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Disillusionment!: Editorial

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DISILLUSIONMENT !

EDITORIAL

Who has not felt his very flesh writhe and shrink on reading Hugo's fearful story of Gilliatt's fight with the octopus? The art of the great Frenchman is here superb. He compels the reader to identify himself with his hero. Gilliatt's struggles and emotions are his also. The monster projects itself upon him—its tentacles entwine him, their horrible sucking vacuum cups pull at his flesh; he strains, heaves, grasps at these accursed circling gelatinous bands; they seem to yield, but never actually; they crush, excoriate, scarify—his flesh seems to melt—he is disintegrating—it is death in life!

But, pshaw! why all the emotion? "God made the octopus," said Hugo. "Yes," says the scientist, "but He didn't make him a man-eater!" Horrible he is to see, without doubt. Pierce is his owl-like beak, staring are his almost human eyes, terrible are his stringy, elastic tentacles with their rows of vacuum cups. But monstrous as he is in appearance, his actual danger to man consists only in the terror that his appearance inspires. He is probably as much afraid of man as man is of him. Fishes and other denizens of the sea fall grist to his horrible mill—but not man! Disillusionment number one!

In Appleton's Fourth Reader of forty years back is a story that has thrilled its thousands. Who has not fled hand in hand with that solitary skater as he raced silently down the moonlit river with the "bloody-jawed," slaver-flecked pack at his heels? Their hot breaths fairly blow upon him, he feels himself eviscerated, vanishing from the sight of men; he dodges suddenly and his fierce pursuers go sliding on their haunches—for the moment helpless. Then the

baying of his hounds saves him—and our blood pressure is allowed to fall! But it should not have arisen in the first place! Wolves do not hunt in packs. The largest pack seen is six or seven and these commonly consist of a family—a mother and her cubs. Moreover, wolves, gray or otherwise, rarely attack man. No longer may we thrill with propriety on contemplating the spectacle of the solitary hunter anxiously squatting over the flare of his waning campfire—his roving glance ever seeking the gradually narrowing circle of blazing wolf eyes. "No," says the scientist, "most of the wolf stories must go! A wolf may follow a man but largely out of curiosity." Disillusionment number two!

Yet another story that plumbs one's very depths of emotion. The day is calm, the bay like glass, the ship barely heaving from the long, slow swells. The sailors disport themselves in the lazy sea! Suddenly a cry is heard from the deck! The horrible word, "Shark!" rings out wildly over the waters. Three hundred yards out, a venturesome swimmer turns with blanched face and strokes powerfully towards the ship; a hundred yards back of him a great black fin cuts the water—a man-eater is in pursuit. The race is terrific—the shark is gaining on his victim, horror grips us! Then the boom of a light cannon rends the awful stillness and the monster turns belly-up—the rows of white saw-like teeth showing in his wide, evil mouth as he floats! Whew! That surely was a close one!

But, here again, the scientist speaks and assures the doubtful swimmer that he has nothing to fear from sharks. True, a barracuda may occasionally take off a leg or a hand—but no shark would think of being so ill-behaved. Time and again great fifteen-footers have come up and stared into Beebe's face as he walked about on the sea floor, but not one showed more than a casual interest in him. They don't seem to bother man, thinks Beebe. Disillusionment number three!

So it goes, as the scientist cleaves his way. Hoop snakes and joint snakes do not exist, snakes do not swallow their young to protect them, bats are not blind, loons are not

crazy, March hares are not mad, pigs are not dirty, the porcupine does not throw his quills, panthers are not dangerous to man, if a turtle bites you he will not hang on until it thunders, and at present there is considerable doubt than a man actually lives in the moon.

Science is both kind and cruel to her disciples. She bares the truth to him who will have it, but in so doing at once leaves him shorn of most of the tingling glamour of things half seen, half understood.

GENERAL SCIENCE

In our last article we discussed one of the common minerals found on the earth's surface. In this article the writer will attempt two things: first, to describe a few of the common rock-making minerals; and second, to discuss some of the simple ways of distinguishing the common igneous rock found on the earth's surface. The commonest igneous rock-making minerals, besides quartz, are the feldspars, the irons, pyroxene, hornblende, and the micas. Feldspars are of many kinds, although the most common one found in igneous rocks is orthoclase. Its colors are red, pink, gray, and white. It also is very hard, six in the scale, while quartz is seven. It has a very glassy appearance but may be told from quartz in that it has distinct cleavage planes. This fact may easily be seen if the mineral is held in natural light. It is not necessary for the inexperienced to distinguish the various kinds of feldspars. There are three kinds of mica: yellow, white, and black. The micas are easily told since they are composed of thin plates which separate readily one from another. The plates are elastic and are easily cut with a knife. Pyroxene and hornblendes are black or greenish black in appearance. They are very hard, but like the feldspars, they possess distinct cleavage. Since both minerals have the same hardness, six in the scale, and the same compositions, it is not easy to tell them apart unless a complete crystal of each is obtained. Pyroxene has cleavage angles of 87 degrees and 93 degrees, while hornblende has cleavage angles of 124 degrees and 56 degrees. As both are dark in color it is im-

possible to tell which mineral is present in igneous rocks. The best way to express the dark colored mineral is to say either pyroxene or hornblende. The irons are hematite, magnetite, and limonite. Hematite is reddish or reddish-black in color. When the mineral is drawn across a piece of unglazed porcelain, it leaves a brick red streak. If the mineral is broken up and a magnet is used, small fragments will cling to the magnet. Hematite is the commonest of the iron ores. Magnetite is very black in color and is highly magnetic, whence its name. It gives a black streak and is very heavy. When this mineral occurs in rock, the rocks are heavy and black in color. Limonite is a hydrated iron ore; that is, the oxygen of the air has united with the iron in the presence of water. It is always of a yellowish or brownish-yellow color. When the mineral has weathered and is mixed with clay, it is called yellow ochre. Limonite gives a brownish streak and is non-magnetic. It is this mineral that gives the yellowish color to the subsoil. Calcite is also a very common mineral in nature. It has a glassy appearance like quartz, but, unlike it, is soft, has distinct rhomb-like cleavage and is readily soluble in acid. It may have many colors although white, or transparent varieties are most common. The mineral generally crystallizes out in cavities in bed rock or caves. In caves it occurs most frequently in the forms of stalactites which hang from the roof of the caves, while stalagmites build up from the bottom of the caverns. In beds of limestone where small cavities occur, they are often filled with this mineral whence they are called calcite geodes. Limestone, one of the commonest forms of bedrock in Iowa, is an impure form of calcite. Having discussed briefly the common rock-making minerals we will now put them together in the igneous rocks.

There are three great classes of rocks found on the earth: igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic. The second class is found most universally on the surface of the lithosphere, although the igneous, the original rocks of the earth, are found everywhere some distance beneath the sedimentary. Igneous,