

## THE WHALE — A STUDY

### THE HISTORIC SCHOOL OF JONAH

I WAS MUCH interested in the diagram on the Time Card sent out by the Secretary of the Club the other day, accompanying the notice of a Musical Soiree to be given at some future date in the club rooms. At first glance I supposed that the pink card was an enclosed dodger surreptitiously introduced by some irresponsible mailing firm to call attention to the times of sailing and to the admirable accommodation and service on the Whaleback, which takes men in happy frame to Milwaukee to be married — and returns them to become sober. This idea was rather borne out by the portrait on the reverse of the card of such a jolly tar, wearing pinned to the bosom of his bathing suit the insignia of his ship, seemingly. Then the brilliant complexion of "Literary Club" and "Jonah" dazzled my eye and I perceived that I was on the wrong tack, nautically speaking, for there was no possible connection between Jonah and the S. S. Christopher Columbus. The "Whaleback" is said not to be profitable while, as is stoutly maintained in some quarters, in the time

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of Jonah there was considerable prophet in one whale — an individual prophet, as it were — one profit from maker to consumer!

While cogitating on this and kindred themes, I was inspired to study the natural history of the whale and found much to my profit in the many interesting and scientific facts. Neither I, nor the authorities I have taken occasion to consult, have had Jonah's splendid and I may say unique opportunity to take an inside view into the workings of the whale in the domestic economy of every day life. We have arrived at our conclusions from careful use of the dissecting knife and the microscope. As to that powerful, vital engine in the hold of the whale, we all agree that it is "heart to beat."

Although living in the water the true whale represents being called a fish. Some un-naturalists once, in the presence of a mother whale, referred to her cub as a cunning little fish; whereupon she interjected in almost the words of "the father of her country," "I cannot tell a lie, I did *not* do it with my little hatch it." And, indeed, to its lasting credit be it set down that in all the great multitude and magnitude of fish stories, the whale has never been known to utter a lie. Whales though moral are not necessarily ecclesiastical.

Now Bulls may be papa-l. Whales are mamma-l always.

Whales swim naturally with great ease and their tails — steering with one fin and nursing their young with the udder.

The most recent discovery in connection with the whale is that it does not play golf. The links of an anchor chain do not offer a sporting ground suitable to whales.

Whales do not care to indulge in football or sports of that nature though they spend so much of their time in schools. The nature of the work is almost entirely academic so that the head of a whale soon develops to about one-third the size of the body. A large part of their school term is given to Delsarte and elocution, with great attention to correct breathing; so that the whale learns to "spout with considerable violence" like a senator or an alderman though unlike an alderman in that water is the whale's natural element. A suck of salt water flavored with iceberg puts the whale in the best of spirits. But like the senator and the alderman, when the whale spouts in public it gives itself dead away, for then the man at the mast-head cries "there she blows" and that is the signal for the harpoon or the lampoon.

Without wishing in the least to disparage the whale I must say that in one thing it much resembles the populist and free silver orator. Its jaws are six feet wide, open up ten feet high and are sixteen feet

long. Just think of it! 16 to 1 — sixteen feet of jaw to one whale.

Like old Mr. Johnson of the song, the whale has troubles of its own and has been caught weeping bitterly — but it much prefers to keep its blubber to itself.

The whale, producing as it does necessary and beautiful articles of toilet such as seafoam, whale oil soap and corsets, is much affected by the ladies. The jaw of the north whale is equipped with about a ton of fish plates composed of whalebone. It is the function of this bone to catch fish and truck for its whaleship's food; and being deeply attached to the whale it performs this function cheerfully throughout its aquatic life. When its term of food gathering is completed, the whalebone enters into rest in corset form and embraces the dainty waist of many a charming maid. A rich reward, indeed, for a life of service. I believe there are men who would fish for a whale if for reward they might forever clasp in their sinewy and flexible arms some lithe, slender female form. It were a consummation devoutly to be wished — could one be assured that it, in time, might not become consommé!

And now having imparted to the club more information concerning the whale than I, myself, possess, I retire in favor of some disciple whose barque threads more fluently than does mine the watery mazes of the lie.