



THE WALRUS.

THE walrus (whale-horse), or morse, is allied to the seals in the general structure of the skeleton. There is, however, a greater approximation to the terrestrial mammalia in the neck, and a striking difference in the teeth. In the adult lower jaw, there are neither incisors nor canines, and it is compressed so as to fit between the two enormous canines of the upper jaw. These are from fifteen to thirty inches long, and weigh from five to ten pounds. In the young walrus there are three incisors on each side of the upper jaw, and two on each side of the lower, which become obliterated in the adult animal. Its head is very round, eyes small and brilliant, upper lip thick and covered with pellucid bristles. Nostrils large, on the upper part of the snout, and has no external ears. Its length is from ten to twenty feet, with a girth of about ten feet.

The walrus feeds upon marine vegetables, especially the *Fucus digitatus*, and Captain Scoresby found also in their stomachs the remains of young seals, shrimps, and crawfish. It appears therefore to be omnivorous, with molars better adapted to bruise than to divide. Fabricius and Crantz affirm that it lives much on shell-fish, and that the use of its tusks is to disengage them from the rocks. They live in pairs, and the male parent often displays much courage in defence of the female and their offspring; while they are exempt from those terrible combats, the result of jealousy, which characterise the polygamous seals and whales. Sir Edward Parry encountered about two hundred in Fox's Channel, lying piled as usual over each other on the loose drift ice. A boat's

crew from both the *Hecda* and the *Fury* went to attack them, but they made a desperate resistance, some with their cubs mounted on their backs; and one of them tore the planks off a boat in two or three places. Their parental affection is great. Captain Cook states that on the approach of the boats of his ships to the ice, in Behring's Straits, all the walruses took their cubs under their fins, and endeavoured to escape with them into the sea. "Several whose young were killed and wounded, and were left floating on the surface, rose again and carried them down, sometimes just as the people were going to take them into the boat; and they might be traced bearing them to a great distance through the water, which was coloured with their blood. They were afterwards observed bringing them up at times above the surface, as if for air, and diving under it with a dreadful bellowing. One female in particular, whose young had been destroyed and taken into the boat, became so enraged that she attacked the cutter and struck her tusks through the bottom of it."

Dr. Kane, during the two years passed in the Arctic regions, had a good opportunity of observing the walrus.

"The walrus, like some of the higher order of beings to which he has been compared, is fond of his own music, and will lie for hours listening to himself. His vocalisation is something between the mooing of a cow and the deepest baying of a mastiff: very round and full, with its barks or detached notes repeated rather quickly, seven to nine times in succession.

The instinct of attack which characterises the walrus is interesting to the naturalist, as it is characteristic also of the land animals, the pachyderms, with

which he is classed. When wounded, he rises high out of the water, plunges heavily against the ice, and strives to raise himself with his fore-flippers upon its surface. As it breaks under his weight, his countenance assumes a still more vindictive expression, his bark changes to a roar, and the foam pours out from his jaws till it froths his beard.

Even when not excited he manages his tusks bravely. They are so strong that he uses them to grapple the rocks with, and climbs steeps of ice and land, which would be inaccessible to him without their aid. He ascends in this way rocky islands, that are sixty and a hundred feet above the level of the sea; and I have myself seen him in these elevated positions basking with his young in the cool sunshine of August and September.

He can strike a fearful blow; but prefers charging with his tusks in a soldierly manner. Awuk is the lion of the Danish Esquimaux, and they always speak of him with the highest respect. Governor Flaischer told me that, in 1830, a brown walrus, which, according to the Esquimaux, is the fiercest, after being lanced and maimed at Upper Navik, routed his numerous assailants, and drove them in fear to seek for help from the settlement. His movements were so violent as to jerk out the harpoons that were struck into him. The governor slew him with great difficulty, after several rifle-shots and lance-wounds from his whale-boat.

The manner of hunting the walrus depends in a considerable degree on the season of the year. In the fall, when the pack is but partially closed, they are found in numbers, hanging around the neutral region of mixed ice and water, and, as this becomes solid, with the advance of winter, following it more and more to the south. The Esquimaux approach them then over the young ice, and assail them in cracks and holes

with harpoon and line. This fishery, as the season grows colder, darker, and more tempestuous, is fearfully hazardous: scarcely a year passes without a catastrophe.

During the latter part of March the spring fishery begins. The walrus is now taken in two ways. Sometimes he has risen by the side of an iceberg, where the currents have worn away the floe, or through a tide crack, and enjoying the sunshine too long, finds his retreat cut off by the freezing up of the opening; for, like the seal, the walrus can only work from below. When thus caught, the Esquimaux, who with keen hunter-craft are scouring the floes, scent him out by their dogs and spear him.

The early spring is the breeding season, and the walrus then are in their glory. My observations show that they tenant the region throughout the entire year; but at this time the female, with her calf, is accompanied by the grim-visaged father, surging in loving trios from crack to crack, sporting around the bergwater or basking in the sun. While thus on their tours, they invite their vigilant enemies to the second method of capture. This also is by the lance and the harpoon; but it often becomes a regular battle, the male gallantly fronting the assault, and charging the hunters with furious bravery. Not unfrequently the entire family—mother, calf, and bull—are killed in one of these contests."

The walrus has occasionally been seen off the British coasts, but is so very rare a visitant that any such occurrences can only be considered as exceptional to the general rule. The term walrus literally signifies "whale-horse," and the specific name, *rosmarus*, is a Latinised form of the Norwegian word *rosmar*, or "sea-horse." The word *morse* is slightly altered from the Russian *morss*, or the Lapponic *morsk*.