

calm weather, when the serpent swam by, as if a steamer at full speed was passing near the shore.

I conclude, therefore, that the sea serpent of North America and the German Ocean is a shark, probably the *Squalus maximus*, a species which seems, from the measurements taken in Orkney in 1808, to attain sometimes, when old, a much larger size than had ever been previously imagined. It may be objected that this opinion is directly opposed to a great body of evidence which has been accumulating for nearly a century, derived partly from experienced sea-faring men, and partly from observers on the land, some of whom were of the educated class. I answer that most of them caught glimpses only of the creature when in rapid motion and in its own element, four-fifths or more of the body being submerged; and when, at length, the whole carcass of a monster mistaken for a sea snake was stranded, touched, and measured, and parts of it sent to the ablest anatomists and zoologists in Scotland, we narrowly escaped having transmitted to us, without power of refutation, a tale as marvelous and fabulous concerning its form and nature, as was ever charged against Pontoppidan by the most skeptical of his critics.\*

\* After the above was written, a letter appeared in the English newspapers, by Captain M'Quhae, R.N., of the *Dædalus* frigate, dated Oct. 7, 1848, giving an account of "the sea serpent" seen by him, Aug. 6, 1848, lat.  $24^{\circ} 44'$  S. between the Cape and St. Helena, about 300 miles distant from the western coast of Africa; the length estimated at sixty feet, head held four feet above water, with something like the mane of a horse on its back which was straight and inflexible. Professor Owen has declared his opinion, after seeing the drawing of the animal, sent to the Admiralty by Captain M'Quhae, "that it may have been the largest of the seal tribe, the sea-elephant of the southern whalers, *Phoca proboscidea*, which sometimes attains a length of thirty feet, and individuals of which have been known to have been floated by icebergs toward the Cape. This species has coarse hair on the upper part of its inflexible trunk which might appear like a mane. The chief impelling force would be the deeply immersed terminal fins and tail, which would create a long eddy, readily mistakable for an indefinite prolongation of the body."

Mr. Owen's conjecture appears to me very probable; but, before I heard it, I had made up my mind that the creature seen by Captain M'Quhae differed from the sea serpent of the Norwegians and New Englanders, from whose description it varies materially, especially in the absence, when at full speed, of apparent undulations, or dorsal prominences.