

Is This the Great Fish That Swallowed Prophet Jonah?

Scientists Are Baffled by Strange Monster Here in Pensacola, Which Was Captured Off Florida Keys.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION SAYS IT IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST FISH

Capt. Chas. H. Thompson, of Miami, Its Captor, Gives Weight at 30,000 Pounds, Length 45 Feet.

WHAT is declared by scientists to be the largest fish known in history or ever captured in the history of the world, will be on exhibition in Pensacola. It is so big, in fact, it could have swallowed twenty Jonahs without suffering the slightest pang of indigestion.

Of course it is harmless now, but before it succumbed to the effects of five harpoon thrusts and 151 good sized bullets in a battle which lasted thirty-nine hours its animal instincts were so fierce that an octopus weighing 1,500 pounds and a half-ton of coral only served it as an appetizer of the mildest sort.

This is a big fish story, but it is a true one, and the Smithsonian Institution at Washington vouches for it in every detail.

This strange and mysterious monster which, as above stated, will be on exhibition in Pensacola, is 45 feet in length and measures 23 feet 9 inches in circumference. It weighed when captured 15 tons or 30,000 pounds, and its liver alone weighed 1,700 pounds.

Think of harpooning such a monster as this and being dragged through the water at express train speed for hundreds of miles over the ocean for two days and a night before the game was up and the capture safely landed.

Think of catching a fish with a mouth big enough to hold three men of ordinary size and of such strange and peculiar aspect that men of science stood astounded. Sounds like a Jonah story, doesn't it? And for all one knows to the contrary it may be and unquestionably is the sequel to that story in the Bible that for ages has proved the stumbling block to men of science and made ministers of every creed use their wit and ingenuity to logically explain the story of the big fish that swallowed the Hebrew prophet some thousands of years ago.

Capt. Thompson Proves Story.
It remains for Capt. Charles H. Thompson of Miami, Fla., to end the controversy as to how belongs the credit of capturing the monster that could have swallowed Jonah with the greatest ease had it been in the neighborhood when the prophet was cast overboard by the crew of the ship he was traveling on.

Nobody is better known in the world of sports than Captain Thompson. For years he has been, and still is, the favored patron of the Vanderbilt, the Whitneys and other millionaire sportsmen who frequent the lower east coast and who invariably engage him to accompany them on their trips through the Everglades and through the magic waters of the Florida Keys after big game for which this section is noted.

Captain Thompson encountered this strange fish while cruising off the lower Florida keys in that stretch of water that for more than a century was the scene of countless thrilling adventures and romantic exploits like of Spanish explorers and blood-thirsty pirates.

Long the home of romance and mystery it seems only natural that this stranger and most mysterious of monsters should have been discovered lurking in these magical waters. Captain Thompson had captured many a wonderful inhabitant of these teeming waters, ranging all the way from predatory sharks to terrible devil fish, but nothing so strange, so weird, so unaccountable as this extraordinary creature, this puzzle to the scientific world, which has become known as the Deep Sea Mystery, ever came out of the sea before.

With the first announcement in the papers of the remarkable achievement, Captain Thompson was flooded with letters and telegrams from all over the country asking for descriptions and articles of the wonder, and the interest became so widespread and insistent that after having had the unique specimen preserved at great expense with the assistance of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, he decided to exhibit the wonder throughout the country.

Yacht Now in Pensacola.
To that end he had a large sea-going yacht constructed, the entire lower deck of which was especially designed to accommodate the monster fish and was made sufficiently large to allow for ample space for as many as 1,500 spectators to view it from every side.

The yacht also carries one of the finest and most valuable private marine exhibits ever brought together,

consisting of numerous rare and strange specimens of marine life, all of which were personally collected by Captain Thompson while on his many cruises in the Florida Straits and adjacent waters.

Captain Thompson's palatial yacht, for such it is, as it was built at a cost in excess of \$20,000 will tie up Wednesday at Captain Bennie Edmundson's wharf where the huge monster will be on exhibition.

The people of Pensacola now have the great privilege for the first time of seeing this truly wonderful marine exhibit, including the huge monster known as the Deep Sea Mystery, which possibly has been the subject of more speculation and controversy than any other creature that ever came out of the ocean.

What, then, is the great Deep Sea Mystery?

No one knows. You must see it for yourself and your guess will be as good as anybody's.

You may think it is some kind of a whale. But it is not a whale. Whales are not classed as fish, but are warm blooded mammals that suckle their young like a cow.

Except for its huge size the Deep Sea Mystery has not a single feature in common with the whale. The creature is a true fish with all the well known characteristics of a fish including the gills, which are four feet long and by means of which it breathes. Yet it does not resemble any species of fish known to scientific authorities.

You may think it is a shark, but it is not a shark. No shark ever grew to be such a size as this, besides the tell-tale characteristic of all sharks, the slit-like mouth underneath the head, making the animal turn over on its side or back in order to seize its prey, is absent.

Hugh Fish Only a Baby.
On the contrary, the mouth of the Deep Sea Mystery is an enormous cavity, 30 inches wide and 43 inches deep situated right at the end of the snout and provides for a monstrous snout cat fish more than anything else. Inside the mouth is a tongue forty inches long and a gullet large enough to swallow a giant octopus weighing 1,500 pounds which was found alive in the creature's stomach when it was dissected.

The Deep Sea Mystery captured by Captain Thompson exhibits other characteristics of a true fish that are as A, B, C, to the scientific investigator. There are no ribs and in place of a backbone its spinal column consisted of cartilaginous vertebrae, some of which were 13 1-2 inches wide and showing signs of ossification. This was proof beyond doubt that the creature was still undeveloped—it was a baby, in fact.

Naturalists say that a full grown specimen of the kind would be not less than two and a half times as large as the baby captured by Captain Thompson. Had this creature lived out its allotted span then it must have attained the stupendous proportions of 115 feet in length and 29 or 35 feet broad.

Baby though it was, it had assuredly cut its teeth, for the jaws were lined with innumerable tiny teeth that nobody has taken the trouble to count. They are set with an inward slant so as to prevent the escape of any prey seized by the creature in looking for food and Jonah would have had small chance of escape had he fallen in its way.

The huge mouth of such a monster as the Deep Sea Mystery would not appear to invite repose, but as a matter of fact two men did actually sit side by side in the creature's mouth without crowding each other. The tail of the Deep Sea Mystery measures ten feet from tip to tip; the pectoral fin is five feet long and three feet wide, while the dorsal fin is three feet long and two feet nine inches wide. With this huge muscular tail as motive power the creature was

Facts of Interest About the Deep Sea Monster

Measures 45 feet in length. Weighs 15 tons or thirty thousand pounds.

Its liver alone weighed 1,700 pounds or more than ten full grown men put together.

It is twenty-three feet around the body and its tail measures ten feet from tip to tip.

It had swallowed an octopus weighing one thousand five hundred pounds which was still alive in its stomach when caught.

It could have swallowed twenty Jonahs without suffering the slightest pang of indigestion.

It smashed a boat into thousands of pieces and crushed the rudder and propeller of a thirty-one ton yacht with a single swish of its mighty tail.

Five harpoon thrusts and one hundred and fifty large calibre rifle bullets only served to increase its fury and it took five days to finally kill it.

The battle lasted thirty-nine hours—two days and a night—in open sea with monster dragging small boat at express train speed for hundreds of miles.

Smithsonian authorities believe that the creature was an inhabitant of depths more than fifteen hundred feet below the surface and that it was blown up by some subterranean or volcanic upheaval which injured its diving apparatus so it was unable to return to its native depths.

Its hide is three inches thick and enabled it to withstand the most enormous water pressure, a pressure almost inconceivable to man. Its eyes, which are very small, have no lids and were never closed, indicating that it lived at a depth where eyes were of no avail.

The creature is not classified in natural history, the genus or species is unknown and it is not only the most remarkable zoological specimen of the fish tribe known in history.

Although the largest fish ever captured, scientists claim it was only a baby of its tribe and if it had lived to attain full growth it would have been two and one-half times as large.

Every undertaking establishment on the Florida East Coast from Jacksonville to Key West gave up their entire supply of formaldehyde to preserve the monster and over nineteen barrels were used.

It was mounted by J. S. Warmeth, the celebrated taxidermist of the Smithsonian Institution, who was also chosen to accompany Admiral Peary on his famous trip to the Pole.

Will be on exhibition Wednesday at Captain Bennie Edmundson's wharf on board Captain Thompson's large, sea-going yacht which he built at a cost of \$30,000.

MINISTERS OF GOSPEL GIVE OUT STATEMENT

Great Discovery Produces Sensation in Scientific World—Theologians, Scientists and Other Learned Men Eagerly Write for Facts.

Theologians and other learned men who have viewed the giant fish say it unquestionably must have been a creature of this species that swallowed the Prophet Jonah as related in the Scriptures and no discovery within the past century has created such a profound sensation in the scientific and zoological world.

As a matter of fact, no other species of fish ever known to science could possibly have accomplished the feat. Doubting Thomases and skeptics have always proclaimed that no fish big enough to swallow Jonah ever existed, but Captain Thompson's capture throws an entirely different light on the matter.

Within only a few days after the news of the capture was flashed over the wires of the country and the details of the capture appeared in the newspapers, Captain Thompson began to receive letters and requests for scientific data from all parts of the country. Letters by the score were received from newspapers and magazines, publishers, ministers of the Gospel, scientists, writers on natural history, to say nothing of an offer of \$50,000 from a well known capitalist who wanted to buy the fish for exhibition purposes.

In this connection Captain Thompson said: "The news of my exploit spread rapidly abroad over the country through the newspaper accounts that had been printed about it and I was daily receiving letters from people everywhere asking for the facts and details of its capture."

Bryan Sees Monster.
"Many persons who had seen the giant fish while it was being exhibited at Miami," continued the captain, "wrote to me afterwards about it. Among the most valued letters I received is one from the Hon. William Jennings Bryan, formerly secretary of state in President Wilson's cabinet, who commended it as a well known. Mr. Bryan has a winter home at Miami

and spends much of his time there during the season. "Newspaper and magazine editors were constantly applying to me for information and photographs for the stories they wanted to print about the Deep Sea Mystery. Among the first was A. W. Stoddard, of the New York Sun, who printed a splendid account in the Sunday Sun. Scott Sinclair applied for material for a story for Field and Stream. Among others who wrote up the big fish were H. E. Ehlers, of the Newark Sunday Call; Francis Arthur Jones, New York representative of the well known English publications, The Tatler, The Sphere and The Wide World Magazine, the latter publishing a six or eight-page article. The Chicago Record-Herald, the Louisville Courier-Journal, and other well known publications too numerous to mention, also published interesting articles.

"Among the large numbers of letters received from ministers was one from the Rev. Scott Phillips, a prominent Presbyterian minister, of Oxford, N. C., who said: "The giant fish which you captured has made a tremendous impression on me and I believe that God enabled you to capture this fish that its evidence might be used to convince skeptics that no longer is there any ground to doubt the account found in the book of Jonah that he was swallowed by a great fish."

"The Bible does not state that Jonah was swallowed by a whale necessarily, for it says God had prepared the fish. He certainly must have prepared the one you caught. My purpose in writing you this letter is to get some reply which I might quote in a series of sermons I desire to preach from the Book of Jonah."

Captain Thompson has in his possession numerous other interesting letters from, well known ministers which cannot be published for lack of space.

It will be on exhibition Wednesday at Captain Bennie Edmundson's wharf

and a night over the trackless main is another story and will be related in a subsequent article in the captain's own words.

It was undoubtedly the most thrilling adventure that ever befell mariner or sportsman outside the pages of fiction, and one must read Victor Hugo's great story, "The Toilers of the Sea," which is a purely imaginary romance, to find anything approxi-

mate to the great fish which was captured off the Florida keys and which is now on exhibition in Pensacola.

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WHITE SLAVE CASE WAS THROWN OUT

In the United States District Court Monday the case against George R. Kummans charged with white slavery was not pressed.

Anna Brown was found guilty of giving liquor to soldiers. She will be sentenced later.

EX-POSTMASTER IS SENTENCED 1 YEAR

W. H. McSwain, postmaster at Deerland, Okaloosa County, Fla., yesterday pleaded guilty in the United States District Court to the charge of embezzling postal funds. He was sentenced to one year and one day in the federal penitentiary at Atlanta.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP ON THOUSANDS OF ALIENS

Washington, May 13.—In co-operation with the army general staff, the naturalization bureau of the department of labor prepared today to confer American citizenship on one hundred and twenty-three thousand aliens in the national army, besides many other thousands in civil life. Notices of signing the new law has been sent to all army cantonments, requesting assistance of men eligible to citizenship and affording them an opportunity to complete naturalization and arrangements made by the department of justice to hold special terms of court adjacent to camps and cantonments.

matting the captain's nerve-racking experience.

The eyes of the Deep Sea Mystery are unusually small for so huge an animal as this, with other characteristics displayed by the creature's viscera, indicate that it inhabited the abyssal depths of the ocean where little if any sunlight ever penetrates and eyes are of little use. This must be true, for were it a surface dweller undoubtedly some mature specimens must long since have been discovered dispersing themselves in these waters by one of the thousands of mariners who have constantly traversed these seas during the past 400 years.

Since no one has ever made any such momentous discovery the question naturally arises how came this creature to be swimming in shallow water where Capt. Thompson by the merest chance discovered it.

Science answers that it must have been thrown to the surface by some unusual submarine disturbance, such as a volcanic eruption might bring about. Relieved of the enormous pressure exerted by the water at the great depth which it inhabited, its body became distended with air and gases, its diving apparatus was ruptured and the animal was unable to dive. During the many hours of its frantic struggle to escape its pursuers it never once attempted to dive but kept to the surface till it became exhausted and was finally slain.

Thousands View Monster.

The skin is three inches thick, scaleless and so tough that the many bullets fired at it hardly penetrated it at all. The liver alone weighed 1,700 pounds and 19 barrels of formaldehyde and other disinfectants were required to preserve the skin while a wood and steel framework was constructed along the lines of the fish's proportions by Prof. J. S. Warmeth, one of the most skilled taxidermists in the country, who had been recommended by the Smithsonian Institution at Washington to Capt. Thompson as being eminently fitted to do the work in the most satisfactory manner. A number of able assistants were pressed into service and after weeks of arduous labor the Deep Sea Mystery was successfully mounted and made ready for exhibition.

News of the strange fish traveled far and wide, and although it was midsummer and Miami practically depopulated of tourists which form a great part of its population, when the monster was landed more than 5,000 people crowded the docks and lined the river banks in order to see the wonder prize. Every body in Miami, including the mayor, councilmen, ministers, merchants, and in fact, practically everybody in the county saw the fish during the few days it lay on the docks.

Many scientists learned in fish lore went to Miami for the special purpose of examining the strange creature, and, if possible, to classify it. But no one was able to tell what it was or to what order of the finny tribe it belongs. So far as is known it is the first and only specimen of the kind ever seen by the eye of man unless indeed, some far off progenitor of this creature of mystery appearing in the nick of time, saved Jonah from a watery grave and afterwards to spew him out on dry land when he had repented.

Considering that the Mediterranean is a semi-tropic sea with a temperature about like that of the Caribbean sea, and with a fauna of a similar type, such a surmise is by no means impossible.

Capt. Thompson is now preparing to exhibit his prize throughout the entire country and after exhibiting the fish here for only a few days will sail with his family for Mobile and New Orleans.

His itinerary will include all the leading cities and towns of the Mississippi river and its tributaries on the completion of which he will go via the Chicago canal into the Great Lakes, thence to Buffalo and the Erie canal to the Hudson river on to New York City and the Atlantic seaboard and back to Miami.

Capt. Thompson, as may well be imagined, is of a most interesting personality and although very quiet and unassuming in his manner, is always glad to meet the public and relate in person the many thrilling details of his wonderful exploit.—Ad.

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