

¶The terrible ways of the shark.

KILLER OF THE SEAS

PHYSICALLY, the shark is a marvel. Ghostly, golden eyes alert, keen nose delicately attuned to the scent of prey, the long, graceful fusiform shark slithers majestically now on the surface, now along the bottom. His teeth, in five to seven rows, are the terrible weapons which trap his prey. With but one bone-like structure in his body, the shark consists chiefly of muscles. Most important are the two muscles of his tail, stretching from the head to the caudal fin, providing his motive power. These are matched only by the muscle of the lower jaw, which give its owner the ability to bite through the tough, protective armor of another shark or to crunch tough turtle shell to bits. Perpetually hungry, he cruises on a constant search for food, never relaxing his vigilance, never stilling his great fins, never sleeping.

From time immemorial, men have lived in dread of these omnivorous brutes. No white swimmer will linger to dispute the watery domain with a shark. Brown-skinned natives of many countries hold the shark in contempt—for a peculiar reason. A shark is not curious about a dark object! Yet

even dark-skinned natives will hesitate to swim at dusk in shark-infested waters.

It has been charged that these predatory fish are cowards, scared by shadows and loud noises, wary of baited hooks. Such observations are well-founded, for rubber-suited divers are never molested below. While the rising column of escaping air bubbles attracts sharks, any sudden movement or a quick burst of released air will send them scurrying for safety.

But shouting will not scare them, since ears as such do not exist. Sharks receive impulses through the skin; they may be sent dashing off by banging on the bottom of the boat, but if any toothsome scent is liberated in the sea, they will come cruising back, silent and sinister. Of all the special senses, smell is probably of the greatest service to most sharks. When, in the course of an experiment, the nostrils were plugged with cotton wool so as to prevent any circulation of water through the nose sacs, the sharks would swim over any food without detecting it.

Blood scent seems to drive sharks crazy. When blood is

spilled into water with sharks present, the surface is suddenly lashed by tremendous surges and flurries of fin and tail. Then danger threatens anything within reach of gaping jaws, and woe betide the luckless creature unable to make good its escape; it will be snapped to bits and swallowed in gulps until nothing is left. In this temporary insanity, the ferocious fish discard their natural caution, and will unhesitatingly attack not only any foreign object but each other as well. Once a piece of fin is sliced off a shark, the others rush in for the kill, worrying and tearing at the carcass until it sinks out of sight.

Sharks seem to show a remarkable insensibility to pain. When whales were caught in the last century, many sharks lured to the spot would rush the carcass for a quick bellyful of juicy meat. Thrusts from sharp spades in the hands of the sailors had little effect; sharks returned to the feast again and again, ignoring multiple wounds, until they died in the act.

Bright objects are another irresistible lure to a hungry shark. Bottles, tin cans, horses' hooves and other strange things are discovered in dissected shark stomachs. While the enzymes of their digestive tracts are powerful enough to corrode most things, it is a peculiar talent of

the shark that it can disgorge the contents of its stomach practically at will, as so often occurs when the brutes are captured.

The small brain, located between the eyes, offers the shark hunter his best method of dealing death. With a blow from a stout club or short section of pipe, even the largest sharks can be stunned with ease. But it takes a seasoned hand to get results.

Shark meat is good to eat, contrary to popular belief. Shark hunters and Eskimos have eaten it as a regular diet. During the war, tons of shark meat found their way to dining tables, although not under this bald name. Today, also, the meat is still eaten. It is sometimes known as rock salmon, gray-fish, filet of sole, scallops, and swordfish.

For centuries sharks swam the seas unmolested. Within the last twenty years, however, demands for shark products have been growing, and today adventurous fishermen kill the shark and reduce his carcass to various useful substances.

Dried and salted shark meat is made into fertilizer. Livers, full of oil, weigh usually about one-fourth of the weight of a shark, and have a high medicinal value. Fins are sold to Chinese customers who make soup of them and consider it a deli-

cacy. Viscera will soon rot, their high ammonia and acid content being potent aids to fertilization of plants. Teeth, and even eye pupils, are used for making a crude type of jewelry and advertising novelties. The hide, made into leather, far outclasses cowhide in durability, toughness, and beauty.

Natives of coastal lands know full well that sharks, provided with serrated, scimitar-sharp teeth, are to be assiduously

avoided if there is blood in the water, or at dusk when most actual shark attacks seem to occur. Widespread accounts of death by shark bite are encountered throughout Polynesia, the Philippines, and South Seas.

Caution is the better part of valor if an ugly green fin is spied slicing along the surface; thus advise the shark hunters who have spent years tracking down the tigers of the sea in all climes and oceans.—*Horace S. Mazet, condensed from Travel.*

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Nothing to Say?

EVEN the best talkers are sometimes at a loss for an appropriate remark at a social gathering. With this in mind, Christopher Billopp, of the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, compiled a list of things to say. Because it fills a long-felt want, it is published here. By memorizing this list, no one need be tongue-tied. Billopp now speaking:

You're growing fat. You're growing bald. Where did you get that hair-cut? Is that a fever blister? Who hit you in the eye? What happened to your nose? You're getting a double chin.

You're looking better than you did. Is that a gray hair? You forgot to shave this morning. Oh, are you bow-legged? What's that on your face? Hold your shoulders back. Your underskirt's showing.

You've lost your color. You're getting quite a bay window, aren't you? You're getting large around the hips. Haven't you lost a good deal of weight? Have you lost a tooth? Green makes you look sallow.

The tie doesn't go very well with the shirt. What makes your waistcoat wrinkle that way? Aren't you feeling well? Stop frowning. Are those crows' feet? Your hair isn't naturally curly, is it? You've got a cold, haven't you? What makes your nose so red on the end? When did you last have that suit pressed? You are not as young as you were. There are lines under your eyes. What's that? You don't like to be told? Goodness, but you are sensitive!—*The William Feather Magazine.*