

Walking the Pole.

BY A. H. BROADWELL.

Photographs specially taken by A. J. Johnson.



WE have heard much about the North Pole, and we are going to hear a great deal more about the South Pole presently; in the meantime, however, we will introduce you to a memorable voyage on and along a new kind of pole altogether.

The pole under treatment in this case is but a very commonplace one at best. We

end of the pole; as this, unfortunately, is but a rare achievement, the coveted trophy generally goes to the competitor who travels farthest along the uncertain path.

Though sad to relate, it is nevertheless quite true that none of the many brave men who are shown in the pictures that follow succeeded in reaching the end of the pole. They one and all struggled bravely on, but there came a time when every effort proved



THE COMPETITORS.

may safely call it a common or garden scaffolding pole, strongly braced over a sheet of deep water.

Now, walking the pole has become part and parcel of every self-respecting water carnival, and, needless to say, is the *bonne bouche* of any such entertainment, inasmuch as it provides endless merriment at the expense of the fantastically-clad competitors.

The main idea is to reach the far end of the vacillating thing, which feat requires a deal of pluck and much more balancing-power than falls to the lot of ordinary mortals.

Various prizes are offered; the chief plum, however, falls to him who reaches the very

unavailing, a moment when nothing save the instantaneous abolition of the laws of gravity could have saved them from an ignominious tumble and consequent immersion.

The contest under notice took place at the splendid open-air baths of the Tunbridge Wells Swimming Club, all arrangements being made through the kindness of its courteous secretary, Mr. W. Tyrell Biggs, who helped us to obtain the extraordinary pictures of water polo published in last month's issue.

The group which we reproduce first was taken immediately before the contest took place. The costumes are numerous, and it

will be noticed that, according to the most approved London County Council methods, Robert is strongly in evidence, while our American cousin cuts a brave figure, as proud of his stars and stripes as Yankee ever was.

Our bobby was a brave man, and tackled the pole with that confidence which we usually expect from every member of the



ROBERT TAKES THE PLUNGE.

his helmet, cautiously made his way to the starting-point amid a sudden and breathless silence, and then, with a final look of defiance at someone tittering near by, he bravely went forth. As will be noticed, however, his self-assurance left him at an early stage of the proceedings, and, much against his will, he was "run in" soon after by an every-day citizen, who may be seen in the second



"RUN IN."

force. Unabashed by the repeated cries of "Move on, please," he carefully adjusted



A COUNTRY LASS.



A SLEEP WALKER.

picture above, towing him to the bank in the best style advocated by the Royal Humane Society.

We now come to a couple of tumbles much resembling dives. It is evident that at the crucial moment the two masqueraders regained their self-possession for a moment, endeavouring to dive

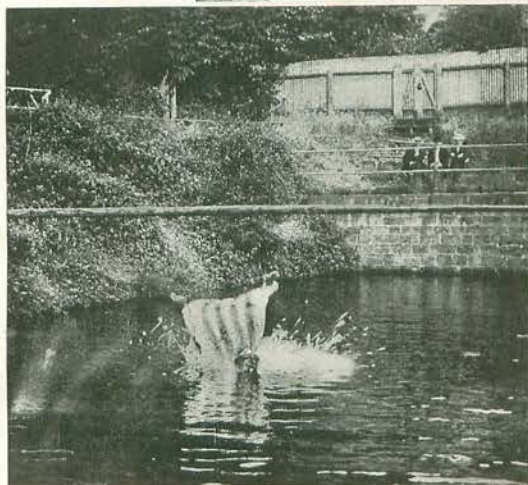
according to rules. He in the night-dress tumbled head-long, holding a candlestick in the left hand; she in the sun-bonnet endeavoured to be graceful, but wasn't.

The Yankee caught slipping off the pole presented a gorgeous spectacle in the full

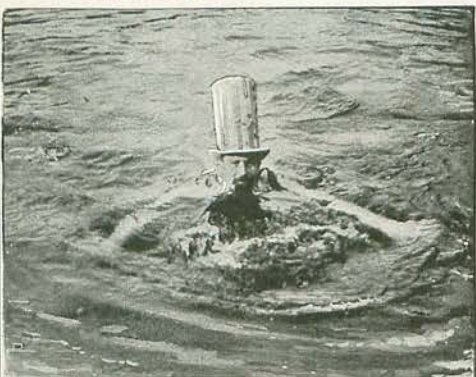


THE YANKEE.

on this slippery path tandem fashion. Alas, however, union is not always strength, for, curious to relate, the man in front assured us that, but for the man at his back, he most certainly would have reached the end of the pole and, of course, *vice versa*. However that may



HIS DOWNFALL.



THE RETURN JOURNEY.

be, they ventured together, and fell together, as all good friends should do.

glory of his stars and stripes. His hat of large dimensions might have been intended for a life-buoy in cases of emergency. He is losing his balance in the first picture, is half-way immersed in the second, while in the third he very pluckily returns to the shore apparently none the worse for his ducking.

The next picture depicts what might well be called a "double event." Each, unwilling to make a start without the other, ventured



"A DOUBLE EVENT."

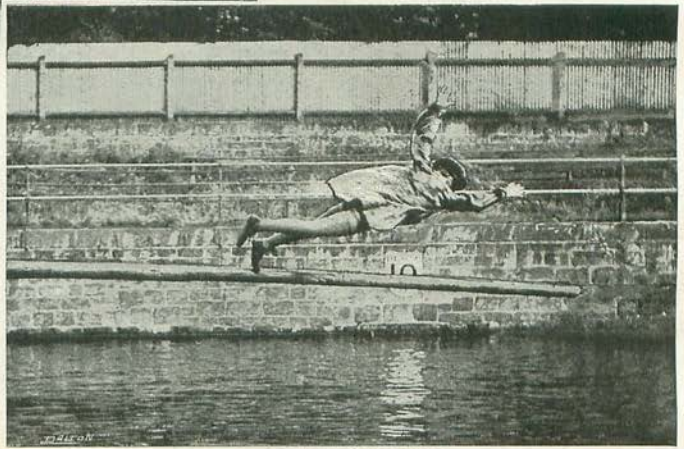


AUNT SALLY'S HOPELESS CASE.

If you will take the trouble to refer to the group on the first page of this article you will get a good idea of Aunt Sally's appearance before this unfortunate accident took place. She was happy then in the pride of her old-fashioned sun-bonnet, but all good things must come to an end. The picture illustrates a crisis in poor Sally's life—a frantic clutch at the empty air above—a tremendous splash—and soon afterwards a bedraggled re-appearance,

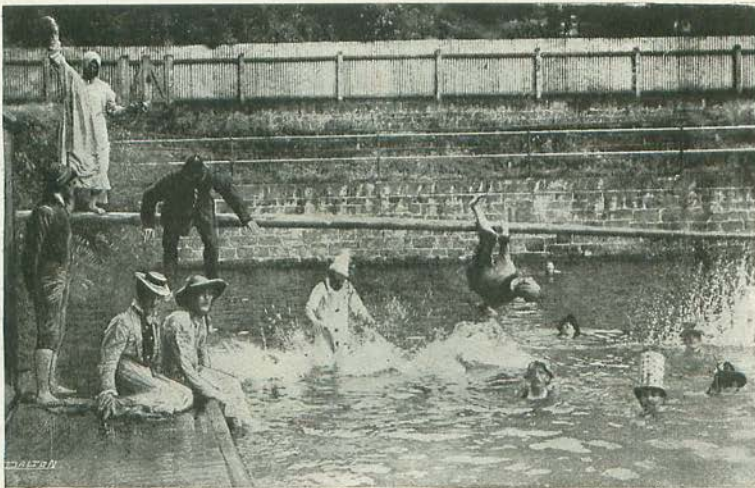
greeted with shouts of laughter not unmingled with commiseration.

The Italian count whose graceful departure is shown in the next photograph boasted that *he* of all would reach the much-coveted goal; there was to be no dilly-dallying about *his* walk; in Italy they did these things every day. "Why, sir, I'd walk this pole in my sleep," said he to an unsuccessful comrade. He spoke truly—it was only a dream; half-way through his perilous journey he indulged in a little by-play, lost his balance, and like the plucky knight he was he made the best of a bad business in the manner shown.



AN ITALIAN NOBLEMAN.

Our last picture shows a general *mêlée* of our good-humoured and much-bedecked crowd.



A GENERAL MÊLÉE.