

Sand Art.

BY THOMAS E. CURTIS.

Illustrations from Photographs taken expressly for George Newnes, Limited.



It is worth a trip to America merely to see Mr. James Taylor model in sand. He works on the beach at Atlantic City, one of the most famous watering-places in the world, about sixty miles from Philadelphia, on the coast of New Jersey. Here, throughout the summer, Mr. Taylor, who stands head and shoulders above all his imitators in sand art, manipulates the dull and unadhesive material, turning it into veritable gems of sculpture.

Unhappily, however, the labour of this clever man is ephemeral. The waves of old ocean ruthlessly wash away the artist's handiwork. There is a touch of sentiment in it, and the many thousands who have watched the artist moulding his fleeting figures within reach of the onward tide have not been less interested in the work because its life is short.

The variety of subjects which have sprung

from the worker's fertile brain is astonishing. Hardly a thing happens in the world, such as the blowing up of the *Maine*, or the death of a noted man, but what some reproduction of it may be made with sand. The photographs in this article show how varied Mr. Taylor's talents are, and how quick he is to seize upon the subject of momentary note for the interest of his countless onlookers. His last subject, recently done expressly for this Magazine, as shown by the illustration below, touches, we think, the highest he has yet reached in sand art. The beautiful figure on the sand, with its flowing drapery, is really amazing in the naturalness of its lines. When we consider the haste with which it must have been made, and the material of which it is composed, it is certainly a cause of admiration.

The tools with which the work is performed are two in number—a piece of wood and brains. In the centre of his circle of



RECUMBENT FEMALE FIGURE, MODELLED IN SAND AT ATLANTIC CITY EXPRESSLY FOR THIS MAGAZINE BY MR. JAMES TAYLOR.

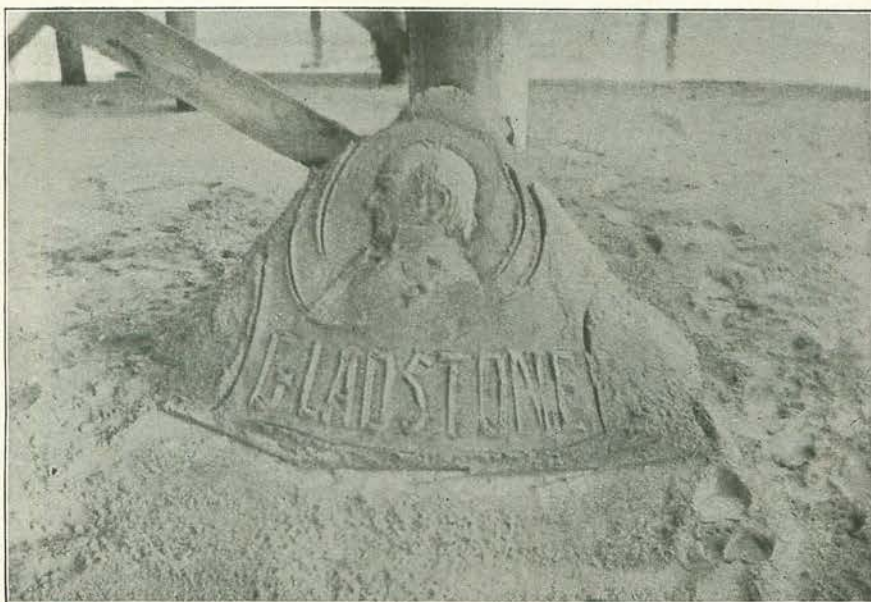


GROUP OF SAND FIGURES AT ATLANTIC CITY.

pleasure-seekers, the artist unassumingly collects a pile of damp sand, and, taking a small bit of wood from the beach, begins to carve his subject in the rough. If it is a bas-relief, such as the model of Gladstone, or "Love Rules the World," the tailpiece to our article, he first flattens the damp sand on one side, and then picks out his design with the sharp end of the stick. No matter what the subject, the touch of the artist is true, and the constant practice of years shows itself in the skill and rapidity with which the designs are concluded. When one is finished, no time is lost in beginning

another, and thus between the tides we are likely to have made for us half-a-dozen sculptures, each successful, and each the cynosure of the passing throng. In the illustration above we see four of these models: the two at the right representing President McKinley and General Lee, who, during the troublous times last year, were the two most-talked-of men in the country. At the left is a fanciful reproduction of the American summer girl, with her gay "shirt-waist" and her jaunty air.

When Gladstone died, over a year ago, a most speaking likeness of him in sand stood against one of the pier supports of Atlantic



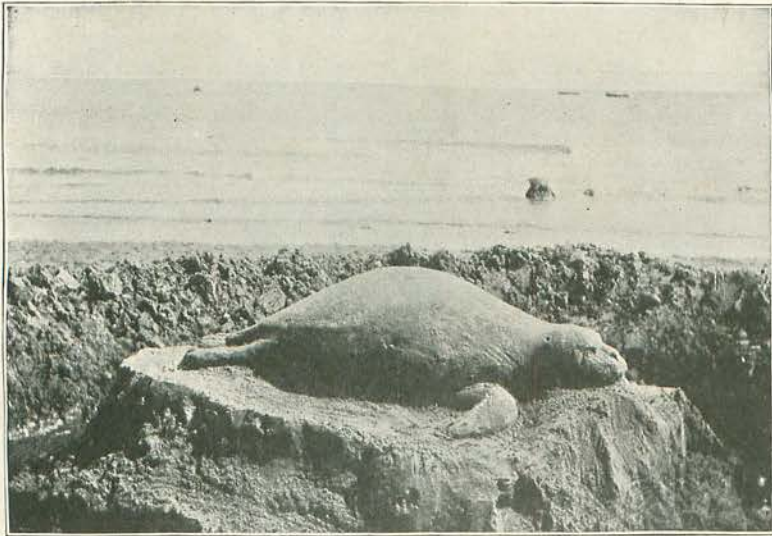
GLADSTONE.



ADMIRAL GEORGE DEWEY.

Beach. When the war broke out with Spain the American battleship was a popular subject for reproduction. No sooner did Hobson burst into heroic prominence than his now familiar features appeared on the Jersey sand,

reproduce herewith. Others, of which we are unable, through limitations of space, to reproduce the photographs, show classic and portrait subjects. One called "Late Arrivals" shows a mound of sand with three figures



SAND SEAL AT SHANKLIN, I.W.

and the memorable victory at Manila was quickly followed by a model of Admiral Dewey in uniform. Some of these we have been able to catch with the camera and

of people well known along the beach. Many of the photographs resemble our final illustration in showing the piers near which the sculptures are modelled.

One of the most interesting things about our Atlantic City artist is that he has never had training of any sort. Like many of the pavement artists in London, he fell into occupation by chance, guided to good results by an artistic instinct. But what a difference between this man and the pavement artist. The one is up-to-date, versatile, and always moving forward with the times. The other, with just enough ingenuity to bring him a few daily pennies, rests content with the same pictures in coloured chalk from day to day until the passer-by gets weary of lighthouses, ships, and moons. A little more enterprise would doubtless make pavement art as profitable as sand art is upon the American beach.

This, of course, is not to say that the sand artist is not known in England. On the south coast he is not an unfamiliar figure. At Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight, the seal which we show on the previous page, sent to us by

Mr. A. Hugh Harper, Addiscombe Lodge, Thornton Heath, Surrey, was moulded by one of these men, and it certainly possesses a naturalness which makes it come a close second to the American work. But on the English beaches one does not see variety in sand art. Here and there a man portrays a cathedral, a bridge, a castle, or perhaps a portrait of some celebrity. But it is usually done on the flat surface of the sand. This is more back-breaking, but less difficult, and less effective than the other.

In any event, the art of sand modelling is not so easy as it looks—a fact that many of our readers may discover. Should they not fear the difficulties in the way, and should they be successful in sand art, we should welcome the privilege of looking over any snap-shots of their handiwork which they might care to send to us, and may publish a selection of the best in some future number.

