HOW TO SAVE A DROWNING MAN

By ALEXANDER MEFFERT
Instructor in Swimming, Knickerbocker Athletic Club

MOST of the drownings that occur about the bathing places result from lack of nerve or coolheaded courage. If swimmers could be trained to keep cool under all circumstances there would be comparatively little drowning among bathers and summer pleasure seekers. Cramp is usually assigned as the cause when some good swimmer drowns. But cramp ought in reality to be nothing serious. Usually it affects only an arm or a leg, or, may be, only a hand or foot. Any moderately good swimmer can keep afloat with one arm, or even without the use of that; yet good swimmers are drowning every week as a result of cramp. If such fatalities were analyzed they would be more properly classed as drownings from fright and loss of nerve. This comes from the fact that every one is taught in childhood to fear the water, and comes as a splash and paw and struggle, and then goes down.

What the swimmer should remember is that he can keep afloat with very, very little effort if he will turn on his back and keep his chest inflated. It is the simple matter of floating, which every swimmer knows and finds very easy. If the swimmer will keep cool and float, the cramping limb will frequently relax after a little and he will find himself as well as ever.

At every summer resort and every country village which has a lake we hear more or less frequently of double drownings, in
which the drowning man has seized his would-be rescuer and pulled him under. This is because the average swimmer does not know how to approach a man in trouble. He has read of rescues in cheap novels, and in these the hero invariably plunges in, seizes the drowning man, and, taking him on his back, swims ashore, landing the rescued but little the worse for wear. Some one sees a swimmer drowning, goes for him in this way, is grabbed about the neck and pulled under, to drown with the man he would save.

The would-be lifesaver must know something of how drowning occurs and of how drowning men act. There are two chief causes of drowning. Either a swimmer is taken with cramp, as a result of going into the water overheated, swimming with a stomach full of undigested food, or from staying too long in the water and becoming chilled; or else some one falls into the water, or what amounts to the same thing, ventures beyond his depth. Now notice how he acts. He begins to struggle in a frantic way and sinks, takes a mouthful of water into his lungs, rises crazy with fear, grabs at everything about him, expels a little of the air remaining in his lungs, goes down for another breath of water, comes up utterly insane, and repeats the going down and coming up until his lungs are pretty well filled with water. Then he sinks to stay. His sinkings are very slow, and he does not at first go far below the surface. He probably rises three or four times before he finally goes down.

If the lifesaver dashes at the drowning one while he struggles, and attempts to carry him out in dime novel fashion, he is grabbed, pulled down, finds his arms useless, and, unless he is a very strong man or a good wrestler, will be unable to break his hold, and will drown with the man he would save.

First of all, then, the lifesaver must remember that there is no need of hurry. The drowning one will not sink at once, not until he has gone down enough times to fill his lungs with water. A little more water will not harm the victim to any extent. He will have to be resuscitated when he is taken ashore anyway, and the more water he breathes now the easier it will be to take him there. When you see a man drowning, therefore, wait. Do not wait on the shore or in a boat. Swim close to the one in danger, so as to be ready when the

“Get a good hold in his hair * * * and strike out.”
How to Save a Drowning Man

time comes. But, by all means approach carefully, from behind if possible, so as to be out of reach of his arms. If the man turns around, or if for any reason it is impracticable to approach from the rear, swim as near as necessary in front, but in this case be always on guard. The best guard is to keep the left arm extended as far as possible in front, pointing toward the drowning man. Should he flounder toward you and attempt to grab you, put your left hand against his lower jaw and push him away. Now the only hold he can possibly get is on your arm, and this maybe take in a little more water, if necessary holding his head under to help along the process. When the struggling is over, turn on your side or back, whichever way you can swim most strongly, and strike out, dragging your man as shown in the photograph.

Do not labor under the impression that you must keep the victim’s head above water. If you can do so easily, it will do no harm, and possibly some good. But if you try to raise him out of the water you tend to force yourself under, and multiply the difficulties of keeping afloat yourself.

“A much safer way is to approach from behind.”

easily broken by turning, raising one leg so that your foot is on his chest, and then pushing with all your might. After he has gone down once or twice his struggles will weaken. Now is the time to act. Your method of handling the man will depend on the way he is dressed and the length of his hair. If his hair is long enough to give a good hand hold you need not consider any other grip. Just reach out your left hand, if you are a right handed swimmer, and get a good hold in his hair. If he still shows an inclination to struggle do not be in any hurry to take him out. Just keep your hold and let him

If you pull him after you, however, letting his head follow as it will, you will find that he floats easily and that your task is not much more difficult than towing a stick of wood or other floating body.

All this may sound cruel and cold-blooded, but it is not. If you try to take the man out while he is still struggling you are more than likely to drown with him. If you try to hold his head out of water you lessen the chances of saving his life by tiring yourself. Besides, he is nearly as well off brought ashore unconscious as only half so, for if any system commonly employed for resuscitating the drowning be
employed he will soon come to consciousness not so very much the worse for his late experience.

The easiest man to save, other things being equal, is the long haired one. Next comes the man with the bathing suit on or a suit of clothing loose about the neck. Approach such a one the same way you would approach the man with long hair. Wait for him to quit struggling in the same manner. Then reach your left hand down the back of his neck, inside his bathing suit or coat, and grab firm hold of the other grip until his struggles end. If you find yourself in danger of being grabbed, do not hesitate to break away in the harshest manner necessary, for if seized the chances are for your both drowning.

A much safer way of approaching and seizing a person who has neither clothing nor hair to take hold of is to approach from behind and put a hand in each of his armpits. To do this you may best approach with the ordinary breast stroke, and then, allowing your body to assume a horizontal position, keep afloat by treading garment on the inside. This gives you a good grip, and you may turn and swim out as before.

If the drowning person have on no clothing whatever there are two principal methods of taking hold. The rescuer must use his judgment as to which is preferable. The easiest of these, when it is safe, is the hand hold. After the drowning man has stopped struggling get hold of one of his hands, preferably his left, with your own left. Turn and swim, dragging him after you. The greatest objection to this is that if the victim is not quite unconscious your hold on his hand makes it easier for him to turn in his struggles and seize you. Therefore, if you must use the hand hold, and it is a fairly easy way to take a man from the water, do so guardedly, if necessary holding the man by some water. You may grab a person who is still struggling in this way, for, since you take hold from both sides at once, you can very easily prevent his turning in either direction. When you have a firm hold, turn, pull the drowning man back until he is floating face up, at the same time bringing your feet upward and forward until they are under the other's body. Now you are swimming on your back, dragging the unconscious man. If he be very strong and is still inclined to struggle it is best to change your hold from the armpits to the upper arms. You may do this so as to either keep his arms at his sides or by raising them above his head. In either case he is powerless to turn.

The advantages of this hold are that it is a very safe approach, and that it can be used on a person who has neither hair nor
clothing. It allows one to catch the victim before the latter becomes unconscious. If the latter is a child or a very light person it may be advisable to take this hold even when clothing is worn, but if he be heavy this is the very worst of all. The disadvantages are that it requires both hands and keeps the rescuer’s body below that of the victim, forcing him to lift up somewhat and tending to force his own head under water. If the distance to shore be great it is a very difficult method indeed.

In using this hold, and in fact any of the others, the rescuer must bear in mind that it is necessary to husband his own strength. In no way can this be better done than by swimming slowly and keeping the chest full of air. This latter precaution will enable him to float, if he turns on his back. And above all he must bear in mind that all he need do is to get the drowning person ashore. If he can do that resuscitation will bring him back to life. Let the victim float as far down as he will; take it easy, and get to shore with as little effort as possible.

Dragging the Victim by a Hold on his Bathing Suit.

V. — THE TRILOGY OF THE TALKING APPLE TREE

By ALOYSIUS COLL

LOOK on these gnarled boughs, this mossy trunk, these lichen-covered twigs that begin to show, like gray hairs in the head of an old man, and you guess not that my tough, knurled core is an urn wherein I have inscribed a tale of tenderness, a triple picture that is the heart history of a good woman and a true man.

When in my prime I was the noblest pippin tree in this glorious orchard of many noble trees. Wide of girth, lusty of leaf, fertile of blossom, and sweet of fruit, I stood, greatest and greenest on the pinnacle of the apple lot, and first and finest in the affections of the children that came to pluck my rosy baubles and swing beneath my thickest branch. My sap ran free, like the blood in the veins of a farm boy. I was the mecca of the nomad birds; in my network of shadow and sun they composed their sweetest lyrics and tried their gladdest canticles. Only one de-