, visited New York-New Jersey waters in 1916, when four persons fell victim to their hunger. Shipping had been reduced to zero by the war, and it was conjectured that deep-sea sharks, deprived of the food

Gold for American Employees Abroad

Many Americans are streaming home from European gold-standard countries, driven back by the plunge of the dollar which sent their living costs kiting. But what of those who can't leave? In this class are government employees. They have been so hard hit as the dollar shrank that now the State Department has decided to rush to their rescue.

Explaining the plight of employees abroad, the department takes the case of an American clerk in Paris who has a salary of \$2,000. This already had been reduced to \$1,700 by the general 15 per cent. economy slash.

"But instead of being able, as in this country, to apply that entire amount to his necessary expenses," said the department announcement, "he must in France turn his dollars into francs in order to pay his rent, living expenses and purchase such things as he may need.

"In this transaction he must now pay at the rate of \$1.45 for each twenty-five francs, where some months ago he would have paid only \$1 for the same number of francs. In this way the actual money which he has to apply to the payment of his expenses has dropped from \$2,000, the amount appropriated by Congress originally, to a little more than \$1,000, the value of the foreign

currency which he is able to apply to the payment of his expenses.

"This amounts to nearly a fifty per cent. reduction in pay instead of the fifteen per cent. applicable to all government employees in the United States. This not only is the condition in France but in a number of other countries where local currencies have greatly appreciated in terms of dollar exchange. Clearly Congress did not intend that employees should suffer this heavy reduction."

And so arrangements have been made to pay government employees abroad in gold.

"The no estimates of what it will cost the Treasury are available," says the Baltimore Sun, "and estimates would not be of much use anyway so long as the dollar is completely on the loose on the foreign exchanges, the sum will probably not be very formidable. And the advance of it will eliminate some very real hardship."

A number of papers agree with the Asheville Citizen that "the national Government is performing only 'an act of justice.'" As this paper says, "Our foreign representatives in the consular service and in some of the diplomatic posts are dependent on their salaries. It is only right that those salaries should be calculated in terms of what they will actually buy."

Crisis in the American Experiment

(Continued from page 4)

by the building up of a pyramid of debt and a speculative inflation of profits. As the rising curve of debt and speculative profits and the declining curve of wages in manufacturing industries diverged there came a decline in production. Wages were reduced. Purchasing power shrunk more rapidly than the overhead burden on the excess plants which were capitalized at a high price-level.

As the New Deal theorists view it the depression revolves around an interplay of maladjustments of purchasing power and production, declining wages and prices and rigid overhead and debt costs.

From the view-point of those now in power the former Administration mistakenly sought to give relief by maintaining capital values with a view to aiding business and employment. The present approach to the problem is to rebuild purchasing power as the most effective means of helping both labor and capital. The change from debt relief to job relief has been credited by its sponsors with contributing to an upward reconstruction of capital values of agriculture and industry. It is described as a new economic and social technique appropriate to changed conditions and new conceptions.

Officials of the NRA are keeping their eyes fixed on charts which show trends of purchasing power, employment and production. They were distressed when prices and production increased more rapidly than employment and purchasing power. If the curve representing purchasing power can catch up with the more rapidly ascending curves of production and prices, they will

regard the great experiment as a success. If this does not happen, they will realize that something was wrong with their theories.

While the Industrial Recovery Act is limited to two years, its framers believe there never will be a return to the old order. Those who view such a possibility with alarm fear that this is probable. Their thought was expressed by Representative James W. Wadsworth of New York during consideration of the legislation in the House of Representatives on May 26, thus:

"Individualism in America will come to an end if legislation of this type and character is placed upon our statute books and kept there. I can not help but believe that this means the end of real liberty and the substitution of bureaucracy—the hard, heavy, cold hand of bureaucracy—upon the daily lives of millions and millions of Americans."

General Johnson has ventured the opinion that the good in the system will survive, while the bad will perish. The supposition is that there will first be an extension of the life of the act, and eventually the framing of a modified system for the permanent regulation of business. Such a modified system will embrace safeguards for labor as well as a continued relaxation of anti-trust laws under governmental supervision. In the World War General Johnson, then a young army officer, won laurels for brilliant conception and execution of plans for the mobilization of man-power and industrial power. In his present task he faces problems broader and infinitely more difficult of solution.

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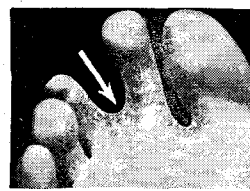
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