

CHANNEL BEATS MOST SWIMMERS

By L. de B. HANDLEY.

THE English Channel—which on Tuesday conjured one of its ugly moods and foiled the game efforts of America's foremost girl swimmer, Miss Gertrude Ederle, of the Women's Swimming Association of New York, to cross its waters—has been the coveted goal of the world's greatest exponents of natatorial endurance as far back as man can remember. Long before it was crossed for the first time by a swimmer—exactly half a century ago—champions of many lands had pitted their skill against the Channel gods. By then, in fact, so many failures had been recorded that the feat was believed quite beyond human strength and stamina.

It was left to an Englishman, Captain Matthew Webb, who subsequently lost his life in braving the Niagara rapids, to demonstrate that the popular belief was unfounded and that the Channel could be conquered. In the Summer of 1875 he amazed the entire swimming world by accomplishing that supposedly impossible exploit in 21 hours 45 minutes.

Apparently Captain Webb's success served to arouse afresh the ambitions of other aspirants to Channel laurels, for a number of attempts soon followed and continued to be made yearly thereafter. But thirty-six years elapsed before another doughty waterman was able to emulate Webb's achievement. William Burgess, an Englishman—who has lately been training Miss Lillian Harrison, of Argentine swimmers—effected the crossing in 1911, but in slight-

Fickle Weather Not to Be Gauged— Only Five Winners So Far

ly slower time than Webb, completing the trip in 22 hours 35 minutes.

Three Conquer the Channel.

Frequent trials have taken place each Summer since (except for an interval during the period of the war, when the Channel was forbidden territory); but not until twelve years after Burgess had triumphed did victory again occur. Then, strangely enough, came what may be termed the red letter season for Channel swimmers. No less than three fortunate candidates placed the notable feat to their credit in quick succession during the Summer of 1923.

Henry P. Sullivan of Lowell, Mass., was the first of the trio to go through. He attained the goal after a bitterly fought struggle lasting nearly twenty-eight hours. Next, Enrico Tiraboschi, an Argentinean of Italian extraction, made the punishing swim in 16 hours 33 minutes, beating by 5 hours 12 minutes Webb's record for the course and setting up a mark which has remained untouched to this day. Lastly, Charles Toth of Boston won his niche in the hall of fame by getting across in 16 hours 40 minutes—just seven minutes behind record time.

These five now share the glory of being the only ones, out of hundreds of honor seekers, who have vanquished the

twenty miles of turbulent and tide-swept waters between Dover and Calais.

The chronicle of Channel failures would make interesting reading, for numerous swimmers, thoroughly equipped for the big test, have lost out after plucky and meritorious efforts, solely because circumstances went against them—often with success at hand. Take, for instance, Jabez Wolffe of England, who prepared Miss Ederle for her recent trial. He possessed not only the skill and physical resources necessary, but keen knowledge of Channel conditions; yet on several occasions he came within an ace of the goal, only to see himself frustrated at the eleventh hour by contrary tides.

Attempts of Women Swimmers.

Unfortunately, reports of unsuccessful attempts are not always reliable. At present interest is so alive that trials on the part of noted swimmers, at least, draw a full contingent of dependable witnesses. But it was different in the past; and even now the attempts of some candidates are made without an authoritative following. It is therefore unwise to take at face value all of the claims raised in such cases.

For this reason it is difficult to speak with assurance of the performances of some of the women swimmers who have tried the Channel. It is generally ac-

cepted, however, that previous to this Summer the best attempts were effected by Baroness I. Von Isacescu of Austria, Miss Lily Smith of England and Miss Annette Kellermann of Australia, said to have lasted in their trials approximately ten, six and five hours, in the order named.

This season there have been three exceptionally impressive feats: Those of Miss Lillian Harrison, an Anglo-Argentine girl; Mme. Jeanne Sion of France and the American champion, Miss Gertrude Ederle.

Miss Harrison swam a bit more than half way across in 8 hours 45 minutes, then collapsed and narrowly escaped drowning. Mme. Sion was in the water 13 hours 30 minutes, and some reports stated that she reached within a mile and a quarter of the English coast—though her previous performances afford evidence that she lacks the speed to cover anything like the claimed mileage in the quoted time. Distances on the water are extremely deceptive and no doubt a mistake was made.

Miss Ederle had the bad luck to encounter very rough weather after seven hours under way, and broke down in consequence, having gone further, however, in 8 hours 46 minutes than has any other swimmer on the Channel course in that space of time.

These failures by mermaids of high rating again have raised the question, Does any woman possess the required physical and mental qualifications for making the Channel swim? Many think not. But experts best competent to judge

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attribute these failures to other than lack of essential resources. In Miss Ederle's case failure is laid entirely to the storm, which they believe would have stopped any swimmer. It is their conviction that the great feat is well within woman's scope, past events notwithstanding.

Reasons for Failure.

One thing is certain: no man or woman can hope to swim the Channel unless conditions are favorable. Luck in finding fair weather throughout is indispensable—which obviously makes the element of chance a very large factor.

It goes without saying that excellence in watermanship, stamina, imperviousness to cold and dauntless courage are absolutely necessary. At the same time the best-equipped swimmer who ever lived would be doomed to defeat if the weather gods turned unpropitious. Not infrequently good conditions encourage a start. Then, when the trial is on, a sudden storm will arise. Before one knows it battering waves, through which no swimmer can proceed, are churning the Channel into a maelstrom.

But rough and very cold water (usually registering under 60 degrees Fahrenheit) is far from being the only difficulty against which the Channel swimmer must contend. Undoubtedly responsible for a goodly percentage of the failures is the fact that success depends on figuring accurately in advance the influence of the swirling tides. Of this one can never be certain.

To understand the problem which is faced in laying out plans for any Channel trial it must be realized that the Strait of Dover, where the swim is made, is formed by two sharp promontories, on either side of which land recedes abruptly. Swift tides sweep the course laterally, running approximately eastward and westward, back and forth, for periods of about five and three-quarter hours in each direction.

The Baffling Tides.

As a consequence, the swimmer does not progress in a straight line, though he aims for a definite point. The recurring flood and ebb tides force him first one way, then the other, so that he describes a great zigzag. Nevertheless, he must approach the opposite coast within the narrow lane marked by the extreme ends of jutting promontories and on the favorite tide; otherwise, upon nearing the finish, he will be carried irresistibly outside the landing area and find it impossible to cover the final stretch.

It will be clear, therefore, that one must estimate beforehand how long it will take the swimmer to negotiate the

twenty miles between shores as the total tidal drift will be determined by the number of hours employed in the crossing. Then the hour of departure must be fixed accordingly, so that the eastward and westward deviation may be compensated for and equalized.

But it will be no less clear that such calculation represents, virtually, guesswork; for there is no foretelling what the weather holds in store. Channel weather is noted for its vagaries and quick changes. At any moment a shift in the wind may alter conditions so as to materially affect the swimmer's pace. Then the most carefully studied plans will suddenly go all awry.

Another problem which every Channel swimmer must solve concerns the kind and quantity of nourishment to be taken during an attempt. Nearly all trainers believe that nourishment is indispensable; yet some men and women are so constituted that under the strain of long-maintained physical effort they are made sick very easily by food or beverage. So experiments must be undertaken while preparing for the trial in order to ascertain what may profitably be taken. Most experts recommend beef broth, milk, milk and egg mixed, chocolate, grapes, sugar and tea or coffee in small doses. But in certain cases such diet has caused swimmers to become violently ill—the fact that salt water has also been swallowed perhaps conspiring—so that they have been forced to give up the swim.

Salt Water Blindness.

Salt water blindness, due to the effect of brine on the eyes, is still another potential obstacle in the path of the Channel swimmer. Occasionally swimmers have been known to lose their sight completely for a time and to become incapable of following the piloting craft. The affliction is temporary; one soon recovers after leaving the water; but it may be proved fatal to one's chances. Lately, water-goggles have been devised to protect the eyes. Miss Ederle used them. But they are hard to fit and useless unless they are perfectly water-tight.

The Channel swim is a momentous undertaking in every respect, but particularly for swimmers whose homes are far away. It is very important to become used to the climate and general conditions, so that candidates find it advisable to prepare on the spot for a couple of months or more. Then a trainer, rubbers and pacers must be engaged. There is the additional expense of hiring a motor launch and a rowboat with oarsmen to follow practice swims. It all runs into money.

Comes next the actual attempt, for

which an ocean-going tug is essential, as well as a skiff with attendants to keep in close touch with the swimmer from start to finish. Nourishment when called for must be handed out and help must be available on the instant in case of emergency.

These items, combined with cost of travel, lodging and maintenance (not to mention the often high-mounting incidentals), serve to make any attempt to swim the Channel a venture which demands an outlay of \$2,000 at the very least. The three-thousand-dollar mark is likely to be touched if a second or third trial be indulged in.

The widespread belief that the crossing of the Channel entails an actual swim of more than thirty miles is without foundation. Due to the lateral tidal drift, as explained, the route followed by the swimmer may show on paper a course of as much as forty or more miles, according to the number of hours in the water; but this is chart mileage. The swimmer negotiates, by his efforts, just about twenty miles, the distance between shores as the crow flies. The rest is tidal deviation.

This brings up the interesting point of

the merit of Tiraboschi's established record of 16 hours 33 minutes and the likelihood of its being improved upon in years to come.

It is a safe wager that if devotees of the modern school of swimming take to trying the Channel test—something they have not done so far—the Argentinian's mark will be bettered by several hours. Neither Tiraboschi nor Toth (and the latter almost equaled the former's time), begins to compare in speed with the average marathon racer of the present day. Though some claim that speed swimmers cannot last long enough to effect the crossing, this argument will not hold water. As we know, the crawl stroke has been used for continuous swims of fifteen to seventeen hours, and it should not take an expert crawler more than twelve hours to cover twenty miles at the pace which must be held for such a distance.

Of course with luck figuring so largely any man or woman, irrespective of speed and stamina, may fall; but there is good reason to believe that the record for the course will drop four or five hours, possibly more, in the long run.

“SOCIAL AUDIT” GRADES STUDENTS ON THEIR FITNESS FOR BUSINESS

BELIEVING that personal characteristics as well as classroom ability play a part in locating college students and graduates for specific jobs in business and industry, officials of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania have consented to the use of the school for an experiment of means of bridging the gap between scholastic training and life work.

The Industrial Service Department of the school has taken a social audit of approximately two thousand men, the plan having been in operation for two scholastic years. Each man has received from three to six ratings or marks for his dress, poise, social attitude, mental alertness, industry, expression, cooperation, reaction toward criticism and general range of information—so that any business house can easily ascertain more than the classroom ability of the men considered.

In the second term of the college year rating cards are distributed among the instructors. Students are closely observed for a week or two, during which time the instructor is requested to make an effort to give each student as accurate an audit as possible. Except in the case of the estimate for social attitude, which is indicated by underscoring one of five attitudes, the rating is indicated by the use of the five grades in general use throughout the university.

Since its inception in 1920 the Industrial Service Department has developed a method of placing students in busi-

ness and industrial enterprises, and the social audit plan is regarded as a check upon the the department's estimates of men.

“We form our own estimates of the man,” one official said, “especially with respect to the field that he wishes to enter, and then check our views with the general estimates of the instructors. Where there are clear-cut discrepancies between our views and those held by the instructors, or between the views held by the instructors, we get in touch with the staff.”

Merely as a check, or guide, however, the social audit is considered of value to both the university and to business houses in the placing of students. It has demonstrated that there is not the anticipated relationship between scholastic record and the estimates for personal characteristics. A careful analysis of the audit for the first year showed, for example, that there was a very indefinite relationship between a student's appearance and the grades he obtained in the classroom. The same was found to be true of poise, cooperation, social attitude and reaction toward criticism, though there was a steady increase in the relationship in the order given.

One advantage of the social audit is that it obviates the error of assuming that a student's personal characteristics will be acceptable simply because of his ability to get good marks from the instructors.