WHALE HUNTING *with* GUN *and* CAMERA

A NATURALIST'S ACCOUNT OF THE MODERN SHORE WHALING INDUSTRY, OF WHALES AND THEIR HABITS, AND OF HUNTING EXPERIENCES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD

BY
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THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO

MY WIFE

WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT IT
WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

AND TO

MY MOTHER

WHO HAS BORNE THE ANXIETIES
OF HER SON'S LONG WANDERINGS

PREFACE

In this book I have endeavored to tell of modern shore whaling as I have seen it during the past eight years while collecting and studying cetaceans for the American Museum of Natural History. This work carried me twice around the world, as well as northward on two expeditions to Alaska, and southward to the tropic waters of Borneo and the Dutch East Indies.

I have also tried to give, in a readable way, some of the most interesting facts about whales and their habits, confining myself, however, to those species which form the basis of the shore whaling industry, or are commercially important, and which have come under my personal observation.

In all of this work the camera has necessarily played a large part, for it is only by means of photographs that whales can be seen in future study as they appear alive or when freshly killed. It is hardly necessary to say that the photographing has been intensely interesting, and to any one who is in search of real excitement I can heartily recommend camera hunting for whales.

It should be understood that this book is in no sense a manual of the large Cetacea. I hope, however, at some future time to write a volume which will treat of this wonderful mammalian order in a less casual way, and thus satisfy a desire which has been ever present in my mind since I began the study of whales.

Some portions of this book have been published as separate articles in the *American Museum Journal*, *World's Work*, *Metropolitan*, *Outing*, *National Geographic*, and other magazines, but by far the greater part of it is new.

There have been many pleasurable sides to the work, but one of the most delightful has been the friends that I have made, and my cordial reception by the officials of the whaling companies in whatever corner of the world I have chanced to be.

Space will not permit me to mention all those to whom I am indebted and who have contributed to the success of the various expeditions, but I wish first to express my gratitude to the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, under whose auspices all my work upon cetaceans has been conducted, and especially to President Henry Fairfield Osborn for his encouragement and wise counsel.

Captains I. N. Hibberd and John Barneson have never failed in kindness and the President and Directors of the Toyo Hogei Kabushiki Kaisha of Osaka, and Mr. D. Ogiwara of Shimonoseki, Japan, are in a large measure responsible for the success of the work conducted in the Orient. Not only did these gentlemen freely extend the courtesies of their ships and stations, but also presented to the American Museum of Natural History skeletons of all the large Japanese cetaceans, which are the only specimens of Asiatic whales in America.

Thanks are due to the Directors of the (former) Pacific Whaling Company of Victoria, B. C., and to the (former) managers of the stations, Mr. Sidney C. Ruck, V. H. Street and J. H. Quinton. Mr. Ruck also furnished me with valuable

data as to the progress of the American West Coast whaling industry and assisted in other ways.

I cannot mention, individually, all the gunners who have entertained me ashore and afloat, but the kindness of Captains H. G. Melsom, Fred Olsen and Y. E. Andersen I shall never forget. Captain Melsom has also read portions of the manuscript of this book and in criticism has afforded me the benefit of his long experience and keen observation.

My wife, Yvette Borup Andrews, has transcribed practically all of this book from my dictation and has assisted in numberless other ways throughout its preparation, and to her my thanks are due.

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude for material assistance throughout the work upon cetaceans to Dr. Frederic A. Lucas, Director of the Museum; Dr. J. A. Allen, Dr. Herman C. Bumpus, Messrs. George H. Sherwood, (late) George S. Bowdoin and Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Bernheimer.

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INTRODUCTION
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHORE WHALING

Although the commercial products of whales have contributed largely to the comfort and welfare of the civilized world for over a thousand years, never have the animals been of greater economic importance than they are today.

It is true that the magnificent fleet of ships which had its birth in the New England States has passed away, and that the smoke of cotton-mills now drifts over the famous old city of New Bedford where once the harbor was filled with the towering masts of scores of whaling vessels.

But as one chapter of whaling history closed another opened and the scene shifted to Norway where Tønsberg, a little city in Christiania Bay, has become the Alpha and Omega of the modern whaling alphabet. It was there, in 1864, that Svend Foyn invented the harpoon-gun and brought into existence the sturdy little steamships which were destined to take the place of New England's fleet, destroyed by the Confederate raiders during the Civil War.

Although despised by the "deep-water" whalers of New Bedford, nevertheless shore whaling has rapidly grown into a world industry which today, in the height of its prosperity, yields a revenue of nearly $70,000,000 a year.

In the old days only three species, the sperm, bowhead and right whale, were hunted and until Svend Foyn invented the harpoon-gun the fin whales, of less commercial value, were seldom captured. Their yield of oil was so small, and the whalebone so short and coarse, that if these products alone were utilized they were not worth the trouble of killing. Moreover, the great speed of the animals in the water and their tendency to sink when dead made them unacceptable to the men who hunted in a small boat with a hand harpoon and lance.

With the development of steam whalers the situation was changed, for they made possible the capture of "finners" in sufficient numbers to warrant the erection of stations at certain points on the shore, near the feeding grounds of the animals, where the huge carcasses could be brought in and converted into commercial products.

The perfection of the harpoon-gun and steam whale ships came only after long discouragement and persistent effort upon the part of Svend Foyn. Foyn was born in Tønsberg in 1809, and died there in 1894. He went to sea at fourteen in the merchant service and later entered the sealing fleet where he eventually made considerable money. It was while sealing that he conceived the idea of capturing the fin whales with a bomb harpoon, and 360,000 *kronen* were spent in experimenting before he succeeded in building a suitable gun and vessel.

In 1864 he went to Finmark for the first time in the small ship *Spes et Fides*, but caught nothing and was equally unsuccessful in the two following years. In 1867 he secured

the first whales at Vardö, in Varangerfjord, and the next season killed 30. In 1869 he went north with two ships but got only 17 whales, and in 1870 only 36. It was in this year that at Kirkeö the first factory for converting whale flesh into guano, or fertilizer, was built and successfully operated. Foyn's best years were between 1871 and 1880, when 506 whales were killed, having a value of about 2,000,000 kronen.

In 1877 a competitive company began work in Jarfjord, and in 1881 two others started at Vardö and two in West Finmark near the North Cape. In 1882 Norway had 8 companies and 12 ships, and five years later 20 companies and 35 ships. In 1890 the whales began to show the effect of continual persecution, decreasing rapidly in numbers, and five companies shifted their operations to Iceland. In 1896 the 18 ships hunting there killed 792 whales, yielding 49,500 barrels of oil; in the same season 29 ships off the Finmark coast caught 1,212 whales.

From the very beginning the Norwegian fishermen were hostile to the shore whalers, for they believed that the whales drove the fish toward the land and into their nets and that their industry was being greatly injured by the slaughter of the animals. Although it has been clearly demonstrated that whales have no direct influence upon the movements of fish, nevertheless in 1903 the Störthing prohibited shore whaling altogether.

The efforts of the Norwegian whalers had been watched with interest in other parts of the world and in 1897 shore whaling began in Newfoundland; there it thrived amazingly, and by

1905 eighteen stations were in operation upon the island and in its immediate vicinity.

In 1905 the first shore station on the Pacific coast of America was built at Sechart, in Barclay Sound, on the west side of Vancouver Island. This factory was under the management of the Pacific Whaling Company, of Victoria, B. C., and although their first season was not a success, a revision of the methods of handling the carcasses resulted in a lucrative business being established. In 1907 a second fine station was erected at Kyuquot, one hundred miles north of Sechart.

About this time the Tyee Company was formed under the direction of Captains Hibberd and Barneson, and a station was constructed at Murderer's Cove, on the southern end of Admiralty Island, Alaska. The hunting here was entirely conducted in the inland waters of Frederick Sound, and after a few seasons the whales became so reduced in numbers that operations had to be transferred to the open sea about Cape Ommaney, sixty miles away; the Tyee Company was later re-formed as the United States Whaling Company.

In 1910 the Pacific Whaling Company was sold to the Canadian North Pacific Fisheries, Ltd., with stations at Rose and Naden Harbor, Queen Charlotte Islands, and Bay City, Washington, besides the two Vancouver factories. Another establishment, known as the Alaska Whaling Company, started work at Unimak Pass, Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and a Norwegian firm built a station on the Pacific coast of Mexico.

About the time Newfoundland became interested in shore whaling, the Russians and Japanese started operations along the coasts of Siberia and Japan, respectively. The Russian

industry there was abruptly ended at the time of the Russian-Japanese war and has not since been resumed, but the Japanese have continued their work with great success and today vie with the Norwegians in the development of shore whaling, for by their methods almost every particle of a whale's carcass is utilized for human consumption.

The Toyo Hogei Kabushiki Kaisha, of Osaka, is the largest whaling company in the world, owning fifteen stations and twice as many ships, and conducting operations in almost every part of the Japanese Empire.

The South African industry was founded by Mr. John Bryde, of Sandefjord, Norway, who in 1909 erected the first station in Durban and another in the following year in Saldanha Bay on the west coast. Stations have also been built at several places in Australia and Tasmania, and in New Zealand humpback whales are being caught in wire nets. This method is so unique that a description of it here may be of interest.

The station is owned by the Messrs. Cook Brothers and is located south of the Bay of Islands, at the village of Wangamumu. On their annual migrations the humpback whales often pass through a narrow channel just under Cape Brett, which separates a cluster of outlying rocks from the mainland, and makes an ideal spot to place the nets. Having a stretch of five hundred or six hundred feet and a depth of two hundred, the nets, meshed to seven feet and made of three-eighths-inch wire rope, are hung on strong cables buoyed by huge floats and drogues. When a whale is sighted from the coast, steam launches place the three nets, which are allowed to float loose, the principle being to so hamper

the whale by the entangling wires that it falls an easy prey to the hunters. What happens when a whale is caught can best be told in the words of an eye-witness.

When the nets are in position the launches and attendant whale-boats, with their crews, take up their stations at some distance to watch for the upheaval and dancing float-line that marks the "striking" of a whale.... Suddenly a sort of shudder runs through the sea. There are tossing billows and wild commotions away by the bobbing float-lines. "Hurrah! She's struck!" is the cry.

Away go the boats, each racing to be first "fast" to the struggling "fish" and so earn the bonus that rewards the winning crew.

A mighty gray-black head, entangled in a clinging web of wire, rears from out the water. Up, up, it goes till a huge bulk of body towers a good fifty feet in the air, its side fins thrashing wildly in a smother of foam. It curves in an arch and then, like an arrow, down go whale and net together for the "sound."

Not for long, though. The upward drag of the bunched net-floats, and its necessity for breath, bring the "fish" quickly to the surface—a spouting, snorting, wallowing mass; mad with rage, wild with terror of the unknown, clinging horror that envelopes it.

Bang! bang! go the guns from each boat, in quick succession. Both irons are home and well placed. A wild quiver of flukes and fins, and the whale either "sounds" again or "races" along the surface, towing the boats after it at express speed. But the net holds fast, and at each new effort for freedom the victim becomes more hopelessly "wound up" than before.

Soon, exhausted with futile struggling, the whale comes to rest, and there is a momentary cessation of the mad fight as the leviathan pauses for breath. Huge, panting air-gasps are plainly audible aboard our launch at a distance of half a mile.

The crews are quick to seize the opportunity. With the lance-men ready in the bow, the boats sweep in, one on either side. "Steady with the lance." "Now!" Eight-foot steel blades drive deep for the heart behind the pectoral fins.

A shiver, a hissing spout of water and blood, a wallow and roll of the huge, wire-tangled carcass, flashes of red and white foam in the sunlight, and the black heave of a twenty-foot fin that for one dread instant, scimitar-shaped, a falling wall of bone and sinew, hangs over the boat and its occupants. The boat's crew back out like lightning, just in time. Down crashes the mighty flail, missing its blow by a barefoot. There is a roar and clap of many thunders, and jetting spurts of spray leap high into the blue.

The boats, backed clear, still hang to the lines, the crews watching events and waiting the end. It may be that the dying whale will "sound" again, or "race" in a final effort.

But, no. The lances have gone home. A few more wallows' of despair, the great tail-flukes thrash the water with lessening force, and presently the huge body, inert, lifeless, lies quietly on the surface. Hawsers are made fast to the dead whale, and while the boats return to their stations to watch the remaining nets it is towed by the launch to the flensing jetty ashore.[1]

Since the beginning of the last century the sub-antarctic islands known as the Shetlands, South Orkneys, Falklands, South Georgia and Kerguelen have proved to be the greatest whaling grounds of modern times, and are today yielding nearly $35,000,000 per year—just one-half of the total world revenue derived from the shore whaling industry. On South Georgia alone, eight companies with headquarters in Norway, England, Scotland, and Argentina are in operation, and all the other islands have one or more stations or "floating factories."

In South America there are several stations on the coast of Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, and operations are also being carried on at Spitzbergen, the Faroe Islands, Shetland, the Hebrides, Greenland, and the Galapagos Islands. Shore whaling is, therefore, a world industry in the truest sense of the word.

A modern shore whaling station at Kyuquot, Vancouver Island, B. C. The flensing slip, carcass platform and wharf are shown in the foreground. In the background is the manager's dwelling.

When it was discovered that in certain localities the whales were being rapidly killed off and the vessels had to hunt so far from the stations as to make the trip unprofitable, the "floating factory" was devised. This is a large steamship of five or six thousand tons which is fitted with huge boiling vats and can be moved about from place to place as the whales themselves travel. Usually two or three steamers operate from one floating factory for formerly when only the blubber was used and the carcass was turned adrift, one ship could not supply enough whales to make the work profitable. These factories are used most extensively on the South Atlantic grounds.