

for a full half-century, and from the pages of even our more credulous voyagers for at least a century more, it maintained its place as a real existence long enough to be assigned a permanent niche in our literature. It has been described as raising its vast arms out of the water to the height of tall forest-trees, and as stretching its knobbed and warted bulk, roughened with shells, and darkened with seaweed, for roods and furlongs together,—resembling nothing less extensive than some range of rocky skerries on some dangerous coast, or some long chain of sand-banks forming the bar of some great river. It was introduced to the reading world with much circumstantiality of detail, by an old Norwegian bishop (Eric Pontoppidan), as ‘an animal the largest in creation, whose body rises above the surface of the water like a mountain, and its arms like the masts of ships.’ And one of the French continuators of Buffon,—Denys Montfort,—regarding it as at least a possible existence, has given, in his history of Mollusca, a print of a colossal cuttle-fish hanging at the gunwale of a ship, and twisting its immense arms about the masts and rigging,—a feat which the cuttle-fish of the Indian seas is said sometimes to accomplish, if not with a ship, at least with a canoe. But nowhere does the kraken of Norway look half so imposing or half so poetical as in Milton. In palpable reference to the old bishop’s ‘largest animal in creation,’ we find the poet describing, in one of his finest similes,—

‘ that sea-beast,
 Leviathan, which God of all his works
 Created hugest that swim th’ ocean stream :
 Him haply slumb’ring on the Norway foam,
 The pilot of some small night-founder’d skiff,
 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
 With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
 Moors by his side under the lee, while night
 Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.’

The existing cuttle-fish of our seas, though vastly less