

The Loch Ness "Monster"

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT)

SINCE early in the past summer, newspaper references have become more frequent and more precise, relating to the presence of an aquatic "monster" in Loch Ness. After its reported occurrence, the writer spent a forenoon in July by and on the Loch without seeing anything unusual, and up to the present the "creature" has been chary of exhibiting its paces to a skilled naturalist. Experience of alleged wonders and the results of investigation—where investigation was possible—lead to deep scepticism concerning reports by inexpert observers describing phenomena with which they are unfamiliar, and in the present case the variations in the descriptions suggest either fertile (if unconscious) imagination, or the observation of different phenomena.

Descriptions vary: several observers have "seen" an eel-like monster with humps upon its back, a few a creature with small head and long neck attached to an enormous body, and others something that looked like an upturned boat. As a rule, it is said to move swiftly through the water, sometimes to the accompaniment of a "flurry" of foam. Guesses at identity have varied even more than descriptions; from possibilities, such as large eel, grampus, porpoise, whale-shark, seal, otter, to improbabilities such as sunfish, crocodile, "some amphibian", and so to impossibilities which include *Plesiosaurus*, "sea-camel" and the sea-serpent of the Middle Ages. Two professional zoologists have ventured identifications: one suggested an unstable mass of drifting peat, the other a white whale or beluga, but for various reasons neither is likely to be correct.

During the last fortnight, the "monster" has become insistent upon attention, mainly through its advocates. The Secretary of State for Scotland, in reply to questions, has written that he has communicated with the Chief Constable of Inverness-shire, who had already stationed five constables at different places on the loch. None has yet seen

the monster; but it is guaranteed protection should it appear and be threatened.

In the *Times* of December 8, Lieut.-Commander R. T. Gould, who has taken much trouble to examine the evidence, considers that the creature is a "specimen of one of the rarest and least known of all living creatures", in fact as near as may be a relative of the traditional "sea-serpent", with large body supporting a small head perched upon a long neck, the base of which is fringed with appendages, "possibly gills"—he suggests a giant marine form (hitherto unrecognised by science) of the common newt. To a zoologist, Commander Gould's acceptance and analysis of at any rate some of the evidence appears to be uncritical and even credulous, and his conclusion unjustified.

By far the most important piece of recent evidence has been the publication of a photograph said to be of the "monster". The photograph lay undeveloped for four weeks notwithstanding its possible interest, and its first reproduction in the newspaper in which the writer saw it was cancelled on the following day because the print had been "slightly retouched to throw up the details of the monster and its shadow". A second "wholly untouched reproduction of the photographic print" was produced, and if it is correct, it suggests a creature quite different from the animals it is alleged to represent. But to the writer there still seem to be on the print indications that it is not a direct contact print from an untouched negative, and until he has critically examined the negative, he is not prepared to hazard a suggestion.

So far, one can say that although the evidence is not consistent, and that although much that has been said about the "monster" is, to put it mildly, uncritical, if the evidence is to be believed at all, there may be in Loch Ness a creature, which if not unusual in its own habitat, is unusual in its surroundings in a Highland fresh-water loch.

Obituary

MR. H. M. MARTIN

WE regret to record the death on November 17 of Mr. Harold Medway Martin, who for forty-six years was a member of the editorial staff of *Engineering*, and was widely known not only as an engineering journalist of outstanding ability but also as a mathematical physicist of distinction.

Martin was born at Royston, Hertfordshire, on May 21, 1864, and was one of a large family which included Henry Newell Martin, the biologist who worked with Huxley, and Mary Jane Martin, the first woman to gain first-class honours in the Moral Science Tripos at Cambridge, who became the wife of Prof. James Ward.

Educated at the Northern Congregational School at Silcoats, Wakefield, in 1881, Martin was apprenticed to Messrs. Black, Hawthorn and Co., of Gateshead, and in 1885 obtained a Whitworth scholarship, and a Clothworkers' scholarship at the Central Institution of the City and Guilds of London Institute. Passing out of the Central Institution in 1887, he was recommended by the late Dr. Unwin to Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Maw, and on July 18, 1887, joined the staff of *Engineering*, of which he remained a member until his death.

Martin's contributions to the columns of *Engineering* covered a wide range of subjects, such as lubrication, heat transfer, suspension bridges, the behaviour of gases, the theory of