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AMONG THE WHALES.

Whales are the largest living animals now known, and well spoken of by Burke as "gigantic game." In general, they are divided into Phytophagous, or plant-eaters, Zoophagous, or animal-eaters. They have no external ear, other than an orifice; no visible neck; no hair or scales on the body. Some are supplied with teeth in both jaws, some only in the lower jaw, some have no teeth at all, as in the variety that gives us the whalebone. They are air-breathing animals, respiring through "blow-holes," or more regular nostrils. So it is only by sufferance that they are called "fishes," as a true fish is not an air-breathing animal. They have two ventricles to the heart, and are warm-blooded. In short, they belong to the great family of mammals.

Whales show their age in the color of their skin, as we do in our hair; white and gray appearing upon it as they advance in years. Some thus become piebald, or spotted with age. Occasionally specimens, of some varieties, attain an enormous length, from 80 to 100 feet, and in older times, when not so thinned out by the murderous harpoon, they may have extended themselves even still farther. A certain specimen of the great Northern Rorqual, the largest of the whale tribe, is said to have measured 105 feet. And in the single stomach of one of this variety, were found some hundreds of large cod, and apparently as many thousands of pilchards, a fish near the size of the herring. It is supposed that their eyesight may be more acute and powerful under water, than at the surface; and also somewhat so with their hearing; which may possibly account for the facility with which the whale-boats get so near them.

The two varieties of whales principally sought for by our whale-ships are the Sperm Whale (Cachatot), and the Right Whale

(Baleana mysticetus). The Sperm Whale, from which comes our sperm oil and sperm candles, has its lower jaw strongly-toothed, hanging on to an enormous head, which measures at least one-third of the entire body. This great head has in it a large cavity, called a "case," where the spermaceti, or sperm oil is secreted and

black, shaded into white on the belly. Immediately under the skin lies the blubber, or fat, which boiled or melted, furnishes the common oil. One of large size may afford 100 or even 150 barrels. When alarmed, this monster spouts with tremendous noise, ejecting the water through his blow-holes with intense velocity. When he decides to

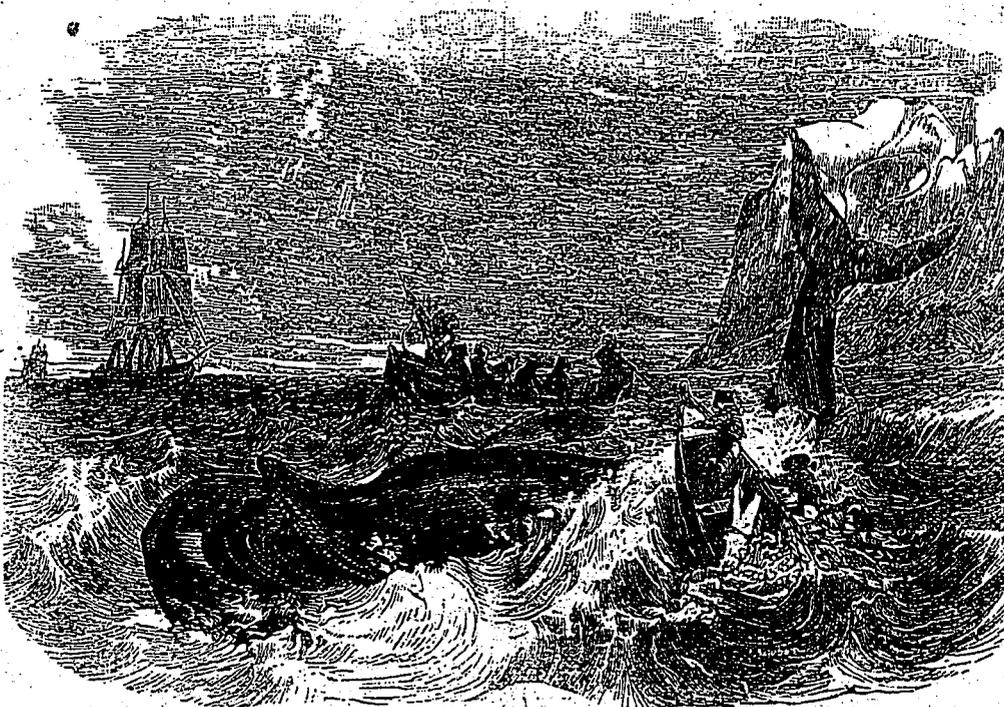
call his "flurry." Lashing the waves with his tremendous tail, he "maketh the deep," as the book of Job says, "to boil like a pot: so that one would think the deep to be hoary."

The Right Whale differs in structure from the Sperm Whale, and is typically larger, and affords very much more oil, 150, 200, or even more barrels from one carcass.

This is the variety that gives us our whalebone or "baleen," commonly called in England "whale-fin;" as also dealers in it there are known as "whale-fin merchants." This whalebone is attached to the upper jaw, and composes all the teeth that the creature has. It hangs in long strips, or blades, up and down the huge mouth, and acts as a seine, net, or strainer, to catch the minute shrimps, medusæ, &c., for food.

In feeding it opens wide its cavernous jaws and swims forward at a most rapid rate, engulfing multitudes innumerable of the fish-kind, which it catches or detains with its hairy whalebone seine, while the water thus strained-pours out in great streams at the sides of the mouth. The poor little shrimps and other kindred creatures seldom find escape through the closely-grated gates of this, to them, most horrible dental apparatus. So true is it that "the big fish eat up the little ones." Then man steps in and uses up the big ones. But how long it may be before he has used them all up it is impossible to conjecture. But the thing itself is not impossible.

As to the dangers, sometimes sailors get entangled in the line attached to the harpoon, and are so dragged into and under the water. Mr. John Dillingham, now living at Edgartown, Mass., was once so dragged down beneath the waves, but with great



WHALE FISHING.—THE WHALE IN A "FLURRY."

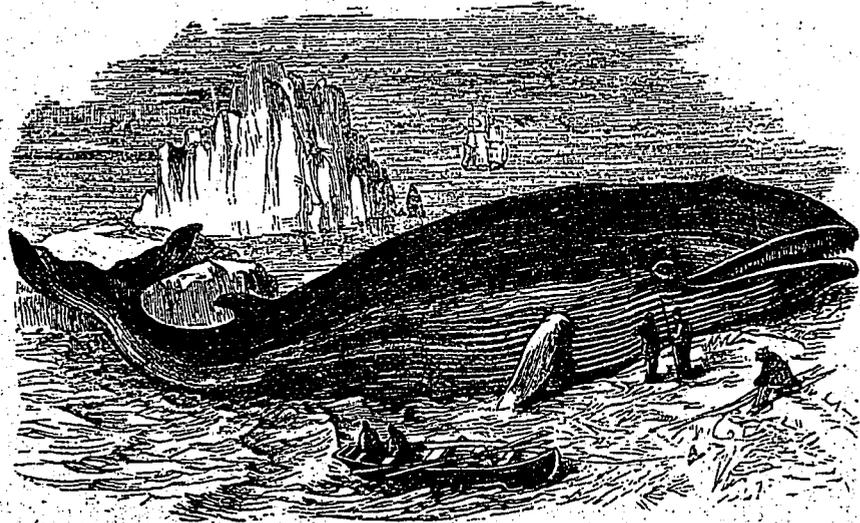
held, and from which it is baled out, sometimes in quantities amounting to a ton or so, or ten or twelve barrels or more.

Its heart, also, is said to be in some instances so large as to throw forward from ten to fifteen gallons of blood at a stroke. Of course, the mouth is immense, extending nearly the entire length of the great head, and with a throat to correspond; apparently ample to receive the body of a man. At least, no fisherman lost in it has ever come back to controvert the statement.

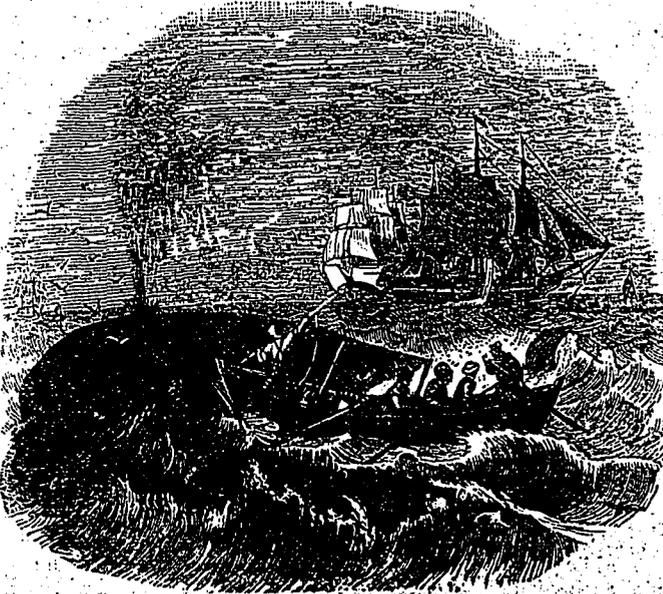
The skin of the sperm whale is generally

leave the dangerous nearness to his hunters, he gradually sinks his heavy head below the surface until obtaining a perpendicular direction, with tail up; and then shoots himself straight down into the fathomless deeps; there to stay forty or fifty minutes, or a shorter time, at his pleasure. And woe to the boat that happens to be exactly in his path when he comes up again. Many a boat's crew have found themselves flying in the air, or scattered on the waves, by such an agency!

This huge creature is sometimes known to leap clear out of the water, and to fall back upon his monstrous side. And alas! for the boat's crew that are then under him! When struck by the harpoon, or pierced by the sharp lance, his signs of pain are distressing in the extreme; and most terrific are his dying writhings, when he comes to what the sailors



THE RORQUAL, OR GREAT WHALE OF THE NORTH SEAS.



HARPOONING A WHALE.

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