around its mouth in a maze of suction cups. J. Cousteau. These men played with octo-Obviously, prey forced into this pit of puses of virtually all sizes except the adhesiveness is held fast in the very jaws giants, which they never met. Said Capof destruction. For within its mouth is tain Cousteau: a parrotlike beak with which the octopus "Soon we were handling any size of tears its food or its enemies to pieces. cephalopod [octopus] we found. Dumas be-Then there are the octopus' eyes—a pair came a sort of dancing instructor. . . . He of lidless, staring eyes, sometimes as large would select an unwilling pupil, hold it as saucers. Nor is that all. This crea- firmly and gently and gyrate around, inture is a living jet motor; he can shoot ducing the creature to follow. The octopod himself backward like a rocket almost fastused every trick to escape. The bashful er than the eye can follow. animal usually refused to fasten its suction cups to flesh. . . The ink of the octopus No Malice Toward Man has been liberally diluted with journalistic A monstrous octopus is without doubt a fantasy."

formidable creature. Giant octopuses of the Pacific sometimes span more than thirty feet across from tip to tip of opposite arms. An octopus of this size can be dangerous. From time to time accounts of narrow escapes by divers crop up. Is this a display of octopus malice toward man? Zoological authorities think not. Since the attacks are comparatively few, it may be that the octopus is defending himself, or, what is more likely, protecting its family. For it is known that a mother octopus, like a mother bear protecting its cubs, will fight ferociously if she thinks her eggs are threatened. But whatever the reason for octopus' attacks on divers, this certainly is significant: it is generally conceded that no authentic cases of death from octopus attack are in existence.

Throwing more light on the real nature of these strange creatures are the experiences of aqualung divers. To the divers' surprise they found that octopuses are shy, timid and retiring. Instead of attacking the divers, the octopuses tried to make fast getaways. Finding octopuses to be odd creatures, the divers got a great deal of enjoyment from them. They played with them and even waltzed with them. The book The Silent World tells about aqua-

Just how wrong popular opinion is concerning octopuses is evident from this fact: most people believe octopuses to be giants or at least that small ones grow into giants; but in reality the vast majority, even when mature, are small creatures, less than a foot or two in diameter from tip of one arm to tip of opposite arm.

Everyday Life in Octopusdom

Spineless creature that he is, the octopus nonetheless has the respect of other sea creatures that are equipped with heavy armor. For the octopus is one of the most successful animals in the sea when it comes to winning a living. This probably comes as no surprise to anyone who has seen its eight arms in action. Woe to the plodding clam! Woe to the wayfaring crab! Woe to the incautious lobster! But octopuses live on sea food—not humans.

What of the octopus' ink? It is not really frightful; in fact, it is most practical. It is often thought of as a smoke screen to help frightened octopuses escape enemies. The ink may not be as simple as one might suppose. In recent years authorities have come to suggest that the ink is used to produce a mock-octopus shape to divert weak-eyed pursuers, since the size and shape of the lung divers Frédéric Dumas and Captain puff roughly resemble a swimming octo-

AWAKE!

pus. The aqualung divers, as reported in Rome ate every variety of octopus known The Silent World, said: "We found that the in the Mediterranean. emission was not a smoke screen to hide Today? Yes, octopuses are widely eaten, the creature from pursuers. The pigment both small and large, both body and tendid not dissipate; it hung in the water as tacles. They are boiled, broiled, fried and a fairly firm blob with a tail, too small to pickled. Many Pacific and Mediterranean conceal the octopus." It may be, then, that people relish octopus. Vendors in Mondello, the ink is intended to be a mock octopus near Palermo, set up booths along the waso that the enemy mistakes it for a real ter front each Sunday to sell boiled octopus octopus, which, by executing one of his refor eating on the spot. Octopus meat is markable color changes, becomes more or firm, pure white and of a mild, delicate less invisible as he darts off in a different flavor. Small ones are truly a delight to direction. the palate of the most discriminating gour-Octopuses are remarkable, one authormet. Small ones are usually preferred.

ity says, "in that they exhibit more vivid, North Americans generally shy away complicated and rapid color changes than from octopus. The big difficulty may be do any other members of the animal kingthat many have grown up since childhood dom." They turn to any color to match loathing octopuses, thinking that they are their background—pink, red, purple, blue. man-eating monsters. Actually the oppo-Divers have even seen flashes of rainbow site is true: man eats the octopus. One hues. Girl octopuses must arouse the emo-American zoologist who was pursuaded to tions in boy octopuses by their beauty; at try a piece of a larger-size octopus, after any rate when a boy octopus courts a girl, having been assured by a Filipino cook his emotions are powerful enough to overthat octopuses were very good, said: "So rule his natural impulse to assume a color they were—or rather, I should say, it was that simulates his background, and he may —for I chewed a single tentacle during the glow red and pale white, with a whole great part of the following forenoon and gamut of intermediate shades and variarelinquished it only, and that with regret, tions. If the octopus is blushing when he when my jaws, aching from overexertion, asks his girl for her hand in marriage, it refused to operate any longer." may be that he is more bashful than even Aside from their value as food, many the aqualung divers supposed! Or could it nature-loving people are coming to find be that he does not know which hand to octopuses interesting, intriguing, funny ask for?

Eight-armed Delicacy of the Sea

If anyone is entitled to present a bill of foot arm spread can hardly be inclined to complaint on account of a tendency to seize use it on anything so big as a human bathand devour, it would be more appropriate er or diver. But the giant thirty-foot octofor octopuses to prefer such charges pus of the Australian coast is something against humans. In many countries, and else again. If you meet up with one of these since very ancient times, the octopus has mammoth animals, which is most unlikely, been considered one of the very choicest it would be well to stay clear of him. of morsels. The Greeks and Romans con-He probably would be tough eating, sidered it the finest food furnished by the sea. Pliny tells us that the gourmets of anyway.

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creatures, even beautiful and marvelous in their own peculiar way. Small ones are harmless and even those of a six- or eight-