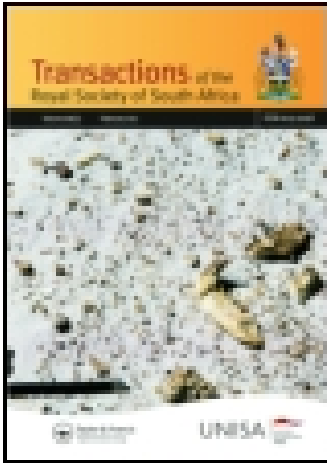


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VI. *On a specimen of the so-called "Bonnet" of the Southern Right Whale.*—By Roland Trimen, F.L.S., F.Z.S., Curator of the South-African Museum, General Secretary, South-African Philosophical Society.

[Read 28th November, 1877.]

The object which I exhibit to the Society puzzled me considerably at first sight. Mr. Whitford, who presented it to the Museum, pointed out to me, by scraping one corner of the specimen, that its structure was apparently identical with that of ordinary whalebone; and then informed me that he had obtained it, with other zoological specimens, from an American engaged in the southern whale fishery. This sailor stated that he had taken the object from the whale's skin, but did not mention from what part of the body; he also said that he had previously seen similar warts or excrescences.

I found no mention of any object of the kind in the books which I consulted, until I referred to the British Museum "Catalogue of Seals and Whales" (by the late Dr. J. E. Gray) published in 1866. In that volume (p.p. 95, 96) Dr. Gray has reprinted a paper which he published in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London for 1864 (p.p. 170, 171), recording two apparently similar specimens, presented to the British Museum by Mr. Holdsworth. These were obtained at the Sandwich Islands (one from an American whaler), and at that locality were known to the whalers as a wart on the tip of the whale's nose commonly called the "Whale's Bonnet."

The specimen before us is intermediate in size between the two just mentioned, of which the larger is recorded to be 11 by 8 inches, and the smaller 6 by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the thickness not being stated. Its greatest length is $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches; greatest width $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches; and greatest thickness

2½ inches. Its outline is very irregular; the under surface by which it seems to have been attached to the animal's skin is comparatively flat, but with numerous shallow depressions and small circular pits; while the upper side is everywhere very deeply and most irregularly excavated, the intervening projections forming peaks and prominences of different shapes and sizes, but grouping into masses of which one (near the broader end) is considerably larger than the rest. This excavation appears to be much more developed than in the larger of Mr. Holdsworth's specimens, judging from the figure of the latter given by Dr. Gray.

The author quoted notes, the following opinions as having been given him by different persons touching the larger of Mr. Holdsworth's specimens, viz.:

(1). Mr. Holdsworth himself thought it might be a natural development characteristic of the species of whale.

(2). Professor Owen considered it as "a diseased action or tumour of the outer layers of integument."

(3). A "foreign zoologist" thought it might be caused by the adhesion of the barnacles called *Coronula*, or the irritation occasioned by the whale-lice (*Cyamus* sp.).

Dr. Gray considered the last supposition untenable, especially as regards the barnacles, of which he had seen numerous examples attached to the skin of whales, but which had given rise to no such horny excrescence as the "bonnet." Whale-lice were on the specimen when it was obtained from the whaler, but Dr. Gray suggests that they were merely sheltering in the hollow of it. The same zoologist notes that in the figure of the whale given in his memoir in Dieffenbach's "New Zealand" there are represented two rough rounded prominences, one on the front of each jaw; and he further expresses his belief (though he gives no reasons for it) that a prominence of the kind is to be observed in all the species of the genus *Balæna*. I have examined the figure referred to (vol. II., 1843; facing p. 177), and find on the middle line of both upper and lower jaws, near the extremity, the representation of a warty excrescence, looking like a rudimentary or perhaps worn-down horn.

The whale concerned is the Southern Right Whale, or Cape baleen whale (*Balæna Australis*), of which a considerable number used formerly to be killed on the coast of this Colony in the winter season. Mr. Warwick, in

a note published by Dr. Gray, states that out of 60 whales killed in False Bay during his stay only one was a male, the females coming into shallow water to bring forth their young. He mentions that he could not pass his hand through the gullet of a female which measured 68 feet in length.

The only suggestion which occurs to me in regard to the so-called "bonnet" is that it may possibly be a character peculiar to the male whale. The specimen figured in Dieffenbach's "New Zealand" was a male.