

TRICHECHUS AMERICANUS—MANATEE.

BY W. O. AYRES.

Strange-looking animals these are which we have here represented. They have been classed by some writers near to the whales, that is, among the cetaceans; and yet they are by no means closely allied to the cetaceans. And then, again, others have ranked them with the pachyderms, and in alliance with the elephants, etc. But the most recent writers, of suitable authority, set them by themselves in a designated group, to which is given the name of *Sirenians*. Of these are now existing but two genera, though one other has become extinct within a little more than a hundred years. These two are the *dugong*, *Kalicore dugong*, and the *manatees*, *Trichechus*, one species of which is figured for us here.

A common name, which is sometimes applied to them all, of the various types is *sea cow*; and the total disappearance of the sea cow of Behring's Island is a curious instance of the rapid and complete extermination of an animal of huge size, which at its discovery was abundant.

The facts are these: When Behring discovered the island to which he gave his name, a very large Sirenian fairly swarmed in the creeks and shallow waters of its shores. It was well described by Steller, the naturalist who accompanied him, and the specimens which he took home to St. Petersburg were, until quite recently, the only ones available. But in 1883 the Smithsonian Institution received from Dr. Stejneger a very valuable collection of skulls; in fact, almost complete skeletons. The animal was larger than either of the Sirenians now in existence—20 to 28 feet long. It constitutes the genus *Rhytina*.

Like all the Sirenians, it was very gentle and affectionate in its disposition, and Behring's sailors tamed them readily; but, alas! for the poor sea cows, their flesh was excellent for food, and the sailors took advantage of their gentleness, and by 1768 not a single *Rhytina* could be found on Behring's Island—the only known place of their residence—and none others have ever since been seen. Steller's sea cow is, without doubt, extinct.

The *Sirenians*, as already noted, are of very peculiar formation. They have no hind, limbs whatever externally manifested, resembling the cetaceans in that respect; but their fore limbs are very strong, large, flat, flipper-like, and remarkably flexible. The bones of the entire skeleton are denser and heavier than those of any others of the mammalia. The flesh of all is, like that of the *Rhytina*, much prized as an article of food.

The skin is coarse, heavy, and resembles that of an elephant, having short, stiff hairs scattered about on it, but nowhere thickly, the general color being dark, almost black. The eyes are small, the nostrils large, provided each with a valve.

These characters are common to the dugong and the manatees. Of the latter—*Trichechus*—there are two species, an African, *T. senegalensis*, and an American, *T. americanus*, which is the one before us, and of which only I will here speak.

*Trichechus americanus* is a native of our whole eastern coast from the southern to the northern tropical limit and a little beyond, that is, from Brazil to Florida, including the West India Islands and the Gulf of Mexico. It should be mentioned that an attempt has been made to

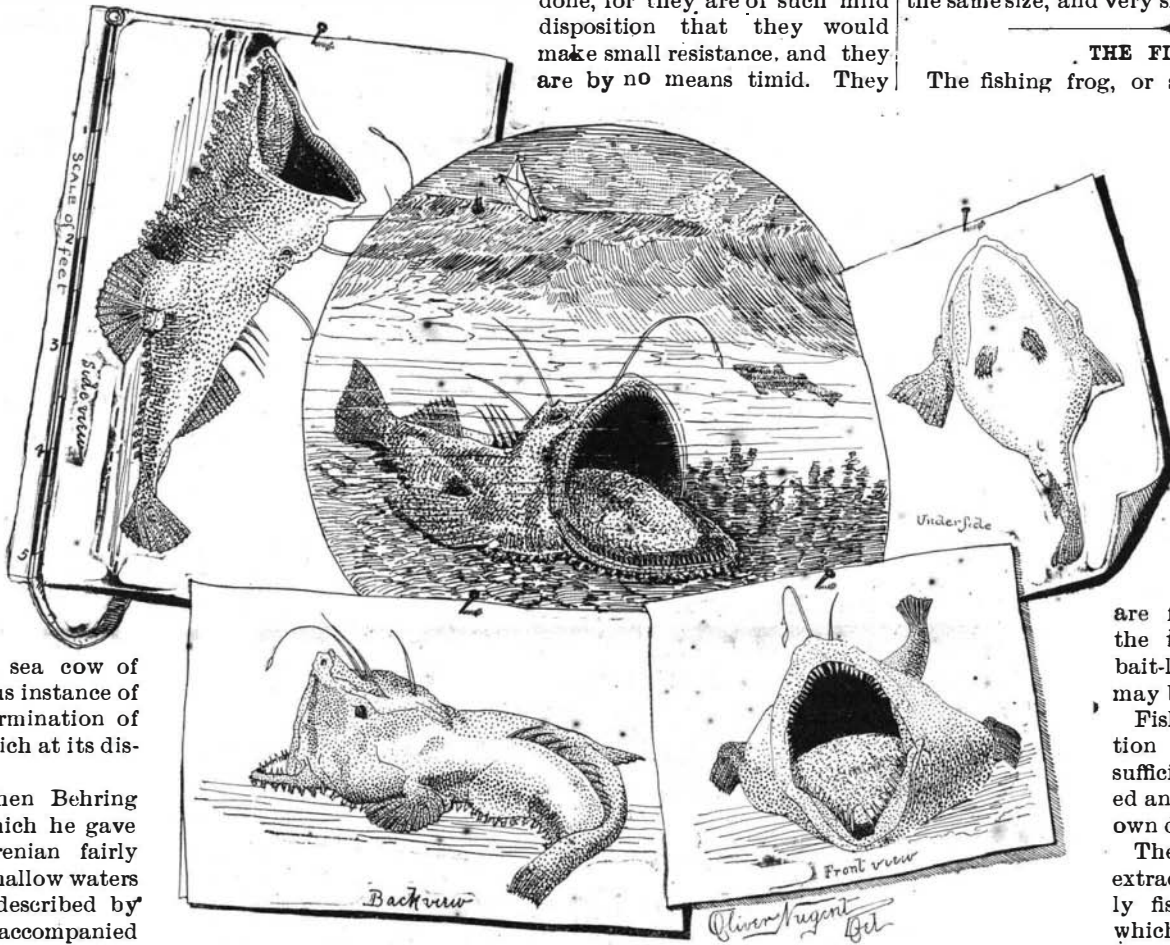
separate the northern type, those of Florida, as a distinct species, under the name of *Trichechus latirostris*, but it is perhaps more probably only a climatic variety.

The manatees have seldom been captured and brought away for exhibition, though it might easily be done, for they are of such mild disposition that they would make small resistance, and they are by no means timid. They

to 15 feet. It ascends the South American rivers freely, following the Amazon far up into the mountains.

The dugong is found in the Red Sea, the Indian Archipelago, Mauritius, Australia, etc.

It is closely allied to our manatee, and is of about the same size, and very similar to it in habits.



THE FISHING FROG (LOPHIUS PISCATORIUS)—A STUDY FROM LIFE.

frequent the shallow lagoons, and an easy arrangement of nets could capture them. Two small ones, about six feet in length, were exhibited in 1875, and one smaller still was shown only a month or two since by Messrs. Reiche Brothers, of New York, importers of such curiosities, from which our representations are made.

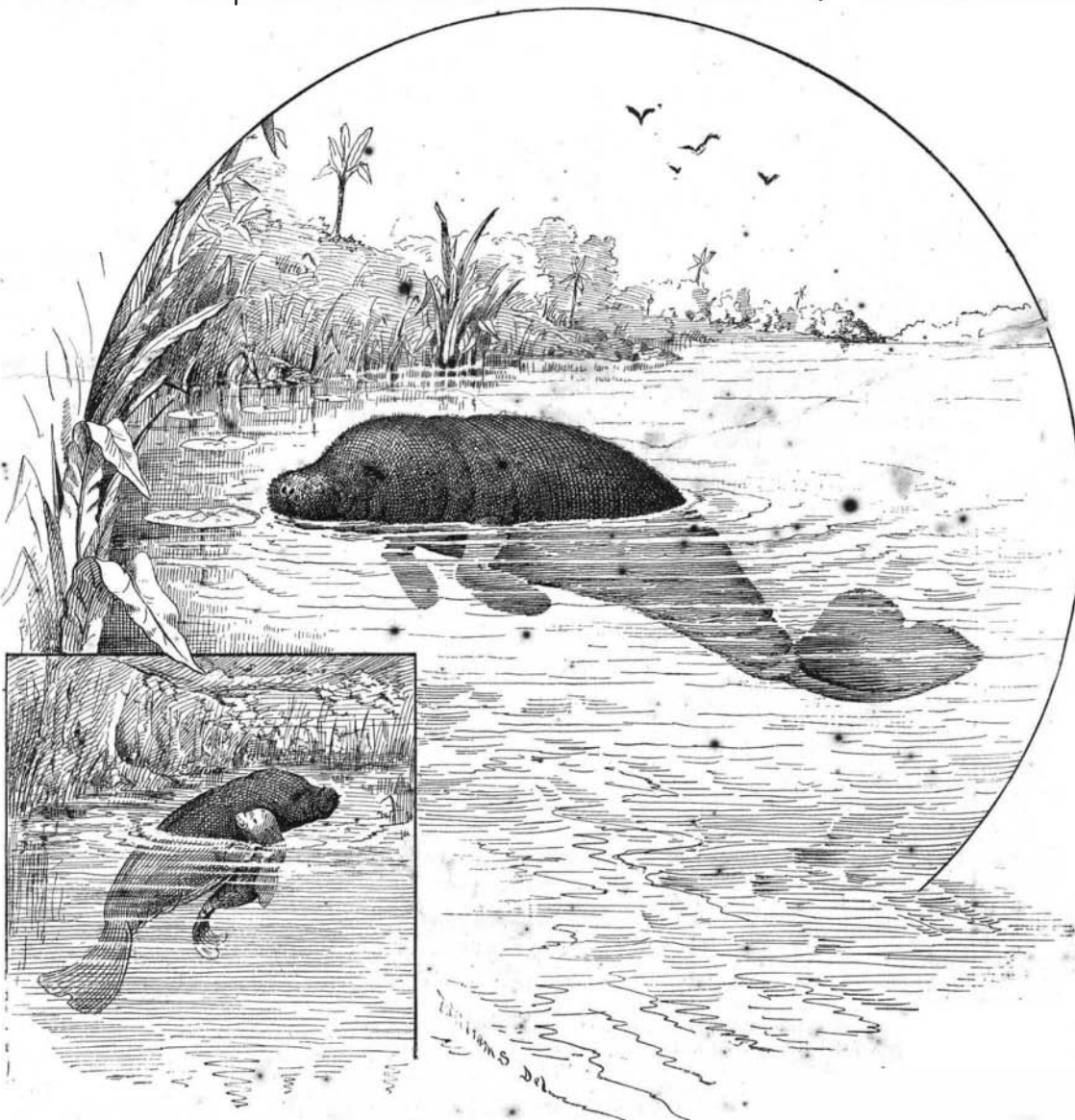
Its attitudes are well shown by the figures. It was said to have been brought from Brazil. It breathed in one to one and a quarter minutes, the valves of the nostrils opening as it rose to the surface and closing as it went below. This species grows to the length of 12

around its entire circumference, and which enables it to conceal itself easily among the seaweeds and mosses on the bottom of the sea, where it is its pleasure and custom to extend and bury itself in wait for its victims.

The specimen from which the drawing was made was captured near Flushing, Long Island, by Dick Hill, son of the celebrated sporting man Harry Hill, of this city. It was 5 feet long, and weighed 125 pounds.

EQUALITY.—That all men have equal rights is a cardinal doctrine in the theory of democratic government, but it is possible to expand the claim to a point beyond the bound of rights simply, and apply it to the results of the exercise of our inalienable endowments. Human beings are not born with equal gifts and powers. Wherever there is an upper and middle, there must be an under. The weak must seek the wall and be the stile from which the ambitious strong will vault toward the top. Nor can those appointed by nature for the pyramid's base serve in any other position. To press the wall as little as possible, get all the pay for service that it demands, and make the "best of now and here," is the bound of their possibilities. Without a foundation there can be no superstructure, and the position is as truly honorable as any other, though universal mankind have held it to be less desirable. All theories for the help of those who serve must proceed upon an admission of inequality.—*The Carriage Monthly*.

THE American Forestry Commission, at its annual meeting held at Denver, Col., September 15, recommended to Congress the establishment in the District of Columbia of an agricultural and forestry experimental station, and the passage of a bill for the protection of the government timber lands.



THE MANATEE, OR SEA COW.