

Leviathan and the Kraken

DOWN in the vast sunned depths of the sea lurks the Kraken of medieval Norse myth. He is not a mythical creature at all, but a giant cuttlefish or squid, with a body 20 feet long and ten 35-foot arms. Long the subject of quite justifiable skepticism, this giant mollusk is now known to be authentic and real.

Once in a rare while one is glimpsed at the surface. When that happens, usually another sea-serpent story is born. There are even tales of attacks on ships by these monsters. You must choose for yourself whether to believe them or not.

Master of the seas of the world is Leviathan, the sperm whale. He is the largest animal that has ever existed, reaching a length of 90 feet, and a weight far exceeding that of any of the dinosaurs of old. He fears nothing, and had no need to fear, until that mischievous little landing, man, learned how to build bigger whales out of wood and iron, and to arm them with the powers of Hell.

When Leviathan is hungry, he needs a giant meal. So he swims downward to where the Kraken lurks. How he finds him nobody knows. There must be many Krakens, for Leviathan seldom has to do without his pink flesh when he is minded to feed.

The sperm whale, unlike most whales, has teeth. They are bluntly conical mounds of hard ivory, bigger than a harpooner's fist. Imagine a big alligator's jaw multiplied by ten or twenty. That gives a rough idea of Leviathan's armament.

One can only guess what titanic struggle ensues when the giant sperm whale finds his giant prey. The Kraken does not yield without a fight. But apparently he does not have any more chance

than the Dragon had against St. George. He is rent and devoured.

How do we know all this? Leviathan tells us.

When a sperm whale is killed by a whaling ship, its skin is apt to be scarred, especially about the great, blocky head, with saucer-sized circles. It looks as though the Devil's horse had been galloping there. These are the marks of the formidable, horny-rimmed sucker-disks on the giant squid's arms. Evidently the poor Kraken has defended himself with the only technique he knew—and found it insufficient.

When Leviathan, himself now a victim to one smaller yet mightier than himself, is cut up for oil and meat, great salmon-colored chunks of flesh are found in his stomach. Even more convincing, there are very apt to be some huge, parrot-like beaks, that once armed the Kraken's devouring mouth.

Science News Letter, March 19, 1938

PHOTOGRAPHY

Unusual Movie Built From Variations of Parabola

See Front Cover

IN A NOVEL sort of motion picture, all the "actors" are designs based on the parabola, an important mathematical curve. The photograph shown on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER and all the others that make up the 900 feet of film in "Parabola" are built up from this type of curve.

The parabola is the curve taken by a projectile, by the water of a fountain, or by the cables of a suspension bridge.

Abstract form, it is pointed out by Rutherford Boyd, designer and director of the film, is one of the sources of design and, therefore, of beauty. The designs in the film are synchronized to music.

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The Malayan tree shrew looks like a sharp-nosed squirrel.

● RADIO

March 24, 4:00 p. m., E.S.T.
EVOLUTION TO ORDER—Dr. Albert Blakeslee of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

March 24, 4:00 p. m., E.S.T.
VISITING THE SICK—Miss Mary Ryan of the American Red Cross.

In the Science Service series of radio discussions led by Watson Davis, Director, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

DENTISTRY

Danger To Heart In Local Anesthetics

A WARNING to dentists advising care in the use of procaine-epinephrine local anesthetics was issued by University of Chicago scientists after more than a year of experimentation.

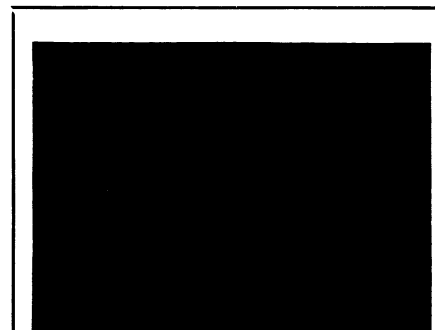
These anesthetics, injected into the gums to eliminate pain, are found to cause marked rises in blood pressure, sometimes toxic reactions and may be dangerous to the heart. Although widely used in dental practice, there has been insufficient research upon their dental and medical use, the report in the Proceedings of the Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine states.

The research was by Drs. Paul P. Pickering and Herbert P. Steinmeyer of the Walter G. Zoller Memorial Dental Clinic and Dr. Arno B. Luckhardt, who in 1923 discovered the anesthetic properties of ethylene gas.

Science News Letter, March 19, 1938

Bubble drinking fountains for the home are being produced.

"Eighty miles of lilacs" are to be planted in a lilac hedge along the highway from Fargo to Grand Forks, North Dakota.



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