

STUDIES IN TASMANIAN CETACEA.

PART VI.

By

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ZIPHIUS CAVIROSTRIS (or sp.).

On the third of October, of the present year, there came to us from Preservation Island the ossified mesorostral bones of a Ziphoid Whale.

Owing to the dense character of such ossified rostral moieties it is not easy to determine their actual age, unless field notes have been collected, and as none are available to use, we can only say that, although apparently recent, it may have been washed out of a Pleistocene shell limestone formation.

The specimen is not perfect, and has at its proximal end a complete cast of the anterior narial wall, a cavity 60 mm. wide x 40 mm. deep. Its distal end yields evidence of a wound during the life of the animal, which must have caused distortion to the end of the beak. Due also to this, the tip of the right intermaxillary bone is twisted upwards, so that the floor of the dental fossa is on the level of the middle of its fellow.

ASYMMETRY.

The asymmetrical development, at the proximal end, is all towards the left, and is considerable in the actual weight

of bony matter present. This, of course, is the normal asymmetry of such a whale, and has nothing to do with the mutilated, pathogenic effect, at the distal end.

SIZE.

Sir William Turner (1) quoted two specimens in sizes of 13½ inches and 14½ inches respectively, the former having come from Shetland, and the latter from New Zealand, but owing to the mutilation noted in our specimen, the animal only ossified 10½ inches of the beak (274 mm. in exact measurement), the remainder having been spongy, or semi-cartilaginous in life. This is our rendition of the story gathered from information supplied by other whales, whose spongy beak tips have been wounded during fights. It is only fair to say, however, that some workers would regard the mutilations as being post mortem, with subsequent sand blasting of the snapped bones, until they stimulated pathogenic effects. The uptilted intermaxillary suggests reparative results, incidental upon inflammation, but if the conditions that obtain were post mortem, then the cranial asymmetry was spiral, and the specimen has been embedded, tip outwards, in some protective strata, and slowly sand worked to its present state. Here the want of field notes is manifest. The greatest width of the specimen is 97 mm., and its weight is 4 lb. 50 drachms. The outline of the specimen does not suggest Cuvier's Whale, already recorded by us from Tasmania (2), (3).

(1) Report on the Cetacea collected by H.M.S. *Challenger*.

(2) "Studies in Tasmanian Cetacea," Scott & Lord, P. & P. Roy. Soc. Tas., 1919, pp. 1-10.

(3) "New or Little Known Fossils in the National Museum," F. Chapman, Proc. Roy. Soc. Vic., N.S., Pt. I., 1927.