

The Affectionate Crab

MANKIND in the large is not aware of the gentle feelings and tender sentiments which may animate our familiar crustacean friend, the crab. Human beings value the crab principally as crabmeat salad and crabmeat cocktail, and fried soft-shelled crabs, or, as an arduous delicacy, boiled hard-shelled crabs. Seldom does anyone show any appreciation of the warm and sentimental heart that may beat within a crab's rugged shell.

There was once a diver, and he has had occasion to observe the less-known ways of the denizens of the ocean floor. He relates that he was at work in his diver's suit a hundred and fifty feet below the surface of the ocean. He was looking for a lost anchor. When he found the anchor he discovered that it was covered with the seaweed called kelp. He was in a kneeling position and clearing away the kelp with his knife.

His attention was diverted by a big, ferocious-looking lobster near him. That lobster had in its claws a young female crab. The diver, a kindly soul, reached over, freed young Miss Crab from the lobster's claws,

and handed Old Man Lobster a good whacking with the handle of the knife. The lobster gave him a mean look and slunk off.

The diver thought no more of the incident and went on clearing the kelp away from the anchor. Having to unwind a large piece of the seaweed, he laid his knife at his feet for a moment. When he reached for the knife again he found it gone, vanished. And it occurred to him that the malicious old lobster had sneaked up and stolen his knife in revenge.

That was a bad situation, because the diver then saw a man-eating shark lurking in the green distance of the underwater. And he had no knife with which to fight the shark.

Then he felt something brushing and bumping against his feet. He looked down and saw a little female crab. She was pushing against his leg. In his anxiety he was impatient, and didn't pay much attention to the tiny creature. He kicked her rudely away. But the little female crab would not be driven away.

He observed her more closely now. With one claw she was pulling at his trousers. In her other claw she had the missing knife. She realized now that he understood. She swam up and placed the knife in his hand. He noticed now that several of her legs were missing and she was clawed up a bit, and he realized that the vengeful lobster had stolen his knife, and the little crab had witnessed the act. She had seen the shark, and out of gratitude had flung herself upon the lobster, and, though badly bruised and mangled in the struggle, had taken the knife away from him.

The diver saw a look of affectionate alarm in the face of the little creature and then he saw that the shark was close at hand. He brandished his knife and the hideous monster of the deep fled.

When the diver finished the work on the anchor and was

drawn to the surface, he took the little crab with him. In the cabin of the boat that night he told the story to the other divers, and the little crustacean instantly became a universal favorite. They kept her and fed her, and when she became of marriageable age they caught a handsome young mate for her.

In due time she became a mother crab and had a hundred or so babies. The divers knew that, in spite of all the affection human beings could lavish upon a crab, a boat was no place for a large and growing crab family. So they released their friend and her mate and all of her babies. The whole clan went scurrying away through the water, but first the little female crab turned around for one last look at her human friends. And there were moist eyes and a sniffle or two among the hardened men of the underwater.—*Lowell Thomas in Tall Stories.*

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Simple Enough

Brown: "Your wife is a very systematic woman, isn't she?"

Jones: "Yes, very. She works on the theory that you can find whatever you want when you don't want it by looking where it wouldn't be if you did want it."—*Weekly News (Auckland, N. Z.).*