

CALLS OCTOPUS SHY AND NOT MAN-EATER OF FICTION WRITERS

SAN FRANCISCO, July 18.—Devilfish, better known as "polypus octopus hongkongensis," are being caught at Santa Cruz, California, like flies in a trap, and the tentacles are being shipped to fish markets in San Francisco, New York, and other cities where they are sliced and sold at from fifty to sixty cents a pound, according to C. B. Florence, secretary of the California state fish exchange here. Florence says the sliced octopus tentacle makes a succulent table delicacy when properly fried.

While fishermen emulate Victor Hugo and other writers of fiction by telling of terrific battles with giant devilfish, usually ending by explaining how the fish reached one of its arms above the water and wrapped it around the boat, breaking the craft in two, Florence and Professor Harold Heath, department of zoology, Stanford University, California, state that this is physically impossible. Professor Heath describes the octopus as being "of a shy and retiring disposition."

"The devilfish has no bones or no structure of any kind," says Florence. "It cannot swim, but can only float on the water, or propel itself on the floor of the ocean by means of fastening its suckers on a rock and pulling itself along. Each of the eight tentacles are covered with cup shaped suckers, and these form a vacuum when fastened on an object. Fishermen haul them out of the traps and throw them in boxes in a manner that is extremely undignified to a fish that has an age-old fictional reputation of being a man-killer and boat-smasher."

In the picturesque food shops that line the narrow streets of San Francisco's colorful Chinatown, the tentacles of the devilfish may be seen hanging from hooks alongside many other edibles that are strange to the native American. On the floors of the wholesale fish houses here the devilfish may be seen stacked in jelly-like heaps, with tentacles, in some cases, extending ten feet across, five feet from each side of the small, egg-shaped head.

The traps at Santa Cruz, where the majority of the devilfish are caught on the Pacific coast, are built like fly traps, only much larger. The traps are made of wire, with a cone-shaped entrance for the octopus to squeeze through in order to reach the bait fixed for him. He has no trouble in entering the over-narrowing tunnel, but finds it impossible to leave. Usually, fishermen state, two or more are caught in the same trap.

Instead of being a fighter, the devilfish protects itself from attack by changing its color and hiding from its enemy, according to Professor Heath. He says:

"To agility and naturally acute senses should be added their surprising ability to change their color to harmonize with that of their surroundings, so they prey and enemies alike are usually unaware of their proximity. This color change is based upon minute elastic sacs filled with muscles for causing their expansion."

"As a devilfish crawls about on the sea bottom its color can be seen to change in a twinkling from deep chocolate through dull red and to gray. If sand or rock is encountered on the journey the skin is usually thrown into lumps and ridges, so that under all conditions the body is practically invisible."

However, if Professor Heath's opinion of the devilfish as a food is heeded, the fish will continue to be eaten by its celestial admirers and by a limited few who crave the unusual. Properly to place before the American epicurean a dish of tender octopus, Professor Heath says, something must be done "to destroy its rubber-like consistency."

LARGE BLOCKS IN KLAMATH FOREST TO BE OFFERED

YREKA, Calif., July 18.—That large blocks of timber in the Klamath national forest in Siskiyou county are to be offered for sale soon is the opinion locally following the visit of T. D. Woodbury of San Francisco, assistant United States district forester, and J. H. Price, logging engineer, both of whom are now checking over the merchantable timber area in the national forest and on adjacent private lands.

The timber scheduled to be checked and blocked out is on the Scott river watershed, and lies twenty miles southwest of Yreka. Several

mills of 50,000 feet daily capacity have gone into Scott valley within the past two years. Patterson and Dennis last week completed the installation of a mill of 75,000 feet capacity.

Large interests are said to be anxious to have this rich timber belt opened up and in the event that it is, a railroad may be built from Yreka into Scott river valley. The opening of one or two large lumber camps would assure the road, it is held. Nearly 150,000 acres of land are under cultivation in Scott valley, and more land probably would be opened up if rail facilities are provided.

The Guggenheims have large copper holdings on the Klamath river, and if the copper market advances and these were developed, the road would be extended to these holdings.

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By Edna Wallace Hopper

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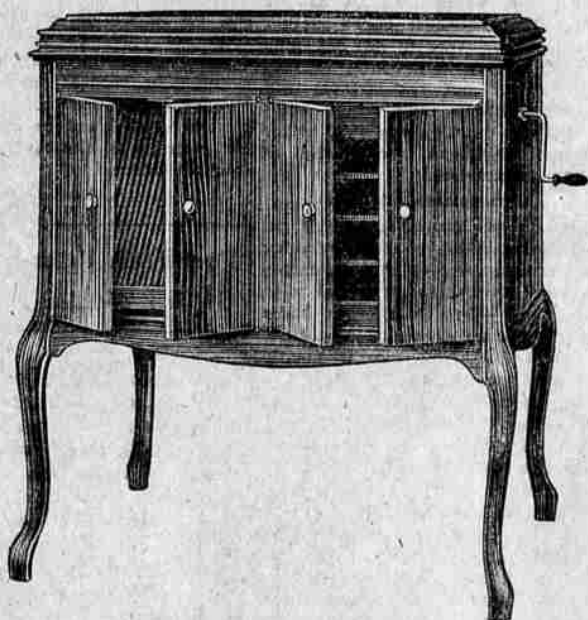
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