

of the northern sea snake, agree perfectly with the idea of the projecting back of a shark followed by a succession of waves, diminishing in size as they recede from the dorsal prominence.

The parts before mentioned as alone visible above water would form so small a portion of the whole body, that they might easily convey the notion of narrowness as compared to great length; and the assertion of a few witnesses that the dorsal projections were pointed, may have arisen from their having taken a more accurate look at the shape of the fins, and distinguished them better from the intervening waves of the sea. But, according to this view, the large eyes seen in the "blunt head" by several observers, must have been imaginary, unless in cases where they may have really been looking at a seal. It can hardly be doubted that some good marksmen, both in Norway and New England, who fired at the animal, sent bullets into what they took to be the head, and the fact that the wound seems never to have produced serious injury, although in one case blood flowed freely, accords perfectly with the hypothesis that they were firing at the dorsal prominence, and not at the head of a shark. The opinion of most of the observers that the undulations were coincident with the rapid movements of the creature, agrees well with our theory, which refers the greater number of the projections to waves of the sea. On the other hand, as several of the protuberances are real, consisting of three fins and a part of the back, the emergence of these parts may explain what other witnesses beheld. Dr. Melville has suggested to me, that if the speed were as great as stated, and the progressive movement such as he has described,* the three fins would be first submerged, and then re-emerge in such rapid succession, that the image of one set would be retained on the retina of the eye after another set had become visible, and they might be counted over and over again, and multiplied indefinitely. Although I think this explanation unnecessary in most cases, such a confusion of the images seems very possible, when we recollect that the fins would be always mingled with waves of the sea, which are said, in the Norwegian accounts of 1845, to have been so great, that they broke on the coast in

* Ante, p. 119.