

year. Seldom do the whalers start on their homeward voyage within two years after they have left New Bedford, and frequently fully three years elapse before they again moor at its wharves.

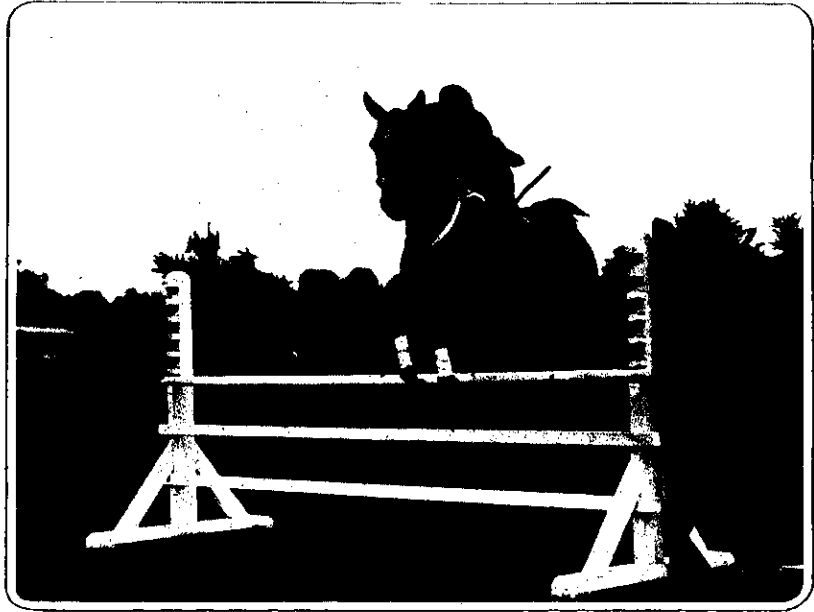
It is a question whether any calling is more dangerous or attended with more hardships than the hunting of the Arctic whale; but the creature is so valuable that its pursuit is as fascinating as the search for the gold-vein. A single specimen may yield oil, bone, and other substances which are worth from three to five thousand pounds. Some have been killed which have actually been worth to the successful hunters over five thousand pounds. The product most highly prized, however, is what is generally called whalebone. As a matter of fact, whalebone is not a bone at all, but a flexible fringe on the creature's jaw in lieu of teeth, to enable the whale to separate from the sea-water in which it floats the marine animalcules on which it subsists. It allows the water to enter its cavernous mouth, then closes its jaws, expels the brine through this fringe, and swallows the minute food which satisfies its mighty bulk. Each whale has about four hundred plates of this "bone" in its jaws, its teeth being embryonic only. The huge carcass yields much oil, it is true, but the oil alone would not make the venture pay, and the practice has been, after "flensing" or stripping off the outer coat of fat or blubber, to let the remainder go, and the skeleton, with the covering of flesh which enshrouds it, weighing from forty to fifty tons, usually becomes the prey of sharks.

man received in addition one hundred pounds as his share of the proceeds. But the whaler usually secures three or four whales each season, so that often the ship returns with a cargo so valuable that, after all expenses are paid, every man receives at least five hundred pounds to one thousand pounds as his share of the hunt. Yearly the number of whales caught is decreasing, and the price of the bone increasing in proportion.

In the modern method of capturing the great Arctic whale the harpoon thrown by hand is seldom used. Each

ship carries a small cannon mounted on the bow, and frequently has a small steam launch, which is also armed with what is known as the harpoon gun. When the bay becomes navigable, the vessel starts for the places which are most frequented by the whales. The veteran Hudson Bay whaler knows where the favourite feeding-grounds of his prey are situated. When one has been sighted, the vessel is stopped within gun-shot of the creature if possible. The cannon is aimed at a point over the heart, and its projectile seldom fails to enter the body, so true is the aim of

the gunner. This projectile is several feet in length, and contains a bomb filled with some explosive which is ignited by a time fuse. The projectile also contains a "head," consisting of four large steel bars, which spread out as soon as it enters the body and are caught in the flesh. The bomb is intended to explode inside the whale, and if properly aimed seldom fails to reach a vital part, causing death within a few minutes. If it has not been mortally wounded, however, the whale seldom escapes its pursuers, for attached to the projectile is a stout rope, which is fas-



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The bowhead contains far more whalebone than any other species of marine animal, and this is why it is so eagerly pursued. It takes its name from the curved formation containing the whalebone which is found in its head. Occasionally one is killed which has a double fringe of the bone. In the early days of whale-hunting in Hudson Bay, one monster was harpooned from which over three thousand pounds were taken, and the bones sold for three thousand pounds sterling a ton. This single capture paid all the expenses of the voyage, which lasted two and a-half years, and each

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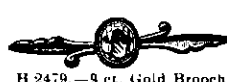
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