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\*\*\* START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MOBY DICK; OR THE WHALE \*\*\*  
  
  
  
  
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MOBY DICK; OR THE WHALE  
  
By Herman Melville  
  
  
  
  
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In chapters 24, 89, and 90, we substituted a capital L for the symbol  
for the British pound, a unit of currency.  
  
  
  
  
ETYMOLOGY.  
  
(Supplied by a Late Consumptive Usher to a Grammar School)  
  
The pale Usher--threadbare in coat, heart, body, and brain; I see him  
now. He was ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars, with a queer  
handkerchief, mockingly embellished with all the gay flags of all  
the known nations of the world. He loved to dust his old grammars; it  
somehow mildly reminded him of his mortality.  
  
"While you take in hand to school others, and to teach them by what  
name a whale-fish is to be called in our tongue leaving out, through  
ignorance, the letter H, which almost alone maketh the signification of  
the word, you deliver that which is not true." --HACKLUYT  
  
"WHALE.... Sw. and Dan. HVAL. This animal is named from roundness or  
rolling; for in Dan. HVALT is arched or vaulted." --WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY  
  
"WHALE.... It is more immediately from the Dut. and Ger. WALLEN; A.S.  
WALW-IAN, to roll, to wallow." --RICHARDSON'S DICTIONARY  
  
 KETOS, GREEK.  
 CETUS, LATIN.  
 WHOEL, ANGLO-SAXON.  
 HVALT, DANISH.  
 WAL, DUTCH.  
 HWAL, SWEDISH.  
 WHALE, ICELANDIC.  
 WHALE, ENGLISH.  
 BALEINE, FRENCH.  
 BALLENA, SPANISH.  
 PEKEE-NUEE-NUEE, FEGEE.  
 PEHEE-NUEE-NUEE, ERROMANGOAN.  
  
  
  
  
EXTRACTS (Supplied by a Sub-Sub-Librarian).  
  
It will be seen that this mere painstaking burrower and grub-worm of a  
poor devil of a Sub-Sub appears to have gone through the long Vaticans  
and street-stalls of the earth, picking up whatever random allusions to  
whales he could anyways find in any book whatsoever, sacred or  
profane. Therefore you must not, in every case at least, take the  
higgledy-piggledy whale statements, however authentic, in these  
extracts, for veritable gospel cetology. Far from it. As touching the  
ancient authors generally, as well as the poets here appearing, these  
extracts are solely valuable or entertaining, as affording a glancing  
bird's eye view of what has been promiscuously said, thought, fancied,  
and sung of Leviathan, by many nations and generations, including our  
own.  
  
So fare thee well, poor devil of a Sub-Sub, whose commentator I am. Thou  
belongest to that hopeless, sallow tribe which no wine of this world  
will ever warm; and for whom even Pale Sherry would be too rosy-strong;  
but with whom one sometimes loves to sit, and feel poor-devilish, too;  
and grow convivial upon tears; and say to them bluntly, with full eyes  
and empty glasses, and in not altogether unpleasant sadness--Give it up,  
Sub-Subs! For by how much the more pains ye take to please the world,  
by so much the more shall ye for ever go thankless! Would that I could  
clear out Hampton Court and the Tuileries for ye! But gulp down your  
tears and hie aloft to the royal-mast with your hearts; for your friends  
who have gone before are clearing out the seven-storied heavens, and  
making refugees of long-pampered Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, against  
your coming. Here ye strike but splintered hearts together--there, ye  
shall strike unsplinterable glasses!  
  
  
EXTRACTS.  
  
"And God created great whales." --GENESIS.  
  
"Leviathan maketh a path to shine after him; One would think the deep to  
be hoary." --JOB.  
  
"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." --JONAH.  
  
"There go the ships; there is that Leviathan whom thou hast made to play  
therein." --PSALMS.  
  
"In that day, the Lord with his sore, and great, and strong sword,  
shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan that crooked  
serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." --ISAIAH  
  
"And what thing soever besides cometh within the chaos of this monster's  
mouth, be it beast, boat, or stone, down it goes all incontinently that  
foul great swallow of his, and perisheth in the bottomless gulf of his  
paunch." --HOLLAND'S PLUTARCH'S MORALS.  
  
"The Indian Sea breedeth the most and the biggest fishes that are: among  
which the Whales and Whirlpooles called Balaene, take up as much in  
length as four acres or arpens of land." --HOLLAND'S PLINY.  
  
"Scarcely had we proceeded two days on the sea, when about sunrise a  
great many Whales and other monsters of the sea, appeared. Among the  
former, one was of a most monstrous size.... This came towards us,  
open-mouthed, raising the waves on all sides, and beating the sea before  
him into a foam." --TOOKE'S LUCIAN. "THE TRUE HISTORY."  
  
"He visited this country also with a view of catching horse-whales,  
which had bones of very great value for their teeth, of which he brought  
some to the king.... The best whales were catched in his own country, of  
which some were forty-eight, some fifty yards long. He said that he was  
one of six who had killed sixty in two days." --OTHER OR OTHER'S VERBAL  
NARRATIVE TAKEN DOWN FROM HIS MOUTH BY KING ALFRED, A.D. 890.  
  
"And whereas all the other things, whether beast or vessel, that  
enter into the dreadful gulf of this monster's (whale's) mouth, are  
immediately lost and swallowed up, the sea-gudgeon retires into it in  
great security, and there sleeps." --MONTAIGNE. --APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND  
SEBOND.  
  
"Let us fly, let us fly! Old Nick take me if is not Leviathan described  
by the noble prophet Moses in the life of patient Job." --RABELAIS.  
  
"This whale's liver was two cartloads." --STOWE'S ANNALS.  
  
"The great Leviathan that maketh the seas to seethe like boiling pan."  
--LORD BACON'S VERSION OF THE PSALMS.  
  
"Touching that monstrous bulk of the whale or ork we have received  
nothing certain. They grow exceeding fat, insomuch that an incredible  
quantity of oil will be extracted out of one whale." --IBID. "HISTORY OF  
LIFE AND DEATH."  
  
"The sovereignest thing on earth is parmacetti for an inward bruise."  
--KING HENRY.  
  
"Very like a whale." --HAMLET.  
  
 "Which to secure, no skill of leach's art  
 Mote him availle, but to returne againe  
 To his wound's worker, that with lowly dart,  
 Dinting his breast, had bred his restless paine,  
 Like as the wounded whale to shore flies thro' the maine."  
 --THE FAERIE QUEEN.  
  
"Immense as whales, the motion of whose vast bodies can in a peaceful  
calm trouble the ocean til it boil." --SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT. PREFACE TO  
GONDIBERT.  
  
"What spermacetti is, men might justly doubt, since the learned  
Hosmannus in his work of thirty years, saith plainly, Nescio quid sit."  
--SIR T. BROWNE. OF SPERMA CETI AND THE SPERMA CETI WHALE. VIDE HIS V.  
E.  
  
 "Like Spencer's Talus with his modern flail  
 He threatens ruin with his ponderous tail.  
 ...  
 Their fixed jav'lins in his side he wears,  
 And on his back a grove of pikes appears."  
 --WALLER'S BATTLE OF THE SUMMER ISLANDS.  
  
"By art is created that great Leviathan, called a Commonwealth or  
State--(in Latin, Civitas) which is but an artificial man." --OPENING  
SENTENCE OF HOBBES'S LEVIATHAN.  
  
"Silly Mansoul swallowed it without chewing, as if it had been a sprat  
in the mouth of a whale." --PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.  
  
 "That sea beast  
 Leviathan, which God of all his works  
 Created hugest that swim the ocean stream." --PARADISE LOST.  
  
 ---"There Leviathan,  
 Hugest of living creatures, in the deep  
 Stretched like a promontory sleeps or swims,  
 And seems a moving land; and at his gills  
 Draws in, and at his breath spouts out a sea." --IBID.  
  
"The mighty whales which swim in a sea of water, and have a sea of oil  
swimming in them." --FULLLER'S PROFANE AND HOLY STATE.  
  
 "So close behind some promontory lie  
 The huge Leviathan to attend their prey,  
 And give no chance, but swallow in the fry,  
 Which through their gaping jaws mistake the way."  
 --DRYDEN'S ANNUS MIRABILIS.  
  
"While the whale is floating at the stern of the ship, they cut off his  
head, and tow it with a boat as near the shore as it will come; but it  
will be aground in twelve or thirteen feet water." --THOMAS EDGE'S TEN  
VOYAGES TO SPITZBERGEN, IN PURCHAS.  
  
"In their way they saw many whales sporting in the ocean, and in  
wantonness fuzzing up the water through their pipes and vents, which  
nature has placed on their shoulders." --SIR T. HERBERT'S VOYAGES INTO  
ASIA AND AFRICA. HARRIS COLL.  
  
"Here they saw such huge troops of whales, that they were forced to  
proceed with a great deal of caution for fear they should run their ship  
upon them." --SCHOUTEN'S SIXTH CIRCUMNAVIGATION.  
  
"We set sail from the Elbe, wind N.E. in the ship called The  
Jonas-in-the-Whale.... Some say the whale can't open his mouth, but that  
is a fable.... They frequently climb up the masts to see whether they  
can see a whale, for the first discoverer has a ducat for his pains....  
I was told of a whale taken near Shetland, that had above a barrel of  
herrings in his belly.... One of our harpooneers told me that he caught  
once a whale in Spitzbergen that was white all over." --A VOYAGE TO  
GREENLAND, A.D. 1671 HARRIS COLL.  
  
"Several whales have come in upon this coast (Fife) Anno 1652, one  
eighty feet in length of the whale-bone kind came in, which (as I was  
informed), besides a vast quantity of oil, did afford 500 weight of  
baleen. The jaws of it stand for a gate in the garden of Pitferren."  
--SIBBALD'S FIFE AND KINROSS.  
  
"Myself have agreed to try whether I can master and kill this  
Sperma-ceti whale, for I could never hear of any of that sort that was  
killed by any man, such is his fierceness and swiftness." --RICHARD  
STRAFFORD'S LETTER FROM THE BERMUDAS. PHIL. TRANS. A.D. 1668.  
  
"Whales in the sea God's voice obey." --N. E. PRIMER.  
  
"We saw also abundance of large whales, there being more in those  
southern seas, as I may say, by a hundred to one; than we have to the  
northward of us." --CAPTAIN COWLEY'S VOYAGE ROUND THE GLOBE, A.D. 1729.  
  
"... and the breath of the whale is frequently attended with such an  
insupportable smell, as to bring on a disorder of the brain." --ULLOA'S  
SOUTH AMERICA.  
  
 "To fifty chosen sylphs of special note,  
 We trust the important charge, the petticoat.  
 Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,  
 Tho' stuffed with hoops and armed with ribs of whale."  
 --RAPE OF THE LOCK.  
  
"If we compare land animals in respect to magnitude, with those  
that take up their abode in the deep, we shall find they will appear  
contemptible in the comparison. The whale is doubtless the largest  
animal in creation." --GOLDSMITH, NAT. HIST.  
  
"If you should write a fable for little fishes, you would make them  
speak like great wales." --GOLDSMITH TO JOHNSON.  
  
"In the afternoon we saw what was supposed to be a rock, but it was  
found to be a dead whale, which some Asiatics had killed, and were then  
towing ashore. They seemed to endeavor to conceal themselves behind the  
whale, in order to avoid being seen by us." --COOK'S VOYAGES.  
  
"The larger whales, they seldom venture to attack. They stand in so  
great dread of some of them, that when out at sea they are afraid to  
mention even their names, and carry dung, lime-stone, juniper-wood,  
and some other articles of the same nature in their boats, in order to  
terrify and prevent their too near approach." --UNO VON TROIL'S LETTERS  
ON BANKS'S AND SOLANDER'S VOYAGE TO ICELAND IN 1772.  
  
"The Spermacetti Whale found by the Nantuckois, is an active, fierce  
animal, and requires vast address and boldness in the fishermen."  
--THOMAS JEFFERSON'S WHALE MEMORIAL TO THE FRENCH MINISTER IN 1778.  
  
"And pray, sir, what in the world is equal to it?" --EDMUND BURKE'S  
REFERENCE IN PARLIAMENT TO THE NANTUCKET WHALE-FISHERY.  
  
"Spain--a great whale stranded on the shores of Europe." --EDMUND BURKE.  
(SOMEWHERE.)  
  
"A tenth branch of the king's ordinary revenue, said to be grounded on  
the consideration of his guarding and protecting the seas from pirates  
and robbers, is the right to royal fish, which are whale and sturgeon.  
And these, when either thrown ashore or caught near the coast, are the  
property of the king." --BLACKSTONE.  
  
 "Soon to the sport of death the crews repair:  
 Rodmond unerring o'er his head suspends  
 The barbed steel, and every turn attends."  
 --FALCONER'S SHIPWRECK.  
  
 "Bright shone the roofs, the domes, the spires,  
 And rockets blew self driven,  
 To hang their momentary fire  
 Around the vault of heaven.  
  
 "So fire with water to compare,  
 The ocean serves on high,  
 Up-spouted by a whale in air,  
 To express unwieldy joy." --COWPER, ON THE QUEEN'S  
 VISIT TO LONDON.  
  
"Ten or fifteen gallons of blood are thrown out of the heart at  
a stroke, with immense velocity." --JOHN HUNTER'S ACCOUNT OF THE  
DISSECTION OF A WHALE. (A SMALL SIZED ONE.)  
  
"The aorta of a whale is larger in the bore than the main pipe of the  
water-works at London Bridge, and the water roaring in its passage  
through that pipe is inferior in impetus and velocity to the blood  
gushing from the whale's heart." --PALEY'S THEOLOGY.  
  
"The whale is a mammiferous animal without hind feet." --BARON CUVIER.  
  
"In 40 degrees south, we saw Spermacetti Whales, but did not take  
any till the first of May, the sea being then covered with them."  
--COLNETT'S VOYAGE FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXTENDING THE SPERMACETI WHALE  
FISHERY.  
  
 "In the free element beneath me swam,  
 Floundered and dived, in play, in chace, in battle,  
 Fishes of every colour, form, and kind;  
 Which language cannot paint, and mariner  
 Had never seen; from dread Leviathan  
 To insect millions peopling every wave:  
 Gather'd in shoals immense, like floating islands,  
 Led by mysterious instincts through that waste  
 And trackless region, though on every side  
 Assaulted by voracious enemies,  
 Whales, sharks, and monsters, arm'd in front or jaw,  
 With swords, saws, spiral horns, or hooked fangs."  
 --MONTGOMERY'S WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD.  
  
 "Io! Paean! Io! sing.  
 To the finny people's king.  
 Not a mightier whale than this  
 In the vast Atlantic is;  
 Not a fatter fish than he,  
 Flounders round the Polar Sea."  
 --CHARLES LAMB'S TRIUMPH OF THE WHALE.  
  
"In the year 1690 some persons were on a high hill observing the  
whales spouting and sporting with each other, when one observed:  
there--pointing to the sea--is a green pasture where our children's  
grand-children will go for bread." --OBED MACY'S HISTORY OF NANTUCKET.  
  
"I built a cottage for Susan and myself and made a gateway in the form  
of a Gothic Arch, by setting up a whale's jaw bones." --HAWTHORNE'S  
TWICE TOLD TALES.  
  
"She came to bespeak a monument for her first love, who had been killed  
by a whale in the Pacific ocean, no less than forty years ago." --IBID.  
  
"No, Sir, 'tis a Right Whale," answered Tom; "I saw his sprout; he threw  
up a pair of as pretty rainbows as a Christian would wish to look at.  
He's a raal oil-butt, that fellow!" --COOPER'S PILOT.  
  
"The papers were brought in, and we saw in the Berlin Gazette  
that whales had been introduced on the stage there." --ECKERMANN'S  
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOETHE.  
  
"My God! Mr. Chace, what is the matter?" I answered, "we have been stove  
by a whale." --"NARRATIVE OF THE SHIPWRECK OF THE WHALE SHIP ESSEX OF  
NANTUCKET, WHICH WAS ATTACKED AND FINALLY DESTROYED BY A LARGE SPERM  
WHALE IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN." BY OWEN CHACE OF NANTUCKET, FIRST MATE OF  
SAID VESSEL. NEW YORK, 1821.  
  
 "A mariner sat in the shrouds one night,  
 The wind was piping free;  
 Now bright, now dimmed, was the moonlight pale,  
 And the phospher gleamed in the wake of the whale,  
 As it floundered in the sea."  
 --ELIZABETH OAKES SMITH.  
  
"The quantity of line withdrawn from the boats engaged in the capture  
of this one whale, amounted altogether to 10,440 yards or nearly six  
English miles....  
  
"Sometimes the whale shakes its tremendous tail in the air, which,  
cracking like a whip, resounds to the distance of three or four miles."  
--SCORESBY.  
  
"Mad with the agonies he endures from these fresh attacks, the  
infuriated Sperm Whale rolls over and over; he rears his enormous head,  
and with wide expanded jaws snaps at everything around him; he rushes  
at the boats with his head; they are propelled before him with vast  
swiftness, and sometimes utterly destroyed.... It is a matter of great  
astonishment that the consideration of the habits of so interesting,  
and, in a commercial point of view, so important an animal (as the Sperm  
Whale) should have been so entirely neglected, or should have excited  
so little curiosity among the numerous, and many of them competent  
observers, that of late years, must have possessed the most abundant  
and the most convenient opportunities of witnessing their habitudes."  
--THOMAS BEALE'S HISTORY OF THE SPERM WHALE, 1839.  
  
"The Cachalot" (Sperm Whale) "is not only better armed than the True  
Whale" (Greenland or Right Whale) "in possessing a formidable weapon  
at either extremity of its body, but also more frequently displays a  
disposition to employ these weapons offensively and in manner at once so  
artful, bold, and mischievous, as to lead to its being regarded as the  
most dangerous to attack of all the known species of the whale tribe."  
--FREDERICK DEBELL BENNETT'S WHALING VOYAGE ROUND THE GLOBE, 1840.  
  
 October 13. "There she blows," was sung out from the mast-head.  
 "Where away?" demanded the captain.  
 "Three points off the lee bow, sir."  
 "Raise up your wheel. Steady!" "Steady, sir."  
 "Mast-head ahoy! Do you see that whale now?"  
 "Ay ay, sir! A shoal of Sperm Whales! There she blows! There she  
 breaches!"  
 "Sing out! sing out every time!"  
 "Ay Ay, sir! There she blows! there--there--THAR she  
 blows--bowes--bo-o-os!"  
 "How far off?"  
 "Two miles and a half."  
 "Thunder and lightning! so near! Call all hands."  
 --J. ROSS BROWNE'S ETCHINGS OF A WHALING CRUIZE. 1846.  
  
"The Whale-ship Globe, on board of which vessel occurred the horrid  
transactions we are about to relate, belonged to the island of  
Nantucket." --"NARRATIVE OF THE GLOBE," BY LAY AND HUSSEY SURVIVORS.  
A.D. 1828.  
  
Being once pursued by a whale which he had wounded, he parried the  
assault for some time with a lance; but the furious monster at length  
rushed on the boat; himself and comrades only being preserved by leaping  
into the water when they saw the onset was inevitable." --MISSIONARY  
JOURNAL OF TYERMAN AND BENNETT.  
  
"Nantucket itself," said Mr. Webster, "is a very striking and peculiar  
portion of the National interest. There is a population of eight or nine  
thousand persons living here in the sea, adding largely every year  
to the National wealth by the boldest and most persevering industry."  
--REPORT OF DANIEL WEBSTER'S SPEECH IN THE U. S. SENATE, ON THE  
APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF A BREAKWATER AT NANTUCKET. 1828.  
  
"The whale fell directly over him, and probably killed him in a moment."  
--"THE WHALE AND HIS CAPTORS, OR THE WHALEMAN'S ADVENTURES AND THE  
WHALE'S BIOGRAPHY, GATHERED ON THE HOMEWARD CRUISE OF THE COMMODORE  
PREBLE." BY REV. HENRY T. CHEEVER.  
  
"If you make the least damn bit of noise," replied Samuel, "I will send  
you to hell." --LIFE OF SAMUEL COMSTOCK (THE MUTINEER), BY HIS BROTHER,  
WILLIAM COMSTOCK. ANOTHER VERSION OF THE WHALE-SHIP GLOBE NARRATIVE.  
  
"The voyages of the Dutch and English to the Northern Ocean, in order,  
if possible, to discover a passage through it to India, though they  
failed of their main object, laid-open the haunts of the whale."  
--MCCULLOCH'S COMMERCIAL DICTIONARY.  
  
"These things are reciprocal; the ball rebounds, only to bound forward  
again; for now in laying open the haunts of the whale, the whalemen seem  
to have indirectly hit upon new clews to that same mystic North-West  
Passage." --FROM "SOMETHING" UNPUBLISHED.  
  
"It is impossible to meet a whale-ship on the ocean without being struck  
by her near appearance. The vessel under short sail, with look-outs at  
the mast-heads, eagerly scanning the wide expanse around them, has a  
totally different air from those engaged in regular voyage." --CURRENTS  
AND WHALING. U.S. EX. EX.  
  
"Pedestrians in the vicinity of London and elsewhere may recollect  
having seen large curved bones set upright in the earth, either to form  
arches over gateways, or entrances to alcoves, and they may perhaps  
have been told that these were the ribs of whales." --TALES OF A WHALE  
VOYAGER TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN.  
  
"It was not till the boats returned from the pursuit of these whales,  
that the whites saw their ship in bloody possession of the savages  
enrolled among the crew." --NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT OF THE TAKING AND RETAKING  
OF THE WHALE-SHIP HOBOMACK.  
  
"It is generally well known that out of the crews of Whaling vessels  
(American) few ever return in the ships on board of which they  
departed." --CRUISE IN A WHALE BOAT.  
  
"Suddenly a mighty mass emerged from the water, and shot up  
perpendicularly into the air. It was the while." --MIRIAM COFFIN OR THE  
WHALE FISHERMAN.  
  
"The Whale is harpooned to be sure; but bethink you, how you would  
manage a powerful unbroken colt, with the mere appliance of a rope tied  
to the root of his tail." --A CHAPTER ON WHALING IN RIBS AND TRUCKS.  
  
"On one occasion I saw two of these monsters (whales) probably male and  
female, slowly swimming, one after the other, within less than a stone's  
throw of the shore" (Terra Del Fuego), "over which the beech tree  
extended its branches." --DARWIN'S VOYAGE OF A NATURALIST.  
  
"'Stern all!' exclaimed the mate, as upon turning his head, he saw the  
distended jaws of a large Sperm Whale close to the head of the boat,  
threatening it with instant destruction;--'Stern all, for your lives!'"  
--WHARTON THE WHALE KILLER.  
  
"So be cheery, my lads, let your hearts never fail, While the bold  
harpooneer is striking the whale!" --NANTUCKET SONG.  
  
 "Oh, the rare old Whale, mid storm and gale  
 In his ocean home will be  
 A giant in might, where might is right,  
 And King of the boundless sea."  
 --WHALE SONG.  
  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 1. Loomings.  
  
  
Call me Ishmael. Some years ago--never mind how long precisely--having  
little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on  
shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of  
the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating  
the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth;  
whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find  
myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up  
the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get  
such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to  
prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically  
knocking people's hats off--then, I account it high time to get to sea  
as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a  
philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly  
take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew  
it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very  
nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.  
  
There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by  
wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs--commerce surrounds it with  
her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward. Its extreme  
downtown is the battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and  
cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land.  
Look at the crowds of water-gazers there.  
  
Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears  
Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What  
do you see?--Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand  
thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some  
leaning against the spiles; some seated upon the pier-heads; some  
looking over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the  
rigging, as if striving to get a still better seaward peep. But these  
are all landsmen; of week days pent up in lath and plaster--tied to  
counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are  
the green fields gone? What do they here?  
  
But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and  
seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the  
extremest limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder  
warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water  
as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand--miles of  
them--leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets  
and avenues--north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite.  
Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all  
those ships attract them thither?  
  
Once more. Say you are in the country; in some high land of lakes. Take  
almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a  
dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic  
in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest  
reveries--stand that man on his legs, set his feet a-going, and he will  
infallibly lead you to water, if water there be in all that region.  
Should you ever be athirst in the great American desert, try this  
experiment, if your caravan happen to be supplied with a metaphysical  
professor. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for  
ever.  
  
But here is an artist. He desires to paint you the dreamiest, shadiest,  
quietest, most enchanting bit of romantic landscape in all the valley of  
the Saco. What is the chief element he employs? There stand his trees,  
each with a hollow trunk, as if a hermit and a crucifix were within; and  
here sleeps his meadow, and there sleep his cattle; and up from yonder  
cottage goes a sleepy smoke. Deep into distant woodlands winds a  
mazy way, reaching to overlapping spurs of mountains bathed in their  
hill-side blue. But though the picture lies thus tranced, and though  
this pine-tree shakes down its sighs like leaves upon this shepherd's  
head, yet all were vain, unless the shepherd's eye were fixed upon the  
magic stream before him. Go visit the Prairies in June, when for scores  
on scores of miles you wade knee-deep among Tiger-lilies--what is the  
one charm wanting?--Water--there is not a drop of water there! Were  
Niagara but a cataract of sand, would you travel your thousand miles to  
see it? Why did the poor poet of Tennessee, upon suddenly receiving two  
handfuls of silver, deliberate whether to buy him a coat, which he sadly  
needed, or invest his money in a pedestrian trip to Rockaway Beach? Why  
is almost every robust healthy boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at  
some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a  
passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first  
told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the  
old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate  
deity, and own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning.  
And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because  
he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain,  
plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see  
in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of  
life; and this is the key to it all.  
  
Now, when I say that I am in the habit of going to sea whenever I begin  
to grow hazy about the eyes, and begin to be over conscious of my lungs,  
I do not mean to have it inferred that I ever go to sea as a passenger.  
For to go as a passenger you must needs have a purse, and a purse is  
but a rag unless you have something in it. Besides, passengers get  
sea-sick--grow quarrelsome--don't sleep of nights--do not enjoy  
themselves much, as a general thing;--no, I never go as a passenger;  
nor, though I am something of a salt, do I ever go to sea as a  
Commodore, or a Captain, or a Cook. I abandon the glory and distinction  
of such offices to those who like them. For my part, I abominate all  
honourable respectable toils, trials, and tribulations of every kind  
whatsoever. It is quite as much as I can do to take care of myself,  
without taking care of ships, barques, brigs, schooners, and what not.  
And as for going as cook,--though I confess there is considerable glory  
in that, a cook being a sort of officer on ship-board--yet, somehow,  
I never fancied broiling fowls;--though once broiled, judiciously  
buttered, and judgmatically salted and peppered, there is no one who  
will speak more respectfully, not to say reverentially, of a broiled  
fowl than I will. It is out of the idolatrous dotings of the old  
Egyptians upon broiled ibis and roasted river horse, that you see the  
mummies of those creatures in their huge bake-houses the pyramids.  
  
No, when I go to sea, I go as a simple sailor, right before the mast,  
plumb down into the forecastle, aloft there to the royal mast-head.  
True, they rather order me about some, and make me jump from spar to  
spar, like a grasshopper in a May meadow. And at first, this sort  
of thing is unpleasant enough. It touches one's sense of honour,  
particularly if you come of an old established family in the land, the  
Van Rensselaers, or Randolphs, or Hardicanutes. And more than all,  
if just previous to putting your hand into the tar-pot, you have been  
lording it as a country schoolmaster, making the tallest boys stand  
in awe of you. The transition is a keen one, I assure you, from a  
schoolmaster to a sailor, and requires a strong decoction of Seneca and  
the Stoics to enable you to grin and bear it. But even this wears off in  
time.  
  
What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom  
and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed,  
I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel  
Gabriel thinks anything the less of me, because I promptly and  
respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who ain't  
a slave? Tell me that. Well, then, however the old sea-captains may  
order me about--however they may thump and punch me about, I have the  
satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is  
one way or other served in much the same way--either in a physical  
or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is  
passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and  
be content.  
  
Again, I always go to sea as a sailor, because they make a point of  
paying me for my trouble, whereas they never pay passengers a single  
penny that I ever heard of. On the contrary, passengers themselves must  
pay. And there is all the difference in the world between paying  
and being paid. The act of paying is perhaps the most uncomfortable  
infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us. But BEING  
PAID,--what will compare with it? The urbane activity with which a man  
receives money is really marvellous, considering that we so earnestly  
believe money to be the root of all earthly ills, and that on no account  
can a monied man enter heaven. Ah! how cheerfully we consign ourselves  
to perdition!  
  
Finally, I always go to sea as a sailor, because of the wholesome  
exercise and pure air of the fore-castle deck. For as in this world,  
head winds are far more prevalent than winds from astern (that is,  
if you never violate the Pythagorean maxim), so for the most part the  
Commodore on the quarter-deck gets his atmosphere at second hand from  
the sailors on the forecastle. He thinks he breathes it first; but not  
so. In much the same way do the commonalty lead their leaders in many  
other things, at the same time that the leaders little suspect it.  
But wherefore it was that after having repeatedly smelt the sea as a  
merchant sailor, I should now take it into my head to go on a whaling  
voyage; this the invisible police officer of the Fates, who has the  
constant surveillance of me, and secretly dogs me, and influences me  
in some unaccountable way--he can better answer than any one else. And,  
doubtless, my going on this whaling voyage, formed part of the grand  
programme of Providence that was drawn up a long time ago. It came in as  
a sort of brief interlude and solo between more extensive performances.  
I take it that this part of the bill must have run something like this:  
  
  
"GRAND CONTESTED ELECTION FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES.  
  
"WHALING VOYAGE BY ONE ISHMAEL.  
  
"BLOODY BATTLE IN AFFGHANISTAN."  
  
  
Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the  
Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others  
were set down for magnificent parts in high tragedies, and short and  
easy parts in genteel comedies, and jolly parts in farces--though  
I cannot tell why this was exactly; yet, now that I recall all the  
circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives  
which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced  
me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the  
delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill  
and discriminating judgment.  
  
Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great  
whale himself. Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my  
curiosity. Then the wild and distant seas where he rolled his island  
bulk; the undeliverable, nameless perils of the whale; these, with all  
the attending marvels of a thousand Patagonian sights and sounds, helped  
to sway me to my wish. With other men, perhaps, such things would not  
have been inducements; but as for me, I am tormented with an everlasting  
itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas, and land on  
barbarous coasts. Not ignoring what is good, I am quick to perceive a  
horror, and could still be social with it--would they let me--since it  
is but well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place  
one lodges in.  
  
By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the  
great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild  
conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into  
my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them  
all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 2. The Carpet-Bag.  
  
  
I stuffed a shirt or two into my old carpet-bag, tucked it under my arm,  
and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific. Quitting the good city of  
old Manhatto, I duly arrived in New Bedford. It was a Saturday night in  
December. Much was I disappointed upon learning that the little packet  
for Nantucket had already sailed, and that no way of reaching that place  
would offer, till the following Monday.  
  
As most young candidates for the pains and penalties of whaling stop at  
this same New Bedford, thence to embark on their voyage, it may as well  
be related that I, for one, had no idea of so doing. For my mind was  
made up to sail in no other than a Nantucket craft, because there was a  
fine, boisterous something about everything connected with that famous  
old island, which amazingly pleased me. Besides though New Bedford has  
of late been gradually monopolising the business of whaling, and though  
in this matter poor old Nantucket is now much behind her, yet Nantucket  
was her great original--the Tyre of this Carthage;--the place where the  
first dead American whale was stranded. Where else but from Nantucket  
did those aboriginal whalemen, the Red-Men, first sally out in canoes to  
give chase to the Leviathan? And where but from Nantucket, too, did that  
first adventurous little sloop put forth, partly laden with imported  
cobblestones--so goes the story--to throw at the whales, in order to  
discover when they were nigh enough to risk a harpoon from the bowsprit?  
  
Now having a night, a day, and still another night following before me  
in New Bedford, ere I could embark for my destined port, it became a  
matter of concernment where I was to eat and sleep meanwhile. It was a  
very dubious-looking, nay, a very dark and dismal night, bitingly cold  
and cheerless. I knew no one in the place. With anxious grapnels I had  
sounded my pocket, and only brought up a few pieces of silver,--So,  
wherever you go, Ishmael, said I to myself, as I stood in the middle of  
a dreary street shouldering my bag, and comparing the gloom towards the  
north with the darkness towards the south--wherever in your wisdom you  
may conclude to lodge for the night, my dear Ishmael, be sure to inquire  
the price, and don't be too particular.  
  
With halting steps I paced the streets, and passed the sign of "The  
Crossed Harpoons"--but it looked too expensive and jolly there. Further  
on, from the bright red windows of the "Sword-Fish Inn," there came such  
fervent rays, that it seemed to have melted the packed snow and ice from  
before the house, for everywhere else the congealed frost lay ten inches  
thick in a hard, asphaltic pavement,--rather weary for me, when I struck  
my foot against the flinty projections, because from hard, remorseless  
service the soles of my boots were in a most miserable plight. Too  
expensive and jolly, again thought I, pausing one moment to watch the  
broad glare in the street, and hear the sounds of the tinkling glasses  
within. But go on, Ishmael, said I at last; don't you hear? get away  
from before the door; your patched boots are stopping the way. So on I  
went. I now by instinct followed the streets that took me waterward, for  
there, doubtless, were the cheapest, if not the cheeriest inns.  
  
Such dreary streets! blocks of blackness, not houses, on either hand,  
and here and there a candle, like a candle moving about in a tomb. At  
this hour of the night, of the last day of the week, that quarter of  
the town proved all but deserted. But presently I came to a smoky light  
proceeding from a low, wide building, the door of which stood invitingly  
open. It had a careless look, as if it were meant for the uses of the  
public; so, entering, the first thing I did was to stumble over an  
ash-box in the porch. Ha! thought I, ha, as the flying particles almost  
choked me, are these ashes from that destroyed city, Gomorrah? But "The  
Crossed Harpoons," and "The Sword-Fish?"--this, then must needs be the  
sign of "The Trap." However, I picked myself up and hearing a loud voice  
within, pushed on and opened a second, interior door.  
  
It seemed the great Black Parliament sitting in Tophet. A hundred black  
faces turned round in their rows to peer; and beyond, a black Angel  
of Doom was beating a book in a pulpit. It was a negro church; and the  
preacher's text was about the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and  
wailing and teeth-gnashing there. Ha, Ishmael, muttered I, backing out,  
Wretched entertainment at the sign of 'The Trap!'  
  
Moving on, I at last came to a dim sort of light not far from the docks,  
and heard a forlorn creaking in the air; and looking up, saw a swinging  
sign over the door with a white painting upon it, faintly representing  
a tall straight jet of misty spray, and these words underneath--"The  
Spouter Inn:--Peter Coffin."  
  
Coffin?--Spouter?--Rather ominous in that particular connexion, thought  
I. But it is a common name in Nantucket, they say, and I suppose this  
Peter here is an emigrant from there. As the light looked so dim, and  
the place, for the time, looked quiet enough, and the dilapidated little  
wooden house itself looked as if it might have been carted here from  
the ruins of some burnt district, and as the swinging sign had a  
poverty-stricken sort of creak to it, I thought that here was the very  
spot for cheap lodgings, and the best of pea coffee.  
  
It was a queer sort of place--a gable-ended old house, one side palsied  
as it were, and leaning over sadly. It stood on a sharp bleak corner,  
where that tempestuous wind Euroclydon kept up a worse howling than ever  
it did about poor Paul's tossed craft. Euroclydon, nevertheless, is a  
mighty pleasant zephyr to any one in-doors, with his feet on the hob  
quietly toasting for bed. "In judging of that tempestuous wind called  
Euroclydon," says an old writer--of whose works I possess the only copy  
extant--"it maketh a marvellous difference, whether thou lookest out at  
it from a glass window where the frost is all on the outside, or whether  
thou observest it from that sashless window, where the frost is on both  
sides, and of which the wight Death is the only glazier." True enough,  
thought I, as this passage occurred to my mind--old black-letter, thou  
reasonest well. Yes, these eyes are windows, and this body of mine is  
the house. What a pity they didn't stop up the chinks and the crannies  
though, and thrust in a little lint here and there. But it's too late  
to make any improvements now. The universe is finished; the copestone  
is on, and the chips were carted off a million years ago. Poor Lazarus  
there, chattering his teeth against the curbstone for his pillow, and  
shaking off his tatters with his shiverings, he might plug up both ears  
with rags, and put a corn-cob into his mouth, and yet that would not  
keep out the tempestuous Euroclydon. Euroclydon! says old Dives, in his  
red silken wrapper--(he had a redder one afterwards) pooh, pooh! What  
a fine frosty night; how Orion glitters; what northern lights! Let them  
talk of their oriental summer climes of everlasting conservatories; give  
me the privilege of making my own summer with my own coals.  
  
But what thinks Lazarus? Can he warm his blue hands by holding them up  
to the grand northern lights? Would not Lazarus rather be in Sumatra  
than here? Would he not far rather lay him down lengthwise along the  
line of the equator; yea, ye gods! go down to the fiery pit itself, in  
order to keep out this frost?  
  
Now, that Lazarus should lie stranded there on the curbstone before the  
door of Dives, this is more wonderful than that an iceberg should be  
moored to one of the Moluccas. Yet Dives himself, he too lives like a  
Czar in an ice palace made of frozen sighs, and being a president of a  
temperance society, he only drinks the tepid tears of orphans.  
  
But no more of this blubbering now, we are going a-whaling, and there is  
plenty of that yet to come. Let us scrape the ice from our frosted feet,  
and see what sort of a place this "Spouter" may be.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 3. The Spouter-Inn.  
  
  
Entering that gable-ended Spouter-Inn, you found yourself in a wide,  
low, straggling entry with old-fashioned wainscots, reminding one of  
the bulwarks of some condemned old craft. On one side hung a very large  
oilpainting so thoroughly besmoked, and every way defaced, that in the  
unequal crosslights by which you viewed it, it was only by diligent  
study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of  
the neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its  
purpose. Such unaccountable masses of shades and shadows, that at first  
you almost thought some ambitious young artist, in the time of the New  
England hags, had endeavored to delineate chaos bewitched. But by dint  
of much and earnest contemplation, and oft repeated ponderings, and  
especially by throwing open the little window towards the back of the  
entry, you at last come to the conclusion that such an idea, however  
wild, might not be altogether unwarranted.  
  
But what most puzzled and confounded you was a long, limber, portentous,  
black mass of something hovering in the centre of the picture over three  
blue, dim, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast. A boggy,  
soggy, squitchy picture truly, enough to drive a nervous man distracted.  
Yet was there a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable  
sublimity about it that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily  
took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvellous painting  
meant. Ever and anon a bright, but, alas, deceptive idea would dart you  
through.--It's the Black Sea in a midnight gale.--It's the unnatural  
combat of the four primal elements.--It's a blasted heath.--It's a  
Hyperborean winter scene.--It's the breaking-up of the icebound stream  
of Time. But at last all these fancies yielded to that one portentous  
something in the picture's midst. THAT once found out, and all the rest  
were plain. But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic  
fish? even the great leviathan himself?  
  
In fact, the artist's design seemed this: a final theory of my own,  
partly based upon the aggregated opinions of many aged persons with whom  
I conversed upon the subject. The picture represents a Cape-Horner in a  
great hurricane; the half-foundered ship weltering there with its three  
dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to  
spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself  
upon the three mast-heads.  
  
The opposite wall of this entry was hung all over with a heathenish  
array of monstrous clubs and spears. Some were thickly set with  
glittering teeth resembling ivory saws; others were tufted with knots of  
human hair; and one was sickle-shaped, with a vast handle sweeping round  
like the segment made in the new-mown grass by a long-armed mower. You  
shuddered as you gazed, and wondered what monstrous cannibal and savage  
could ever have gone a death-harvesting with such a hacking, horrifying  
implement. Mixed with these were rusty old whaling lances and harpoons  
all broken and deformed. Some were storied weapons. With this once long  
lance, now wildly elbowed, fifty years ago did Nathan Swain kill fifteen  
whales between a sunrise and a sunset. And that harpoon--so like a  
corkscrew now--was flung in Javan seas, and run away with by a whale,  
years afterwards slain off the Cape of Blanco. The original iron entered  
nigh the tail, and, like a restless needle sojourning in the body of a  
man, travelled full forty feet, and at last was found imbedded in the  
hump.  
  
Crossing this dusky entry, and on through yon low-arched way--cut  
through what in old times must have been a great central chimney with  
fireplaces all round--you enter the public room. A still duskier place  
is this, with such low ponderous beams above, and such old wrinkled  
planks beneath, that you would almost fancy you trod some old craft's  
cockpits, especially of such a howling night, when this corner-anchored  
old ark rocked so furiously. On one side stood a long, low, shelf-like  
table covered with cracked glass cases, filled with dusty rarities  
gathered from this wide world's remotest nooks. Projecting from the  
further angle of the room stands a dark-looking den--the bar--a rude  
attempt at a right whale's head. Be that how it may, there stands the  
vast arched bone of the whale's jaw, so wide, a coach might almost drive  
beneath it. Within are shabby shelves, ranged round with old decanters,  
bottles, flasks; and in those jaws of swift destruction, like another  
cursed Jonah (by which name indeed they called him), bustles a little  
withered old man, who, for their money, dearly sells the sailors  
deliriums and death.  
  
Abominable are the tumblers into which he pours his poison. Though  
true cylinders without--within, the villanous green goggling glasses  
deceitfully tapered downwards to a cheating bottom. Parallel meridians  
rudely pecked into the glass, surround these footpads' goblets. Fill to  
THIS mark, and your charge is but a penny; to THIS a penny more; and so  
on to the full glass--the Cape Horn measure, which you may gulp down for  
a shilling.  
  
Upon entering the place I found a number of young seamen gathered about  
a table, examining by a dim light divers specimens of SKRIMSHANDER. I  
sought the landlord, and telling him I desired to be accommodated with a  
room, received for answer that his house was full--not a bed unoccupied.  
"But avast," he added, tapping his forehead, "you haint no objections  
to sharing a harpooneer's blanket, have ye? I s'pose you are goin'  
a-whalin', so you'd better get used to that sort of thing."  
  
I told him that I never liked to sleep two in a bed; that if I should  
ever do so, it would depend upon who the harpooneer might be, and  
that if he (the landlord) really had no other place for me, and the  
harpooneer was not decidedly objectionable, why rather than wander  
further about a strange town on so bitter a night, I would put up with  
the half of any decent man's blanket.  
  
"I thought so. All right; take a seat. Supper?--you want supper?  
Supper'll be ready directly."  
  
I sat down on an old wooden settle, carved all over like a bench on the  
Battery. At one end a ruminating tar was still further adorning it with  
his jack-knife, stooping over and diligently working away at the space  
between his legs. He was trying his hand at a ship under full sail, but  
he didn't make much headway, I thought.  
  
At last some four or five of us were summoned to our meal in an  
adjoining room. It was cold as Iceland--no fire at all--the landlord  
said he couldn't afford it. Nothing but two dismal tallow candles, each  
in a winding sheet. We were fain to button up our monkey jackets, and  
hold to our lips cups of scalding tea with our half frozen fingers. But  
the fare was of the most substantial kind--not only meat and potatoes,  
but dumplings; good heavens! dumplings for supper! One young fellow in  
a green box coat, addressed himself to these dumplings in a most direful  
manner.  
  
"My boy," said the landlord, "you'll have the nightmare to a dead  
sartainty."  
  
"Landlord," I whispered, "that aint the harpooneer is it?"  
  
"Oh, no," said he, looking a sort of diabolically funny, "the harpooneer  
is a dark complexioned chap. He never eats dumplings, he don't--he eats  
nothing but steaks, and he likes 'em rare."  
  
"The devil he does," says I. "Where is that harpooneer? Is he here?"  
  
"He'll be here afore long," was the answer.  
  
I could not help it, but I began to feel suspicious of this "dark  
complexioned" harpooneer. At any rate, I made up my mind that if it so  
turned out that we should sleep together, he must undress and get into  
bed before I did.  
  
Supper over, the company went back to the bar-room, when, knowing not  
what else to do with myself, I resolved to spend the rest of the evening  
as a looker on.  
  
Presently a rioting noise was heard without. Starting up, the landlord  
cried, "That's the Grampus's crew. I seed her reported in the offing  
this morning; a three years' voyage, and a full ship. Hurrah, boys; now  
we'll have the latest news from the Feegees."  
  
A tramping of sea boots was heard in the entry; the door was flung open,  
and in rolled a wild set of mariners enough. Enveloped in their shaggy  
watch coats, and with their heads muffled in woollen comforters, all  
bedarned and ragged, and their beards stiff with icicles, they seemed an  
eruption of bears from Labrador. They had just landed from their boat,  
and this was the first house they entered. No wonder, then, that they  
made a straight wake for the whale's mouth--the bar--when the wrinkled  
little old Jonah, there officiating, soon poured them out brimmers all  
round. One complained of a bad cold in his head, upon which Jonah  
mixed him a pitch-like potion of gin and molasses, which he swore was a  
sovereign cure for all colds and catarrhs whatsoever, never mind of how  
long standing, or whether caught off the coast of Labrador, or on the  
weather side of an ice-island.  
  
The liquor soon mounted into their heads, as it generally does even  
with the arrantest topers newly landed from sea, and they began capering  
about most obstreperously.  
  
I observed, however, that one of them held somewhat aloof, and though  
he seemed desirous not to spoil the hilarity of his shipmates by his own  
sober face, yet upon the whole he refrained from making as much noise  
as the rest. This man interested me at once; and since the sea-gods  
had ordained that he should soon become my shipmate (though but a  
sleeping-partner one, so far as this narrative is concerned), I will  
here venture upon a little description of him. He stood full six feet  
in height, with noble shoulders, and a chest like a coffer-dam. I have  
seldom seen such brawn in a man. His face was deeply brown and burnt,  
making his white teeth dazzling by the contrast; while in the deep  
shadows of his eyes floated some reminiscences that did not seem to give  
him much joy. His voice at once announced that he was a Southerner,  
and from his fine stature, I thought he must be one of those tall  
mountaineers from the Alleghanian Ridge in Virginia. When the revelry  
of his companions had mounted to its height, this man slipped away  
unobserved, and I saw no more of him till he became my comrade on the  
sea. In a few minutes, however, he was missed by his shipmates, and  
being, it seems, for some reason a huge favourite with them, they raised  
a cry of "Bulkington! Bulkington! where's Bulkington?" and darted out of  
the house in pursuit of him.  
  
It was now about nine o'clock, and the room seeming almost  
supernaturally quiet after these orgies, I began to congratulate myself  
upon a little plan that had occurred to me just previous to the entrance  
of the seamen.  
  
No man prefers to sleep two in a bed. In fact, you would a good deal  
rather not sleep with your own brother. I don't know how it is, but  
people like to be private when they are sleeping. And when it comes to  
sleeping with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange  
town, and that stranger a harpooneer, then your objections indefinitely  
multiply. Nor was there any earthly reason why I as a sailor should  
sleep two in a bed, more than anybody else; for sailors no more sleep  
two in a bed at sea, than bachelor Kings do ashore. To be sure they  
all sleep together in one apartment, but you have your own hammock, and  
cover yourself with your own blanket, and sleep in your own skin.  
  
The more I pondered over this harpooneer, the more I abominated the  
thought of sleeping with him. It was fair to presume that being a  
harpooneer, his linen or woollen, as the case might be, would not be of  
the tidiest, certainly none of the finest. I began to twitch all over.  
Besides, it was getting late, and my decent harpooneer ought to be  
home and going bedwards. Suppose now, he should tumble in upon me at  
midnight--how could I tell from what vile hole he had been coming?  
  
"Landlord! I've changed my mind about that harpooneer.--I shan't sleep  
with him. I'll try the bench here."  
  
"Just as you please; I'm sorry I cant spare ye a tablecloth for a  
mattress, and it's a plaguy rough board here"--feeling of the knots and  
notches. "But wait a bit, Skrimshander; I've got a carpenter's plane  
there in the bar--wait, I say, and I'll make ye snug enough." So saying  
he procured the plane; and with his old silk handkerchief first dusting  
the bench, vigorously set to planing away at my bed, the while grinning  
like an ape. The shavings flew right and left; till at last the  
plane-iron came bump against an indestructible knot. The landlord was  
near spraining his wrist, and I told him for heaven's sake to quit--the  
bed was soft enough to suit me, and I did not know how all the planing  
in the world could make eider down of a pine plank. So gathering up the  
shavings with another grin, and throwing them into the great stove in  
the middle of the room, he went about his business, and left me in a  
brown study.  
  
I now took the measure of the bench, and found that it was a foot too  
short; but that could be mended with a chair. But it was a foot too  
narrow, and the other bench in the room was about four inches higher  
than the planed one--so there was no yoking them. I then placed the  
first bench lengthwise along the only clear space against the wall,  
leaving a little interval between, for my back to settle down in. But I  
soon found that there came such a draught of cold air over me from under  
the sill of the window, that this plan would never do at all, especially  
as another current from the rickety door met the one from the window,  
and both together formed a series of small whirlwinds in the immediate  
vicinity of the spot where I had thought to spend the night.  
  
The devil fetch that harpooneer, thought I, but stop, couldn't I steal  
a march on him--bolt his door inside, and jump into his bed, not to be  
wakened by the most violent knockings? It seemed no bad idea; but upon  
second thoughts I dismissed it. For who could tell but what the next  
morning, so soon as I popped out of the room, the harpooneer might be  
standing in the entry, all ready to knock me down!  
  
Still, looking round me again, and seeing no possible chance of spending  
a sufferable night unless in some other person's bed, I began to think  
that after all I might be cherishing unwarrantable prejudices against  
this unknown harpooneer. Thinks I, I'll wait awhile; he must be dropping  
in before long. I'll have a good look at him then, and perhaps we may  
become jolly good bedfellows after all--there's no telling.  
  
But though the other boarders kept coming in by ones, twos, and threes,  
and going to bed, yet no sign of my harpooneer.  
  
"Landlord!" said I, "what sort of a chap is he--does he always keep such  
late hours?" It was now hard upon twelve o'clock.  
  
The landlord chuckled again with his lean chuckle, and seemed to  
be mightily tickled at something beyond my comprehension. "No," he  
answered, "generally he's an early bird--airley to bed and airley to  
rise--yes, he's the bird what catches the worm. But to-night he went out  
a peddling, you see, and I don't see what on airth keeps him so late,  
unless, may be, he can't sell his head."  
  
"Can't sell his head?--What sort of a bamboozingly story is this you  
are telling me?" getting into a towering rage. "Do you pretend to say,  
landlord, that this harpooneer is actually engaged this blessed Saturday  
night, or rather Sunday morning, in peddling his head around this town?"  
  
"That's precisely it," said the landlord, "and I told him he couldn't  
sell it here, the market's overstocked."  
  
"With what?" shouted I.  
  
"With heads to be sure; ain't there too many heads in the world?"  
  
"I tell you what it is, landlord," said I quite calmly, "you'd better  
stop spinning that yarn to me--I'm not green."  
  
"May be not," taking out a stick and whittling a toothpick, "but I  
rayther guess you'll be done BROWN if that ere harpooneer hears you a  
slanderin' his head."  
  
"I'll break it for him," said I, now flying into a passion again at this  
unaccountable farrago of the landlord's.  
  
"It's broke a'ready," said he.  
  
"Broke," said I--"BROKE, do you mean?"  
  
"Sartain, and that's the very reason he can't sell it, I guess."  
  
"Landlord," said I, going up to him as cool as Mt. Hecla in a  
snow-storm--"landlord, stop whittling. You and I must understand one  
another, and that too without delay. I come to your house and want a  
bed; you tell me you can only give me half a one; that the other half  
belongs to a certain harpooneer. And about this harpooneer, whom I  
have not yet seen, you persist in telling me the most mystifying and  
exasperating stories tending to beget in me an uncomfortable feeling  
towards the man whom you design for my bedfellow--a sort of connexion,  
landlord, which is an intimate and confidential one in the highest  
degree. I now demand of you to speak out and tell me who and what this  
harpooneer is, and whether I shall be in all respects safe to spend the  
night with him. And in the first place, you will be so good as to unsay  
that story about selling his head, which if true I take to be good  
evidence that this harpooneer is stark mad, and I've no idea of sleeping  
with a madman; and you, sir, YOU I mean, landlord, YOU, sir, by trying  
to induce me to do so knowingly, would thereby render yourself liable to  
a criminal prosecution."  
  
"Wall," said the landlord, fetching a long breath, "that's a purty long  
sarmon for a chap that rips a little now and then. But be easy, be easy,  
this here harpooneer I have been tellin' you of has just arrived from  
the south seas, where he bought up a lot of 'balmed New Zealand heads  
(great curios, you know), and he's sold all on 'em but one, and that one  
he's trying to sell to-night, cause to-morrow's Sunday, and it would not  
do to be sellin' human heads about the streets when folks is goin' to  
churches. He wanted to, last Sunday, but I stopped him just as he was  
goin' out of the door with four heads strung on a string, for all the  
airth like a string of inions."  
  
This account cleared up the otherwise unaccountable mystery, and showed  
that the landlord, after all, had had no idea of fooling me--but at  
the same time what could I think of a harpooneer who stayed out of a  
Saturday night clean into the holy Sabbath, engaged in such a cannibal  
business as selling the heads of dead idolators?  
  
"Depend upon it, landlord, that harpooneer is a dangerous man."  
  
"He pays reg'lar," was the rejoinder. "But come, it's getting dreadful  
late, you had better be turning flukes--it's a nice bed; Sal and me  
slept in that ere bed the night we were spliced. There's plenty of room  
for two to kick about in that bed; it's an almighty big bed that. Why,  
afore we give it up, Sal used to put our Sam and little Johnny in the  
foot of it. But I got a dreaming and sprawling about one night, and  
somehow, Sam got pitched on the floor, and came near breaking his arm.  
Arter that, Sal said it wouldn't do. Come along here, I'll give ye a  
glim in a jiffy;" and so saying he lighted a candle and held it towards  
me, offering to lead the way. But I stood irresolute; when looking at a  
clock in the corner, he exclaimed "I vum it's Sunday--you won't see that  
harpooneer to-night; he's come to anchor somewhere--come along then; DO  
come; WON'T ye come?"  
  
I considered the matter a moment, and then up stairs we went, and I was  
ushered into a small room, cold as a clam, and furnished, sure enough,  
with a prodigious bed, almost big enough indeed for any four harpooneers  
to sleep abreast.  
  
"There," said the landlord, placing the candle on a crazy old sea chest  
that did double duty as a wash-stand and centre table; "there, make  
yourself comfortable now, and good night to ye." I turned round from  
eyeing the bed, but he had disappeared.  
  
Folding back the counterpane, I stooped over the bed. Though none of the  
most elegant, it yet stood the scrutiny tolerably well. I then glanced  
round the room; and besides the bedstead and centre table, could see  
no other furniture belonging to the place, but a rude shelf, the four  
walls, and a papered fireboard representing a man striking a whale. Of  
things not properly belonging to the room, there was a hammock lashed  
up, and thrown upon the floor in one corner; also a large seaman's bag,  
containing the harpooneer's wardrobe, no doubt in lieu of a land trunk.  
Likewise, there was a parcel of outlandish bone fish hooks on the shelf  
over the fire-place, and a tall harpoon standing at the head of the bed.  
  
But what is this on the chest? I took it up, and held it close to the  
light, and felt it, and smelt it, and tried every way possible to arrive  
at some satisfactory conclusion concerning it. I can compare it to  
nothing but a large door mat, ornamented at the edges with little  
tinkling tags something like the stained porcupine quills round an  
Indian moccasin. There was a hole or slit in the middle of this mat,  
as you see the same in South American ponchos. But could it be possible  
that any sober harpooneer would get into a door mat, and parade the  
streets of any Christian town in that sort of guise? I put it on, to try  
it, and it weighed me down like a hamper, being uncommonly shaggy and  
thick, and I thought a little damp, as though this mysterious harpooneer  
had been wearing it of a rainy day. I went up in it to a bit of glass  
stuck against the wall, and I never saw such a sight in my life. I tore  
myself out of it in such a hurry that I gave myself a kink in the neck.  
  
I sat down on the side of the bed, and commenced thinking about this  
head-peddling harpooneer, and his door mat. After thinking some time on  
the bed-side, I got up and took off my monkey jacket, and then stood in  
the middle of the room thinking. I then took off my coat, and thought  
a little more in my shirt sleeves. But beginning to feel very cold now,  
half undressed as I was, and remembering what the landlord said about  
the harpooneer's not coming home at all that night, it being so very  
late, I made no more ado, but jumped out of my pantaloons and boots, and  
then blowing out the light tumbled into bed, and commended myself to the  
care of heaven.  
  
Whether that mattress was stuffed with corn-cobs or broken crockery,  
there is no telling, but I rolled about a good deal, and could not sleep  
for a long time. At last I slid off into a light doze, and had pretty  
nearly made a good offing towards the land of Nod, when I heard a heavy  
footfall in the passage, and saw a glimmer of light come into the room  
from under the door.  
  
Lord save me, thinks I, that must be the harpooneer, the infernal  
head-peddler. But I lay perfectly still, and resolved not to say a word  
till spoken to. Holding a light in one hand, and that identical New  
Zealand head in the other, the stranger entered the room, and without  
looking towards the bed, placed his candle a good way off from me on the  
floor in one corner, and then began working away at the knotted cords  
of the large bag I before spoke of as being in the room. I was all  
eagerness to see his face, but he kept it averted for some time while  
employed in unlacing the bag's mouth. This accomplished, however, he  
turned round--when, good heavens! what a sight! Such a face! It was of  
a dark, purplish, yellow colour, here and there stuck over with large  
blackish looking squares. Yes, it's just as I thought, he's a terrible  
bedfellow; he's been in a fight, got dreadfully cut, and here he is,  
just from the surgeon. But at that moment he chanced to turn his face  
so towards the light, that I plainly saw they could not be  
sticking-plasters at all, those black squares on his cheeks. They were  
stains of some sort or other. At first I knew not what to make of this;  
but soon an inkling of the truth occurred to me. I remembered a story of  
a white man--a whaleman too--who, falling among the cannibals, had been  
tattooed by them. I concluded that this harpooneer, in the course of his  
distant voyages, must have met with a similar adventure. And what is it,  
thought I, after all! It's only his outside; a man can be honest in any  
sort of skin. But then, what to make of his unearthly complexion, that  
part of it, I mean, lying round about, and completely independent of the  
squares of tattooing. To be sure, it might be nothing but a good coat of  
tropical tanning; but I never heard of a hot sun's tanning a white man  
into a purplish yellow one. However, I had never been in the South Seas;  
and perhaps the sun there produced these extraordinary effects upon the  
skin. Now, while all these ideas were passing through me like lightning,  
this harpooneer never noticed me at all. But, after some difficulty  
having opened his bag, he commenced fumbling in it, and presently pulled  
out a sort of tomahawk, and a seal-skin wallet with the hair on. Placing  
these on the old chest in the middle of the room, he then took the New  
Zealand head--a ghastly thing enough--and crammed it down into the bag.  
He now took off his hat--a new beaver hat--when I came nigh singing out  
with fresh surprise. There was no hair on his head--none to speak of at  
least--nothing but a small scalp-knot twisted up on his forehead. His  
bald purplish head now looked for all the world like a mildewed skull.  
Had not the stranger stood between me and the door, I would have bolted  
out of it quicker than ever I bolted a dinner.  
  
Even as it was, I thought something of slipping out of the window, but  
it was the second floor back. I am no coward, but what to make of  
this head-peddling purple rascal altogether passed my comprehension.  
Ignorance is the parent of fear, and being completely nonplussed and  
confounded about the stranger, I confess I was now as much afraid of him  
as if it was the devil himself who had thus broken into my room at  
the dead of night. In fact, I was so afraid of him that I was not  
game enough just then to address him, and demand a satisfactory answer  
concerning what seemed inexplicable in him.  
  
Meanwhile, he continued the business of undressing, and at last showed  
his chest and arms. As I live, these covered parts of him were checkered  
with the same squares as his face; his back, too, was all over the same  
dark squares; he seemed to have been in a Thirty Years' War, and just  
escaped from it with a sticking-plaster shirt. Still more, his very  
legs were marked, as if a parcel of dark green frogs were running up  
the trunks of young palms. It was now quite plain that he must be some  
abominable savage or other shipped aboard of a whaleman in the South  
Seas, and so landed in this Christian country. I quaked to think of it.  
A peddler of heads too--perhaps the heads of his own brothers. He might  
take a fancy to mine--heavens! look at that tomahawk!  
  
But there was no time for shuddering, for now the savage went about  
something that completely fascinated my attention, and convinced me that  
he must indeed be a heathen. Going to his heavy grego, or wrapall, or  
dreadnaught, which he had previously hung on a chair, he fumbled in the  
pockets, and produced at length a curious little deformed image with  
a hunch on its back, and exactly the colour of a three days' old Congo  
baby. Remembering the embalmed head, at first I almost thought that  
this black manikin was a real baby preserved in some similar manner. But  
seeing that it was not at all limber, and that it glistened a good deal  
like polished ebony, I concluded that it must be nothing but a wooden  
idol, which indeed it proved to be. For now the savage goes up to the  
empty fire-place, and removing the papered fire-board, sets up this  
little hunch-backed image, like a tenpin, between the andirons. The  
chimney jambs and all the bricks inside were very sooty, so that I  
thought this fire-place made a very appropriate little shrine or chapel  
for his Congo idol.  
  
I now screwed my eyes hard towards the half hidden image, feeling but  
ill at ease meantime--to see what was next to follow. First he takes  
about a double handful of shavings out of his grego pocket, and places  
them carefully before the idol; then laying a bit of ship biscuit on  
top and applying the flame from the lamp, he kindled the shavings into  
a sacrificial blaze. Presently, after many hasty snatches into the fire,  
and still hastier withdrawals of his fingers (whereby he seemed to be  
scorching them badly), he at last succeeded in drawing out the biscuit;  
then blowing off the heat and ashes a little, he made a polite offer of  
it to the little negro. But the little devil did not seem to fancy such  
dry sort of fare at all; he never moved his lips. All these strange  
antics were accompanied by still stranger guttural noises from the  
devotee, who seemed to be praying in a sing-song or else singing some  
pagan psalmody or other, during which his face twitched about in the  
most unnatural manner. At last extinguishing the fire, he took the idol  
up very unceremoniously, and bagged it again in his grego pocket as  
carelessly as if he were a sportsman bagging a dead woodcock.  
  
All these queer proceedings increased my uncomfortableness, and  
seeing him now exhibiting strong symptoms of concluding his business  
operations, and jumping into bed with me, I thought it was high time,  
now or never, before the light was put out, to break the spell in which  
I had so long been bound.  
  
But the interval I spent in deliberating what to say, was a fatal one.  
Taking up his tomahawk from the table, he examined the head of it for an  
instant, and then holding it to the light, with his mouth at the handle,  
he puffed out great clouds of tobacco smoke. The next moment the light  
was extinguished, and this wild cannibal, tomahawk between his teeth,  
sprang into bed with me. I sang out, I could not help it now; and giving  
a sudden grunt of astonishment he began feeling me.  
  
Stammering out something, I knew not what, I rolled away from him  
against the wall, and then conjured him, whoever or whatever he might  
be, to keep quiet, and let me get up and light the lamp again. But his  
guttural responses satisfied me at once that he but ill comprehended my  
meaning.  
  
"Who-e debel you?"--he at last said--"you no speak-e, dam-me, I kill-e."  
And so saying the lighted tomahawk began flourishing about me in the  
dark.  
  
"Landlord, for God's sake, Peter Coffin!" shouted I. "Landlord! Watch!  
Coffin! Angels! save me!"  
  
"Speak-e! tell-ee me who-ee be, or dam-me, I kill-e!" again growled the  
cannibal, while his horrid flourishings of the tomahawk scattered the  
hot tobacco ashes about me till I thought my linen would get on fire.  
But thank heaven, at that moment the landlord came into the room light  
in hand, and leaping from the bed I ran up to him.  
  
"Don't be afraid now," said he, grinning again, "Queequeg here wouldn't  
harm a hair of your head."  
  
"Stop your grinning," shouted I, "and why didn't you tell me that that  
infernal harpooneer was a cannibal?"  
  
"I thought ye know'd it;--didn't I tell ye, he was a peddlin' heads  
around town?--but turn flukes again and go to sleep. Queequeg, look  
here--you sabbee me, I sabbee--you this man sleepe you--you sabbee?"  
  
"Me sabbee plenty"--grunted Queequeg, puffing away at his pipe and  
sitting up in bed.  
  
"You gettee in," he added, motioning to me with his tomahawk, and  
throwing the clothes to one side. He really did this in not only a civil  
but a really kind and charitable way. I stood looking at him a moment.  
For all his tattooings he was on the whole a clean, comely looking  
cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to  
myself--the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason  
to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober  
cannibal than a drunken Christian.  
  
"Landlord," said I, "tell him to stash his tomahawk there, or pipe, or  
whatever you call it; tell him to stop smoking, in short, and I will  
turn in with him. But I don't fancy having a man smoking in bed with me.  
It's dangerous. Besides, I ain't insured."  
  
This being told to Queequeg, he at once complied, and again politely  
motioned me to get into bed--rolling over to one side as much as to  
say--"I won't touch a leg of ye."  
  
"Good night, landlord," said I, "you may go."  
  
I turned in, and never slept better in my life.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 4. The Counterpane.  
  
  
Upon waking next morning about daylight, I found Queequeg's arm thrown  
over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost  
thought I had been his wife. The counterpane was of patchwork, full of  
odd little parti-coloured squares and triangles; and this arm of his  
tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure,  
no two parts of which were of one precise shade--owing I suppose to  
his keeping his arm at sea unmethodically in sun and shade, his shirt  
sleeves irregularly rolled up at various times--this same arm of his, I  
say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt.  
Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could  
hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together; and  
it was only by the sense of weight and pressure that I could tell that  
Queequeg was hugging me.  
  
My sensations were strange. Let me try to explain them. When I was a  
child, I well remember a somewhat similar circumstance that befell me;  
whether it was a reality or a dream, I never could entirely settle.  
The circumstance was this. I had been cutting up some caper or other--I  
think it was trying to crawl up the chimney, as I had seen a little  
sweep do a few days previous; and my stepmother who, somehow or other,  
was all the time whipping me, or sending me to bed supperless,--my  
mother dragged me by the legs out of the chimney and packed me off to  
bed, though it was only two o'clock in the afternoon of the 21st June,  
the longest day in the year in our hemisphere. I felt dreadfully. But  
there was no help for it, so up stairs I went to my little room in the  
third floor, undressed myself as slowly as possible so as to kill time,  
and with a bitter sigh got between the sheets.  
  
I lay there dismally calculating that sixteen entire hours must elapse  
before I could hope for a resurrection. Sixteen hours in bed! the  
small of my back ached to think of it. And it was so light too; the  
sun shining in at the window, and a great rattling of coaches in the  
streets, and the sound of gay voices all over the house. I felt worse  
and worse--at last I got up, dressed, and softly going down in my  
stockinged feet, sought out my stepmother, and suddenly threw myself  
at her feet, beseeching her as a particular favour to give me a good  
slippering for my misbehaviour; anything indeed but condemning me to lie  
abed such an unendurable length of time. But she was the best and most  
conscientious of stepmothers, and back I had to go to my room. For  
several hours I lay there broad awake, feeling a great deal worse than I  
have ever done since, even from the greatest subsequent misfortunes. At  
last I must have fallen into a troubled nightmare of a doze; and slowly  
waking from it--half steeped in dreams--I opened my eyes, and the before  
sun-lit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock  
running through all my frame; nothing was to be seen, and nothing was  
to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung  
over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable, silent form  
or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my  
bed-side. For what seemed ages piled on ages, I lay there, frozen with  
the most awful fears, not daring to drag away my hand; yet ever thinking  
that if I could but stir it one single inch, the horrid spell would be  
broken. I knew not how this consciousness at last glided away from me;  
but waking in the morning, I shudderingly remembered it all, and for  
days and weeks and months afterwards I lost myself in confounding  
attempts to explain the mystery. Nay, to this very hour, I often puzzle  
myself with it.  
  
Now, take away the awful fear, and my sensations at feeling the  
supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their strangeness, to  
those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg's pagan  
arm thrown round me. But at length all the past night's events soberly  
recurred, one by one, in fixed reality, and then I lay only alive to  
the comical predicament. For though I tried to move his arm--unlock his  
bridegroom clasp--yet, sleeping as he was, he still hugged me tightly,  
as though naught but death should part us twain. I now strove to rouse  
him--"Queequeg!"--but his only answer was a snore. I then rolled over,  
my neck feeling as if it were in a horse-collar; and suddenly felt a  
slight scratch. Throwing aside the counterpane, there lay the tomahawk  
sleeping by the savage's side, as if it were a hatchet-faced baby. A  
pretty pickle, truly, thought I; abed here in a strange house in the  
broad day, with a cannibal and a tomahawk! "Queequeg!--in the name of  
goodness, Queequeg, wake!" At length, by dint of much wriggling, and  
loud and incessant expostulations upon the unbecomingness of his  
hugging a fellow male in that matrimonial sort of style, I succeeded in  
extracting a grunt; and presently, he drew back his arm, shook himself  
all over like a Newfoundland dog just from the water, and sat up in bed,  
stiff as a pike-staff, looking at me, and rubbing his eyes as if he  
did not altogether remember how I came to be there, though a dim  
consciousness of knowing something about me seemed slowly dawning over  
him. Meanwhile, I lay quietly eyeing him, having no serious misgivings  
now, and bent upon narrowly observing so curious a creature. When, at  
last, his mind seemed made up touching the character of his bedfellow,  
and he became, as it were, reconciled to the fact; he jumped out upon  
the floor, and by certain signs and sounds gave me to understand that,  
if it pleased me, he would dress first and then leave me to dress  
afterwards, leaving the whole apartment to myself. Thinks I, Queequeg,  
under the circumstances, this is a very civilized overture; but, the  
truth is, these savages have an innate sense of delicacy, say what  
you will; it is marvellous how essentially polite they are. I pay this  
particular compliment to Queequeg, because he treated me with so much  
civility and consideration, while I was guilty of great rudeness;  
staring at him from the bed, and watching all his toilette motions; for  
the time my curiosity getting the better of my breeding. Nevertheless,  
a man like Queequeg you don't see every day, he and his ways were well  
worth unusual regarding.  
  
He commenced dressing at top by donning his beaver hat, a very tall one,  
by the by, and then--still minus his trowsers--he hunted up his boots.  
What under the heavens he did it for, I cannot tell, but his next  
movement was to crush himself--boots in hand, and hat on--under the bed;  
when, from sundry violent gaspings and strainings, I inferred he was  
hard at work booting himself; though by no law of propriety that I ever  
heard of, is any man required to be private when putting on his  
boots. But Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition  
stage--neither caterpillar nor butterfly. He was just enough civilized  
to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manners. His  
education was not yet completed. He was an undergraduate. If he had not  
been a small degree civilized, he very probably would not have troubled  
himself with boots at all; but then, if he had not been still a savage,  
he never would have dreamt of getting under the bed to put them on. At  
last, he emerged with his hat very much dented and crushed down over his  
eyes, and began creaking and limping about the room, as if, not  
being much accustomed to boots, his pair of damp, wrinkled cowhide  
ones--probably not made to order either--rather pinched and tormented  
him at the first go off of a bitter cold morning.  
  
Seeing, now, that there were no curtains to the window, and that the  
street being very narrow, the house opposite commanded a plain view  
into the room, and observing more and more the indecorous figure that  
Queequeg made, staving about with little else but his hat and boots on;  
I begged him as well as I could, to accelerate his toilet somewhat,  
and particularly to get into his pantaloons as soon as possible. He  
complied, and then proceeded to wash himself. At that time in the  
morning any Christian would have washed his face; but Queequeg, to  
my amazement, contented himself with restricting his ablutions to his  
chest, arms, and hands. He then donned his waistcoat, and taking up a  
piece of hard soap on the wash-stand centre table, dipped it into water  
and commenced lathering his face. I was watching to see where he kept  
his razor, when lo and behold, he takes the harpoon from the bed corner,  
slips out the long wooden stock, unsheathes the head, whets it a little  
on his boot, and striding up to the bit of mirror against the wall,  
begins a vigorous scraping, or rather harpooning of his cheeks. Thinks  
I, Queequeg, this is using Rogers's best cutlery with a vengeance.  
Afterwards I wondered the less at this operation when I came to know of  
what fine steel the head of a harpoon is made, and how exceedingly sharp  
the long straight edges are always kept.  
  
The rest of his toilet was soon achieved, and he proudly marched out of  
the room, wrapped up in his great pilot monkey jacket, and sporting his  
harpoon like a marshal's baton.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 5. Breakfast.  
  
  
I quickly followed suit, and descending into the bar-room accosted the  
grinning landlord very pleasantly. I cherished no malice towards him,  
though he had been skylarking with me not a little in the matter of my  
bedfellow.  
  
However, a good laugh is a mighty good thing, and rather too scarce a  
good thing; the more's the pity. So, if any one man, in his own  
proper person, afford stuff for a good joke to anybody, let him not be  
backward, but let him cheerfully allow himself to spend and be spent in  
that way. And the man that has anything bountifully laughable about him,  
be sure there is more in that man than you perhaps think for.  
  
The bar-room was now full of the boarders who had been dropping in the  
night previous, and whom I had not as yet had a good look at. They were  
nearly all whalemen; chief mates, and second mates, and third mates, and  
sea carpenters, and sea coopers, and sea blacksmiths, and harpooneers,  
and ship keepers; a brown and brawny company, with bosky beards; an  
unshorn, shaggy set, all wearing monkey jackets for morning gowns.  
  
You could pretty plainly tell how long each one had been ashore. This  
young fellow's healthy cheek is like a sun-toasted pear in hue, and  
would seem to smell almost as musky; he cannot have been three days  
landed from his Indian voyage. That man next him looks a few shades  
lighter; you might say a touch of satin wood is in him. In the  
complexion of a third still lingers a tropic tawn, but slightly bleached  
withal; HE doubtless has tarried whole weeks ashore. But who could show  
a cheek like Queequeg? which, barred with various tints, seemed like the  
Andes' western slope, to show forth in one array, contrasting climates,  
zone by zone.  
  
"Grub, ho!" now cried the landlord, flinging open a door, and in we went  
to breakfast.  
  
They say that men who have seen the world, thereby become quite at ease  
in manner, quite self-possessed in company. Not always, though: Ledyard,  
the great New England traveller, and Mungo Park, the Scotch one; of all  
men, they possessed the least assurance in the parlor. But perhaps the  
mere crossing of Siberia in a sledge drawn by dogs as Ledyard did, or  
the taking a long solitary walk on an empty stomach, in the negro heart  
of Africa, which was the sum of poor Mungo's performances--this kind of  
travel, I say, may not be the very best mode of attaining a high social  
polish. Still, for the most part, that sort of thing is to be had  
anywhere.  
  
These reflections just here are occasioned by the circumstance that  
after we were all seated at the table, and I was preparing to hear some  
good stories about whaling; to my no small surprise, nearly every  
man maintained a profound silence. And not only that, but they looked  
embarrassed. Yes, here were a set of sea-dogs, many of whom without the  
slightest bashfulness had boarded great whales on the high seas--entire  
strangers to them--and duelled them dead without winking; and yet, here  
they sat at a social breakfast table--all of the same calling, all of  
kindred tastes--looking round as sheepishly at each other as though they  
had never been out of sight of some sheepfold among the Green Mountains.  
A curious sight; these bashful bears, these timid warrior whalemen!  
  
But as for Queequeg--why, Queequeg sat there among them--at the head of  
the table, too, it so chanced; as cool as an icicle. To be sure I cannot  
say much for his breeding. His greatest admirer could not have cordially  
justified his bringing his harpoon into breakfast with him, and using it  
there without ceremony; reaching over the table with it, to the imminent  
jeopardy of many heads, and grappling the beefsteaks towards him. But  
THAT was certainly very coolly done by him, and every one knows that in  
most people's estimation, to do anything coolly is to do it genteelly.  
  
We will not speak of all Queequeg's peculiarities here; how he eschewed  
coffee and hot rolls, and applied his undivided attention to beefsteaks,  
done rare. Enough, that when breakfast was over he withdrew like the  
rest into the public room, lighted his tomahawk-pipe, and was sitting  
there quietly digesting and smoking with his inseparable hat on, when I  
sallied out for a stroll.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 6. The Street.  
  
  
If I had been astonished at first catching a glimpse of so outlandish  
an individual as Queequeg circulating among the polite society of a  
civilized town, that astonishment soon departed upon taking my first  
daylight stroll through the streets of New Bedford.  
  
In thoroughfares nigh the docks, any considerable seaport will  
frequently offer to view the queerest looking nondescripts from foreign  
parts. Even in Broadway and Chestnut streets, Mediterranean mariners  
will sometimes jostle the affrighted ladies. Regent Street is not  
unknown to Lascars and Malays; and at Bombay, in the Apollo Green, live  
Yankees have often scared the natives. But New Bedford beats all Water  
Street and Wapping. In these last-mentioned haunts you see only sailors;  
but in New Bedford, actual cannibals stand chatting at street corners;  
savages outright; many of whom yet carry on their bones unholy flesh. It  
makes a stranger stare.  
  
But, besides the Feegeeans, Tongatobooarrs, Erromanggoans, Pannangians,  
and Brighggians, and, besides the wild specimens of the whaling-craft  
which unheeded reel about the streets, you will see other sights still  
more curious, certainly more comical. There weekly arrive in this town  
scores of green Vermonters and New Hampshire men, all athirst for gain  
and glory in the fishery. They are mostly young, of stalwart frames;  
fellows who have felled forests, and now seek to drop the axe and snatch  
the whale-lance. Many are as green as the Green Mountains whence they  
came. In some things you would think them but a few hours old. Look  
there! that chap strutting round the corner. He wears a beaver hat and  
swallow-tailed coat, girdled with a sailor-belt and sheath-knife. Here  
comes another with a sou'-wester and a bombazine cloak.  
  
No town-bred dandy will compare with a country-bred one--I mean a  
downright bumpkin dandy--a fellow that, in the dog-days, will mow his  
two acres in buckskin gloves for fear of tanning his hands. Now when a  
country dandy like this takes it into his head to make a distinguished  
reputation, and joins the great whale-fishery, you should see the  
comical things he does upon reaching the seaport. In bespeaking his  
sea-outfit, he orders bell-buttons to his waistcoats; straps to his  
canvas trowsers. Ah, poor Hay-Seed! how bitterly will burst those straps  
in the first howling gale, when thou art driven, straps, buttons, and  
all, down the throat of the tempest.  
  
But think not that this famous town has only harpooneers, cannibals, and  
bumpkins to show her visitors. Not at all. Still New Bedford is a queer  
place. Had it not been for us whalemen, that tract of land would this  
day perhaps have been in as howling condition as the coast of Labrador.  
As it is, parts of her back country are enough to frighten one, they  
look so bony. The town itself is perhaps the dearest place to live  
in, in all New England. It is a land of oil, true enough: but not like  
Canaan; a land, also, of corn and wine. The streets do not run with  
milk; nor in the spring-time do they pave them with fresh eggs. Yet, in  
spite of this, nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like  
houses; parks and gardens more opulent, than in New Bedford. Whence came  
they? how planted upon this once scraggy scoria of a country?  
  
Go and gaze upon the iron emblematical harpoons round yonder lofty  
mansion, and your question will be answered. Yes; all these brave houses  
and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans.  
One and all, they were harpooned and dragged up hither from the bottom  
of the sea. Can Herr Alexander perform a feat like that?  
  
In New Bedford, fathers, they say, give whales for dowers to their  
daughters, and portion off their nieces with a few porpoises a-piece.  
You must go to New Bedford to see a brilliant wedding; for, they say,  
they have reservoirs of oil in every house, and every night recklessly  
burn their lengths in spermaceti candles.  
  
In summer time, the town is sweet to see; full of fine maples--long  
avenues of green and gold. And in August, high in air, the beautiful and  
bountiful horse-chestnuts, candelabra-wise, proffer the passer-by their  
tapering upright cones of congregated blossoms. So omnipotent is art;  
which in many a district of New Bedford has superinduced bright terraces  
of flowers upon the barren refuse rocks thrown aside at creation's final  
day.  
  
And the women of New Bedford, they bloom like their own red roses. But  
roses only bloom in summer; whereas the fine carnation of their cheeks  
is perennial as sunlight in the seventh heavens. Elsewhere match that  
bloom of theirs, ye cannot, save in Salem, where they tell me the young  
girls breathe such musk, their sailor sweethearts smell them miles off  
shore, as though they were drawing nigh the odorous Moluccas instead of  
the Puritanic sands.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 7. The Chapel.  
  
  
In this same New Bedford there stands a Whaleman's Chapel, and few are  
the moody fishermen, shortly bound for the Indian Ocean or Pacific, who  
fail to make a Sunday visit to the spot. I am sure that I did not.  
  
Returning from my first morning stroll, I again sallied out upon this  
special errand. The sky had changed from clear, sunny cold, to driving  
sleet and mist. Wrapping myself in my shaggy jacket of the cloth called  
bearskin, I fought my way against the stubborn storm. Entering, I  
found a small scattered congregation of sailors, and sailors' wives and  
widows. A muffled silence reigned, only broken at times by the shrieks  
of the storm. Each silent worshipper seemed purposely sitting apart from  
the other, as if each silent grief were insular and incommunicable. The  
chaplain had not yet arrived; and there these silent islands of men and  
women sat steadfastly eyeing several marble tablets, with black borders,  
masoned into the wall on either side the pulpit. Three of them ran  
something like the following, but I do not pretend to quote:--  
  
SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN TALBOT, Who, at the age of eighteen, was  
lost overboard, Near the Isle of Desolation, off Patagonia, November  
1st, 1836. THIS TABLET Is erected to his Memory BY HIS SISTER.  
  
SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF ROBERT LONG, WILLIS ELLERY, NATHAN COLEMAN,  
WALTER CANNY, SETH MACY, AND SAMUEL GLEIG, Forming one of the boats'  
crews OF THE SHIP ELIZA Who were towed out of sight by a Whale, On the  
Off-shore Ground in the PACIFIC, December 31st, 1839. THIS MARBLE Is  
here placed by their surviving SHIPMATES.  
  
SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF The late CAPTAIN EZEKIEL HARDY, Who in the bows  
of his boat was killed by a Sperm Whale on the coast of Japan, AUGUST  
3d, 1833. THIS TABLET Is erected to his Memory BY HIS WIDOW.  
  
Shaking off the sleet from my ice-glazed hat and jacket, I seated myself  
near the door, and turning sideways was surprised to see Queequeg near  
me. Affected by the solemnity of the scene, there was a wondering gaze  
of incredulous curiosity in his countenance. This savage was the only  
person present who seemed to notice my entrance; because he was the only  
one who could not read, and, therefore, was not reading those frigid  
inscriptions on the wall. Whether any of the relatives of the seamen  
whose names appeared there were now among the congregation, I knew not;  
but so many are the unrecorded accidents in the fishery, and so plainly  
did several women present wear the countenance if not the trappings  
of some unceasing grief, that I feel sure that here before me were  
assembled those, in whose unhealing hearts the sight of those bleak  
tablets sympathetically caused the old wounds to bleed afresh.  
  
Oh! ye whose dead lie buried beneath the green grass; who standing among  
flowers can say--here, HERE lies my beloved; ye know not the desolation  
that broods in bosoms like these. What bitter blanks in those  
black-bordered marbles which cover no ashes! What despair in those  
immovable inscriptions! What deadly voids and unbidden infidelities in  
the lines that seem to gnaw upon all Faith, and refuse resurrections to  
the beings who have placelessly perished without a grave. As well might  
those tablets stand in the cave of Elephanta as here.  
  
In what census of living creatures, the dead of mankind are included;  
why it is that a universal proverb says of them, that they tell no  
tales, though containing more secrets than the Goodwin Sands; how it is  
that to his name who yesterday departed for the other world, we prefix  
so significant and infidel a word, and yet do not thus entitle him, if  
he but embarks for the remotest Indies of this living earth; why the  
Life Insurance Companies pay death-forfeitures upon immortals; in what  
eternal, unstirring paralysis, and deadly, hopeless trance, yet lies  
antique Adam who died sixty round centuries ago; how it is that we  
still refuse to be comforted for those who we nevertheless maintain are  
dwelling in unspeakable bliss; why all the living so strive to hush all  
the dead; wherefore but the rumor of a knocking in a tomb will terrify a  
whole city. All these things are not without their meanings.  
  
But Faith, like a jackal, feeds among the tombs, and even from these  
dead doubts she gathers her most vital hope.  
  
It needs scarcely to be told, with what feelings, on the eve of a  
Nantucket voyage, I regarded those marble tablets, and by the murky  
light of that darkened, doleful day read the fate of the whalemen  
who had gone before me. Yes, Ishmael, the same fate may be thine. But  
somehow I grew merry again. Delightful inducements to embark, fine  
chance for promotion, it seems--aye, a stove boat will make me an  
immortal by brevet. Yes, there is death in this business of whaling--a  
speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into Eternity. But what  
then? Methinks we have hugely mistaken this matter of Life and Death.  
Methinks that what they call my shadow here on earth is my true  
substance. Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too  
much like oysters observing the sun through the water, and thinking that  
thick water the thinnest of air. Methinks my body is but the lees of my  
better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not  
me. And therefore three cheers for Nantucket; and come a stove boat and  
stove body when they will, for stave my soul, Jove himself cannot.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 8. The Pulpit.  
  
  
I had not been seated very long ere a man of a certain venerable  
robustness entered; immediately as the storm-pelted door flew back upon  
admitting him, a quick regardful eyeing of him by all the congregation,  
sufficiently attested that this fine old man was the chaplain. Yes, it  
was the famous Father Mapple, so called by the whalemen, among whom he  
was a very great favourite. He had been a sailor and a harpooneer in his  
youth, but for many years past had dedicated his life to the ministry.  
At the time I now write of, Father Mapple was in the hardy winter of a  
healthy old age; that sort of old age which seems merging into a second  
flowering youth, for among all the fissures of his wrinkles, there shone  
certain mild gleams of a newly developing bloom--the spring verdure  
peeping forth even beneath February's snow. No one having previously  
heard his history, could for the first time behold Father Mapple without  
the utmost interest, because there were certain engrafted clerical  
peculiarities about him, imputable to that adventurous maritime life  
he had led. When he entered I observed that he carried no umbrella, and  
certainly had not come in his carriage, for his tarpaulin hat ran down  
with melting sleet, and his great pilot cloth jacket seemed almost to  
drag him to the floor with the weight of the water it had absorbed.  
However, hat and coat and overshoes were one by one removed, and hung up  
in a little space in an adjacent corner; when, arrayed in a decent suit,  
he quietly approached the pulpit.  
  
Like most old fashioned pulpits, it was a very lofty one, and since a  
regular stairs to such a height would, by its long angle with the floor,  
seriously contract the already small area of the chapel, the architect,  
it seemed, had acted upon the hint of Father Mapple, and finished the  
pulpit without a stairs, substituting a perpendicular side ladder, like  
those used in mounting a ship from a boat at sea. The wife of a whaling  
captain had provided the chapel with a handsome pair of red worsted  
man-ropes for this ladder, which, being itself nicely headed, and  
stained with a mahogany colour, the whole contrivance, considering what  
manner of chapel it was, seemed by no means in bad taste. Halting for  
an instant at the foot of the ladder, and with both hands grasping the  
ornamental knobs of the man-ropes, Father Mapple cast a look upwards,  
and then with a truly sailor-like but still reverential dexterity, hand  
over hand, mounted the steps as if ascending the main-top of his vessel.  
  
The perpendicular parts of this side ladder, as is usually the case with  
swinging ones, were of cloth-covered rope, only the rounds were of wood,  
so that at every step there was a joint. At my first glimpse of the  
pulpit, it had not escaped me that however convenient for a ship,  
these joints in the present instance seemed unnecessary. For I was not  
prepared to see Father Mapple after gaining the height, slowly turn  
round, and stooping over the pulpit, deliberately drag up the ladder  
step by step, till the whole was deposited within, leaving him  
impregnable in his little Quebec.  
  
I pondered some time without fully comprehending the reason for this.  
Father Mapple enjoyed such a wide reputation for sincerity and sanctity,  
that I could not suspect him of courting notoriety by any mere tricks  
of the stage. No, thought I, there must be some sober reason for this  
thing; furthermore, it must symbolize something unseen. Can it be,  
then, that by that act of physical isolation, he signifies his spiritual  
withdrawal for the time, from all outward worldly ties and connexions?  
Yes, for replenished with the meat and wine of the word, to the faithful  
man of God, this pulpit, I see, is a self-containing stronghold--a lofty  
Ehrenbreitstein, with a perennial well of water within the walls.  
  
But the side ladder was not the only strange feature of the place,  
borrowed from the chaplain's former sea-farings. Between the marble  
cenotaphs on either hand of the pulpit, the wall which formed its back  
was adorned with a large painting representing a gallant ship beating  
against a terrible storm off a lee coast of black rocks and snowy  
breakers. But high above the flying scud and dark-rolling clouds, there  
floated a little isle of sunlight, from which beamed forth an angel's  
face; and this bright face shed a distinct spot of radiance upon the  
ship's tossed deck, something like that silver plate now inserted into  
the Victory's plank where Nelson fell. "Ah, noble ship," the angel  
seemed to say, "beat on, beat on, thou noble ship, and bear a hardy  
helm; for lo! the sun is breaking through; the clouds are rolling  
off--serenest azure is at hand."  
  
Nor was the pulpit itself without a trace of the same sea-taste that  
had achieved the ladder and the picture. Its panelled front was in  
the likeness of a ship's bluff bows, and the Holy Bible rested on a  
projecting piece of scroll work, fashioned after a ship's fiddle-headed  
beak.  
  
What could be more full of meaning?--for the pulpit is ever this earth's  
foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the  
world. From thence it is the storm of God's quick wrath is first  
descried, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is  
the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favourable winds.  
Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete;  
and the pulpit is its prow.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 9. The Sermon.  
  
  
Father Mapple rose, and in a mild voice of unassuming authority ordered  
the scattered people to condense. "Starboard gangway, there! side away  
to larboard--larboard gangway to starboard! Midships! midships!"  
  
There was a low rumbling of heavy sea-boots among the benches, and a  
still slighter shuffling of women's shoes, and all was quiet again, and  
every eye on the preacher.  
  
He paused a little; then kneeling in the pulpit's bows, folded his large  
brown hands across his chest, uplifted his closed eyes, and offered  
a prayer so deeply devout that he seemed kneeling and praying at the  
bottom of the sea.  
  
This ended, in prolonged solemn tones, like the continual tolling of  
a bell in a ship that is foundering at sea in a fog--in such tones he  
commenced reading the following hymn; but changing his manner towards  
the concluding stanzas, burst forth with a pealing exultation and joy--  
  
 "The ribs and terrors in the whale,  
 Arched over me a dismal gloom,  
 While all God's sun-lit waves rolled by,  
 And lift me deepening down to doom.  
  
 "I saw the opening maw of hell,  
 With endless pains and sorrows there;  
 Which none but they that feel can tell--  
 Oh, I was plunging to despair.  
  
 "In black distress, I called my God,  
 When I could scarce believe him mine,  
 He bowed his ear to my complaints--  
 No more the whale did me confine.  
  
 "With speed he flew to my relief,  
 As on a radiant dolphin borne;  
 Awful, yet bright, as lightning shone  
 The face of my Deliverer God.  
  
 "My song for ever shall record  
 That terrible, that joyful hour;  
 I give the glory to my God,  
 His all the mercy and the power."  
  
  
Nearly all joined in singing this hymn, which swelled high above the  
howling of the storm. A brief pause ensued; the preacher slowly turned  
over the leaves of the Bible, and at last, folding his hand down upon  
the proper page, said: "Beloved shipmates, clinch the last verse of the  
first chapter of Jonah--'And God had prepared a great fish to swallow up  
Jonah.'"  
  
"Shipmates, this book, containing only four chapters--four yarns--is one  
of the smallest strands in the mighty cable of the Scriptures. Yet what  
depths of the soul does Jonah's deep sealine sound! what a pregnant  
lesson to us is this prophet! What a noble thing is that canticle in the  
fish's belly! How billow-like and boisterously grand! We feel the floods  
surging over us; we sound with him to the kelpy bottom of the waters;  
sea-weed and all the slime of the sea is about us! But WHAT is this  
lesson that the book of Jonah teaches? Shipmates, it is a two-stranded  
lesson; a lesson to us all as sinful men, and a lesson to me as a pilot  
of the living God. As sinful men, it is a lesson to us all, because it  
is a story of the sin, hard-heartedness, suddenly awakened fears, the  
swift punishment, repentance, prayers, and finally the deliverance and  
joy of Jonah. As with all sinners among men, the sin of this son of  
Amittai was in his wilful disobedience of the command of God--never  
mind now what that command was, or how conveyed--which he found a hard  
command. But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to  
do--remember that--and hence, he oftener commands us than endeavors to  
persuade. And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in  
this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists.  
  
"With this sin of disobedience in him, Jonah still further flouts at  
God, by seeking to flee from Him. He thinks that a ship made by men will  
carry him into countries where God does not reign, but only the Captains  
of this earth. He skulks about the wharves of Joppa, and seeks a ship  
that's bound for Tarshish. There lurks, perhaps, a hitherto unheeded  
meaning here. By all accounts Tarshish could have been no other city  
than the modern Cadiz. That's the opinion of learned men. And where is  
Cadiz, shipmates? Cadiz is in Spain; as far by water, from Joppa,  
as Jonah could possibly have sailed in those ancient days, when the  
Atlantic was an almost unknown sea. Because Joppa, the modern Jaffa,  
shipmates, is on the most easterly coast of the Mediterranean, the  
Syrian; and Tarshish or Cadiz more than two thousand miles to the  
westward from that, just outside the Straits of Gibraltar. See ye  
not then, shipmates, that Jonah sought to flee world-wide from God?  
Miserable man! Oh! most contemptible and worthy of all scorn; with  
slouched hat and guilty eye, skulking from his God; prowling among the  
shipping like a vile burglar hastening to cross the seas. So disordered,  
self-condemning is his look, that had there been policemen in those  
days, Jonah, on the mere suspicion of something wrong, had been arrested  
ere he touched a deck. How plainly he's a fugitive! no baggage, not a  
hat-box, valise, or carpet-bag,--no friends accompany him to the wharf  
with their adieux. At last, after much dodging search, he finds the  
Tarshish ship receiving the last items of her cargo; and as he steps on  
board to see its Captain in the cabin, all the sailors for the moment  
desist from hoisting in the goods, to mark the stranger's evil eye.  
Jonah sees this; but in vain he tries to look all ease and confidence;  
in vain essays his wretched smile. Strong intuitions of the man assure  
the mariners he can be no innocent. In their gamesome but still serious  
way, one whispers to the other--"Jack, he's robbed a widow;" or, "Joe,  
do you mark him; he's a bigamist;" or, "Harry lad, I guess he's the  
adulterer that broke jail in old Gomorrah, or belike, one of the missing  
murderers from Sodom." Another runs to read the bill that's stuck  
against the spile upon the wharf to which the ship is moored, offering  
five hundred gold coins for the apprehension of a parricide, and  
containing a description of his person. He reads, and looks from Jonah  
to the bill; while all his sympathetic shipmates now crowd round Jonah,  
prepared to lay their hands upon him. Frighted Jonah trembles, and  
summoning all his boldness to his face, only looks so much the more a  
coward. He will not confess himself suspected; but that itself is strong  
suspicion. So he makes the best of it; and when the sailors find him  
not to be the man that is advertised, they let him pass, and he descends  
into the cabin.  
  
"'Who's there?' cries the Captain at his busy desk, hurriedly making  
out his papers for the Customs--'Who's there?' Oh! how that harmless  
question mangles Jonah! For the instant he almost turns to flee again.  
But he rallies. 'I seek a passage in this ship to Tarshish; how soon  
sail ye, sir?' Thus far the busy Captain had not looked up to Jonah,  
though the man now stands before him; but no sooner does he hear that  
hollow voice, than he darts a scrutinizing glance. 'We sail with the  
next coming tide,' at last he slowly answered, still intently eyeing  
him. 'No sooner, sir?'--'Soon enough for any honest man that goes a  
passenger.' Ha! Jonah, that's another stab. But he swiftly calls away  
the Captain from that scent. 'I'll sail with ye,'--he says,--'the  
passage money how much is that?--I'll pay now.' For it is particularly  
written, shipmates, as if it were a thing not to be overlooked in this  
history, 'that he paid the fare thereof' ere the craft did sail. And  
taken with the context, this is full of meaning.  
  
"Now Jonah's Captain, shipmates, was one whose discernment detects crime  
in any, but whose cupidity exposes it only in the penniless. In this  
world, shipmates, sin that pays its way can travel freely, and without  
a passport; whereas Virtue, if a pauper, is stopped at all frontiers.  
So Jonah's Captain prepares to test the length of Jonah's purse, ere he  
judge him openly. He charges him thrice the usual sum; and it's assented  
to. Then the Captain knows that Jonah is a fugitive; but at the same  
time resolves to help a flight that paves its rear with gold. Yet when  
Jonah fairly takes out his purse, prudent suspicions still molest the  
Captain. He rings every coin to find a counterfeit. Not a forger, any  
way, he mutters; and Jonah is put down for his passage. 'Point out my  
state-room, Sir,' says Jonah now, 'I'm travel-weary; I need sleep.'  
'Thou lookest like it,' says the Captain, 'there's thy room.' Jonah  
enters, and would lock the door, but the lock contains no key. Hearing  
him foolishly fumbling there, the Captain laughs lowly to himself, and  
mutters something about the doors of convicts' cells being never allowed  
to be locked within. All dressed and dusty as he is, Jonah throws  
himself into his berth, and finds the little state-room ceiling almost  
resting on his forehead. The air is close, and Jonah gasps. Then, in  
that contracted hole, sunk, too, beneath the ship's water-line, Jonah  
feels the heralding presentiment of that stifling hour, when the whale  
shall hold him in the smallest of his bowels' wards.  
  
"Screwed at its axis against the side, a swinging lamp slightly  
oscillates in Jonah's room; and the ship, heeling over towards the wharf  
with the weight of the last bales received, the lamp, flame and all,  
though in slight motion, still maintains a permanent obliquity with  
reference to the room; though, in truth, infallibly straight itself, it  
but made obvious the false, lying levels among which it hung. The lamp  
alarms and frightens Jonah; as lying in his berth his tormented eyes  
roll round the place, and this thus far successful fugitive finds no  
refuge for his restless glance. But that contradiction in the lamp more  
and more appals him. The floor, the ceiling, and the side, are all awry.  
'Oh! so my conscience hangs in me!' he groans, 'straight upwards, so it  
burns; but the chambers of my soul are all in crookedness!'  
  
"Like one who after a night of drunken revelry hies to his bed, still  
reeling, but with conscience yet pricking him, as the plungings of the  
Roman race-horse but so much the more strike his steel tags into him; as  
one who in that miserable plight still turns and turns in giddy anguish,  
praying God for annihilation until the fit be passed; and at last amid  
the whirl of woe he feels, a deep stupor steals over him, as over the  
man who bleeds to death, for conscience is the wound, and there's naught  
to staunch it; so, after sore wrestlings in his berth, Jonah's prodigy  
of ponderous misery drags him drowning down to sleep.  
  
"And now the time of tide has come; the ship casts off her cables; and  
from the deserted wharf the uncheered ship for Tarshish, all careening,  
glides to sea. That ship, my friends, was the first of recorded  
smugglers! the contraband was Jonah. But the sea rebels; he will not  
bear the wicked burden. A dreadful storm comes on, the ship is like to  
break. But now when the boatswain calls all hands to lighten her;  
when boxes, bales, and jars are clattering overboard; when the wind  
is shrieking, and the men are yelling, and every plank thunders with  
trampling feet right over Jonah's head; in all this raging tumult, Jonah  
sleeps his hideous sleep. He sees no black sky and raging sea, feels not  
the reeling timbers, and little hears he or heeds he the far rush of the  
mighty whale, which even now with open mouth is cleaving the seas after  
him. Aye, shipmates, Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship--a  
berth in the cabin as I have taken it, and was fast asleep. But the  
frightened master comes to him, and shrieks in his dead ear, 'What  
meanest thou, O, sleeper! arise!' Startled from his lethargy by that  
direful cry, Jonah staggers to his feet, and stumbling to the deck,  
grasps a shroud, to look out upon the sea. But at that moment he is  
sprung upon by a panther billow leaping over the bulwarks. Wave after  
wave thus leaps into the ship, and finding no speedy vent runs roaring  
fore and aft, till the mariners come nigh to drowning while yet afloat.  
And ever, as the white moon shows her affrighted face from the steep  
gullies in the blackness overhead, aghast Jonah sees the rearing  
bowsprit pointing high upward, but soon beat downward again towards the  
tormented deep.  
  
"Terrors upon terrors run shouting through his soul. In all his cringing  
attitudes, the God-fugitive is now too plainly known. The sailors mark  
him; more and more certain grow their suspicions of him, and at last,  
fully to test the truth, by referring the whole matter to high Heaven,  
they fall to casting lots, to see for whose cause this great tempest was  
upon them. The lot is Jonah's; that discovered, then how furiously they  
mob him with their questions. 'What is thine occupation? Whence comest  
thou? Thy country? What people? But mark now, my shipmates, the behavior  
of poor Jonah. The eager mariners but ask him who he is, and where  
from; whereas, they not only receive an answer to those questions,  
but likewise another answer to a question not put by them, but the  
unsolicited answer is forced from Jonah by the hard hand of God that is  
upon him.  
  
"'I am a Hebrew,' he cries--and then--'I fear the Lord the God of Heaven  
who hath made the sea and the dry land!' Fear him, O Jonah? Aye, well  
mightest thou fear the Lord God THEN! Straightway, he now goes on to  
make a full confession; whereupon the mariners became more and more  
appalled, but still are pitiful. For when Jonah, not yet supplicating  
God for mercy, since he but too well knew the darkness of his  
deserts,--when wretched Jonah cries out to them to take him and cast him  
forth into the sea, for he knew that for HIS sake this great tempest  
was upon them; they mercifully turn from him, and seek by other means to  
save the ship. But all in vain; the indignant gale howls louder;  
then, with one hand raised invokingly to God, with the other they not  
unreluctantly lay hold of Jonah.  
  
"And now behold Jonah taken up as an anchor and dropped into the sea;  
when instantly an oily calmness floats out from the east, and the sea  
is still, as Jonah carries down the gale with him, leaving smooth  
water behind. He goes down in the whirling heart of such a masterless  
commotion that he scarce heeds the moment when he drops seething into  
the yawning jaws awaiting him; and the whale shoots-to all his ivory  
teeth, like so many white bolts, upon his prison. Then Jonah prayed unto  
the Lord out of the fish's belly. But observe his prayer, and learn a  
weighty lesson. For sinful as he is, Jonah does not weep and wail for  
direct deliverance. He feels that his dreadful punishment is just. He  
leaves all his deliverance to God, contenting himself with this, that  
spite of all his pains and pangs, he will still look towards His holy  
temple. And here, shipmates, is true and faithful repentance; not  
clamorous for pardon, but grateful for punishment. And how pleasing to  
God was this conduct in Jonah, is shown in the eventual deliverance of  
him from the sea and the whale. Shipmates, I do not place Jonah before  
you to be copied for his sin but I do place him before you as a model  
for repentance. Sin not; but if you do, take heed to repent of it like  
Jonah."  
  
While he was speaking these words, the howling of the shrieking,  
slanting storm without seemed to add new power to the preacher, who,  
when describing Jonah's sea-storm, seemed tossed by a storm himself.  
His deep chest heaved as with a ground-swell; his tossed arms seemed the  
warring elements at work; and the thunders that rolled away from off his  
swarthy brow, and the light leaping from his eye, made all his simple  
hearers look on him with a quick fear that was strange to them.  
  
There now came a lull in his look, as he silently turned over the leaves  
of the Book once more; and, at last, standing motionless, with closed  
eyes, for the moment, seemed communing with God and himself.  
  
But again he leaned over towards the people, and bowing his head lowly,  
with an aspect of the deepest yet manliest humility, he spake these  
words:  
  
"Shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both his hands press  
upon me. I have read ye by what murky light may be mine the lesson that  
Jonah teaches to all sinners; and therefore to ye, and still more to me,  
for I am a greater sinner than ye. And now how gladly would I come down  
from this mast-head and sit on the hatches there where you sit, and  
listen as you listen, while some one of you reads ME that other and more  
awful lesson which Jonah teaches to ME, as a pilot of the living God.  
How being an anointed pilot-prophet, or speaker of true things, and  
bidden by the Lord to sound those unwelcome truths in the ears of a  
wicked Nineveh, Jonah, appalled at the hostility he should raise, fled  
from his mission, and sought to escape his duty and his God by taking  
ship at Joppa. But God is everywhere; Tarshish he never reached. As we  
have seen, God came upon him in the whale, and swallowed him down to  
living gulfs of doom, and with swift slantings tore him along 'into the  
midst of the seas,' where the eddying depths sucked him ten thousand  
fathoms down, and 'the weeds were wrapped about his head,' and all the  
watery world of woe bowled over him. Yet even then beyond the reach of  
any plummet--'out of the belly of hell'--when the whale grounded upon  
the ocean's utmost bones, even then, God heard the engulphed, repenting  
prophet when he cried. Then God spake unto the fish; and from the  
shuddering cold and blackness of the sea, the whale came breeching  
up towards the warm and pleasant sun, and all the delights of air and  
earth; and 'vomited out Jonah upon the dry land;' when the word of the  
Lord came a second time; and Jonah, bruised and beaten--his ears, like  
two sea-shells, still multitudinously murmuring of the ocean--Jonah  
did the Almighty's bidding. And what was that, shipmates? To preach the  
Truth to the face of Falsehood! That was it!  
  
"This, shipmates, this is that other lesson; and woe to that pilot of  
the living God who slights it. Woe to him whom this world charms from  
Gospel duty! Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God  
has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than  
to appal! Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe  
to him who, in this world, courts not dishonour! Woe to him who would  
not be true, even though to be false were salvation! Yea, woe to him  
who, as the great Pilot Paul has it, while preaching to others is  
himself a castaway!"  
  
He dropped and fell away from himself for a moment; then lifting his  
face to them again, showed a deep joy in his eyes, as he cried out with  
a heavenly enthusiasm,--"But oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of  
every woe, there is a sure delight; and higher the top of that delight,  
than the bottom of the woe is deep. Is not the main-truck higher than  
the kelson is low? Delight is to him--a far, far upward, and inward  
delight--who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever  
stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong  
arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has  
gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the  
truth, and kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out  
from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight,--top-gallant  
delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his  
God, and is only a patriot to heaven. Delight is to him, whom all the  
waves of the billows of the seas of the boisterous mob can never shake  
from this sure Keel of the Ages. And eternal delight and deliciousness  
will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final  
breath--O Father!--chiefly known to me by Thy rod--mortal or immortal,  
here I die. I have striven to be Thine, more than to be this world's, or  
mine own. Yet this is nothing: I leave eternity to Thee; for what is man  
that he should live out the lifetime of his God?"  
  
He said no more, but slowly waving a benediction, covered his face with  
his hands, and so remained kneeling, till all the people had departed,  
and he was left alone in the place.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 10. A Bosom Friend.  
  
  
Returning to the Spouter-Inn from the Chapel, I found Queequeg there  
quite alone; he having left the Chapel before the benediction some time.  
He was sitting on a bench before the fire, with his feet on the stove  
hearth, and in one hand was holding close up to his face that little  
negro idol of his; peering hard into its face, and with a jack-knife  
gently whittling away at its nose, meanwhile humming to himself in his  
heathenish way.  
  
But being now interrupted, he put up the image; and pretty soon, going  
to the table, took up a large book there, and placing it on his lap  
began counting the pages with deliberate regularity; at every fiftieth  
page--as I fancied--stopping a moment, looking vacantly around him, and  
giving utterance to a long-drawn gurgling whistle of astonishment. He  
would then begin again at the next fifty; seeming to commence at number  
one each time, as though he could not count more than fifty, and it was  
only by such a large number of fifties being found together, that his  
astonishment at the multitude of pages was excited.  
  
With much interest I sat watching him. Savage though he was, and  
hideously marred about the face--at least to my taste--his countenance  
yet had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable. You cannot  
hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw  
the traces of a simple honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes,  
fiery black and bold, there seemed tokens of a spirit that would dare a  
thousand devils. And besides all this, there was a certain lofty bearing  
about the Pagan, which even his uncouthness could not altogether maim.  
He looked like a man who had never cringed and never had had a creditor.  
Whether it was, too, that his head being shaved, his forehead was drawn  
out in freer and brighter relief, and looked more expansive than it  
otherwise would, this I will not venture to decide; but certain it was  
his head was phrenologically an excellent one. It may seem ridiculous,  
but it reminded me of General Washington's head, as seen in the popular  
busts of him. It had the same long regularly graded retreating slope  
from above the brows, which were likewise very projecting, like two  
long promontories thickly wooded on top. Queequeg was George Washington  
cannibalistically developed.  
  
Whilst I was thus closely scanning him, half-pretending meanwhile to be  
looking out at the storm from the casement, he never heeded my presence,  
never troubled himself with so much as a single glance; but appeared  
wholly occupied with counting the pages of the marvellous book.  
Considering how sociably we had been sleeping together the night  
previous, and especially considering the affectionate arm I had found  
thrown over me upon waking in the morning, I thought this indifference  
of his very strange. But savages are strange beings; at times you do not  
know exactly how to take them. At first they are overawing; their calm  
self-collectedness of simplicity seems a Socratic wisdom. I had noticed  
also that Queequeg never consorted at all, or but very little, with the  
other seamen in the inn. He made no advances whatever; appeared to have  
no desire to enlarge the circle of his acquaintances. All this struck  
me as mighty singular; yet, upon second thoughts, there was something  
almost sublime in it. Here was a man some twenty thousand miles from  
home, by the way of Cape Horn, that is--which was the only way he could  
get there--thrown among people as strange to him as though he were in  
the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving  
the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to  
himself. Surely this was a touch of fine philosophy; though no doubt he  
had never heard there was such a thing as that. But, perhaps, to be  
true philosophers, we mortals should not be conscious of so living or  
so striving. So soon as I hear that such or such a man gives himself  
out for a philosopher, I conclude that, like the dyspeptic old woman, he  
must have "broken his digester."  
  
As I sat there in that now lonely room; the fire burning low, in that  
mild stage when, after its first intensity has warmed the air, it then  
only glows to be looked at; the evening shades and phantoms gathering  
round the casements, and peering in upon us silent, solitary twain;  
the storm booming without in solemn swells; I began to be sensible of  
strange feelings. I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart  
and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing  
savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a  
nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits.  
Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself  
mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have  
repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll  
try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but  
hollow courtesy. I drew my bench near him, and made some friendly signs  
and hints, doing my best to talk with him meanwhile. At first he little  
noticed these advances; but presently, upon my referring to his last  
night's hospitalities, he made out to ask me whether we were again to be  
bedfellows. I told him yes; whereat I thought he looked pleased, perhaps  
a little complimented.  
  
We then turned over the book together, and I endeavored to explain to  
him the purpose of the printing, and the meaning of the few pictures  
that were in it. Thus I soon engaged his interest; and from that we went  
to jabbering the best we could about the various outer sights to be seen  
in this famous town. Soon I proposed a social smoke; and, producing  
his pouch and tomahawk, he quietly offered me a puff. And then we sat  
exchanging puffs from that wild pipe of his, and keeping it regularly  
passing between us.  
  
If there yet lurked any ice of indifference towards me in the Pagan's  
breast, this pleasant, genial smoke we had, soon thawed it out, and left  
us cronies. He seemed to take to me quite as naturally and unbiddenly as  
I to him; and when our smoke was over, he pressed his forehead against  
mine, clasped me round the waist, and said that henceforth we were  
married; meaning, in his country's phrase, that we were bosom friends;  
he would gladly die for me, if need should be. In a countryman, this  
sudden flame of friendship would have seemed far too premature, a thing  
to be much distrusted; but in this simple savage those old rules would  
not apply.  
  
After supper, and another social chat and smoke, we went to our room  
together. He made me a present of his embalmed head; took out his  
enormous tobacco wallet, and groping under the tobacco, drew out  
some thirty dollars in silver; then spreading them on the table, and  
mechanically dividing them into two equal portions, pushed one of them  
towards me, and said it was mine. I was going to remonstrate; but he  
silenced me by pouring them into my trowsers' pockets. I let them stay.  
He then went about his evening prayers, took out his idol, and removed  
the paper fireboard. By certain signs and symptoms, I thought he seemed  
anxious for me to join him; but well knowing what was to follow, I  
deliberated a moment whether, in case he invited me, I would comply or  
otherwise.  
  
I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible  
Presbyterian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in  
worshipping his piece of wood? But what is worship? thought I. Do  
you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and  
earth--pagans and all included--can possibly be jealous of an  
insignificant bit of black wood? Impossible! But what is worship?--to do  
the will of God--THAT is worship. And what is the will of God?--to do to  
my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me--THAT is the  
will of God. Now, Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that  
this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular  
Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him  
in his; ergo, I must turn idolator. So I kindled the shavings; helped  
prop up the innocent little idol; offered him burnt biscuit with  
Queequeg; salamed before him twice or thrice; kissed his nose; and that  
done, we undressed and went to bed, at peace with our own consciences  
and all the world. But we did not go to sleep without some little chat.  
  
How it is I know not; but there is no place like a bed for confidential  
disclosures between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very  
bottom of their souls to each other; and some old couples often lie  
and chat over old times till nearly morning. Thus, then, in our hearts'  
honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg--a cosy, loving pair.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 11. Nightgown.  
  
  
We had lain thus in bed, chatting and napping at short intervals, and  
Queequeg now and then affectionately throwing his brown tattooed legs  
over mine, and then drawing them back; so entirely sociable and free  
and easy were we; when, at last, by reason of our confabulations, what  
little nappishness remained in us altogether departed, and we felt like  
getting up again, though day-break was yet some way down the future.  
  
Yes, we became very wakeful; so much so that our recumbent position  
began to grow wearisome, and by little and little we found ourselves  
sitting up; the clothes well tucked around us, leaning against the  
head-board with our four knees drawn up close together, and our two  
noses bending over them, as if our kneepans were warming-pans. We felt  
very nice and snug, the more so since it was so chilly out of doors;  
indeed out of bed-clothes too, seeing that there was no fire in the  
room. The more so, I say, because truly to enjoy bodily warmth, some  
small part of you must be cold, for there is no quality in this world  
that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself. If  
you flatter yourself that you are all over comfortable, and have been so  
a long time, then you cannot be said to be comfortable any more. But if,  
like Queequeg and me in the bed, the tip of your nose or the crown  
of your head be slightly chilled, why then, indeed, in the general  
consciousness you feel most delightfully and unmistakably warm. For this  
reason a sleeping apartment should never be furnished with a fire, which  
is one of the luxurious discomforts of the rich. For the height of this  
sort of deliciousness is to have nothing but the blanket between you and  
your snugness and the cold of the outer air. Then there you lie like the  
one warm spark in the heart of an arctic crystal.  
  
We had been sitting in this crouching manner for some time, when all at  
once I thought I would open my eyes; for when between sheets, whether  
by day or by night, and whether asleep or awake, I have a way of always  
keeping my eyes shut, in order the more to concentrate the snugness  
of being in bed. Because no man can ever feel his own identity aright  
except his eyes be closed; as if darkness were indeed the proper element  
of our essences, though light be more congenial to our clayey part. Upon  
opening my eyes then, and coming out of my own pleasant and self-created  
darkness into the imposed and coarse outer gloom of the unilluminated  
twelve-o'clock-at-night, I experienced a disagreeable revulsion. Nor did  
I at all object to the hint from Queequeg that perhaps it were best to  
strike a light, seeing that we were so wide awake; and besides he felt  
a strong desire to have a few quiet puffs from his Tomahawk. Be it said,  
that though I had felt such a strong repugnance to his smoking in the  
bed the night before, yet see how elastic our stiff prejudices grow when  
love once comes to bend them. For now I liked nothing better than to  
have Queequeg smoking by me, even in bed, because he seemed to be full  
of such serene household joy then. I no more felt unduly concerned for  
the landlord's policy of insurance. I was only alive to the condensed  
confidential comfortableness of sharing a pipe and a blanket with a real  
friend. With our shaggy jackets drawn about our shoulders, we now passed  
the Tomahawk from one to the other, till slowly there grew over us a  
blue hanging tester of smoke, illuminated by the flame of the new-lit  
lamp.  
  
Whether it was that this undulating tester rolled the savage away to far  
distant scenes, I know not, but he now spoke of his native island; and,  
eager to hear his history, I begged him to go on and tell it. He gladly  
complied. Though at the time I but ill comprehended not a few of his  
words, yet subsequent disclosures, when I had become more familiar with  
his broken phraseology, now enable me to present the whole story such as  
it may prove in the mere skeleton I give.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 12. Biographical.  
  
  
Queequeg was a native of Rokovoko, an island far away to the West and  
South. It is not down in any map; true places never are.  
  
When a new-hatched savage running wild about his native woodlands in  
a grass clout, followed by the nibbling goats, as if he were a green  
sapling; even then, in Queequeg's ambitious soul, lurked a strong desire  
to see something more of Christendom than a specimen whaler or two. His  
father was a High Chief, a King; his uncle a High Priest; and on the  
maternal side he boasted aunts who were the wives of unconquerable  
warriors. There was excellent blood in his veins--royal stuff; though  
sadly vitiated, I fear, by the cannibal propensity he nourished in his  
untutored youth.  
  
A Sag Harbor ship visited his father's bay, and Queequeg sought a  
passage to Christian lands. But the ship, having her full complement of  
seamen, spurned his suit; and not all the King his father's influence  
could prevail. But Queequeg vowed a vow. Alone in his canoe, he paddled  
off to a distant strait, which he knew the ship must pass through when  
she quitted the island. On one side was a coral reef; on the other a low  
tongue of land, covered with mangrove thickets that grew out into the  
water. Hiding his canoe, still afloat, among these thickets, with its  
prow seaward, he sat down in the stern, paddle low in hand; and when the  
ship was gliding by, like a flash he darted out; gained her side; with  
one backward dash of his foot capsized and sank his canoe; climbed up  
the chains; and throwing himself at full length upon the deck, grappled  
a ring-bolt there, and swore not to let it go, though hacked in pieces.  
  
In vain the captain threatened to throw him overboard; suspended a  
cutlass over his naked wrists; Queequeg was the son of a King, and  
Queequeg budged not. Struck by his desperate dauntlessness, and his wild  
desire to visit Christendom, the captain at last relented, and told  
him he might make himself at home. But this fine young savage--this sea  
Prince of Wales, never saw the Captain's cabin. They put him down among  
the sailors, and made a whaleman of him. But like Czar Peter content to  
toil in the shipyards of foreign cities, Queequeg disdained no seeming  
ignominy, if thereby he might happily gain the power of enlightening his  
untutored countrymen. For at bottom--so he told me--he was actuated by a  
profound desire to learn among the Christians, the arts whereby to  
make his people still happier than they were; and more than that,  
still better than they were. But, alas! the practices of whalemen soon  
convinced him that even Christians could be both miserable and wicked;  
infinitely more so, than all his father's heathens. Arrived at last in  
old Sag Harbor; and seeing what the sailors did there; and then going on  
to Nantucket, and seeing how they spent their wages in that place also,  
poor Queequeg gave it up for lost. Thought he, it's a wicked world in  
all meridians; I'll die a pagan.  
  
And thus an old idolator at heart, he yet lived among these Christians,  
wore their clothes, and tried to talk their gibberish. Hence the queer  
ways about him, though now some time from home.  
  
By hints, I asked him whether he did not propose going back, and having  
a coronation; since he might now consider his father dead and gone, he  
being very old and feeble at the last accounts. He answered no, not yet;  
and added that he was fearful Christianity, or rather Christians, had  
unfitted him for ascending the pure and undefiled throne of thirty pagan  
Kings before him. But by and by, he said, he would return,--as soon as  
he felt himself baptized again. For the nonce, however, he proposed to  
sail about, and sow his wild oats in all four oceans. They had made a  
harpooneer of him, and that barbed iron was in lieu of a sceptre now.  
  
I asked him what might be his immediate purpose, touching his future  
movements. He answered, to go to sea again, in his old vocation. Upon  
this, I told him that whaling was my own design, and informed him of my  
intention to sail out of Nantucket, as being the most promising port for  
an adventurous whaleman to embark from. He at once resolved to accompany  
me to that island, ship aboard the same vessel, get into the same watch,  
the same boat, the same mess with me, in short to share my every hap;  
with both my hands in his, boldly dip into the Potluck of both worlds.  
To all this I joyously assented; for besides the affection I now felt  
for Queequeg, he was an experienced harpooneer, and as such, could not  
fail to be of great usefulness to one, who, like me, was wholly ignorant  
of the mysteries of whaling, though well acquainted with the sea, as  
known to merchant seamen.  
  
His story being ended with his pipe's last dying puff, Queequeg embraced  
me, pressed his forehead against mine, and blowing out the light, we  
rolled over from each other, this way and that, and very soon were  
sleeping.  
  
  
CHAPTER 13. Wheelbarrow.  
  
  
Next morning, Monday, after disposing of the embalmed head to a barber,  
for a block, I settled my own and comrade's bill; using, however, my  
comrade's money. The grinning landlord, as well as the boarders, seemed  
amazingly tickled at the sudden friendship which had sprung up between  
me and Queequeg--especially as Peter Coffin's cock and bull stories  
about him had previously so much alarmed me concerning the very person  
whom I now companied with.  
  
We borrowed a wheelbarrow, and embarking our things, including my own  
poor carpet-bag, and Queequeg's canvas sack and hammock, away we went  
down to "the Moss," the little Nantucket packet schooner moored at the  
wharf. As we were going along the people stared; not at Queequeg  
so much--for they were used to seeing cannibals like him in their  
streets,--but at seeing him and me upon such confidential terms. But we  
heeded them not, going along wheeling the barrow by turns, and Queequeg  
now and then stopping to adjust the sheath on his harpoon barbs. I asked  
him why he carried such a troublesome thing with him ashore, and  
whether all whaling ships did not find their own harpoons. To this, in  
substance, he replied, that though what I hinted was true enough, yet  
he had a particular affection for his own harpoon, because it was of  
assured stuff, well tried in many a mortal combat, and deeply intimate  
with the hearts of whales. In short, like many inland reapers  
and mowers, who go into the farmers' meadows armed with their own  
scythes--though in no wise obliged to furnish them--even so, Queequeg,  
for his own private reasons, preferred his own harpoon.  
  
Shifting the barrow from my hand to his, he told me a funny story about  
the first wheelbarrow he had ever seen. It was in Sag Harbor. The owners  
of his ship, it seems, had lent him one, in which to carry his  
heavy chest to his boarding house. Not to seem ignorant about the  
thing--though in truth he was entirely so, concerning the precise way in  
which to manage the barrow--Queequeg puts his chest upon it; lashes it  
fast; and then shoulders the barrow and marches up the wharf. "Why,"  
said I, "Queequeg, you might have known better than that, one would  
think. Didn't the people laugh?"  
  
Upon this, he told me another story. The people of his island of  
Rokovoko, it seems, at their wedding feasts express the fragrant water  
of young cocoanuts into a large stained calabash like a punchbowl; and  
this punchbowl always forms the great central ornament on the braided  
mat where the feast is held. Now a certain grand merchant ship once  
touched at Rokovoko, and its commander--from all accounts, a very  
stately punctilious gentleman, at least for a sea captain--this  
commander was invited to the wedding feast of Queequeg's sister, a  
pretty young princess just turned of ten. Well; when all the wedding  
guests were assembled at the bride's bamboo cottage, this Captain  
marches in, and being assigned the post of honour, placed himself over  
against the punchbowl, and between the High Priest and his majesty the  
King, Queequeg's father. Grace being said,--for those people have their  
grace as well as we--though Queequeg told me that unlike us, who at such  
times look downwards to our platters, they, on the contrary, copying the  
ducks, glance upwards to the great Giver of all feasts--Grace, I say,  
being said, the High Priest opens the banquet by the immemorial ceremony  
of the island; that is, dipping his consecrated and consecrating fingers  
into the bowl before the blessed beverage circulates. Seeing himself  
placed next the Priest, and noting the ceremony, and thinking  
himself--being Captain of a ship--as having plain precedence over a  
mere island King, especially in the King's own house--the Captain coolly  
proceeds to wash his hands in the punchbowl;--taking it I suppose for a  
huge finger-glass. "Now," said Queequeg, "what you tink now?--Didn't our  
people laugh?"  
  
At last, passage paid, and luggage safe, we stood on board the schooner.  
Hoisting sail, it glided down the Acushnet river. On one side, New  
Bedford rose in terraces of streets, their ice-covered trees all  
glittering in the clear, cold air. Huge hills and mountains of casks on  
casks were piled upon her wharves, and side by side the world-wandering  
whale ships lay silent and safely moored at last; while from others  
came a sound of carpenters and coopers, with blended noises of fires and  
forges to melt the pitch, all betokening that new cruises were on the  
start; that one most perilous and long voyage ended, only begins a  
second; and a second ended, only begins a third, and so on, for ever  
and for aye. Such is the endlessness, yea, the intolerableness of all  
earthly effort.  
  
Gaining the more open water, the bracing breeze waxed fresh; the little  
Moss tossed the quick foam from her bows, as a young colt his snortings.  
How I snuffed that Tartar air!--how I spurned that turnpike earth!--that  
common highway all over dented with the marks of slavish heels and  
hoofs; and turned me to admire the magnanimity of the sea which will  
permit no records.  
  
At the same foam-fountain, Queequeg seemed to drink and reel with me.  
His dusky nostrils swelled apart; he showed his filed and pointed teeth.  
On, on we flew; and our offing gained, the Moss did homage to the  
blast; ducked and dived her bows as a slave before the Sultan. Sideways  
leaning, we sideways darted; every ropeyarn tingling like a wire; the  
two tall masts buckling like Indian canes in land tornadoes. So full of  
this reeling scene were we, as we stood by the plunging bowsprit, that  
for some time we did not notice the jeering glances of the passengers, a  
lubber-like assembly, who marvelled that two fellow beings should be so  
companionable; as though a white man were anything more dignified than a  
whitewashed negro. But there were some boobies and bumpkins there, who,  
by their intense greenness, must have come from the heart and centre of  
all verdure. Queequeg caught one of these young saplings mimicking him  
behind his back. I thought the bumpkin's hour of doom was come. Dropping  
his harpoon, the brawny savage caught him in his arms, and by an almost  
miraculous dexterity and strength, sent him high up bodily into the air;  
then slightly tapping his stern in mid-somerset, the fellow landed with  
bursting lungs upon his feet, while Queequeg, turning his back upon him,  
lighted his tomahawk pipe and passed it to me for a puff.  
  
"Capting! Capting!" yelled the bumpkin, running towards that officer;  
"Capting, Capting, here's the devil."  
  
"Hallo, \_you\_ sir," cried the Captain, a gaunt rib of the sea, stalking  
up to Queequeg, "what in thunder do you mean by that? Don't you know you  
might have killed that chap?"  
  
"What him say?" said Queequeg, as he mildly turned to me.  
  
"He say," said I, "that you came near kill-e that man there," pointing  
to the still shivering greenhorn.  
  
"Kill-e," cried Queequeg, twisting his tattooed face into an unearthly  
expression of disdain, "ah! him bevy small-e fish-e; Queequeg no kill-e  
so small-e fish-e; Queequeg kill-e big whale!"  
  
"Look you," roared the Captain, "I'll kill-e YOU, you cannibal, if you  
try any more of your tricks aboard here; so mind your eye."  
  
But it so happened just then, that it was high time for the Captain to  
mind his own eye. The prodigious strain upon the main-sail had parted  
the weather-sheet, and the tremendous boom was now flying from side to  
side, completely sweeping the entire after part of the deck. The poor  
fellow whom Queequeg had handled so roughly, was swept overboard; all  
hands were in a panic; and to attempt snatching at the boom to stay it,  
seemed madness. It flew from right to left, and back again, almost  
in one ticking of a watch, and every instant seemed on the point of  
snapping into splinters. Nothing was done, and nothing seemed capable of  
being done; those on deck rushed towards the bows, and stood eyeing the  
boom as if it were the lower jaw of an exasperated whale. In the  
midst of this consternation, Queequeg dropped deftly to his knees, and  
crawling under the path of the boom, whipped hold of a rope, secured one  
end to the bulwarks, and then flinging the other like a lasso, caught it  
round the boom as it swept over his head, and at the next jerk, the spar  
was that way trapped, and all was safe. The schooner was run into the  
wind, and while the hands were clearing away the stern boat, Queequeg,  
stripped to the waist, darted from the side with a long living arc of  
a leap. For three minutes or more he was seen swimming like a dog,  
throwing his long arms straight out before him, and by turns revealing  
his brawny shoulders through the freezing foam. I looked at the grand  
and glorious fellow, but saw no one to be saved. The greenhorn had gone  
down. Shooting himself perpendicularly from the water, Queequeg, now  
took an instant's glance around him, and seeming to see just how matters  
were, dived down and disappeared. A few minutes more, and he rose again,  
one arm still striking out, and with the other dragging a lifeless form.  
The boat soon picked them up. The poor bumpkin was restored. All hands  
voted Queequeg a noble trump; the captain begged his pardon. From that  
hour I clove to Queequeg like a barnacle; yea, till poor Queequeg took  
his last long dive.  
  
Was there ever such unconsciousness? He did not seem to think that he at  
all deserved a medal from the Humane and Magnanimous Societies. He only  
asked for water--fresh water--something to wipe the brine off; that  
done, he put on dry clothes, lighted his pipe, and leaning against the  
bulwarks, and mildly eyeing those around him, seemed to be saying  
to himself--"It's a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We  
cannibals must help these Christians."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 14. Nantucket.  
  
  
Nothing more happened on the passage worthy the mentioning; so, after a  
fine run, we safely arrived in Nantucket.  
  
Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it. See what a real corner of  
the world it occupies; how it stands there, away off shore, more lonely  
than the Eddystone lighthouse. Look at it--a mere hillock, and elbow of  
sand; all beach, without a background. There is more sand there than  
you would use in twenty years as a substitute for blotting paper. Some  
gamesome wights will tell you that they have to plant weeds there, they  
don't grow naturally; that they import Canada thistles; that they have  
to send beyond seas for a spile to stop a leak in an oil cask; that  
pieces of wood in Nantucket are carried about like bits of the true  
cross in Rome; that people there plant toadstools before their houses,  
to get under the shade in summer time; that one blade of grass makes an  
oasis, three blades in a day's walk a prairie; that they wear quicksand  
shoes, something like Laplander snow-shoes; that they are so shut up,  
belted about, every way inclosed, surrounded, and made an utter island  
of by the ocean, that to their very chairs and tables small clams will  
sometimes be found adhering, as to the backs of sea turtles. But these  
extravaganzas only show that Nantucket is no Illinois.  
  
Look now at the wondrous traditional story of how this island was  
settled by the red-men. Thus goes the legend. In olden times an eagle  
swooped down upon the New England coast, and carried off an infant  
Indian in his talons. With loud lament the parents saw their child borne  
out of sight over the wide waters. They resolved to follow in the same  
direction. Setting out in their canoes, after a perilous passage they  
discovered the island, and there they found an empty ivory casket,--the  
poor little Indian's skeleton.  
  
What wonder, then, that these Nantucketers, born on a beach, should take  
to the sea for a livelihood! They first caught crabs and quohogs in  
the sand; grown bolder, they waded out with nets for mackerel; more  
experienced, they pushed off in boats and captured cod; and at last,  
launching a navy of great ships on the sea, explored this watery world;  
put an incessant belt of circumnavigations round it; peeped in  
at Behring's Straits; and in all seasons and all oceans declared  
everlasting war with the mightiest animated mass that has survived the  
flood; most monstrous and most mountainous! That Himmalehan, salt-sea  
Mastodon, clothed with such portentousness of unconscious power, that  
his very panics are more to be dreaded than his most fearless and  
malicious assaults!  
  
And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea hermits, issuing from  
their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like  
so many Alexanders; parcelling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and  
Indian oceans, as the three pirate powers did Poland. Let America add  
Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm  
all India, and hang out their blazing banner from the sun; two thirds  
of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's. For the sea is his; he  
owns it, as Emperors own empires; other seamen having but a right of  
way through it. Merchant ships are but extension bridges; armed ones but  
floating forts; even pirates and privateers, though following the sea  
as highwaymen the road, they but plunder other ships, other fragments of  
the land like themselves, without seeking to draw their living from the  
bottomless deep itself. The Nantucketer, he alone resides and riots on  
the sea; he alone, in Bible language, goes down to it in ships; to and  
fro ploughing it as his own special plantation. THERE is his home; THERE  
lies his business, which a Noah's flood would not interrupt, though it  
overwhelmed all the millions in China. He lives on the sea, as prairie  
cocks in the prairie; he hides among the waves, he climbs them as  
chamois hunters climb the Alps. For years he knows not the land; so  
that when he comes to it at last, it smells like another world, more  
strangely than the moon would to an Earthsman. With the landless gull,  
that at sunset folds her wings and is rocked to sleep between billows;  
so at nightfall, the Nantucketer, out of sight of land, furls his sails,  
and lays him to his rest, while under his very pillow rush herds of  
walruses and whales.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 15. Chowder.  
  
  
It was quite late in the evening when the little Moss came snugly  
to anchor, and Queequeg and I went ashore; so we could attend to no  
business that day, at least none but a supper and a bed. The landlord of  
the Spouter-Inn had recommended us to his cousin Hosea Hussey of the  
Try Pots, whom he asserted to be the proprietor of one of the best kept  
hotels in all Nantucket, and moreover he had assured us that Cousin  
Hosea, as he called him, was famous for his chowders. In short, he  
plainly hinted that we could not possibly do better than try pot-luck at  
the Try Pots. But the directions he had given us about keeping a yellow  
warehouse on our starboard hand till we opened a white church to the  
larboard, and then keeping that on the larboard hand till we made a  
corner three points to the starboard, and that done, then ask the first  
man we met where the place was: these crooked directions of his very  
much puzzled us at first, especially as, at the outset, Queequeg  
insisted that the yellow warehouse--our first point of departure--must  
be left on the larboard hand, whereas I had understood Peter Coffin to  
say it was on the starboard. However, by dint of beating about a little  
in the dark, and now and then knocking up a peaceable inhabitant  
to inquire the way, we at last came to something which there was no  
mistaking.  
  
Two enormous wooden pots painted black, and suspended by asses' ears,  
swung from the cross-trees of an old top-mast, planted in front of an  
old doorway. The horns of the cross-trees were sawed off on the other  
side, so that this old top-mast looked not a little like a gallows.  
Perhaps I was over sensitive to such impressions at the time, but I  
could not help staring at this gallows with a vague misgiving. A sort of  
crick was in my neck as I gazed up to the two remaining horns; yes, TWO  
of them, one for Queequeg, and one for me. It's ominous, thinks I. A  
Coffin my Innkeeper upon landing in my first whaling port; tombstones  
staring at me in the whalemen's chapel; and here a gallows! and a pair  
of prodigious black pots too! Are these last throwing out oblique hints  
touching Tophet?  
  
I was called from these reflections by the sight of a freckled woman  
with yellow hair and a yellow gown, standing in the porch of the inn,  
under a dull red lamp swinging there, that looked much like an injured  
eye, and carrying on a brisk scolding with a man in a purple woollen  
shirt.  
  
"Get along with ye," said she to the man, "or I'll be combing ye!"  
  
"Come on, Queequeg," said I, "all right. There's Mrs. Hussey."  
  
And so it turned out; Mr. Hosea Hussey being from home, but leaving  
Mrs. Hussey entirely competent to attend to all his affairs. Upon  
making known our desires for a supper and a bed, Mrs. Hussey, postponing  
further scolding for the present, ushered us into a little room, and  
seating us at a table spread with the relics of a recently concluded  
repast, turned round to us and said--"Clam or Cod?"  
  
"What's that about Cods, ma'am?" said I, with much politeness.  
  
"Clam or Cod?" she repeated.  
  
"A clam for supper? a cold clam; is THAT what you mean, Mrs. Hussey?"  
says I, "but that's a rather cold and clammy reception in the winter  
time, ain't it, Mrs. Hussey?"  
  
But being in a great hurry to resume scolding the man in the purple  
Shirt, who was waiting for it in the entry, and seeming to hear nothing  
but the word "clam," Mrs. Hussey hurried towards an open door leading to  
the kitchen, and bawling out "clam for two," disappeared.  
  
"Queequeg," said I, "do you think that we can make out a supper for us  
both on one clam?"  
  
However, a warm savory steam from the kitchen served to belie the  
apparently cheerless prospect before us. But when that smoking chowder  
came in, the mystery was delightfully explained. Oh, sweet friends!  
hearken to me. It was made of small juicy clams, scarcely bigger than  
hazel nuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuit, and salted pork cut up into  
little flakes; the whole enriched with butter, and plentifully seasoned  
with pepper and salt. Our appetites being sharpened by the frosty  
voyage, and in particular, Queequeg seeing his favourite fishing food  
before him, and the chowder being surpassingly excellent, we despatched  
it with great expedition: when leaning back a moment and bethinking  
me of Mrs. Hussey's clam and cod announcement, I thought I would try  
a little experiment. Stepping to the kitchen door, I uttered the word  
"cod" with great emphasis, and resumed my seat. In a few moments the  
savoury steam came forth again, but with a different flavor, and in good  
time a fine cod-chowder was placed before us.  
  
We resumed business; and while plying our spoons in the bowl, thinks I  
to myself, I wonder now if this here has any effect on the head?  
What's that stultifying saying about chowder-headed people? "But look,  
Queequeg, ain't that a live eel in your bowl? Where's your harpoon?"  
  
Fishiest of all fishy places was the Try Pots, which well deserved  
its name; for the pots there were always boiling chowders. Chowder for  
breakfast, and chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper, till you  
began to look for fish-bones coming through your clothes. The area  
before the house was paved with clam-shells. Mrs. Hussey wore a polished  
necklace of codfish vertebra; and Hosea Hussey had his account books  
bound in superior old shark-skin. There was a fishy flavor to the milk,  
too, which I could not at all account for, till one morning happening  
to take a stroll along the beach among some fishermen's boats, I saw  
Hosea's brindled cow feeding on fish remnants, and marching along the  
sand with each foot in a cod's decapitated head, looking very slip-shod,  
I assure ye.  
  
Supper concluded, we received a lamp, and directions from Mrs. Hussey  
concerning the nearest way to bed; but, as Queequeg was about to precede  
me up the stairs, the lady reached forth her arm, and demanded his  
harpoon; she allowed no harpoon in her chambers. "Why not?" said I;  
"every true whaleman sleeps with his harpoon--but why not?" "Because  
it's dangerous," says she. "Ever since young Stiggs coming from that  
unfort'nt v'y'ge of his, when he was gone four years and a half, with  
only three barrels of \_ile\_, was found dead in my first floor back, with  
his harpoon in his side; ever since then I allow no boarders to take  
sich dangerous weepons in their rooms at night. So, Mr. Queequeg" (for  
she had learned his name), "I will just take this here iron, and keep  
it for you till morning. But the chowder; clam or cod to-morrow for  
breakfast, men?"  
  
"Both," says I; "and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way of  
variety."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 16. The Ship.  
  
  
In bed we concocted our plans for the morrow. But to my surprise and  
no small concern, Queequeg now gave me to understand, that he had been  
diligently consulting Yojo--the name of his black little god--and Yojo  
had told him two or three times over, and strongly insisted upon it  
everyway, that instead of our going together among the whaling-fleet in  
harbor, and in concert selecting our craft; instead of this, I say, Yojo  
earnestly enjoined that the selection of the ship should rest wholly  
with me, inasmuch as Yojo purposed befriending us; and, in order to  
do so, had already pitched upon a vessel, which, if left to myself, I,  
Ishmael, should infallibly light upon, for all the world as though it  
had turned out by chance; and in that vessel I must immediately ship  
myself, for the present irrespective of Queequeg.  
  
I have forgotten to mention that, in many things, Queequeg placed great  
confidence in the excellence of Yojo's judgment and surprising forecast  
of things; and cherished Yojo with considerable esteem, as a rather good  
sort of god, who perhaps meant well enough upon the whole, but in all  
cases did not succeed in his benevolent designs.  
  
Now, this plan of Queequeg's, or rather Yojo's, touching the selection  
of our craft; I did not like that plan at all. I had not a little relied  
upon Queequeg's sagacity to point out the whaler best fitted to carry  
us and our fortunes securely. But as all my remonstrances produced  
no effect upon Queequeg, I was obliged to acquiesce; and accordingly  
prepared to set about this business with a determined rushing sort  
of energy and vigor, that should quickly settle that trifling little  
affair. Next morning early, leaving Queequeg shut up with Yojo in our  
little bedroom--for it seemed that it was some sort of Lent or Ramadan,  
or day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer with Queequeg and Yojo that  
day; HOW it was I never could find out, for, though I applied myself  
to it several times, I never could master his liturgies and XXXIX  
Articles--leaving Queequeg, then, fasting on his tomahawk pipe, and Yojo  
warming himself at his sacrificial fire of shavings, I sallied out among  
the shipping. After much prolonged sauntering and many random inquiries,  
I learnt that there were three ships up for three-years' voyages--The  
Devil-dam, the Tit-bit, and the Pequod. DEVIL-DAM, I do not know the  
origin of; TIT-BIT is obvious; PEQUOD, you will no doubt remember, was  
the name of a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians; now extinct  
as the ancient Medes. I peered and pryed about the Devil-dam; from her,  
hopped over to the Tit-bit; and finally, going on board the Pequod,  
looked around her for a moment, and then decided that this was the very  
ship for us.  
  
You may have seen many a quaint craft in your day, for aught I  
know;--square-toed luggers; mountainous Japanese junks; butter-box  
galliots, and what not; but take my word for it, you never saw such a  
rare old craft as this same rare old Pequod. She was a ship of the old  
school, rather small if anything; with an old-fashioned claw-footed look  
about her. Long seasoned and weather-stained in the typhoons and calms  
of all four oceans, her old hull's complexion was darkened like a French  
grenadier's, who has alike fought in Egypt and Siberia. Her venerable  
bows looked bearded. Her masts--cut somewhere on the coast of Japan,  
where her original ones were lost overboard in a gale--her masts stood  
stiffly up like the spines of the three old kings of Cologne. Her  
ancient decks were worn and wrinkled, like the pilgrim-worshipped  
flag-stone in Canterbury Cathedral where Becket bled. But to all these  
her old antiquities, were added new and marvellous features, pertaining  
to the wild business that for more than half a century she had followed.  
Old Captain Peleg, many years her chief-mate, before he commanded  
another vessel of his own, and now a retired seaman, and one of the  
principal owners of the Pequod,--this old Peleg, during the term of his  
chief-mateship, had built upon her original grotesqueness, and inlaid  
it, all over, with a quaintness both of material and device, unmatched  
by anything except it be Thorkill-Hake's carved buckler or bedstead. She  
was apparelled like any barbaric Ethiopian emperor, his neck heavy with  
pendants of polished ivory. She was a thing of trophies. A cannibal of  
a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies. All  
round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous  
jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for  
pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to. Those thews ran not  
through base blocks of land wood, but deftly travelled over sheaves of  
sea-ivory. Scorning a turnstile wheel at her reverend helm, she sported  
there a tiller; and that tiller was in one mass, curiously carved  
from the long narrow lower jaw of her hereditary foe. The helmsman who  
steered by that tiller in a tempest, felt like the Tartar, when he holds  
back his fiery steed by clutching its jaw. A noble craft, but somehow a  
most melancholy! All noble things are touched with that.  
  
Now when I looked about the quarter-deck, for some one having authority,  
in order to propose myself as a candidate for the voyage, at first I saw  
nobody; but I could not well overlook a strange sort of tent, or  
rather wigwam, pitched a little behind the main-mast. It seemed only  
a temporary erection used in port. It was of a conical shape, some ten  
feet high; consisting of the long, huge slabs of limber black bone taken  
from the middle and highest part of the jaws of the right-whale.  
Planted with their broad ends on the deck, a circle of these slabs laced  
together, mutually sloped towards each other, and at the apex united in  
a tufted point, where the loose hairy fibres waved to and fro like the  
top-knot on some old Pottowottamie Sachem's head. A triangular opening  
faced towards the bows of the ship, so that the insider commanded a  
complete view forward.  
  
And half concealed in this queer tenement, I at length found one who  
by his aspect seemed to have authority; and who, it being noon, and  
the ship's work suspended, was now enjoying respite from the burden of  
command. He was seated on an old-fashioned oaken chair, wriggling all  
over with curious carving; and the bottom of which was formed of a  
stout interlacing of the same elastic stuff of which the wigwam was  
constructed.  
  
There was nothing so very particular, perhaps, about the appearance of  
the elderly man I saw; he was brown and brawny, like most old seamen,  
and heavily rolled up in blue pilot-cloth, cut in the Quaker style;  
only there was a fine and almost microscopic net-work of the minutest  
wrinkles interlacing round his eyes, which must have arisen from  
his continual sailings in many hard gales, and always looking to  
windward;--for this causes the muscles about the eyes to become pursed  
together. Such eye-wrinkles are very effectual in a scowl.  
  
"Is this the Captain of the Pequod?" said I, advancing to the door of  
the tent.  
  
"Supposing it be the captain of the Pequod, what dost thou want of him?"  
he demanded.  
  
"I was thinking of shipping."  
  
"Thou wast, wast thou? I see thou art no Nantucketer--ever been in a  
stove boat?"  
  
"No, Sir, I never have."  
  
"Dost know nothing at all about whaling, I dare say--eh?  
  
"Nothing, Sir; but I have no doubt I shall soon learn. I've been several  
voyages in the merchant service, and I think that--"  
  
"Merchant service be damned. Talk not that lingo to me. Dost see that  
leg?--I'll take that leg away from thy stern, if ever thou talkest of  
the marchant service to me again. Marchant service indeed! I suppose now  
ye feel considerable proud of having served in those marchant ships.  
But flukes! man, what makes thee want to go a whaling, eh?--it looks  
a little suspicious, don't it, eh?--Hast not been a pirate, hast  
thou?--Didst not rob thy last Captain, didst thou?--Dost not think of  
murdering the officers when thou gettest to sea?"  
  
I protested my innocence of these things. I saw that under the mask  
of these half humorous innuendoes, this old seaman, as an insulated  
Quakerish Nantucketer, was full of his insular prejudices, and rather  
distrustful of all aliens, unless they hailed from Cape Cod or the  
Vineyard.  
  
"But what takes thee a-whaling? I want to know that before I think of  
shipping ye."  
  
"Well, sir, I want to see what whaling is. I want to see the world."  
  
"Want to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eye on Captain Ahab?"  
  
"Who is Captain Ahab, sir?"  
  
"Aye, aye, I thought so. Captain Ahab is the Captain of this ship."  
  
"I am mistaken then. I thought I was speaking to the Captain himself."  
  
"Thou art speaking to Captain Peleg--that's who ye are speaking to,  
young man. It belongs to me and Captain Bildad to see the Pequod fitted  
out for the voyage, and supplied with all her needs, including crew. We  
are part owners and agents. But as I was going to say, if thou wantest  
to know what whaling is, as thou tellest ye do, I can put ye in a way of  
finding it out before ye bind yourself to it, past backing out. Clap  
eye on Captain Ahab, young man, and thou wilt find that he has only one  
leg."  
  
"What do you mean, sir? Was the other one lost by a whale?"  
  
"Lost by a whale! Young man, come nearer to me: it was devoured,  
chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest parmacetty that ever chipped a  
boat!--ah, ah!"  
  
I was a little alarmed by his energy, perhaps also a little touched at  
the hearty grief in his concluding exclamation, but said as calmly as I  
could, "What you say is no doubt true enough, sir; but how could I know  
there was any peculiar ferocity in that particular whale, though indeed  
I might have inferred as much from the simple fact of the accident."  
  
"Look ye now, young man, thy lungs are a sort of soft, d'ye see; thou  
dost not talk shark a bit. SURE, ye've been to sea before now; sure of  
that?"  
  
"Sir," said I, "I thought I told you that I had been four voyages in the  
merchant--"  
  
"Hard down out of that! Mind what I said about the marchant  
service--don't aggravate me--I won't have it. But let us understand each  
other. I have given thee a hint about what whaling is; do ye yet feel  
inclined for it?"  
  
"I do, sir."  
  
"Very good. Now, art thou the man to pitch a harpoon down a live whale's  
throat, and then jump after it? Answer, quick!"  
  
"I am, sir, if it should be positively indispensable to do so; not to be  
got rid of, that is; which I don't take to be the fact."  
  
"Good again. Now then, thou not only wantest to go a-whaling, to find  
out by experience what whaling is, but ye also want to go in order to  
see the world? Was not that what ye said? I thought so. Well then, just  
step forward there, and take a peep over the weather-bow, and then back  
to me and tell me what ye see there."  
  
For a moment I stood a little puzzled by this curious request, not  
knowing exactly how to take it, whether humorously or in earnest. But  
concentrating all his crow's feet into one scowl, Captain Peleg started  
me on the errand.  
  
Going forward and glancing over the weather bow, I perceived that the  
ship swinging to her anchor with the flood-tide, was now obliquely  
pointing towards the open ocean. The prospect was unlimited, but  
exceedingly monotonous and forbidding; not the slightest variety that I  
could see.  
  
"Well, what's the report?" said Peleg when I came back; "what did ye  
see?"  
  
"Not much," I replied--"nothing but water; considerable horizon though,  
and there's a squall coming up, I think."  
  
"Well, what does thou think then of seeing the world? Do ye wish to go  
round Cape Horn to see any more of it, eh? Can't ye see the world where  
you stand?"  
  
I was a little staggered, but go a-whaling I must, and I would; and the  
Pequod was as good a ship as any--I thought the best--and all this I now  
repeated to Peleg. Seeing me so determined, he expressed his willingness  
to ship me.  
  
"And thou mayest as well sign the papers right off," he added--"come  
along with ye." And so saying, he led the way below deck into the cabin.  
  
Seated on the transom was what seemed to me a most uncommon and  
surprising figure. It turned out to be Captain Bildad, who along with  
Captain Peleg was one of the largest owners of the vessel; the other  
shares, as is sometimes the case in these ports, being held by a crowd  
of old annuitants; widows, fatherless children, and chancery wards; each  
owning about the value of a timber head, or a foot of plank, or a nail  
or two in the ship. People in Nantucket invest their money in whaling  
vessels, the same way that you do yours in approved state stocks  
bringing in good interest.  
  
Now, Bildad, like Peleg, and indeed many other Nantucketers, was a  
Quaker, the island having been originally settled by that sect; and to  
this day its inhabitants in general retain in an uncommon measure the  
peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified  
by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of these same  
Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whale-hunters. They  
are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance.  
  
So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture  
names--a singularly common fashion on the island--and in childhood  
naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker  
idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure  
of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown  
peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a  
Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things  
unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain  
and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion  
of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath  
constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think  
untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature's sweet or  
savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary and confiding  
breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental  
advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language--that man makes  
one in a whole nation's census--a mighty pageant creature, formed for  
noble tragedies. Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically  
regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems  
a half wilful overruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. For all  
men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidness. Be sure  
of this, O young ambition, all mortal greatness is but disease. But,  
as yet we have not to do with such an one, but with quite another; and  
still a man, who, if indeed peculiar, it only results again from another  
phase of the Quaker, modified by individual circumstances.  
  
Like Captain Peleg, Captain Bildad was a well-to-do, retired whaleman.  
But unlike Captain Peleg--who cared not a rush for what are called  
serious things, and indeed deemed those self-same serious things the  
veriest of all trifles--Captain Bildad had not only been originally  
educated according to the strictest sect of Nantucket Quakerism, but all  
his subsequent ocean life, and the sight of many unclad, lovely island  
creatures, round the Horn--all that had not moved this native born  
Quaker one single jot, had not so much as altered one angle of his  
vest. Still, for all this immutableness, was there some lack of  
common consistency about worthy Captain Peleg. Though refusing, from  
conscientious scruples, to bear arms against land invaders, yet himself  
had illimitably invaded the Atlantic and Pacific; and though a sworn foe  
to human bloodshed, yet had he in his straight-bodied coat, spilled tuns  
upon tuns of leviathan gore. How now in the contemplative evening of his  
days, the pious Bildad reconciled these things in the reminiscence, I do  
not know; but it did not seem to concern him much, and very probably  
he had long since come to the sage and sensible conclusion that a man's  
religion is one thing, and this practical world quite another. This  
world pays dividends. Rising from a little cabin-boy in short clothes  
of the drabbest drab, to a harpooneer in a broad shad-bellied waistcoat;  
from that becoming boat-header, chief-mate, and captain, and finally a  
ship owner; Bildad, as I hinted before, had concluded his adventurous  
career by wholly retiring from active life at the goodly age of  
sixty, and dedicating his remaining days to the quiet receiving of his  
well-earned income.  
  
Now, Bildad, I am sorry to say, had the reputation of being an  
incorrigible old hunks, and in his sea-going days, a bitter, hard  
task-master. They told me in Nantucket, though it certainly seems a  
curious story, that when he sailed the old Categut whaleman, his crew,  
upon arriving home, were mostly all carried ashore to the hospital, sore  
exhausted and worn out. For a pious man, especially for a Quaker, he was  
certainly rather hard-hearted, to say the least. He never used to swear,  
though, at his men, they said; but somehow he got an inordinate  
quantity of cruel, unmitigated hard work out of them. When Bildad was a  
chief-mate, to have his drab-coloured eye intently looking at you, made  
you feel completely nervous, till you could clutch something--a hammer  
or a marling-spike, and go to work like mad, at something or other,  
never mind what. Indolence and idleness perished before him. His own  
person was the exact embodiment of his utilitarian character. On his  
long, gaunt body, he carried no spare flesh, no superfluous beard,  
his chin having a soft, economical nap to it, like the worn nap of his  
broad-brimmed hat.  
  
Such, then, was the person that I saw seated on the transom when I  
followed Captain Peleg down into the cabin. The space between the decks  
was small; and there, bolt-upright, sat old Bildad, who always sat so,  
and never leaned, and this to save his coat tails. His broad-brim was  
placed beside him; his legs were stiffly crossed; his drab vesture was  
buttoned up to his chin; and spectacles on nose, he seemed absorbed in  
reading from a ponderous volume.  
  
"Bildad," cried Captain Peleg, "at it again, Bildad, eh? Ye have been  
studying those Scriptures, now, for the last thirty years, to my certain  
knowledge. How far ye got, Bildad?"  
  
As if long habituated to such profane talk from his old shipmate,  
Bildad, without noticing his present irreverence, quietly looked up, and  
seeing me, glanced again inquiringly towards Peleg.  
  
"He says he's our man, Bildad," said Peleg, "he wants to ship."  
  
"Dost thee?" said Bildad, in a hollow tone, and turning round to me.  
  
"I dost," said I unconsciously, he was so intense a Quaker.  
  
"What do ye think of him, Bildad?" said Peleg.  
  
"He'll do," said Bildad, eyeing me, and then went on spelling away at  
his book in a mumbling tone quite audible.  
  
I thought him the queerest old Quaker I ever saw, especially as Peleg,  
his friend and old shipmate, seemed such a blusterer. But I said  
nothing, only looking round me sharply. Peleg now threw open a chest,  
and drawing forth the ship's articles, placed pen and ink before him,  
and seated himself at a little table. I began to think it was high time  
to settle with myself at what terms I would be willing to engage for the  
voyage. I was already aware that in the whaling business they paid no  
wages; but all hands, including the captain, received certain shares of  
the profits called lays, and that these lays were proportioned to the  
degree of importance pertaining to the respective duties of the ship's  
company. I was also aware that being a green hand at whaling, my own  
lay would not be very large; but considering that I was used to the sea,  
could steer a ship, splice a rope, and all that, I made no doubt that  
from all I had heard I should be offered at least the 275th lay--that  
is, the 275th part of the clear net proceeds of the voyage, whatever  
that might eventually amount to. And though the 275th lay was what they  
call a rather LONG LAY, yet it was better than nothing; and if we had a  
lucky voyage, might pretty nearly pay for the clothing I would wear out  
on it, not to speak of my three years' beef and board, for which I would  
not have to pay one stiver.  
  
It might be thought that this was a poor way to accumulate a princely  
fortune--and so it was, a very poor way indeed. But I am one of those  
that never take on about princely fortunes, and am quite content if the  
world is ready to board and lodge me, while I am putting up at this grim  
sign of the Thunder Cloud. Upon the whole, I thought that the 275th lay  
would be about the fair thing, but would not have been surprised had I  
been offered the 200th, considering I was of a broad-shouldered make.  
  
But one thing, nevertheless, that made me a little distrustful about  
receiving a generous share of the profits was this: Ashore, I had heard  
something of both Captain Peleg and his unaccountable old crony Bildad;  
how that they being the principal proprietors of the Pequod, therefore  
the other and more inconsiderable and scattered owners, left nearly the  
whole management of the ship's affairs to these two. And I did not know  
but what the stingy old Bildad might have a mighty deal to say about  
shipping hands, especially as I now found him on board the Pequod,  
quite at home there in the cabin, and reading his Bible as if at his  
own fireside. Now while Peleg was vainly trying to mend a pen with his  
jack-knife, old Bildad, to my no small surprise, considering that he was  
such an interested party in these proceedings; Bildad never heeded  
us, but went on mumbling to himself out of his book, "LAY not up for  
yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth--"  
  
"Well, Captain Bildad," interrupted Peleg, "what d'ye say, what lay  
shall we give this young man?"  
  
"Thou knowest best," was the sepulchral reply, "the seven hundred and  
seventy-seventh wouldn't be too much, would it?--'where moth and rust do  
corrupt, but LAY--'"  
  
LAY, indeed, thought I, and such a lay! the seven hundred and  
seventy-seventh! Well, old Bildad, you are determined that I, for one,  
shall not LAY up many LAYS here below, where moth and rust do corrupt.  
It was an exceedingly LONG LAY that, indeed; and though from the  
magnitude of the figure it might at first deceive a landsman, yet  
the slightest consideration will show that though seven hundred and  
seventy-seven is a pretty large number, yet, when you come to make  
a TEENTH of it, you will then see, I say, that the seven hundred and  
seventy-seventh part of a farthing is a good deal less than seven  
hundred and seventy-seven gold doubloons; and so I thought at the time.  
  
"Why, blast your eyes, Bildad," cried Peleg, "thou dost not want to  
swindle this young man! he must have more than that."  
  
"Seven hundred and seventy-seventh," again said Bildad, without lifting  
his eyes; and then went on mumbling--"for where your treasure is, there  
will your heart be also."  
  
"I am going to put him down for the three hundredth," said Peleg, "do ye  
hear that, Bildad! The three hundredth lay, I say."  
  
Bildad laid down his book, and turning solemnly towards him said,  
"Captain Peleg, thou hast a generous heart; but thou must consider the  
duty thou owest to the other owners of this ship--widows and orphans,  
many of them--and that if we too abundantly reward the labors of this  
young man, we may be taking the bread from those widows and those  
orphans. The seven hundred and seventy-seventh lay, Captain Peleg."  
  
"Thou Bildad!" roared Peleg, starting up and clattering about the  
cabin. "Blast ye, Captain Bildad, if I had followed thy advice in these  
matters, I would afore now had a conscience to lug about that would be  
heavy enough to founder the largest ship that ever sailed round Cape  
Horn."  
  
"Captain Peleg," said Bildad steadily, "thy conscience may be drawing  
ten inches of water, or ten fathoms, I can't tell; but as thou art still  
an impenitent man, Captain Peleg, I greatly fear lest thy conscience be  
but a leaky one; and will in the end sink thee foundering down to the  
fiery pit, Captain Peleg."  
  
"Fiery pit! fiery pit! ye insult me, man; past all natural bearing, ye  
insult me. It's an all-fired outrage to tell any human creature that  
he's bound to hell. Flukes and flames! Bildad, say that again to me, and  
start my soul-bolts, but I'll--I'll--yes, I'll swallow a live goat with  
all his hair and horns on. Out of the cabin, ye canting, drab-coloured  
son of a wooden gun--a straight wake with ye!"  
  
As he thundered out this he made a rush at Bildad, but with a marvellous  
oblique, sliding celerity, Bildad for that time eluded him.  
  
Alarmed at this terrible outburst between the two principal and  
responsible owners of the ship, and feeling half a mind to give up  
all idea of sailing in a vessel so questionably owned and temporarily  
commanded, I stepped aside from the door to give egress to Bildad, who,  
I made no doubt, was all eagerness to vanish from before the awakened  
wrath of Peleg. But to my astonishment, he sat down again on the  
transom very quietly, and seemed to have not the slightest intention of  
withdrawing. He seemed quite used to impenitent Peleg and his ways. As  
for Peleg, after letting off his rage as he had, there seemed no more  
left in him, and he, too, sat down like a lamb, though he twitched a  
little as if still nervously agitated. "Whew!" he whistled at last--"the  
squall's gone off to leeward, I think. Bildad, thou used to be good at  
sharpening a lance, mend that pen, will ye. My jack-knife here needs  
the grindstone. That's he; thank ye, Bildad. Now then, my young man,  
Ishmael's thy name, didn't ye say? Well then, down ye go here, Ishmael,  
for the three hundredth lay."  
  
"Captain Peleg," said I, "I have a friend with me who wants to ship  
too--shall I bring him down to-morrow?"  
  
"To be sure," said Peleg. "Fetch him along, and we'll look at him."  
  
"What lay does he want?" groaned Bildad, glancing up from the book in  
which he had again been burying himself.  
  
"Oh! never thee mind about that, Bildad," said Peleg. "Has he ever  
whaled it any?" turning to me.  
  
"Killed more whales than I can count, Captain Peleg."  
  
"Well, bring him along then."  
  
And, after signing the papers, off I went; nothing doubting but that I  
had done a good morning's work, and that the Pequod was the identical  
ship that Yojo had provided to carry Queequeg and me round the Cape.  
  
But I had not proceeded far, when I began to bethink me that the Captain  
with whom I was to sail yet remained unseen by me; though, indeed, in  
many cases, a whale-ship will be completely fitted out, and receive all  
her crew on board, ere the captain makes himself visible by arriving  
to take command; for sometimes these voyages are so prolonged, and the  
shore intervals at home so exceedingly brief, that if the captain have  
a family, or any absorbing concernment of that sort, he does not trouble  
himself much about his ship in port, but leaves her to the owners till  
all is ready for sea. However, it is always as well to have a look at  
him before irrevocably committing yourself into his hands. Turning back  
I accosted Captain Peleg, inquiring where Captain Ahab was to be found.  
  
"And what dost thou want of Captain Ahab? It's all right enough; thou  
art shipped."  
  
"Yes, but I should like to see him."  
  
"But I don't think thou wilt be able to at present. I don't know exactly  
what's the matter with him; but he keeps close inside the house; a sort  
of sick, and yet he don't look so. In fact, he ain't sick; but no, he  
isn't well either. Any how, young man, he won't always see me, so I  
don't suppose he will thee. He's a queer man, Captain Ahab--so some  
think--but a good one. Oh, thou'lt like him well enough; no fear, no  
fear. He's a grand, ungodly, god-like man, Captain Ahab; doesn't speak  
much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Mark ye, be  
forewarned; Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as  
'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed  
his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales. His lance!  
aye, the keenest and the surest that out of all our isle! Oh! he ain't  
Captain Bildad; no, and he ain't Captain Peleg; HE'S AHAB, boy; and Ahab  
of old, thou knowest, was a crowned king!"  
  
"And a very vile one. When that wicked king was slain, the dogs, did  
they not lick his blood?"  
  
"Come hither to me--hither, hither," said Peleg, with a significance in  
his eye that almost startled me. "Look ye, lad; never say that on board  
the Pequod. Never say it anywhere. Captain Ahab did not name himself.  
'Twas a foolish, ignorant whim of his crazy, widowed mother, who died  
when he was only a twelvemonth old. And yet the old squaw Tistig, at  
Gayhead, said that the name would somehow prove prophetic. And, perhaps,  
other fools like her may tell thee the same. I wish to warn thee. It's a  
lie. I know Captain Ahab well; I've sailed with him as mate years ago;  
I know what he is--a good man--not a pious, good man, like Bildad, but  
a swearing good man--something like me--only there's a good deal more of  
him. Aye, aye, I know that he was never very jolly; and I know that on  
the passage home, he was a little out of his mind for a spell; but it  
was the sharp shooting pains in his bleeding stump that brought that  
about, as any one might see. I know, too, that ever since he lost  
his leg last voyage by that accursed whale, he's been a kind of  
moody--desperate moody, and savage sometimes; but that will all pass  
off. And once for all, let me tell thee and assure thee, young man, it's  
better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one. So  
good-bye to thee--and wrong not Captain Ahab, because he happens to  
have a wicked name. Besides, my boy, he has a wife--not three voyages  
wedded--a sweet, resigned girl. Think of that; by that sweet girl that  
old man has a child: hold ye then there can be any utter, hopeless  
harm in Ahab? No, no, my lad; stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his  
humanities!"  
  
As I walked away, I was full of thoughtfulness; what had been  
incidentally revealed to me of Captain Ahab, filled me with a certain  
wild vagueness of painfulness concerning him. And somehow, at the time,  
I felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don't know what,  
unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange  
awe of him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was  
not exactly awe; I do not know what it was. But I felt it; and it did  
not disincline me towards him; though I felt impatience at what seemed  
like mystery in him, so imperfectly as he was known to me then. However,  
my thoughts were at length carried in other directions, so that for the  
present dark Ahab slipped my mind.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 17. The Ramadan.  
  
  
As Queequeg's Ramadan, or Fasting and Humiliation, was to continue all  
day, I did not choose to disturb him till towards night-fall; for I  
cherish the greatest respect towards everybody's religious obligations,  
never mind how comical, and could not find it in my heart to undervalue  
even a congregation of ants worshipping a toad-stool; or those other  
creatures in certain parts of our earth, who with a degree of footmanism  
quite unprecedented in other planets, bow down before the torso of  
a deceased landed proprietor merely on account of the inordinate  
possessions yet owned and rented in his name.  
  
I say, we good Presbyterian Christians should be charitable in these  
things, and not fancy ourselves so vastly superior to other mortals,  
pagans and what not, because of their half-crazy conceits on these  
subjects. There was Queequeg, now, certainly entertaining the most  
absurd notions about Yojo and his Ramadan;--but what of that? Queequeg  
thought he knew what he was about, I suppose; he seemed to be content;  
and there let him rest. All our arguing with him would not avail; let  
him be, I say: and Heaven have mercy on us all--Presbyterians and Pagans  
alike--for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and  
sadly need mending.  
  
Towards evening, when I felt assured that all his performances and  
rituals must be over, I went up to his room and knocked at the door; but  
no answer. I tried to open it, but it was fastened inside. "Queequeg,"  
said I softly through the key-hole:--all silent. "I say, Queequeg! why  
don't you speak? It's I--Ishmael." But all remained still as before. I  
began to grow alarmed. I had allowed him such abundant time; I thought  
he might have had an apoplectic fit. I looked through the key-hole; but  
the door opening into an odd corner of the room, the key-hole prospect  
was but a crooked and sinister one. I could only see part of the  
foot-board of the bed and a line of the wall, but nothing more. I  
was surprised to behold resting against the wall the wooden shaft of  
Queequeg's harpoon, which the landlady the evening previous had taken  
from him, before our mounting to the chamber. That's strange, thought I;  
but at any rate, since the harpoon stands yonder, and he seldom or  
never goes abroad without it, therefore he must be inside here, and no  
possible mistake.  
  
"Queequeg!--Queequeg!"--all still. Something must have happened.  
Apoplexy! I tried to burst open the door; but it stubbornly resisted.  
Running down stairs, I quickly stated my suspicions to the first person  
I met--the chamber-maid. "La! la!" she cried, "I thought something must  
be the matter. I went to make the bed after breakfast, and the door was  
locked; and not a mouse to be heard; and it's been just so silent ever  
since. But I thought, may be, you had both gone off and locked your  
baggage in for safe keeping. La! la, ma'am!--Mistress! murder! Mrs.  
Hussey! apoplexy!"--and with these cries, she ran towards the kitchen, I  
following.  
  
Mrs. Hussey soon appeared, with a mustard-pot in one hand and a  
vinegar-cruet in the other, having just broken away from the occupation  
of attending to the castors, and scolding her little black boy meantime.  
  
"Wood-house!" cried I, "which way to it? Run for God's sake, and fetch  
something to pry open the door--the axe!--the axe! he's had a stroke;  
depend upon it!"--and so saying I was unmethodically rushing up stairs  
again empty-handed, when Mrs. Hussey interposed the mustard-pot and  
vinegar-cruet, and the entire castor of her countenance.  
  
"What's the matter with you, young man?"  
  
"Get the axe! For God's sake, run for the doctor, some one, while I pry  
it open!"  
  
"Look here," said the landlady, quickly putting down the vinegar-cruet,  
so as to have one hand free; "look here; are you talking about prying  
open any of my doors?"--and with that she seized my arm. "What's the  
matter with you? What's the matter with you, shipmate?"  
  
In as calm, but rapid a manner as possible, I gave her to understand the  
whole case. Unconsciously clapping the vinegar-cruet to one side of her  
nose, she ruminated for an instant; then exclaimed--"No! I haven't seen  
it since I put it there." Running to a little closet under the landing  
of the stairs, she glanced in, and returning, told me that Queequeg's  
harpoon was missing. "He's killed himself," she cried. "It's unfort'nate  
Stiggs done over again there goes another counterpane--God pity his poor  
mother!--it will be the ruin of my house. Has the poor lad a sister?  
Where's that girl?--there, Betty, go to Snarles the Painter, and tell  
him to paint me a sign, with--"no suicides permitted here, and no  
smoking in the parlor;"--might as well kill both birds at once. Kill?  
The Lord be merciful to his ghost! What's that noise there? You, young  
man, avast there!"  
  
And running up after me, she caught me as I was again trying to force  
open the door.  
  
"I don't allow it; I won't have my premises spoiled. Go for the  
locksmith, there's one about a mile from here. But avast!" putting her  
hand in her side-pocket, "here's a key that'll fit, I guess; let's  
see." And with that, she turned it in the lock; but, alas! Queequeg's  
supplemental bolt remained unwithdrawn within.  
  
"Have to burst it open," said I, and was running down the entry a  
little, for a good start, when the landlady caught at me, again vowing  
I should not break down her premises; but I tore from her, and with a  
sudden bodily rush dashed myself full against the mark.  
  
With a prodigious noise the door flew open, and the knob slamming  
against the wall, sent the plaster to the ceiling; and there, good  
heavens! there sat Queequeg, altogether cool and self-collected; right  
in the middle of the room; squatting on his hams, and holding Yojo on  
top of his head. He looked neither one way nor the other way, but sat  
like a carved image with scarce a sign of active life.  
  
"Queequeg," said I, going up to him, "Queequeg, what's the matter with  
you?"  
  
"He hain't been a sittin' so all day, has he?" said the landlady.  
  
But all we said, not a word could we drag out of him; I almost felt  
like pushing him over, so as to change his position, for it was almost  
intolerable, it seemed so painfully and unnaturally constrained;  
especially, as in all probability he had been sitting so for upwards of  
eight or ten hours, going too without his regular meals.  
  
"Mrs. Hussey," said I, "he's ALIVE at all events; so leave us, if you  
please, and I will see to this strange affair myself."  
  
Closing the door upon the landlady, I endeavored to prevail upon  
Queequeg to take a chair; but in vain. There he sat; and all he could  
do--for all my polite arts and blandishments--he would not move a peg,  
nor say a single word, nor even look at me, nor notice my presence in  
the slightest way.  
  
I wonder, thought I, if this can possibly be a part of his Ramadan; do  
they fast on their hams that way in his native island. It must be so;  
yes, it's part of his creed, I suppose; well, then, let him rest; he'll  
get up sooner or later, no doubt. It can't last for ever, thank God,  
and his Ramadan only comes once a year; and I don't believe it's very  
punctual then.  
  
I went down to supper. After sitting a long time listening to the long  
stories of some sailors who had just come from a plum-pudding voyage, as  
they called it (that is, a short whaling-voyage in a schooner or brig,  
confined to the north of the line, in the Atlantic Ocean only); after  
listening to these plum-puddingers till nearly eleven o'clock, I went  
up stairs to go to bed, feeling quite sure by this time Queequeg must  
certainly have brought his Ramadan to a termination. But no; there he  
was just where I had left him; he had not stirred an inch. I began to  
grow vexed with him; it seemed so downright senseless and insane to be  
sitting there all day and half the night on his hams in a cold room,  
holding a piece of wood on his head.  
  
"For heaven's sake, Queequeg, get up and shake yourself; get up and have  
some supper. You'll starve; you'll kill yourself, Queequeg." But not a  
word did he reply.  
  
Despairing of him, therefore, I determined to go to bed and to sleep;  
and no doubt, before a great while, he would follow me. But previous to  
turning in, I took my heavy bearskin jacket, and threw it over him, as  
it promised to be a very cold night; and he had nothing but his ordinary  
round jacket on. For some time, do all I would, I could not get into  
the faintest doze. I had blown out the candle; and the mere thought  
of Queequeg--not four feet off--sitting there in that uneasy position,  
stark alone in the cold and dark; this made me really wretched. Think of  
it; sleeping all night in the same room with a wide awake pagan on his  
hams in this dreary, unaccountable Ramadan!  
  
But somehow I dropped off at last, and knew nothing more till break of  
day; when, looking over the bedside, there squatted Queequeg, as if he  
had been screwed down to the floor. But as soon as the first glimpse of  
sun entered the window, up he got, with stiff and grating joints,  
but with a cheerful look; limped towards me where I lay; pressed his  
forehead again against mine; and said his Ramadan was over.  
  
Now, as I before hinted, I have no objection to any person's religion,  
be it what it may, so long as that person does not kill or insult any  
other person, because that other person don't believe it also. But when  
a man's religion becomes really frantic; when it is a positive torment  
to him; and, in fine, makes this earth of ours an uncomfortable inn to  
lodge in; then I think it high time to take that individual aside and  
argue the point with him.  
  
And just so I now did with Queequeg. "Queequeg," said I, "get into bed  
now, and lie and listen to me." I then went on, beginning with the rise  
and progress of the primitive religions, and coming down to the various  
religions of the present time, during which time I labored to show  
Queequeg that all these Lents, Ramadans, and prolonged ham-squattings in  
cold, cheerless rooms were stark nonsense; bad for the health; useless  
for the soul; opposed, in short, to the obvious laws of Hygiene and  
common sense. I told him, too, that he being in other things such an  
extremely sensible and sagacious savage, it pained me, very badly pained  
me, to see him now so deplorably foolish about this ridiculous Ramadan  
of his. Besides, argued I, fasting makes the body cave in; hence the  
spirit caves in; and all thoughts born of a fast must necessarily be  
half-starved. This is the reason why most dyspeptic religionists cherish  
such melancholy notions about their hereafters. In one word, Queequeg,  
said I, rather digressively; hell is an idea first born on an undigested  
apple-dumpling; and since then perpetuated through the hereditary  
dyspepsias nurtured by Ramadans.  
  
I then asked Queequeg whether he himself was ever troubled with  
dyspepsia; expressing the idea very plainly, so that he could take it  
in. He said no; only upon one memorable occasion. It was after a great  
feast given by his father the king, on the gaining of a great battle  
wherein fifty of the enemy had been killed by about two o'clock in the  
afternoon, and all cooked and eaten that very evening.  
  
"No more, Queequeg," said I, shuddering; "that will do;" for I knew the  
inferences without his further hinting them. I had seen a sailor who had  
visited that very island, and he told me that it was the custom, when  
a great battle had been gained there, to barbecue all the slain in the  
yard or garden of the victor; and then, one by one, they were placed  
in great wooden trenchers, and garnished round like a pilau, with  
breadfruit and cocoanuts; and with some parsley in their mouths, were  
sent round with the victor's compliments to all his friends, just as  
though these presents were so many Christmas turkeys.  
  
After all, I do not think that my remarks about religion made much  
impression upon Queequeg. Because, in the first place, he somehow seemed  
dull of hearing on that important subject, unless considered from his  
own point of view; and, in the second place, he did not more than one  
third understand me, couch my ideas simply as I would; and, finally, he  
no doubt thought he knew a good deal more about the true religion than  
I did. He looked at me with a sort of condescending concern and  
compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible  
young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety.  
  
At last we rose and dressed; and Queequeg, taking a prodigiously hearty  
breakfast of chowders of all sorts, so that the landlady should not  
make much profit by reason of his Ramadan, we sallied out to board the  
Pequod, sauntering along, and picking our teeth with halibut bones.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 18. His Mark.  
  
  
As we were walking down the end of the wharf towards the ship, Queequeg  
carrying his harpoon, Captain Peleg in his gruff voice loudly hailed us  
from his wigwam, saying he had not suspected my friend was a cannibal,  
and furthermore announcing that he let no cannibals on board that craft,  
unless they previously produced their papers.  
  
"What do you mean by that, Captain Peleg?" said I, now jumping on the  
bulwarks, and leaving my comrade standing on the wharf.  
  
"I mean," he replied, "he must show his papers."  
  
"Yes," said Captain Bildad in his hollow voice, sticking his head from  
behind Peleg's, out of the wigwam. "He must show that he's converted.  
Son of darkness," he added, turning to Queequeg, "art thou at present in  
communion with any Christian church?"  
  
"Why," said I, "he's a member of the first Congregational Church." Here  
be it said, that many tattooed savages sailing in Nantucket ships at  
last come to be converted into the churches.  
  
"First Congregational Church," cried Bildad, "what! that worships in  
Deacon Deuteronomy Coleman's meeting-house?" and so saying, taking  
out his spectacles, he rubbed them with his great yellow bandana  
handkerchief, and putting them on very carefully, came out of the  
wigwam, and leaning stiffly over the bulwarks, took a good long look at  
Queequeg.  
  
"How long hath he been a member?" he then said, turning to me; "not very  
long, I rather guess, young man."  
  
"No," said Peleg, "and he hasn't been baptized right either, or it would  
have washed some of that devil's blue off his face."  
  
"Do tell, now," cried Bildad, "is this Philistine a regular member of  
Deacon Deuteronomy's meeting? I never saw him going there, and I pass it  
every Lord's day."  
  
"I don't know anything about Deacon Deuteronomy or his meeting," said  
I; "all I know is, that Queequeg here is a born member of the First  
Congregational Church. He is a deacon himself, Queequeg is."  
  
"Young man," said Bildad sternly, "thou art skylarking with me--explain  
thyself, thou young Hittite. What church dost thee mean? answer me."  
  
Finding myself thus hard pushed, I replied. "I mean, sir, the same  
ancient Catholic Church to which you and I, and Captain Peleg there,  
and Queequeg here, and all of us, and every mother's son and soul of  
us belong; the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole  
worshipping world; we all belong to that; only some of us cherish some  
queer crotchets no ways touching the grand belief; in THAT we all join  
hands."  
  
"Splice, thou mean'st SPLICE hands," cried Peleg, drawing nearer. "Young  
man, you'd better ship for a missionary, instead of a fore-mast hand;  
I never heard a better sermon. Deacon Deuteronomy--why Father Mapple  
himself couldn't beat it, and he's reckoned something. Come aboard, come  
aboard; never mind about the papers. I say, tell Quohog there--what's  
that you call him? tell Quohog to step along. By the great anchor, what  
a harpoon he's got there! looks like good stuff that; and he handles it  
about right. I say, Quohog, or whatever your name is, did you ever stand  
in the head of a whale-boat? did you ever strike a fish?"  
  
Without saying a word, Queequeg, in his wild sort of way, jumped upon  
the bulwarks, from thence into the bows of one of the whale-boats  
hanging to the side; and then bracing his left knee, and poising his  
harpoon, cried out in some such way as this:--  
  
"Cap'ain, you see him small drop tar on water dere? You see him? well,  
spose him one whale eye, well, den!" and taking sharp aim at it, he  
darted the iron right over old Bildad's broad brim, clean across the  
ship's decks, and struck the glistening tar spot out of sight.  
  
"Now," said Queequeg, quietly hauling in the line, "spos-ee him whale-e  
eye; why, dad whale dead."  
  
"Quick, Bildad," said Peleg, his partner, who, aghast at the close  
vicinity of the flying harpoon, had retreated towards the cabin gangway.  
"Quick, I say, you Bildad, and get the ship's papers. We must have  
Hedgehog there, I mean Quohog, in one of our boats. Look ye, Quohog,  
we'll give ye the ninetieth lay, and that's more than ever was given a  
harpooneer yet out of Nantucket."  
  
So down we went into the cabin, and to my great joy Queequeg was soon  
enrolled among the same ship's company to which I myself belonged.  
  
When all preliminaries were over and Peleg had got everything ready for  
signing, he turned to me and said, "I guess, Quohog there don't know how  
to write, does he? I say, Quohog, blast ye! dost thou sign thy name or  
make thy mark?"  
  
But at this question, Queequeg, who had twice or thrice before taken  
part in similar ceremonies, looked no ways abashed; but taking the  
offered pen, copied upon the paper, in the proper place, an exact  
counterpart of a queer round figure which was tattooed upon his arm; so  
that through Captain Peleg's obstinate mistake touching his appellative,  
it stood something like this:--  
  
Quohog. his X mark.  
  
Meanwhile Captain Bildad sat earnestly and steadfastly eyeing Queequeg,  
and at last rising solemnly and fumbling in the huge pockets of his  
broad-skirted drab coat, took out a bundle of tracts, and selecting  
one entitled "The Latter Day Coming; or No Time to Lose," placed it in  
Queequeg's hands, and then grasping them and the book with both his,  
looked earnestly into his eyes, and said, "Son of darkness, I must do my  
duty by thee; I am part owner of this ship, and feel concerned for the  
souls of all its crew; if thou still clingest to thy Pagan ways, which I  
sadly fear, I beseech thee, remain not for aye a Belial bondsman. Spurn  
the idol Bell, and the hideous dragon; turn from the wrath to come; mind  
thine eye, I say; oh! goodness gracious! steer clear of the fiery pit!"  
  
Something of the salt sea yet lingered in old Bildad's language,  
heterogeneously mixed with Scriptural and domestic phrases.  
  
"Avast there, avast there, Bildad, avast now spoiling our harpooneer,"  
cried Peleg. "Pious harpooneers never make good voyagers--it takes the shark  
out of 'em; no harpooneer is worth a straw who aint pretty sharkish.  
There was young Nat Swaine, once the bravest boat-header out of all  
Nantucket and the Vineyard; he joined the meeting, and never came to  
good. He got so frightened about his plaguy soul, that he shrinked and  
sheered away from whales, for fear of after-claps, in case he got stove  
and went to Davy Jones."  
  
"Peleg! Peleg!" said Bildad, lifting his eyes and hands, "thou thyself,  
as I myself, hast seen many a perilous time; thou knowest, Peleg, what  
it is to have the fear of death; how, then, can'st thou prate in this  
ungodly guise. Thou beliest thine own heart, Peleg. Tell me, when this  
same Pequod here had her three masts overboard in that typhoon on Japan,  
that same voyage when thou went mate with Captain Ahab, did'st thou not  
think of Death and the Judgment then?"  
  
"Hear him, hear him now," cried Peleg, marching across the cabin, and  
thrusting his hands far down into his pockets,--"hear him, all of ye.  
Think of that! When every moment we thought the ship would sink!  
Death and the Judgment then? What? With all three masts making such an  
everlasting thundering against the side; and every sea breaking over us,  
fore and aft. Think of Death and the Judgment then? No! no time to think  
about Death then. Life was what Captain Ahab and I was thinking of;  
and how to save all hands--how to rig jury-masts--how to get into the  
nearest port; that was what I was thinking of."  
  
Bildad said no more, but buttoning up his coat, stalked on deck,  
where we followed him. There he stood, very quietly overlooking some  
sailmakers who were mending a top-sail in the waist. Now and then  
he stooped to pick up a patch, or save an end of tarred twine, which  
otherwise might have been wasted.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 19. The Prophet.  
  
  
"Shipmates, have ye shipped in that ship?"  
  
Queequeg and I had just left the Pequod, and were sauntering away from  
the water, for the moment each occupied with his own thoughts, when  
the above words were put to us by a stranger, who, pausing before us,  
levelled his massive forefinger at the vessel in question. He was but  
shabbily apparelled in faded jacket and patched trowsers; a rag of a  
black handkerchief investing his neck. A confluent small-pox had in all  
directions flowed over his face, and left it like the complicated ribbed  
bed of a torrent, when the rushing waters have been dried up.  
  
"Have ye shipped in her?" he repeated.  
  
"You mean the ship Pequod, I suppose," said I, trying to gain a little  
more time for an uninterrupted look at him.  
  
"Aye, the Pequod--that ship there," he said, drawing back his whole  
arm, and then rapidly shoving it straight out from him, with the fixed  
bayonet of his pointed finger darted full at the object.  
  
"Yes," said I, "we have just signed the articles."  
  
"Anything down there about your souls?"  
  
"About what?"  
  
"Oh, perhaps you hav'n't got any," he said quickly. "No matter though,  
I know many chaps that hav'n't got any,--good luck to 'em; and they are  
all the better off for it. A soul's a sort of a fifth wheel to a wagon."  
  
"What are you jabbering about, shipmate?" said I.  
  
"HE'S got enough, though, to make up for all deficiencies of that sort  
in other chaps," abruptly said the stranger, placing a nervous emphasis  
upon the word HE.  
  
"Queequeg," said I, "let's go; this fellow has broken loose from  
somewhere; he's talking about something and somebody we don't know."  
  
"Stop!" cried the stranger. "Ye said true--ye hav'n't seen Old Thunder  
yet, have ye?"  
  
"Who's Old Thunder?" said I, again riveted with the insane earnestness  
of his manner.  
  
"Captain Ahab."  
  
"What! the captain of our ship, the Pequod?"  
  
"Aye, among some of us old sailor chaps, he goes by that name. Ye  
hav'n't seen him yet, have ye?"  
  
"No, we hav'n't. He's sick they say, but is getting better, and will be  
all right again before long."  
  
"All right again before long!" laughed the stranger, with a solemnly  
derisive sort of laugh. "Look ye; when Captain Ahab is all right, then  
this left arm of mine will be all right; not before."  
  
"What do you know about him?"  
  
"What did they TELL you about him? Say that!"  
  
"They didn't tell much of anything about him; only I've heard that he's  
a good whale-hunter, and a good captain to his crew."  
  
"That's true, that's true--yes, both true enough. But you must jump when  
he gives an order. Step and growl; growl and go--that's the word with  
Captain Ahab. But nothing about that thing that happened to him off Cape  
Horn, long ago, when he lay like dead for three days and nights;  
nothing about that deadly skrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in  
Santa?--heard nothing about that, eh? Nothing about the silver calabash  
he spat into? And nothing about his losing his leg last voyage,  
according to the prophecy. Didn't ye hear a word about them matters and  
something more, eh? No, I don't think ye did; how could ye? Who knows  
it? Not all Nantucket, I guess. But hows'ever, mayhap, ye've heard tell  
about the leg, and how he lost it; aye, ye have heard of that, I dare  
say. Oh yes, THAT every one knows a'most--I mean they know he's only one  
leg; and that a parmacetti took the other off."  
  
"My friend," said I, "what all this gibberish of yours is about, I  
don't know, and I don't much care; for it seems to me that you must be a  
little damaged in the head. But if you are speaking of Captain Ahab, of  
that ship there, the Pequod, then let me tell you, that I know all about  
the loss of his leg."  
  
"ALL about it, eh--sure you do?--all?"  
  
"Pretty sure."  
  
With finger pointed and eye levelled at the Pequod, the beggar-like  
stranger stood a moment, as if in a troubled reverie; then starting a  
little, turned and said:--"Ye've shipped, have ye? Names down on the  
papers? Well, well, what's signed, is signed; and what's to be, will be;  
and then again, perhaps it won't be, after all. Anyhow, it's all fixed  
and arranged a'ready; and some sailors or other must go with him, I  
suppose; as well these as any other men, God pity 'em! Morning to ye,  
shipmates, morning; the ineffable heavens bless ye; I'm sorry I stopped  
ye."  
  
"Look here, friend," said I, "if you have anything important to tell  
us, out with it; but if you are only trying to bamboozle us, you are  
mistaken in your game; that's all I have to say."  
  
"And it's said very well, and I like to hear a chap talk up that way;  
you are just the man for him--the likes of ye. Morning to ye, shipmates,  
morning! Oh! when ye get there, tell 'em I've concluded not to make one  
of 'em."  
  
"Ah, my dear fellow, you can't fool us that way--you can't fool us. It  
is the easiest thing in the world for a man to look as if he had a great  
secret in him."  
  
"Morning to ye, shipmates, morning."  
  
"Morning it is," said I. "Come along, Queequeg, let's leave this crazy  
man. But stop, tell me your name, will you?"  
  
"Elijah."  
  
Elijah! thought I, and we walked away, both commenting, after each  
other's fashion, upon this ragged old sailor; and agreed that he was  
nothing but a humbug, trying to be a bugbear. But we had not gone  
perhaps above a hundred yards, when chancing to turn a corner, and  
looking back as I did so, who should be seen but Elijah following us,  
though at a distance. Somehow, the sight of him struck me so, that I  
said nothing to Queequeg of his being behind, but passed on with my  
comrade, anxious to see whether the stranger would turn the same corner  
that we did. He did; and then it seemed to me that he was dogging  
us, but with what intent I could not for the life of me imagine. This  
circumstance, coupled with his ambiguous, half-hinting, half-revealing,  
shrouded sort of talk, now begat in me all kinds of vague wonderments  
and half-apprehensions, and all connected with the Pequod; and Captain  
Ahab; and the leg he had lost; and the Cape Horn fit; and the silver  
calabash; and what Captain Peleg had said of him, when I left the ship  
the day previous; and the prediction of the squaw Tistig; and the voyage  
we had bound ourselves to sail; and a hundred other shadowy things.  
  
I was resolved to satisfy myself whether this ragged Elijah was really  
dogging us or not, and with that intent crossed the way with Queequeg,  
and on that side of it retraced our steps. But Elijah passed on, without  
seeming to notice us. This relieved me; and once more, and finally as it  
seemed to me, I pronounced him in my heart, a humbug.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 20. All Astir.  
  
  
A day or two passed, and there was great activity aboard the Pequod.  
Not only were the old sails being mended, but new sails were coming on  
board, and bolts of canvas, and coils of rigging; in short, everything  
betokened that the ship's preparations were hurrying to a close. Captain  
Peleg seldom or never went ashore, but sat in his wigwam keeping a sharp  
look-out upon the hands: Bildad did all the purchasing and providing  
at the stores; and the men employed in the hold and on the rigging were  
working till long after night-fall.  
  
On the day following Queequeg's signing the articles, word was given at  
all the inns where the ship's company were stopping, that their chests  
must be on board before night, for there was no telling how soon  
the vessel might be sailing. So Queequeg and I got down our traps,  
resolving, however, to sleep ashore till the last. But it seems they  
always give very long notice in these cases, and the ship did not sail  
for several days. But no wonder; there was a good deal to be done, and  
there is no telling how many things to be thought of, before the Pequod  
was fully equipped.  
  
Every one knows what a multitude of things--beds, sauce-pans, knives  
and forks, shovels and tongs, napkins, nut-crackers, and what not, are  
indispensable to the business of housekeeping. Just so with whaling,  
which necessitates a three-years' housekeeping upon the wide ocean,  
far from all grocers, costermongers, doctors, bakers, and bankers. And  
though this also holds true of merchant vessels, yet not by any means  
to the same extent as with whalemen. For besides the great length of the  
whaling voyage, the numerous articles peculiar to the prosecution of the  
fishery, and the impossibility of replacing them at the remote harbors  
usually frequented, it must be remembered, that of all ships, whaling  
vessels are the most exposed to accidents of all kinds, and especially  
to the destruction and loss of the very things upon which the success of  
the voyage most depends. Hence, the spare boats, spare spars, and spare  
lines and harpoons, and spare everythings, almost, but a spare Captain  
and duplicate ship.  
  
At the period of our arrival at the Island, the heaviest storage of the  
Pequod had been almost completed; comprising her beef, bread, water,  
fuel, and iron hoops and staves. But, as before hinted, for some time  
there was a continual fetching and carrying on board of divers odds and  
ends of things, both large and small.  
  
Chief among those who did this fetching and carrying was Captain  
Bildad's sister, a lean old lady of a most determined and indefatigable  
spirit, but withal very kindhearted, who seemed resolved that, if SHE  
could help it, nothing should be found wanting in the Pequod, after once  
fairly getting to sea. At one time she would come on board with a jar  
of pickles for the steward's pantry; another time with a bunch of quills  
for the chief mate's desk, where he kept his log; a third time with a  
roll of flannel for the small of some one's rheumatic back. Never did  
any woman better deserve her name, which was Charity--Aunt Charity, as  
everybody called her. And like a sister of charity did this charitable  
Aunt Charity bustle about hither and thither, ready to turn her hand  
and heart to anything that promised to yield safety, comfort, and  
consolation to all on board a ship in which her beloved brother  
Bildad was concerned, and in which she herself owned a score or two of  
well-saved dollars.  
  
But it was startling to see this excellent hearted Quakeress coming on  
board, as she did the last day, with a long oil-ladle in one hand, and  
a still longer whaling lance in the other. Nor was Bildad himself nor  
Captain Peleg at all backward. As for Bildad, he carried about with him  
a long list of the articles needed, and at every fresh arrival, down  
went his mark opposite that article upon the paper. Every once in a  
while Peleg came hobbling out of his whalebone den, roaring at the men  
down the hatchways, roaring up to the riggers at the mast-head, and then  
concluded by roaring back into his wigwam.  
  
During these days of preparation, Queequeg and I often visited the  
craft, and as often I asked about Captain Ahab, and how he was, and when  
he was going to come on board his ship. To these questions they would  
answer, that he was getting better and better, and was expected aboard  
every day; meantime, the two captains, Peleg and Bildad, could attend  
to everything necessary to fit the vessel for the voyage. If I had been  
downright honest with myself, I would have seen very plainly in my heart  
that I did but half fancy being committed this way to so long a voyage,  
without once laying my eyes on the man who was to be the absolute  
dictator of it, so soon as the ship sailed out upon the open sea.  
But when a man suspects any wrong, it sometimes happens that if he be  
already involved in the matter, he insensibly strives to cover up his  
suspicions even from himself. And much this way it was with me. I said  
nothing, and tried to think nothing.  
  
At last it was given out that some time next day the ship would  
certainly sail. So next morning, Queequeg and I took a very early start.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 21. Going Aboard.  
  
  
It was nearly six o'clock, but only grey imperfect misty dawn, when we  
drew nigh the wharf.  
  
"There are some sailors running ahead there, if I see right," said I to  
Queequeg, "it can't be shadows; she's off by sunrise, I guess; come on!"  
  
"Avast!" cried a voice, whose owner at the same time coming close behind  
us, laid a hand upon both our shoulders, and then insinuating himself  
between us, stood stooping forward a little, in the uncertain twilight,  
strangely peering from Queequeg to me. It was Elijah.  
  
"Going aboard?"  
  
"Hands off, will you," said I.  
  
"Lookee here," said Queequeg, shaking himself, "go 'way!"  
  
"Ain't going aboard, then?"  
  
"Yes, we are," said I, "but what business is that of yours? Do you know,  
Mr. Elijah, that I consider you a little impertinent?"  
  
"No, no, no; I wasn't aware of that," said Elijah, slowly and  
wonderingly looking from me to Queequeg, with the most unaccountable  
glances.  
  
"Elijah," said I, "you will oblige my friend and me by withdrawing. We  
are going to the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and would prefer not to be  
detained."  
  
"Ye be, be ye? Coming back afore breakfast?"  
  
"He's cracked, Queequeg," said I, "come on."  
  
"Holloa!" cried stationary Elijah, hailing us when we had removed a few  
paces.  
  
"Never mind him," said I, "Queequeg, come on."  
  
But he stole up to us again, and suddenly clapping his hand on my  
shoulder, said--"Did ye see anything looking like men going towards that  
ship a while ago?"  
  
Struck by this plain matter-of-fact question, I answered, saying, "Yes,  
I thought I did see four or five men; but it was too dim to be sure."  
  
"Very dim, very dim," said Elijah. "Morning to ye."  
  
Once more we quitted him; but once more he came softly after us; and  
touching my shoulder again, said, "See if you can find 'em now, will ye?  
  
"Find who?"  
  
"Morning to ye! morning to ye!" he rejoined, again moving off. "Oh! I  
was going to warn ye against--but never mind, never mind--it's all one,  
all in the family too;--sharp frost this morning, ain't it? Good-bye to  
ye. Shan't see ye again very soon, I guess; unless it's before the Grand  
Jury." And with these cracked words he finally departed, leaving me, for  
the moment, in no small wonderment at his frantic impudence.  
  
At last, stepping on board the Pequod, we found everything in profound  
quiet, not a soul moving. The cabin entrance was locked within; the  
hatches were all on, and lumbered with coils of rigging. Going forward  
to the forecastle, we found the slide of the scuttle open. Seeing a  
light, we went down, and found only an old rigger there, wrapped in a  
tattered pea-jacket. He was thrown at whole length upon two chests, his  
face downwards and inclosed in his folded arms. The profoundest slumber  
slept upon him.  
  
"Those sailors we saw, Queequeg, where can they have gone to?" said I,  
looking dubiously at the sleeper. But it seemed that, when on the wharf,  
Queequeg had not at all noticed what I now alluded to; hence I would  
have thought myself to have been optically deceived in that matter,  
were it not for Elijah's otherwise inexplicable question. But I beat the  
thing down; and again marking the sleeper, jocularly hinted to Queequeg  
that perhaps we had best sit up with the body; telling him to establish  
himself accordingly. He put his hand upon the sleeper's rear, as though  
feeling if it was soft enough; and then, without more ado, sat quietly  
down there.  
  
"Gracious! Queequeg, don't sit there," said I.  
  
"Oh! perry dood seat," said Queequeg, "my country way; won't hurt him  
face."  
  
"Face!" said I, "call that his face? very benevolent countenance then;  
but how hard he breathes, he's heaving himself; get off, Queequeg, you  
are heavy, it's grinding the face of the poor. Get off, Queequeg! Look,  
he'll twitch you off soon. I wonder he don't wake."  
  
Queequeg removed himself to just beyond the head of the sleeper, and  
lighted his tomahawk pipe. I sat at the feet. We kept the pipe passing  
over the sleeper, from one to the other. Meanwhile, upon questioning him  
in his broken fashion, Queequeg gave me to understand that, in his  
land, owing to the absence of settees and sofas of all sorts, the king,  
chiefs, and great people generally, were in the custom of fattening some  
of the lower orders for ottomans; and to furnish a house comfortably in  
that respect, you had only to buy up eight or ten lazy fellows, and lay  
them round in the piers and alcoves. Besides, it was very convenient on  
an excursion; much better than those garden-chairs which are convertible  
into walking-sticks; upon occasion, a chief calling his attendant, and  
desiring him to make a settee of himself under a spreading tree, perhaps  
in some damp marshy place.  
  
While narrating these things, every time Queequeg received the tomahawk  
from me, he flourished the hatchet-side of it over the sleeper's head.  
  
"What's that for, Queequeg?"  
  
"Perry easy, kill-e; oh! perry easy!"  
  
He was going on with some wild reminiscences about his tomahawk-pipe,  
which, it seemed, had in its two uses both brained his foes and soothed  
his soul, when we were directly attracted to the sleeping rigger. The  
strong vapour now completely filling the contracted hole, it began  
to tell upon him. He breathed with a sort of muffledness; then seemed  
troubled in the nose; then revolved over once or twice; then sat up and  
rubbed his eyes.  
  
"Holloa!" he breathed at last, "who be ye smokers?"  
  
"Shipped men," answered I, "when does she sail?"  
  
"Aye, aye, ye are going in her, be ye? She sails to-day. The Captain  
came aboard last night."  
  
"What Captain?--Ahab?"  
  
"Who but him indeed?"  
  
I was going to ask him some further questions concerning Ahab, when we  
heard a noise on deck.  
  
"Holloa! Starbuck's astir," said the rigger. "He's a lively chief mate,  
that; good man, and a pious; but all alive now, I must turn to." And so  
saying he went on deck, and we followed.  
  
It was now clear sunrise. Soon the crew came on board in twos and  
threes; the riggers bestirred themselves; the mates were actively  
engaged; and several of the shore people were busy in bringing various  
last things on board. Meanwhile Captain Ahab remained invisibly  
enshrined within his cabin.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 22. Merry Christmas.  
  
  
At length, towards noon, upon the final dismissal of the ship's riggers,  
and after the Pequod had been hauled out from the wharf, and after the  
ever-thoughtful Charity had come off in a whale-boat, with her last  
gift--a night-cap for Stubb, the second mate, her brother-in-law, and a  
spare Bible for the steward--after all this, the two Captains, Peleg  
and Bildad, issued from the cabin, and turning to the chief mate, Peleg  
said:  
  
"Now, Mr. Starbuck, are you sure everything is right? Captain Ahab is  
all ready--just spoke to him--nothing more to be got from shore, eh?  
Well, call all hands, then. Muster 'em aft here--blast 'em!"  
  
"No need of profane words, however great the hurry, Peleg," said Bildad,  
"but away with thee, friend Starbuck, and do our bidding."  
  
How now! Here upon the very point of starting for the voyage, Captain  
Peleg and Captain Bildad were going it with a high hand on the  
quarter-deck, just as if they were to be joint-commanders at sea, as  
well as to all appearances in port. And, as for Captain Ahab, no sign of  
him was yet to be seen; only, they said he was in the cabin. But then,  
the idea was, that his presence was by no means necessary in getting the  
ship under weigh, and steering her well out to sea. Indeed, as that was  
not at all his proper business, but the pilot's; and as he was not  
yet completely recovered--so they said--therefore, Captain Ahab stayed  
below. And all this seemed natural enough; especially as in the merchant  
service many captains never show themselves on deck for a considerable  
time after heaving up the anchor, but remain over the cabin table,  
having a farewell merry-making with their shore friends, before they  
quit the ship for good with the pilot.  
  
But there was not much chance to think over the matter, for Captain  
Peleg was now all alive. He seemed to do most of the talking and  
commanding, and not Bildad.  
  
"Aft here, ye sons of bachelors," he cried, as the sailors lingered at  
the main-mast. "Mr. Starbuck, drive'em aft."  
  
"Strike the tent there!"--was the next order. As I hinted before, this  
whalebone marquee was never pitched except in port; and on board the  
Pequod, for thirty years, the order to strike the tent was well known to  
be the next thing to heaving up the anchor.  
  
"Man the capstan! Blood and thunder!--jump!"--was the next command, and  
the crew sprang for the handspikes.  
  
Now in getting under weigh, the station generally occupied by the pilot  
is the forward part of the ship. And here Bildad, who, with Peleg, be it  
known, in addition to his other officers, was one of the licensed pilots  
of the port--he being suspected to have got himself made a pilot in  
order to save the Nantucket pilot-fee to all the ships he was concerned  
in, for he never piloted any other craft--Bildad, I say, might now  
be seen actively engaged in looking over the bows for the approaching  
anchor, and at intervals singing what seemed a dismal stave of psalmody,  
to cheer the hands at the windlass, who roared forth some sort of  
a chorus about the girls in Booble Alley, with hearty good will.  
Nevertheless, not three days previous, Bildad had told them that no  
profane songs would be allowed on board the Pequod, particularly in  
getting under weigh; and Charity, his sister, had placed a small choice  
copy of Watts in each seaman's berth.  
  
Meantime, overseeing the other part of the ship, Captain Peleg ripped  
and swore astern in the most frightful manner. I almost thought he would  
sink the ship before the anchor could be got up; involuntarily I paused  
on my handspike, and told Queequeg to do the same, thinking of the  
perils we both ran, in starting on the voyage with such a devil for a  
pilot. I was comforting myself, however, with the thought that in pious  
Bildad might be found some salvation, spite of his seven hundred and  
seventy-seventh lay; when I felt a sudden sharp poke in my rear, and  
turning round, was horrified at the apparition of Captain Peleg in the  
act of withdrawing his leg from my immediate vicinity. That was my first  
kick.  
  
"Is that the way they heave in the marchant service?" he roared.  
"Spring, thou sheep-head; spring, and break thy backbone! Why don't ye  
spring, I say, all of ye--spring! Quohog! spring, thou chap with the red  
whiskers; spring there, Scotch-cap; spring, thou green pants. Spring, I  
say, all of ye, and spring your eyes out!" And so saying, he moved  
along the windlass, here and there using his leg very freely, while  
imperturbable Bildad kept leading off with his psalmody. Thinks I,  
Captain Peleg must have been drinking something to-day.  
  
At last the anchor was up, the sails were set, and off we glided. It  
was a short, cold Christmas; and as the short northern day merged into  
night, we found ourselves almost broad upon the wintry ocean, whose  
freezing spray cased us in ice, as in polished armor. The long rows of  
teeth on the bulwarks glistened in the moonlight; and like the white  
ivory tusks of some huge elephant, vast curving icicles depended from  
the bows.  
  
Lank Bildad, as pilot, headed the first watch, and ever and anon, as the  
old craft deep dived into the green seas, and sent the shivering frost  
all over her, and the winds howled, and the cordage rang, his steady  
notes were heard,--  
  
"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood, Stand dressed in living green.  
So to the Jews old Canaan stood, While Jordan rolled between."  
  
  
Never did those sweet words sound more sweetly to me than then. They  
were full of hope and fruition. Spite of this frigid winter night in the  
boisterous Atlantic, spite of my wet feet and wetter jacket, there was  
yet, it then seemed to me, many a pleasant haven in store; and meads  
and glades so eternally vernal, that the grass shot up by the spring,  
untrodden, unwilted, remains at midsummer.  
  
At last we gained such an offing, that the two pilots were needed  
no longer. The stout sail-boat that had accompanied us began ranging  
alongside.  
  
It was curious and not unpleasing, how Peleg and Bildad were affected at  
this juncture, especially Captain Bildad. For loath to depart, yet;  
very loath to leave, for good, a ship bound on so long and perilous a  
voyage--beyond both stormy Capes; a ship in which some thousands of  
his hard earned dollars were invested; a ship, in which an old shipmate  
sailed as captain; a man almost as old as he, once more starting to  
encounter all the terrors of the pitiless jaw; loath to say good-bye to  
a thing so every way brimful of every interest to him,--poor old Bildad  
lingered long; paced the deck with anxious strides; ran down into the  
cabin to speak another farewell word there; again came on deck, and  
looked to windward; looked towards the wide and endless waters, only  
bounded by the far-off unseen Eastern Continents; looked towards  
the land; looked aloft; looked right and left; looked everywhere  
and nowhere; and at last, mechanically coiling a rope upon its pin,  
convulsively grasped stout Peleg by the hand, and holding up a lantern,  
for a moment stood gazing heroically in his face, as much as to say,  
"Nevertheless, friend Peleg, I can stand it; yes, I can."  
  
As for Peleg himself, he took it more like a philosopher; but for all  
his philosophy, there was a tear twinkling in his eye, when the lantern  
came too near. And he, too, did not a little run from cabin to deck--now  
a word below, and now a word with Starbuck, the chief mate.  
  
But, at last, he turned to his comrade, with a final sort of look  
about him,--"Captain Bildad--come, old shipmate, we must go. Back the  
main-yard there! Boat ahoy! Stand by to come close alongside, now!  
Careful, careful!--come, Bildad, boy--say your last. Luck to ye,  
Starbuck--luck to ye, Mr. Stubb--luck to ye, Mr. Flask--good-bye and  
good luck to ye all--and this day three years I'll have a hot supper  
smoking for ye in old Nantucket. Hurrah and away!"  
  
"God bless ye, and have ye in His holy keeping, men," murmured old  
Bildad, almost incoherently. "I hope ye'll have fine weather now, so  
that Captain Ahab may soon be moving among ye--a pleasant sun is all  
he needs, and ye'll have plenty of them in the tropic voyage ye go.  
Be careful in the hunt, ye mates. Don't stave the boats needlessly,  
ye harpooneers; good white cedar plank is raised full three per cent.  
within the year. Don't forget your prayers, either. Mr. Starbuck, mind  
that cooper don't waste the spare staves. Oh! the sail-needles are in  
the green locker! Don't whale it too much a' Lord's days, men; but don't  
miss a fair chance either, that's rejecting Heaven's good gifts. Have an  
eye to the molasses tierce, Mr. Stubb; it was a little leaky, I thought.  
If ye touch at the islands, Mr. Flask, beware of fornication. Good-bye,  
good-bye! Don't keep that cheese too long down in the hold, Mr.  
Starbuck; it'll spoil. Be careful with the butter--twenty cents the  
pound it was, and mind ye, if--"  
  
"Come, come, Captain Bildad; stop palavering,--away!" and with that,  
Peleg hurried him over the side, and both dropt into the boat.  
  
Ship and boat diverged; the cold, damp night breeze blew between; a  
screaming gull flew overhead; the two hulls wildly rolled; we gave  
three heavy-hearted cheers, and blindly plunged like fate into the lone  
Atlantic.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 23. The Lee Shore.  
  
  
Some chapters back, one Bulkington was spoken of, a tall, newlanded  
mariner, encountered in New Bedford at the inn.  
  
When on that shivering winter's night, the Pequod thrust her vindictive  
bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at her  
helm but Bulkington! I looked with sympathetic awe and fearfulness upon  
the man, who in mid-winter just landed from a four years' dangerous  
voyage, could so unrestingly push off again for still another  
tempestuous term. The land seemed scorching to his feet. Wonderfullest  
things are ever the unmentionable; deep memories yield no epitaphs; this  
six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington. Let me only say  
that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably  
drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succor; the port  
is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm  
blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale,  
the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all  
hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make  
her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail  
off shore; in so doing, fights 'gainst the very winds that fain would  
blow her homeward; seeks all the lashed sea's landlessness again;  
for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her  
bitterest foe!  
  
Know ye now, Bulkington? Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally  
intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid  
effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while  
the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the  
treacherous, slavish shore?  
  
But as in landlessness alone resides highest truth, shoreless,  
indefinite as God--so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite,  
than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!  
For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land! Terrors of  
the terrible! is all this agony so vain? Take heart, take heart,  
O Bulkington! Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy  
ocean-perishing--straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 24. The Advocate.  
  
  
As Queequeg and I are now fairly embarked in this business of whaling;  
and as this business of whaling has somehow come to be regarded among  
landsmen as a rather unpoetical and disreputable pursuit; therefore, I  
am all anxiety to convince ye, ye landsmen, of the injustice hereby done  
to us hunters of whales.  
  
In the first place, it may be deemed almost superfluous to establish  
the fact, that among people at large, the business of whaling is not  
accounted on a level with what are called the liberal professions. If a  
stranger were introduced into any miscellaneous metropolitan society,  
it would but slightly advance the general opinion of his merits, were  
he presented to the company as a harpooneer, say; and if in emulation  
of the naval officers he should append the initials S.W.F. (Sperm  
Whale Fishery) to his visiting card, such a procedure would be deemed  
pre-eminently presuming and ridiculous.  
  
Doubtless one leading reason why the world declines honouring us  
whalemen, is this: they think that, at best, our vocation amounts to a  
butchering sort of business; and that when actively engaged therein, we  
are surrounded by all manner of defilements. Butchers we are, that is  
true. But butchers, also, and butchers of the bloodiest badge have been  
all Martial Commanders whom the world invariably delights to honour. And  
as for the matter of the alleged uncleanliness of our business, ye shall  
soon be initiated into certain facts hitherto pretty generally unknown,  
and which, upon the whole, will triumphantly plant the sperm whale-ship  
at least among the cleanliest things of this tidy earth. But even  
granting the charge in question to be true; what disordered slippery  
decks of a whale-ship are comparable to the unspeakable carrion of those  
battle-fields from which so many soldiers return to drink in all ladies'  
plaudits? And if the idea of peril so much enhances the popular conceit  
of the soldier's profession; let me assure ye that many a veteran  
who has freely marched up to a battery, would quickly recoil at the  
apparition of the sperm whale's vast tail, fanning into eddies the air  
over his head. For what are the comprehensible terrors of man compared  
with the interlinked terrors and wonders of God!  
  
But, though the world scouts at us whale hunters, yet does it  
unwittingly pay us the profoundest homage; yea, an all-abounding  
adoration! for almost all the tapers, lamps, and candles that burn round  
the globe, burn, as before so many shrines, to our glory!  
  
But look at this matter in other lights; weigh it in all sorts of  
scales; see what we whalemen are, and have been.  
  
Why did the Dutch in De Witt's time have admirals of their whaling  
fleets? Why did Louis XVI. of France, at his own personal expense, fit  
out whaling ships from Dunkirk, and politely invite to that town some  
score or two of families from our own island of Nantucket? Why did  
Britain between the years 1750 and 1788 pay to her whalemen in bounties  
upwards of L1,000,000? And lastly, how comes it that we whalemen of  
America now outnumber all the rest of the banded whalemen in the world;  
sail a navy of upwards of seven hundred vessels; manned by eighteen  
thousand men; yearly consuming 4,000,000 of dollars; the ships worth,  
at the time of sailing, $20,000,000! and every year importing into our  
harbors a well reaped harvest of $7,000,000. How comes all this, if  
there be not something puissant in whaling?  
  
But this is not the half; look again.  
  
I freely assert, that the cosmopolite philosopher cannot, for his life,  
point out one single peaceful influence, which within the last sixty  
years has operated more potentially upon the whole broad world, taken in  
one aggregate, than the high and mighty business of whaling. One way  
and another, it has begotten events so remarkable in themselves, and so  
continuously momentous in their sequential issues, that whaling may  
well be regarded as that Egyptian mother, who bore offspring themselves  
pregnant from her womb. It would be a hopeless, endless task to  
catalogue all these things. Let a handful suffice. For many years past  
the whale-ship has been the pioneer in ferreting out the remotest and  
least known parts of the earth. She has explored seas and archipelagoes  
which had no chart, where no Cook or Vancouver had ever sailed. If  
American and European men-of-war now peacefully ride in once savage  
harbors, let them fire salutes to the honour and glory of the  
whale-ship, which originally showed them the way, and first interpreted  
between them and the savages. They may celebrate as they will the heroes  
of Exploring Expeditions, your Cooks, your Krusensterns; but I say that  
scores of anonymous Captains have sailed out of Nantucket, that were  
as great, and greater than your Cook and your Krusenstern. For in their  
succourless empty-handedness, they, in the heathenish sharked waters,  
and by the beaches of unrecorded, javelin islands, battled with virgin  
wonders and terrors that Cook with all his marines and muskets would  
not willingly have dared. All that is made such a flourish of in the old  
South Sea Voyages, those things were but the life-time commonplaces of  
our heroic Nantucketers. Often, adventures which Vancouver dedicates  
three chapters to, these men accounted unworthy of being set down in the  
ship's common log. Ah, the world! Oh, the world!  
  
Until the whale fishery rounded Cape Horn, no commerce but colonial,  
scarcely any intercourse but colonial, was carried on between Europe and  
the long line of the opulent Spanish provinces on the Pacific coast.  
It was the whaleman who first broke through the jealous policy of the  
Spanish crown, touching those colonies; and, if space permitted, it  
might be distinctly shown how from those whalemen at last eventuated the  
liberation of Peru, Chili, and Bolivia from the yoke of Old Spain, and  
the establishment of the eternal democracy in those parts.  
  
That great America on the other side of the sphere, Australia, was given  
to the enlightened world by the whaleman. After its first blunder-born  
discovery by a Dutchman, all other ships long shunned those shores  
as pestiferously barbarous; but the whale-ship touched there. The  
whale-ship is the true mother of that now mighty colony. Moreover,  
in the infancy of the first Australian settlement, the emigrants were  
several times saved from starvation by the benevolent biscuit of the  
whale-ship luckily dropping an anchor in their waters. The uncounted  
isles of all Polynesia confess the same truth, and do commercial homage  
to the whale-ship, that cleared the way for the missionary and the  
merchant, and in many cases carried the primitive missionaries to their  
first destinations. If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become  
hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due;  
for already she is on the threshold.  
  
But if, in the face of all this, you still declare that whaling has no  
aesthetically noble associations connected with it, then am I ready to  
shiver fifty lances with you there, and unhorse you with a split helmet  
every time.  
  
The whale has no famous author, and whaling no famous chronicler, you  
will say.  
  
THE WHALE NO FAMOUS AUTHOR, AND WHALING NO FAMOUS CHRONICLER? Who wrote  
the first account of our Leviathan? Who but mighty Job! And who composed  
the first narrative of a whaling-voyage? Who, but no less a prince than  
Alfred the Great, who, with his own royal pen, took down the words from  
Other, the Norwegian whale-hunter of those times! And who pronounced our  
glowing eulogy in Parliament? Who, but Edmund Burke!  
  
True enough, but then whalemen themselves are poor devils; they have no  
good blood in their veins.  
  
NO GOOD BLOOD IN THEIR VEINS? They have something better than royal  
blood there. The grandmother of Benjamin Franklin was Mary Morrel;  
afterwards, by marriage, Mary Folger, one of the old settlers  
of Nantucket, and the ancestress to a long line of Folgers and  
harpooneers--all kith and kin to noble Benjamin--this day darting the  
barbed iron from one side of the world to the other.  
  
Good again; but then all confess that somehow whaling is not  
respectable.  
  
WHALING NOT RESPECTABLE? Whaling is imperial! By old English statutory  
law, the whale is declared "a royal fish."\*  
  
Oh, that's only nominal! The whale himself has never figured in any  
grand imposing way.  
  
THE WHALE NEVER FIGURED IN ANY GRAND IMPOSING WAY? In one of the mighty  
triumphs given to a Roman general upon his entering the world's capital,  
the bones of a whale, brought all the way from the Syrian coast, were  
the most conspicuous object in the cymballed procession.\*  
  
  
\*See subsequent chapters for something more on this head.  
  
  
Grant it, since you cite it; but, say what you will, there is no real  
dignity in whaling.  
  
NO DIGNITY IN WHALING? The dignity of our calling the very heavens  
attest. Cetus is a constellation in the South! No more! Drive down your  
hat in presence of the Czar, and take it off to Queequeg! No more! I  
know a man that, in his lifetime, has taken three hundred and fifty  
whales. I account that man more honourable than that great captain of  
antiquity who boasted of taking as many walled towns.  
  
And, as for me, if, by any possibility, there be any as yet undiscovered  
prime thing in me; if I shall ever deserve any real repute in that small  
but high hushed world which I might not be unreasonably ambitious of; if  
hereafter I shall do anything that, upon the whole, a man might rather  
have done than to have left undone; if, at my death, my executors, or  
more properly my creditors, find any precious MSS. in my desk, then here  
I prospectively ascribe all the honour and the glory to whaling; for a  
whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 25. Postscript.  
  
  
In behalf of the dignity of whaling, I would fain advance naught but  
substantiated facts. But after embattling his facts, an advocate who  
should wholly suppress a not unreasonable surmise, which might  
tell eloquently upon his cause--such an advocate, would he not be  
blameworthy?  
  
It is well known that at the coronation of kings and queens, even modern  
ones, a certain curious process of seasoning them for their functions is  
gone through. There is a saltcellar of state, so called, and there  
may be a castor of state. How they use the salt, precisely--who knows?  
Certain I am, however, that a king's head is solemnly oiled at his  
coronation, even as a head of salad. Can it be, though, that they  
anoint it with a view of making its interior run well, as they anoint  
machinery? Much might be ruminated here, concerning the essential  
dignity of this regal process, because in common life we esteem but  
meanly and contemptibly a fellow who anoints his hair, and palpably  
smells of that anointing. In truth, a mature man who uses hair-oil,  
unless medicinally, that man has probably got a quoggy spot in him  
somewhere. As a general rule, he can't amount to much in his totality.  
  
But the only thing to be considered here, is this--what kind of oil is  
used at coronations? Certainly it cannot be olive oil, nor macassar oil,  
nor castor oil, nor bear's oil, nor train oil, nor cod-liver oil. What  
then can it possibly be, but sperm oil in its unmanufactured, unpolluted  
state, the sweetest of all oils?  
  
Think of that, ye loyal Britons! we whalemen supply your kings and  
queens with coronation stuff!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 26. Knights and Squires.  
  
  
The chief mate of the Pequod was Starbuck, a native of Nantucket, and a  
Quaker by descent. He was a long, earnest man, and though born on an icy  
coast, seemed well adapted to endure hot latitudes, his flesh being hard  
as twice-baked biscuit. Transported to the Indies, his live blood would  
not spoil like bottled ale. He must have been born in some time of  
general drought and famine, or upon one of those fast days for which  
his state is famous. Only some thirty arid summers had he seen; those  
summers had dried up all his physical superfluousness. But this, his  
thinness, so to speak, seemed no more the token of wasting anxieties and  
cares, than it seemed the indication of any bodily blight. It was merely  
the condensation of the man. He was by no means ill-looking; quite the  
contrary. His pure tight skin was an excellent fit; and closely wrapped  
up in it, and embalmed with inner health and strength, like a revivified  
Egyptian, this Starbuck seemed prepared to endure for long ages to come,  
and to endure always, as now; for be it Polar snow or torrid sun, like  
a patent chronometer, his interior vitality was warranted to do well  
in all climates. Looking into his eyes, you seemed to see there the yet  
lingering images of those thousand-fold perils he had calmly confronted  
through life. A staid, steadfast man, whose life for the most part was a  
telling pantomime of action, and not a tame chapter of sounds. Yet, for  
all his hardy sobriety and fortitude, there were certain qualities  
in him which at times affected, and in some cases seemed well nigh to  
overbalance all the rest. Uncommonly conscientious for a seaman, and  
endued with a deep natural reverence, the wild watery loneliness of his  
life did therefore strongly incline him to superstition; but to that  
sort of superstition, which in some organizations seems rather to  
spring, somehow, from intelligence than from ignorance. Outward portents  
and inward presentiments were his. And if at times these things bent the  
welded iron of his soul, much more did his far-away domestic memories  
of his young Cape wife and child, tend to bend him still more from the  
original ruggedness of his nature, and open him still further to those  
latent influences which, in some honest-hearted men, restrain the gush  
of dare-devil daring, so often evinced by others in the more perilous  
vicissitudes of the fishery. "I will have no man in my boat," said  
Starbuck, "who is not afraid of a whale." By this, he seemed to mean,  
not only that the most reliable and useful courage was that which arises  
from the fair estimation of the encountered peril, but that an utterly  
fearless man is a far more dangerous comrade than a coward.  
  
"Aye, aye," said Stubb, the second mate, "Starbuck, there, is as careful  
a man as you'll find anywhere in this fishery." But we shall ere long  
see what that word "careful" precisely means when used by a man like  
Stubb, or almost any other whale hunter.  
  
Starbuck was no crusader after perils; in him courage was not a  
sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him, and always at hand upon all  
mortally practical occasions. Besides, he thought, perhaps, that in this  
business of whaling, courage was one of the great staple outfits of  
the ship, like her beef and her bread, and not to be foolishly wasted.  
Wherefore he had no fancy for lowering for whales after sun-down; nor  
for persisting in fighting a fish that too much persisted in fighting  
him. For, thought Starbuck, I am here in this critical ocean to kill  
whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs; and that  
hundreds of men had been so killed Starbuck well knew. What doom was  
his own father's? Where, in the bottomless deeps, could he find the torn  
limbs of his brother?  
  
With memories like these in him, and, moreover, given to a certain  
superstitiousness, as has been said; the courage of this Starbuck which  
could, nevertheless, still flourish, must indeed have been extreme. But  
it was not in reasonable nature that a man so organized, and with such  
terrible experiences and remembrances as he had; it was not in nature  
that these things should fail in latently engendering an element in  
him, which, under suitable circumstances, would break out from its  
confinement, and burn all his courage up. And brave as he might be, it  
was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which,  
while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or  
whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet  
cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors,  
which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and  
mighty man.  
  
But were the coming narrative to reveal in any instance, the complete  
abasement of poor Starbuck's fortitude, scarce might I have the heart to  
write it; for it is a thing most sorrowful, nay shocking, to expose  
the fall of valour in the soul. Men may seem detestable as joint  
stock-companies and nations; knaves, fools, and murderers there may be;  
men may have mean and meagre faces; but man, in the ideal, is so noble  
and so sparkling, such a grand and glowing creature, that over any  
ignominious blemish in him all his fellows should run to throw their  
costliest robes. That immaculate manliness we feel within ourselves,  
so far within us, that it remains intact though all the outer character  
seem gone; bleeds with keenest anguish at the undraped spectacle of  
a valor-ruined man. Nor can piety itself, at such a shameful sight,  
completely stifle her upbraidings against the permitting stars. But this  
august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings and robes, but  
that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it  
shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic  
dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! The  
great God absolute! The centre and circumference of all democracy! His  
omnipresence, our divine equality!  
  
If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall  
hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark; weave round them tragic  
graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them  
all, shall at times lift himself to the exalted mounts; if I shall touch  
that workman's arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow  
over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear  
me out in it, thou Just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal  
mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great  
democratic God! who didst not refuse to the swart convict, Bunyan, the  
pale, poetic pearl; Thou who didst clothe with doubly hammered leaves  
of finest gold, the stumped and paupered arm of old Cervantes; Thou who  
didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a  
war-horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all  
Thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from  
the kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 27. Knights and Squires.  
  
  
Stubb was the second mate. He was a native of Cape Cod; and hence,  
according to local usage, was called a Cape-Cod-man. A happy-go-lucky;  
neither craven nor valiant; taking perils as they came with an  
indifferent air; and while engaged in the most imminent crisis of the  
chase, toiling away, calm and collected as a journeyman joiner engaged  
for the year. Good-humored, easy, and careless, he presided over his  
whale-boat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner, and his  
crew all invited guests. He was as particular about the comfortable  
arrangement of his part of the boat, as an old stage-driver is about the  
snugness of his box. When close to the whale, in the very death-lock of  
the fight, he handled his unpitying lance coolly and off-handedly, as  
a whistling tinker his hammer. He would hum over his old rigadig tunes  
while flank and flank with the most exasperated monster. Long usage had,  
for this Stubb, converted the jaws of death into an easy chair. What he  
thought of death itself, there is no telling. Whether he ever thought of  
it at all, might be a question; but, if he ever did chance to cast his  
mind that way after a comfortable dinner, no doubt, like a good sailor,  
he took it to be a sort of call of the watch to tumble aloft, and bestir  
themselves there, about something which he would find out when he obeyed  
the order, and not sooner.  
  
What, perhaps, with other things, made Stubb such an easy-going,  
unfearing man, so cheerily trudging off with the burden of life in a  
world full of grave pedlars, all bowed to the ground with their packs;  
what helped to bring about that almost impious good-humor of his; that  
thing must have been his pipe. For, like his nose, his short, black  
little pipe was one of the regular features of his face. You would  
almost as soon have expected him to turn out of his bunk without his  
nose as without his pipe. He kept a whole row of pipes there ready  
loaded, stuck in a rack, within easy reach of his hand; and, whenever he  
turned in, he smoked them all out in succession, lighting one from  
the other to the end of the chapter; then loading them again to be in  
readiness anew. For, when Stubb dressed, instead of first putting his  
legs into his trowsers, he put his pipe into his mouth.  
  
I say this continual smoking must have been one cause, at least, of his  
peculiar disposition; for every one knows that this earthly air, whether  
ashore or afloat, is terribly infected with the nameless miseries of  
the numberless mortals who have died exhaling it; and as in time of the  
cholera, some people go about with a camphorated handkerchief to their  
mouths; so, likewise, against all mortal tribulations, Stubb's tobacco  
smoke might have operated as a sort of disinfecting agent.  
  
The third mate was Flask, a native of Tisbury, in Martha's Vineyard. A  
short, stout, ruddy young fellow, very pugnacious concerning whales,  
who somehow seemed to think that the great leviathans had personally  
and hereditarily affronted him; and therefore it was a sort of point of  
honour with him, to destroy them whenever encountered. So utterly lost  
was he to all sense of reverence for the many marvels of their majestic  
bulk and mystic ways; and so dead to anything like an apprehension of  
any possible danger from encountering them; that in his poor opinion,  
the wondrous whale was but a species of magnified mouse, or at least  
water-rat, requiring only a little circumvention and some small  
application of time and trouble in order to kill and boil. This  
ignorant, unconscious fearlessness of his made him a little waggish in  
the matter of whales; he followed these fish for the fun of it; and a  
three years' voyage round Cape Horn was only a jolly joke that lasted  
that length of time. As a carpenter's nails are divided into wrought  
nails and cut nails; so mankind may be similarly divided. Little Flask  
was one of the wrought ones; made to clinch tight and last long. They  
called him King-Post on board of the Pequod; because, in form, he could  
be well likened to the short, square timber known by that name in Arctic  
whalers; and which by the means of many radiating side timbers inserted  
into it, serves to brace the ship against the icy concussions of those  
battering seas.  
  
Now these three mates--Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask, were momentous  
men. They it was who by universal prescription commanded three of the  
Pequod's boats as headsmen. In that grand order of battle in which  
Captain Ahab would probably marshal his forces to descend on the whales,  
these three headsmen were as captains of companies. Or, being armed with  
their long keen whaling spears, they were as a picked trio of lancers;  
even as the harpooneers were flingers of javelins.  
  
And since in this famous fishery, each mate or headsman, like a Gothic  
Knight of old, is always accompanied by his boat-steerer or harpooneer,  
who in certain conjunctures provides him with a fresh lance, when  
the former one has been badly twisted, or elbowed in the assault; and  
moreover, as there generally subsists between the two, a close intimacy  
and friendliness; it is therefore but meet, that in this place we set  
down who the Pequod's harpooneers were, and to what headsman each of  
them belonged.  
  
First of all was Queequeg, whom Starbuck, the chief mate, had selected  
for his squire. But Queequeg is already known.  
  
Next was Tashtego, an unmixed Indian from Gay Head, the most westerly  
promontory of Martha's Vineyard, where there still exists the last  
remnant of a village of red men, which has long supplied the neighboring  
island of Nantucket with many of her most daring harpooneers. In the  
fishery, they usually go by the generic name of Gay-Headers. Tashtego's  
long, lean, sable hair, his high cheek bones, and black rounding  
eyes--for an Indian, Oriental in their largeness, but Antarctic in their  
glittering expression--all this sufficiently proclaimed him an inheritor  
of the unvitiated blood of those proud warrior hunters, who, in quest  
of the great New England moose, had scoured, bow in hand, the aboriginal  
forests of the main. But no longer snuffing in the trail of the wild  
beasts of the woodland, Tashtego now hunted in the wake of the great  
whales of the sea; the unerring harpoon of the son fitly replacing the  
infallible arrow of the sires. To look at the tawny brawn of his lithe  
snaky limbs, you would almost have credited the superstitions of some of  
the earlier Puritans, and half-believed this wild Indian to be a son  
of the Prince of the Powers of the Air. Tashtego was Stubb the second  
mate's squire.  
  
Third among the harpooneers was Daggoo, a gigantic, coal-black  
negro-savage, with a lion-like tread--an Ahasuerus to behold. Suspended  
from his ears were two golden hoops, so large that the sailors called  
them ring-bolts, and would talk of securing the top-sail halyards to  
them. In his youth Daggoo had voluntarily shipped on board of a whaler,  
lying in a lonely bay on his native coast. And never having been  
anywhere in the world but in Africa, Nantucket, and the pagan harbors  
most frequented by whalemen; and having now led for many years the bold  
life of the fishery in the ships of owners uncommonly heedful of what  
manner of men they shipped; Daggoo retained all his barbaric virtues,  
and erect as a giraffe, moved about the decks in all the pomp of six  
feet five in his socks. There was a corporeal humility in looking up at  
him; and a white man standing before him seemed a white flag come to  
beg truce of a fortress. Curious to tell, this imperial negro, Ahasuerus  
Daggoo, was the Squire of little Flask, who looked like a chess-man  
beside him. As for the residue of the Pequod's company, be it said, that  
at the present day not one in two of the many thousand men before the  
mast employed in the American whale fishery, are Americans born, though  
pretty nearly all the officers are. Herein it is the same with the  
American whale fishery as with the American army and military and  
merchant navies, and the engineering forces employed in the construction  
of the American Canals and Railroads. The same, I say, because in all  
these cases the native American liberally provides the brains, the rest  
of the world as generously supplying the muscles. No small number of  
these whaling seamen belong to the Azores, where the outward bound  
Nantucket whalers frequently touch to augment their crews from the hardy  
peasants of those rocky shores. In like manner, the Greenland whalers  
sailing out of Hull or London, put in at the Shetland Islands, to  
receive the full complement of their crew. Upon the passage homewards,  
they drop them there again. How it is, there is no telling, but  
Islanders seem to make the best whalemen. They were nearly all Islanders  
in the Pequod, ISOLATOES too, I call such, not acknowledging the common  
continent of men, but each ISOLATO living on a separate continent of his  
own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these Isolatoes were!  
An Anacharsis Clootz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all  
the ends of the earth, accompanying Old Ahab in the Pequod to lay the  
world's grievances before that bar from which not very many of them ever  
come back. Black Little Pip--he never did--oh, no! he went before. Poor  
Alabama boy! On the grim Pequod's forecastle, ye shall ere long see him,  
beating his tambourine; prelusive of the eternal time, when sent for,  
to the great quarter-deck on high, he was bid strike in with angels, and  
beat his tambourine in glory; called a coward here, hailed a hero there!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 28. Ahab.  
  
  
For several days after leaving Nantucket, nothing above hatches was seen  
of Captain Ahab. The mates regularly relieved each other at the watches,  
and for aught that could be seen to the contrary, they seemed to be the  
only commanders of the ship; only they sometimes issued from the cabin  
with orders so sudden and peremptory, that after all it was plain they  
but commanded vicariously. Yes, their supreme lord and dictator was  
there, though hitherto unseen by any eyes not permitted to penetrate  
into the now sacred retreat of the cabin.  
  
Every time I ascended to the deck from my watches below, I instantly  
gazed aft to mark if any strange face were visible; for my first vague  
disquietude touching the unknown captain, now in the seclusion of the  
sea, became almost a perturbation. This was strangely heightened  
at times by the ragged Elijah's diabolical incoherences uninvitedly  
recurring to me, with a subtle energy I could not have before conceived  
of. But poorly could I withstand them, much as in other moods I was  
almost ready to smile at the solemn whimsicalities of that outlandish  
prophet of the wharves. But whatever it was of apprehensiveness or  
uneasiness--to call it so--which I felt, yet whenever I came to look  
about me in the ship, it seemed against all warrantry to cherish such  
emotions. For though the harpooneers, with the great body of the crew,  
were a far more barbaric, heathenish, and motley set than any of the  
tame merchant-ship companies which my previous experiences had made me  
acquainted with, still I ascribed this--and rightly ascribed it--to the  
fierce uniqueness of the very nature of that wild Scandinavian vocation  
in which I had so abandonedly embarked. But it was especially the aspect  
of the three chief officers of the ship, the mates, which was most  
forcibly calculated to allay these colourless misgivings, and induce  
confidence and cheerfulness in every presentment of the voyage. Three  
better, more likely sea-officers and men, each in his own different way,  
could not readily be found, and they were every one of them Americans; a  
Nantucketer, a Vineyarder, a Cape man. Now, it being Christmas when the  
ship shot from out her harbor, for a space we had biting Polar weather,  
though all the time running away from it to the southward; and by every  
degree and minute of latitude which we sailed, gradually leaving that  
merciless winter, and all its intolerable weather behind us. It was one  
of those less lowering, but still grey and gloomy enough mornings of the  
transition, when with a fair wind the ship was rushing through the water  
with a vindictive sort of leaping and melancholy rapidity, that as I  
mounted to the deck at the call of the forenoon watch, so soon as I  
levelled my glance towards the taffrail, foreboding shivers ran over me.  
Reality outran apprehension; Captain Ahab stood upon his quarter-deck.  
  
There seemed no sign of common bodily illness about him, nor of the  
recovery from any. He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when  
the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them,  
or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness. His  
whole high, broad form, seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an  
unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus. Threading its way out  
from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his  
tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing,  
you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish. It resembled that  
perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of  
a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and  
without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top  
to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly  
alive, but branded. Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it  
was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say.  
By some tacit consent, throughout the voyage little or no allusion was  
made to it, especially by the mates. But once Tashtego's senior, an old  
Gay-Head Indian among the crew, superstitiously asserted that not till  
he was full forty years old did Ahab become that way branded, and  
then it came upon him, not in the fury of any mortal fray, but in  
an elemental strife at sea. Yet, this wild hint seemed inferentially  
negatived, by what a grey Manxman insinuated, an old sepulchral man,  
who, having never before sailed out of Nantucket, had never ere this  
laid eye upon wild Ahab. Nevertheless, the old sea-traditions, the  
immemorial credulities, popularly invested this old Manxman with  
preternatural powers of discernment. So that no white sailor seriously  
contradicted him when he said that if ever Captain Ahab should  
be tranquilly laid out--which might hardly come to pass, so he  
muttered--then, whoever should do that last office for the dead, would  
find a birth-mark on him from crown to sole.  
  
So powerfully did the whole grim aspect of Ahab affect me, and the livid  
brand which streaked it, that for the first few moments I hardly noted  
that not a little of this overbearing grimness was owing to the barbaric  
white leg upon which he partly stood. It had previously come to me that  
this ivory leg had at sea been fashioned from the polished bone of  
the sperm whale's jaw. "Aye, he was dismasted off Japan," said the old  
Gay-Head Indian once; "but like his dismasted craft, he shipped another  
mast without coming home for it. He has a quiver of 'em."  
  
I was struck with the singular posture he maintained. Upon each side of  
the Pequod's quarter deck, and pretty close to the mizzen shrouds, there  
was an auger hole, bored about half an inch or so, into the plank.  
His bone leg steadied in that hole; one arm elevated, and holding by a  
shroud; Captain Ahab stood erect, looking straight out beyond the  
ship's ever-pitching prow. There was an infinity of firmest fortitude,  
a determinate, unsurrenderable wilfulness, in the fixed and fearless,  
forward dedication of that glance. Not a word he spoke; nor did his  
officers say aught to him; though by all their minutest gestures  
and expressions, they plainly showed the uneasy, if not painful,  
consciousness of being under a troubled master-eye. And not only that,  
but moody stricken Ahab stood before them with a crucifixion in his  
face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe.  
  
Ere long, from his first visit in the air, he withdrew into his cabin.  
But after that morning, he was every day visible to the crew; either  
standing in his pivot-hole, or seated upon an ivory stool he had; or  
heavily walking the deck. As the sky grew less gloomy; indeed, began to  
grow a little genial, he became still less and less a recluse; as  
if, when the ship had sailed from home, nothing but the dead wintry  
bleakness of the sea had then kept him so secluded. And, by and by, it  
came to pass, that he was almost continually in the air; but, as yet,  
for all that he said, or perceptibly did, on the at last sunny deck,  
he seemed as unnecessary there as another mast. But the Pequod was  
only making a passage now; not regularly cruising; nearly all whaling  
preparatives needing supervision the mates were fully competent to, so  
that there was little or nothing, out of himself, to employ or excite  
Ahab, now; and thus chase away, for that one interval, the clouds that  
layer upon layer were piled upon his brow, as ever all clouds choose the  
loftiest peaks to pile themselves upon.  
  
Nevertheless, ere long, the warm, warbling persuasiveness of the  
pleasant, holiday weather we came to, seemed gradually to charm him from  
his mood. For, as when the red-cheeked, dancing girls, April and May,  
trip home to the wintry, misanthropic woods; even the barest, ruggedest,  
most thunder-cloven old oak will at least send forth some few green  
sprouts, to welcome such glad-hearted visitants; so Ahab did, in the  
end, a little respond to the playful allurings of that girlish air. More  
than once did he put forth the faint blossom of a look, which, in any  
other man, would have soon flowered out in a smile.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 29. Enter Ahab; to Him, Stubb.  
  
  
Some days elapsed, and ice and icebergs all astern, the Pequod now  
went rolling through the bright Quito spring, which, at sea, almost  
perpetually reigns on the threshold of the eternal August of the Tropic.  
The warmly cool, clear, ringing, perfumed, overflowing, redundant days,  
were as crystal goblets of Persian sherbet, heaped up--flaked up, with  
rose-water snow. The starred and stately nights seemed haughty dames in  
jewelled velvets, nursing at home in lonely pride, the memory of their  
absent conquering Earls, the golden helmeted suns! For sleeping man,  
'twas hard to choose between such winsome days and such seducing nights.  
But all the witcheries of that unwaning weather did not merely lend new  
spells and potencies to the outward world. Inward they turned upon the  
soul, especially when the still mild hours of eve came on; then, memory  
shot her crystals as the clear ice most forms of noiseless twilights.  
And all these subtle agencies, more and more they wrought on Ahab's  
texture.  
  
Old age is always wakeful; as if, the longer linked with life, the less  
man has to do with aught that looks like death. Among sea-commanders,  
the old greybeards will oftenest leave their berths to visit the  
night-cloaked deck. It was so with Ahab; only that now, of late, he  
seemed so much to live in the open air, that truly speaking, his visits  
were more to the cabin, than from the cabin to the planks. "It feels  
like going down into one's tomb,"--he would mutter to himself--"for an  
old captain like me to be descending this narrow scuttle, to go to my  
grave-dug berth."  
  
So, almost every twenty-four hours, when the watches of the night were  
set, and the band on deck sentinelled the slumbers of the band below;  
and when if a rope was to be hauled upon the forecastle, the sailors  
flung it not rudely down, as by day, but with some cautiousness dropt  
it to its place for fear of disturbing their slumbering shipmates; when  
this sort of steady quietude would begin to prevail, habitually, the  
silent steersman would watch the cabin-scuttle; and ere long the old man  
would emerge, gripping at the iron banister, to help his crippled way.  
Some considering touch of humanity was in him; for at times like these,  
he usually abstained from patrolling the quarter-deck; because to his  
wearied mates, seeking repose within six inches of his ivory heel, such  
would have been the reverberating crack and din of that bony step, that  
their dreams would have been on the crunching teeth of sharks. But once,  
the mood was on him too deep for common regardings; and as with heavy,  
lumber-like pace he was measuring the ship from taffrail to mainmast,  
Stubb, the old second mate, came up from below, with a certain  
unassured, deprecating humorousness, hinted that if Captain Ahab was  
pleased to walk the planks, then, no one could say nay; but there might  
be some way of muffling the noise; hinting something indistinctly and  
hesitatingly about a globe of tow, and the insertion into it, of the  
ivory heel. Ah! Stubb, thou didst not know Ahab then.  
  
"Am I a cannon-ball, Stubb," said Ahab, "that thou wouldst wad me that  
fashion? But go thy ways; I had forgot. Below to thy nightly grave;  
where such as ye sleep between shrouds, to use ye to the filling one at  
last.--Down, dog, and kennel!"  
  
Starting at the unforseen concluding exclamation of the so suddenly  
scornful old man, Stubb was speechless a moment; then said excitedly, "I  
am not used to be spoken to that way, sir; I do but less than half like  
it, sir."  
  
"Avast! gritted Ahab between his set teeth, and violently moving away,  
as if to avoid some passionate temptation.  
  
"No, sir; not yet," said Stubb, emboldened, "I will not tamely be called  
a dog, sir."  
  
"Then be called ten times a donkey, and a mule, and an ass, and begone,  
or I'll clear the world of thee!"  
  
As he said this, Ahab advanced upon him with such overbearing terrors in  
his aspect, that Stubb involuntarily retreated.  
  
"I was never served so before without giving a hard blow for it,"  
muttered Stubb, as he found himself descending the cabin-scuttle. "It's  
very queer. Stop, Stubb; somehow, now, I don't well know whether to go  
back and strike him, or--what's that?--down here on my knees and pray  
for him? Yes, that was the thought coming up in me; but it would be the  
first time I ever DID pray. It's queer; very queer; and he's queer too;  
aye, take him fore and aft, he's about the queerest old man Stubb ever  
sailed with. How he flashed at me!--his eyes like powder-pans! is he  
mad? Anyway there's something on his mind, as sure as there must be  
something on a deck when it cracks. He aint in his bed now, either, more  
than three hours out of the twenty-four; and he don't sleep then. Didn't  
that Dough-Boy, the steward, tell me that of a morning he always finds  
the old man's hammock clothes all rumpled and tumbled, and the sheets  
down at the foot, and the coverlid almost tied into knots, and the  
pillow a sort of frightful hot, as though a baked brick had been on  
it? A hot old man! I guess he's got what some folks ashore call  
a conscience; it's a kind of Tic-Dolly-row they say--worse nor a  
toothache. Well, well; I don't know what it is, but the Lord keep me  
from catching it. He's full of riddles; I wonder what he goes into the  
after hold for, every night, as Dough-Boy tells me he suspects; what's  
that for, I should like to know? Who's made appointments with him in  
the hold? Ain't that queer, now? But there's no telling, it's the old  
game--Here goes for a snooze. Damn me, it's worth a fellow's while to be  
born into the world, if only to fall right asleep. And now that I think  
of it, that's about the first thing babies do, and that's a sort of  
queer, too. Damn me, but all things are queer, come to think of 'em. But  
that's against my principles. Think not, is my eleventh commandment; and  
sleep when you can, is my twelfth--So here goes again. But how's that?  
didn't he call me a dog? blazes! he called me ten times a donkey, and  
piled a lot of jackasses on top of THAT! He might as well have kicked  
me, and done with it. Maybe he DID kick me, and I didn't observe it,  
I was so taken all aback with his brow, somehow. It flashed like a  
bleached bone. What the devil's the matter with me? I don't stand right  
on my legs. Coming afoul of that old man has a sort of turned me wrong  
side out. By the Lord, I must have been dreaming, though--How? how?  
how?--but the only way's to stash it; so here goes to hammock again;  
and in the morning, I'll see how this plaguey juggling thinks over by  
daylight."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 30. The Pipe.  
  
  
When Stubb had departed, Ahab stood for a while leaning over the  
bulwarks; and then, as had been usual with him of late, calling a sailor  
of the watch, he sent him below for his ivory stool, and also his pipe.  
Lighting the pipe at the binnacle lamp and planting the stool on the  
weather side of the deck, he sat and smoked.  
  
In old Norse times, the thrones of the sea-loving Danish kings were  
fabricated, saith tradition, of the tusks of the narwhale. How could one  
look at Ahab then, seated on that tripod of bones, without bethinking  
him of the royalty it symbolized? For a Khan of the plank, and a king of  
the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans was Ahab.  
  
Some moments passed, during which the thick vapour came from his mouth  
in quick and constant puffs, which blew back again into his face. "How  
now," he soliloquized at last, withdrawing the tube, "this smoking no  
longer soothes. Oh, my pipe! hard must it go with me if thy charm be  
gone! Here have I been unconsciously toiling, not pleasuring--aye, and  
ignorantly smoking to windward all the while; to windward, and with  
such nervous whiffs, as if, like the dying whale, my final jets were the  
strongest and fullest of trouble. What business have I with this pipe?  
This thing that is meant for sereneness, to send up mild white vapours  
among mild white hairs, not among torn iron-grey locks like mine. I'll  
smoke no more--"  
  
He tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. The fire hissed in the  
waves; the same instant the ship shot by the bubble the sinking pipe  
made. With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 31. Queen Mab.  
  
  
Next morning Stubb accosted Flask.  
  
"Such a queer dream, King-Post, I never had. You know the old man's  
ivory leg, well I dreamed he kicked me with it; and when I tried to kick  
back, upon my soul, my little man, I kicked my leg right off! And then,  
presto! Ahab seemed a pyramid, and I, like a blazing fool, kept kicking  
at it. But what was still more curious, Flask--you know how curious all  
dreams are--through all this rage that I was in, I somehow seemed to be  
thinking to myself, that after all, it was not much of an insult, that  
kick from Ahab. 'Why,' thinks I, 'what's the row? It's not a real leg,  
only a false leg.' And there's a mighty difference between a living  
thump and a dead thump. That's what makes a blow from the hand, Flask,  
fifty times more savage to bear than a blow from a cane. The living  
member--that makes the living insult, my little man. And thinks I to  
myself all the while, mind, while I was stubbing my silly toes against  
that cursed pyramid--so confoundedly contradictory was it all, all  
the while, I say, I was thinking to myself, 'what's his leg now, but  
a cane--a whalebone cane. Yes,' thinks I, 'it was only a playful  
cudgelling--in fact, only a whaleboning that he gave me--not a base  
kick. Besides,' thinks I, 'look at it once; why, the end of it--the foot  
part--what a small sort of end it is; whereas, if a broad footed farmer  
kicked me, THERE'S a devilish broad insult. But this insult is whittled  
down to a point only.' But now comes the greatest joke of the  
dream, Flask. While I was battering away at the pyramid, a sort of  
badger-haired old merman, with a hump on his back, takes me by the  
shoulders, and slews me round. 'What are you 'bout?' says he. Slid! man,  
but I was frightened. Such a phiz! But, somehow, next moment I was over  
the fright. 'What am I about?' says I at last. 'And what business is  
that of yours, I should like to know, Mr. Humpback? Do YOU want a kick?'  
By the lord, Flask, I had no sooner said that, than he turned round his  
stern to me, bent over, and dragging up a lot of seaweed he had for a  
clout--what do you think, I saw?--why thunder alive, man, his stern  
was stuck full of marlinspikes, with the points out. Says I, on second  
thoughts, 'I guess I won't kick you, old fellow.' 'Wise Stubb,' said he,  
'wise Stubb;' and kept muttering it all the time, a sort of eating of  
his own gums like a chimney hag. Seeing he wasn't going to stop saying  
over his 'wise Stubb, wise Stubb,' I thought I might as well fall to  
kicking the pyramid again. But I had only just lifted my foot for it,  
when he roared out, 'Stop that kicking!' 'Halloa,' says I, 'what's  
the matter now, old fellow?' 'Look ye here,' says he; 'let's argue  
the insult. Captain Ahab kicked ye, didn't he?' 'Yes, he did,' says  
I--'right HERE it was.' 'Very good,' says he--'he used his ivory leg,  
didn't he?' 'Yes, he did,' says I. 'Well then,' says he, 'wise Stubb,  
what have you to complain of? Didn't he kick with right good will? it  
wasn't a common pitch pine leg he kicked with, was it? No, you were  
kicked by a great man, and with a beautiful ivory leg, Stubb. It's an  
honour; I consider it an honour. Listen, wise Stubb. In old England the  
greatest lords think it great glory to be slapped by a queen, and made  
garter-knights of; but, be YOUR boast, Stubb, that ye were kicked by  
old Ahab, and made a wise man of. Remember what I say; BE kicked by him;  
account his kicks honours; and on no account kick back; for you can't  
help yourself, wise Stubb. Don't you see that pyramid?' With that, he  
all of a sudden seemed somehow, in some queer fashion, to swim off into  
the air. I snored; rolled over; and there I was in my hammock! Now, what  
do you think of that dream, Flask?"  
  
"I don't know; it seems a sort of foolish to me, tho.'"  
  
"May be; may be. But it's made a wise man of me, Flask. D'ye see Ahab  
standing there, sideways looking over the stern? Well, the best thing  
you can do, Flask, is to let the old man alone; never speak to him,  
whatever he says. Halloa! What's that he shouts? Hark!"  
  
"Mast-head, there! Look sharp, all of ye! There are whales hereabouts!  
  
"If ye see a white one, split your lungs for him!  
  
"What do you think of that now, Flask? ain't there a small drop of  
something queer about that, eh? A white whale--did ye mark that, man?  
Look ye--there's something special in the wind. Stand by for it, Flask.  
Ahab has that that's bloody on his mind. But, mum; he comes this way."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 32. Cetology.  
  
  
Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost  
in its unshored, harbourless immensities. Ere that come to pass; ere the  
Pequod's weedy hull rolls side by side with the barnacled hulls of the  
leviathan; at the outset it is but well to attend to a matter almost  
indispensable to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more  
special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to  
follow.  
  
It is some systematized exhibition of the whale in his broad genera,  
that I would now fain put before you. Yet is it no easy task. The  
classification of the constituents of a chaos, nothing less is here  
essayed. Listen to what the best and latest authorities have laid down.  
  
"No branch of Zoology is so much involved as that which is entitled  
Cetology," says Captain Scoresby, A.D. 1820.  
  
"It is not my intention, were it in my power, to enter into the  
inquiry as to the true method of dividing the cetacea into groups and  
families.... Utter confusion exists among the historians of this animal"  
(sperm whale), says Surgeon Beale, A.D. 1839.  
  
"Unfitness to pursue our research in the unfathomable waters."  
"Impenetrable veil covering our knowledge of the cetacea." "A field  
strewn with thorns." "All these incomplete indications but serve to  
torture us naturalists."  
  
Thus speak of the whale, the great Cuvier, and John Hunter, and Lesson,  
those lights of zoology and anatomy. Nevertheless, though of real  
knowledge there be little, yet of books there are a plenty; and so in  
some small degree, with cetology, or the science of whales. Many are  
the men, small and great, old and new, landsmen and seamen, who have at  
large or in little, written of the whale. Run over a few:--The Authors  
of the Bible; Aristotle; Pliny; Aldrovandi; Sir Thomas Browne; Gesner;  
Ray; Linnaeus; Rondeletius; Willoughby; Green; Artedi; Sibbald; Brisson;  
Marten; Lacepede; Bonneterre; Desmarest; Baron Cuvier; Frederick Cuvier;  
John Hunter; Owen; Scoresby; Beale; Bennett; J. Ross Browne; the  
Author of Miriam Coffin; Olmstead; and the Rev. T. Cheever. But to what  
ultimate generalizing purpose all these have written, the above cited  
extracts will show.  
  
Of the names in this list of whale authors, only those following Owen  
ever saw living whales; and but one of them was a real professional  
harpooneer and whaleman. I mean Captain Scoresby. On the separate  
subject of the Greenland or right-whale, he is the best existing  
authority. But Scoresby knew nothing and says nothing of the great  
sperm whale, compared with which the Greenland whale is almost unworthy  
mentioning. And here be it said, that the Greenland whale is an usurper  
upon the throne of the seas. He is not even by any means the largest  
of the whales. Yet, owing to the long priority of his claims, and the  
profound ignorance which, till some seventy years back, invested the  
then fabulous or utterly unknown sperm-whale, and which ignorance to  
this present day still reigns in all but some few scientific retreats  
and whale-ports; this usurpation has been every way complete. Reference  
to nearly all the leviathanic allusions in the great poets of past days,  
will satisfy you that the Greenland whale, without one rival, was to  
them the monarch of the seas. But the time has at last come for a new  
proclamation. This is Charing Cross; hear ye! good people all,--the  
Greenland whale is deposed,--the great sperm whale now reigneth!  
  
There are only two books in being which at all pretend to put the living  
sperm whale before you, and at the same time, in the remotest degree  
succeed in the attempt. Those books are Beale's and Bennett's; both in  
their time surgeons to English South-Sea whale-ships, and both exact and  
reliable men. The original matter touching the sperm whale to be found  
in their volumes is necessarily small; but so far as it goes, it is of  
excellent quality, though mostly confined to scientific description. As  
yet, however, the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete  
in any literature. Far above all other hunted whales, his is an  
unwritten life.  
  
Now the various species of whales need some sort of popular  
comprehensive classification, if only an easy outline one for the  
present, hereafter to be filled in all its departments by subsequent  
laborers. As no better man advances to take this matter in hand, I  
hereupon offer my own poor endeavors. I promise nothing complete;  
because any human thing supposed to be complete, must for that very  
reason infallibly be faulty. I shall not pretend to a minute anatomical  
description of the various species, or--in this place at least--to much  
of any description. My object here is simply to project the draught of a  
systematization of cetology. I am the architect, not the builder.  
  
But it is a ponderous task; no ordinary letter-sorter in the Post-Office  
is equal to it. To grope down into the bottom of the sea after them;  
to have one's hands among the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very  
pelvis of the world; this is a fearful thing. What am I that I should  
essay to hook the nose of this leviathan! The awful tauntings in Job  
might well appal me. Will he the (leviathan) make a covenant with thee?  
Behold the hope of him is vain! But I have swam through libraries and  
sailed through oceans; I have had to do with whales with these visible  
hands; I am in earnest; and I will try. There are some preliminaries to  
settle.  
  
First: The uncertain, unsettled condition of this science of Cetology  
is in the very vestibule attested by the fact, that in some quarters it  
still remains a moot point whether a whale be a fish. In his System of  
Nature, A.D. 1776, Linnaeus declares, "I hereby separate the whales from  
the fish." But of my own knowledge, I know that down to the year 1850,  
sharks and shad, alewives and herring, against Linnaeus's express edict,  
were still found dividing the possession of the same seas with the  
Leviathan.  
  
The grounds upon which Linnaeus would fain have banished the whales from  
the waters, he states as follows: "On account of their warm bilocular  
heart, their lungs, their movable eyelids, their hollow ears, penem  
intrantem feminam mammis lactantem," and finally, "ex lege naturae jure  
meritoque." I submitted all this to my friends Simeon Macey and Charley  
Coffin, of Nantucket, both messmates of mine in a certain voyage, and  
they united in the opinion that the reasons set forth were altogether  
insufficient. Charley profanely hinted they were humbug.  
  
Be it known that, waiving all argument, I take the good old fashioned  
ground that the whale is a fish, and call upon holy Jonah to back me.  
This fundamental thing settled, the next point is, in what internal  
respect does the whale differ from other fish. Above, Linnaeus has given  
you those items. But in brief, they are these: lungs and warm blood;  
whereas, all other fish are lungless and cold blooded.  
  
Next: how shall we define the whale, by his obvious externals, so as  
conspicuously to label him for all time to come? To be short, then, a  
whale is A SPOUTING FISH WITH A HORIZONTAL TAIL. There you have  
him. However contracted, that definition is the result of expanded  
meditation. A walrus spouts much like a whale, but the walrus is not a  
fish, because he is amphibious. But the last term of the definition is  
still more cogent, as coupled with the first. Almost any one must have  
noticed that all the fish familiar to landsmen have not a flat, but a  
vertical, or up-and-down tail. Whereas, among spouting fish the tail,  
though it may be similarly shaped, invariably assumes a horizontal  
position.  
  
By the above definition of what a whale is, I do by no means exclude  
from the leviathanic brotherhood any sea creature hitherto identified  
with the whale by the best informed Nantucketers; nor, on the other  
hand, link with it any fish hitherto authoritatively regarded as alien.\*  
Hence, all the smaller, spouting, and horizontal tailed fish must be  
included in this ground-plan of Cetology. Now, then, come the grand  
divisions of the entire whale host.  
  
  
\*I am aware that down to the present time, the fish styled Lamatins and  
Dugongs (Pig-fish and Sow-fish of the Coffins of Nantucket) are included  
by many naturalists among the whales. But as these pig-fish are a noisy,  
contemptible set, mostly lurking in the mouths of rivers, and feeding on  
wet hay, and especially as they do not spout, I deny their credentials  
as whales; and have presented them with their passports to quit the  
Kingdom of Cetology.  
  
  
First: According to magnitude I divide the whales into three primary  
BOOKS (subdivisible into CHAPTERS), and these shall comprehend them all,  
both small and large.  
  
I. THE FOLIO WHALE; II. the OCTAVO WHALE; III. the DUODECIMO WHALE.  
  
As the type of the FOLIO I present the SPERM WHALE; of the OCTAVO, the  
GRAMPUS; of the DUODECIMO, the PORPOISE.  
  
FOLIOS. Among these I here include the following chapters:--I. The SPERM  
WHALE; II. the RIGHT WHALE; III. the FIN-BACK WHALE; IV. the HUMP-BACKED  
WHALE; V. the RAZOR-BACK WHALE; VI. the SULPHUR-BOTTOM WHALE.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO), CHAPTER I. (SPERM WHALE).--This whale, among the  
English of old vaguely known as the Trumpa whale, and the Physeter  
whale, and the Anvil Headed whale, is the present Cachalot of the  
French, and the Pottsfich of the Germans, and the Macrocephalus of the  
Long Words. He is, without doubt, the largest inhabitant of the globe;  
the most formidable of all whales to encounter; the most majestic in  
aspect; and lastly, by far the most valuable in commerce; he being  
the only creature from which that valuable substance, spermaceti, is  
obtained. All his peculiarities will, in many other places, be enlarged  
upon. It is chiefly with his name that I now have to do. Philologically  
considered, it is absurd. Some centuries ago, when the Sperm whale was  
almost wholly unknown in his own proper individuality, and when his oil  
was only accidentally obtained from the stranded fish; in those days  
spermaceti, it would seem, was popularly supposed to be derived from a  
creature identical with the one then known in England as the Greenland  
or Right Whale. It was the idea also, that this same spermaceti was that  
quickening humor of the Greenland Whale which the first syllable of  
the word literally expresses. In those times, also, spermaceti was  
exceedingly scarce, not being used for light, but only as an ointment  
and medicament. It was only to be had from the druggists as you nowadays  
buy an ounce of rhubarb. When, as I opine, in the course of time, the  
true nature of spermaceti became known, its original name was still  
retained by the dealers; no doubt to enhance its value by a notion so  
strangely significant of its scarcity. And so the appellation must at  
last have come to be bestowed upon the whale from which this spermaceti  
was really derived.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO), CHAPTER II. (RIGHT WHALE).--In one respect this is the  
most venerable of the leviathans, being the one first regularly hunted  
by man. It yields the article commonly known as whalebone or baleen; and  
the oil specially known as "whale oil," an inferior article in commerce.  
Among the fishermen, he is indiscriminately designated by all the  
following titles: The Whale; the Greenland Whale; the Black Whale;  
the Great Whale; the True Whale; the Right Whale. There is a deal of  
obscurity concerning the identity of the species thus multitudinously  
baptised. What then is the whale, which I include in the second species  
of my Folios? It is the Great Mysticetus of the English naturalists; the  
Greenland Whale of the English whalemen; the Baliene Ordinaire of the  
French whalemen; the Growlands Walfish of the Swedes. It is the whale  
which for more than two centuries past has been hunted by the Dutch and  
English in the Arctic seas; it is the whale which the American fishermen  
have long pursued in the Indian ocean, on the Brazil Banks, on the Nor'  
West Coast, and various other parts of the world, designated by them  
Right Whale Cruising Grounds.  
  
Some pretend to see a difference between the Greenland whale of the  
English and the right whale of the Americans. But they precisely agree  
in all their grand features; nor has there yet been presented a single  
determinate fact upon which to ground a radical distinction. It is by  
endless subdivisions based upon the most inconclusive differences, that  
some departments of natural history become so repellingly intricate. The  
right whale will be elsewhere treated of at some length, with reference  
to elucidating the sperm whale.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO), CHAPTER III. (FIN-BACK).--Under this head I reckon  
a monster which, by the various names of Fin-Back, Tall-Spout, and  
Long-John, has been seen almost in every sea and is commonly the whale  
whose distant jet is so often descried by passengers crossing the  
Atlantic, in the New York packet-tracks. In the length he attains, and  
in his baleen, the Fin-back resembles the right whale, but is of a less  
portly girth, and a lighter colour, approaching to olive. His great lips  
present a cable-like aspect, formed by the intertwisting, slanting folds  
of large wrinkles. His grand distinguishing feature, the fin, from which  
he derives his name, is often a conspicuous object. This fin is some  
three or four feet long, growing vertically from the hinder part of the  
back, of an angular shape, and with a very sharp pointed end. Even if  
not the slightest other part of the creature be visible, this isolated  
fin will, at times, be seen plainly projecting from the surface. When  
the sea is moderately calm, and slightly marked with spherical ripples,  
and this gnomon-like fin stands up and casts shadows upon the wrinkled  
surface, it may well be supposed that the watery circle surrounding it  
somewhat resembles a dial, with its style and wavy hour-lines graved on  
it. On that Ahaz-dial the shadow often goes back. The Fin-Back is not  
gregarious. He seems a whale-hater, as some men are man-haters. Very  
shy; always going solitary; unexpectedly rising to the surface in the  
remotest and most sullen waters; his straight and single lofty jet  
rising like a tall misanthropic spear upon a barren plain; gifted with  
such wondrous power and velocity in swimming, as to defy all present  
pursuit from man; this leviathan seems the banished and unconquerable  
Cain of his race, bearing for his mark that style upon his back. From  
having the baleen in his mouth, the Fin-Back is sometimes included with  
the right whale, among a theoretic species denominated WHALEBONE WHALES,  
that is, whales with baleen. Of these so called Whalebone whales, there  
would seem to be several varieties, most of which, however, are little  
known. Broad-nosed whales and beaked whales; pike-headed whales; bunched  
whales; under-jawed whales and rostrated whales, are the fishermen's  
names for a few sorts.  
  
In connection with this appellative of "Whalebone whales," it is of  
great importance to mention, that however such a nomenclature may be  
convenient in facilitating allusions to some kind of whales, yet it is  
in vain to attempt a clear classification of the Leviathan, founded upon  
either his baleen, or hump, or fin, or teeth; notwithstanding that those  
marked parts or features very obviously seem better adapted to afford  
the basis for a regular system of Cetology than any other detached  
bodily distinctions, which the whale, in his kinds, presents. How  
then? The baleen, hump, back-fin, and teeth; these are things whose  
peculiarities are indiscriminately dispersed among all sorts of whales,  
without any regard to what may be the nature of their structure in other  
and more essential particulars. Thus, the sperm whale and the humpbacked  
whale, each has a hump; but there the similitude ceases. Then, this same  
humpbacked whale and the Greenland whale, each of these has baleen;  
but there again the similitude ceases. And it is just the same with the  
other parts above mentioned. In various sorts of whales, they form such  
irregular combinations; or, in the case of any one of them detached,  
such an irregular isolation; as utterly to defy all general  
methodization formed upon such a basis. On this rock every one of the  
whale-naturalists has split.  
  
But it may possibly be conceived that, in the internal parts of the  
whale, in his anatomy--there, at least, we shall be able to hit the  
right classification. Nay; what thing, for example, is there in the  
Greenland whale's anatomy more striking than his baleen? Yet we have  
seen that by his baleen it is impossible correctly to classify the  
Greenland whale. And if you descend into the bowels of the various  
leviathans, why there you will not find distinctions a fiftieth part as  
available to the systematizer as those external ones already enumerated.  
What then remains? nothing but to take hold of the whales bodily, in  
their entire liberal volume, and boldly sort them that way. And this is  
the Bibliographical system here adopted; and it is the only one that can  
possibly succeed, for it alone is practicable. To proceed.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO) CHAPTER IV. (HUMP-BACK).--This whale is often seen on  
the northern American coast. He has been frequently captured there, and  
towed into harbor. He has a great pack on him like a peddler; or you  
might call him the Elephant and Castle whale. At any rate, the popular  
name for him does not sufficiently distinguish him, since the sperm  
whale also has a hump though a smaller one. His oil is not very  
valuable. He has baleen. He is the most gamesome and light-hearted of  
all the whales, making more gay foam and white water generally than any  
other of them.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO), CHAPTER V. (RAZOR-BACK).--Of this whale little is known  
but his name. I have seen him at a distance off Cape Horn. Of a retiring  
nature, he eludes both hunters and philosophers. Though no coward, he  
has never yet shown any part of him but his back, which rises in a long  
sharp ridge. Let him go. I know little more of him, nor does anybody  
else.  
  
BOOK I. (FOLIO), CHAPTER VI. (SULPHUR-BOTTOM).--Another retiring  
gentleman, with a brimstone belly, doubtless got by scraping along the  
Tartarian tiles in some of his profounder divings. He is seldom seen;  
at least I have never seen him except in the remoter southern seas,  
and then always at too great a distance to study his countenance. He is  
never chased; he would run away with rope-walks of line. Prodigies are  
told of him. Adieu, Sulphur Bottom! I can say nothing more that is true  
of ye, nor can the oldest Nantucketer.  
  
Thus ends BOOK I. (FOLIO), and now begins BOOK II. (OCTAVO).  
  
OCTAVOES.\*--These embrace the whales of middling magnitude, among which  
present may be numbered:--I., the GRAMPUS; II., the BLACK FISH; III.,  
the NARWHALE; IV., the THRASHER; V., the KILLER.  
  
  
\*Why this book of whales is not denominated the Quarto is very plain.  
Because, while the whales of this order, though smaller than those of  
the former order, nevertheless retain a proportionate likeness to them  
in figure, yet the bookbinder's Quarto volume in its dimensioned form  
does not preserve the shape of the Folio volume, but the Octavo volume  
does.  
  
  
BOOK II. (OCTAVO), CHAPTER I. (GRAMPUS).--Though this fish, whose  
loud sonorous breathing, or rather blowing, has furnished a proverb  
to landsmen, is so well known a denizen of the deep, yet is he not  
popularly classed among whales. But possessing all the grand distinctive  
features of the leviathan, most naturalists have recognised him for one.  
He is of moderate octavo size, varying from fifteen to twenty-five feet  
in length, and of corresponding dimensions round the waist. He swims in  
herds; he is never regularly hunted, though his oil is considerable in  
quantity, and pretty good for light. By some fishermen his approach is  
regarded as premonitory of the advance of the great sperm whale.  
  
BOOK II. (OCTAVO), CHAPTER II. (BLACK FISH).--I give the popular  
fishermen's names for all these fish, for generally they are the best.  
Where any name happens to be vague or inexpressive, I shall say so,  
and suggest another. I do so now, touching the Black Fish, so-called,  
because blackness is the rule among almost all whales. So, call him the  
Hyena Whale, if you please. His voracity is well known, and from the  
circumstance that the inner angles of his lips are curved upwards, he  
carries an everlasting Mephistophelean grin on his face. This whale  
averages some sixteen or eighteen feet in length. He is found in almost  
all latitudes. He has a peculiar way of showing his dorsal hooked fin  
in swimming, which looks something like a Roman nose. When not more  
profitably employed, the sperm whale hunters sometimes capture the Hyena  
whale, to keep up the supply of cheap oil for domestic employment--as  
some frugal housekeepers, in the absence of company, and quite alone by  
themselves, burn unsavory tallow instead of odorous wax. Though their  
blubber is very thin, some of these whales will yield you upwards of  
thirty gallons of oil.  
  
BOOK II. (OCTAVO), CHAPTER III. (NARWHALE), that is, NOSTRIL  
WHALE.--Another instance of a curiously named whale, so named I suppose  
from his peculiar horn being originally mistaken for a peaked nose. The  
creature is some sixteen feet in length, while its horn averages five  
feet, though some exceed ten, and even attain to fifteen feet. Strictly  
speaking, this horn is but a lengthened tusk, growing out from the jaw  
in a line a little depressed from the horizontal. But it is only  
found on the sinister side, which has an ill effect, giving its owner  
something analogous to the aspect of a clumsy left-handed man. What  
precise purpose this ivory horn or lance answers, it would be hard to  
say. It does not seem to be used like the blade of the sword-fish and  
bill-fish; though some sailors tell me that the Narwhale employs it for  
a rake in turning over the bottom of the sea for food. Charley Coffin  
said it was used for an ice-piercer; for the Narwhale, rising to the  
surface of the Polar Sea, and finding it sheeted with ice, thrusts his  
horn up, and so breaks through. But you cannot prove either of these  
surmises to be correct. My own opinion is, that however this one-sided  
horn may really be used by the Narwhale--however that may be--it would  
certainly be very convenient to him for a folder in reading pamphlets.  
The Narwhale I have heard called the Tusked whale, the Horned whale, and  
the Unicorn whale. He is certainly a curious example of the Unicornism  
to be found in almost every kingdom of animated nature. From certain  
cloistered old authors I have gathered that this same sea-unicorn's horn  
was in ancient days regarded as the great antidote against poison,  
and as such, preparations of it brought immense prices. It was also  
distilled to a volatile salts for fainting ladies, the same way that the  
horns of the male deer are manufactured into hartshorn. Originally it  
was in itself accounted an object of great curiosity. Black Letter tells  
me that Sir Martin Frobisher on his return from that voyage, when  
Queen Bess did gallantly wave her jewelled hand to him from a window  
of Greenwich Palace, as his bold ship sailed down the Thames; "when Sir  
Martin returned from that voyage," saith Black Letter, "on bended knees  
he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn of the Narwhale,  
which for a long period after hung in the castle at Windsor." An Irish  
author avers that the Earl of Leicester, on bended knees, did likewise  
present to her highness another horn, pertaining to a land beast of the  
unicorn nature.  
  
The Narwhale has a very picturesque, leopard-like look, being of a  
milk-white ground colour, dotted with round and oblong spots of black.  
His oil is very superior, clear and fine; but there is little of it, and  
he is seldom hunted. He is mostly found in the circumpolar seas.  
  
BOOK II. (OCTAVO), CHAPTER IV. (KILLER).--Of this whale little is  
precisely known to the Nantucketer, and nothing at all to the professed  
naturalist. From what I have seen of him at a distance, I should say  
that he was about the bigness of a grampus. He is very savage--a sort of  
Feegee fish. He sometimes takes the great Folio whales by the lip, and  
hangs there like a leech, till the mighty brute is worried to death. The  
Killer is never hunted. I never heard what sort of oil he has. Exception  
might be taken to the name bestowed upon this whale, on the ground  
of its indistinctness. For we are all killers, on land and on sea;  
Bonapartes and Sharks included.  
  
BOOK II. (OCTAVO), CHAPTER V. (THRASHER).--This gentleman is famous for  
his tail, which he uses for a ferule in thrashing his foes. He mounts  
the Folio whale's back, and as he swims, he works his passage by  
flogging him; as some schoolmasters get along in the world by a similar  
process. Still less is known of the Thrasher than of the Killer. Both  
are outlaws, even in the lawless seas.  
  
Thus ends BOOK II. (OCTAVO), and begins BOOK III. (DUODECIMO).  
  
DUODECIMOES.--These include the smaller whales. I. The Huzza Porpoise.  
II. The Algerine Porpoise. III. The Mealy-mouthed Porpoise.  
  
To those who have not chanced specially to study the subject, it may  
possibly seem strange, that fishes not commonly exceeding four or five  
feet should be marshalled among WHALES--a word, which, in the popular  
sense, always conveys an idea of hugeness. But the creatures set  
down above as Duodecimoes are infallibly whales, by the terms of my  
definition of what a whale is--i.e. a spouting fish, with a horizontal  
tail.  
  
BOOK III. (DUODECIMO), CHAPTER 1. (HUZZA PORPOISE).--This is the  
common porpoise found almost all over the globe. The name is of my own  
bestowal; for there are more than one sort of porpoises, and something  
must be done to distinguish them. I call him thus, because he always  
swims in hilarious shoals, which upon the broad sea keep tossing  
themselves to heaven like caps in a Fourth-of-July crowd. Their  
appearance is generally hailed with delight by the mariner. Full of fine  
spirits, they invariably come from the breezy billows to windward. They  
are the lads that always live before the wind. They are accounted a  
lucky omen. If you yourself can withstand three cheers at beholding  
these vivacious fish, then heaven help ye; the spirit of godly  
gamesomeness is not in ye. A well-fed, plump Huzza Porpoise will  
yield you one good gallon of good oil. But the fine and delicate fluid  
extracted from his jaws is exceedingly valuable. It is in request among  
jewellers and watchmakers. Sailors put it on their hones. Porpoise  
meat is good eating, you know. It may never have occurred to you that  
a porpoise spouts. Indeed, his spout is so small that it is not very  
readily discernible. But the next time you have a chance, watch him; and  
you will then see the great Sperm whale himself in miniature.  
  
BOOK III. (DUODECIMO), CHAPTER II. (ALGERINE PORPOISE).--A pirate. Very  
savage. He is only found, I think, in the Pacific. He is somewhat larger  
than the Huzza Porpoise, but much of the same general make. Provoke him,  
and he will buckle to a shark. I have lowered for him many times, but  
never yet saw him captured.  
  
BOOK III. (DUODECIMO), CHAPTER III. (MEALY-MOUTHED PORPOISE).--The  
largest kind of Porpoise; and only found in the Pacific, so far as it is  
known. The only English name, by which he has hitherto been designated,  
is that of the fishers--Right-Whale Porpoise, from the circumstance that  
he is chiefly found in the vicinity of that Folio. In shape, he differs  
in some degree from the Huzza Porpoise, being of a less rotund and jolly  
girth; indeed, he is of quite a neat and gentleman-like figure. He has  
no fins on his back (most other porpoises have), he has a lovely tail,  
and sentimental Indian eyes of a hazel hue. But his mealy-mouth spoils  
all. Though his entire back down to his side fins is of a deep sable,  
yet a boundary line, distinct as the mark in a ship's hull, called  
the "bright waist," that line streaks him from stem to stern, with two  
separate colours, black above and white below. The white comprises part  
of his head, and the whole of his mouth, which makes him look as if he  
had just escaped from a felonious visit to a meal-bag. A most mean and  
mealy aspect! His oil is much like that of the common porpoise.  
  
  
Beyond the DUODECIMO, this system does not proceed, inasmuch as  
the Porpoise is the smallest of the whales. Above, you have all the  
Leviathans of note. But there are a rabble of uncertain, fugitive,  
half-fabulous whales, which, as an American whaleman, I know by  
reputation, but not personally. I shall enumerate them by their  
fore-castle appellations; for possibly such a list may be valuable to  
future investigators, who may complete what I have here but begun. If  
any of the following whales, shall hereafter be caught and marked, then  
he can readily be incorporated into this System, according to his Folio,  
Octavo, or Duodecimo magnitude:--The Bottle-Nose Whale; the Junk Whale;  
the Pudding-Headed Whale; the Cape Whale; the Leading Whale; the Cannon  
Whale; the Scragg Whale; the Coppered Whale; the Elephant Whale; the  
Iceberg Whale; the Quog Whale; the Blue Whale; etc. From Icelandic,  
Dutch, and old English authorities, there might be quoted other lists of  
uncertain whales, blessed with all manner of uncouth names. But I omit  
them as altogether obsolete; and can hardly help suspecting them for  
mere sounds, full of Leviathanism, but signifying nothing.  
  
Finally: It was stated at the outset, that this system would not be  
here, and at once, perfected. You cannot but plainly see that I have  
kept my word. But I now leave my cetological System standing thus  
unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the  
crane still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower. For small  
erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true  
ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity. God keep me from ever  
completing anything. This whole book is but a draught--nay, but the  
draught of a draught. Oh, Time, Strength, Cash, and Patience!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 33. The Specksnyder.  
  
  
Concerning the officers of the whale-craft, this seems as good a place  
as any to set down a little domestic peculiarity on ship-board, arising  
from the existence of the harpooneer class of officers, a class unknown  
of course in any other marine than the whale-fleet.  
  
The large importance attached to the harpooneer's vocation is evinced  
by the fact, that originally in the old Dutch Fishery, two centuries  
and more ago, the command of a whale ship was not wholly lodged in  
the person now called the captain, but was divided between him and an  
officer called the Specksnyder. Literally this word means Fat-Cutter;  
usage, however, in time made it equivalent to Chief Harpooneer. In  
those days, the captain's authority was restricted to the navigation  
and general management of the vessel; while over the whale-hunting  
department and all its concerns, the Specksnyder or Chief Harpooneer  
reigned supreme. In the British Greenland Fishery, under the corrupted  
title of Specksioneer, this old Dutch official is still retained, but  
his former dignity is sadly abridged. At present he ranks simply  
as senior Harpooneer; and as such, is but one of the captain's more  
inferior subalterns. Nevertheless, as upon the good conduct of the  
harpooneers the success of a whaling voyage largely depends, and since  
in the American Fishery he is not only an important officer in the boat,  
but under certain circumstances (night watches on a whaling ground) the  
command of the ship's deck is also his; therefore the grand political  
maxim of the sea demands, that he should nominally live apart from  
the men before the mast, and be in some way distinguished as their  
professional superior; though always, by them, familiarly regarded as  
their social equal.  
  
Now, the grand distinction drawn between officer and man at sea, is  
this--the first lives aft, the last forward. Hence, in whale-ships and  
merchantmen alike, the mates have their quarters with the captain; and  
so, too, in most of the American whalers the harpooneers are lodged in  
the after part of the ship. That is to say, they take their meals in the  
captain's cabin, and sleep in a place indirectly communicating with it.  
  
Though the long period of a Southern whaling voyage (by far the longest  
of all voyages now or ever made by man), the peculiar perils of it, and  
the community of interest prevailing among a company, all of whom, high  
or low, depend for their profits, not upon fixed wages, but upon their  
common luck, together with their common vigilance, intrepidity, and  
hard work; though all these things do in some cases tend to beget a less  
rigorous discipline than in merchantmen generally; yet, never mind  
how much like an old Mesopotamian family these whalemen may, in some  
primitive instances, live together; for all that, the punctilious  
externals, at least, of the quarter-deck are seldom materially relaxed,  
and in no instance done away. Indeed, many are the Nantucket ships in  
which you will see the skipper parading his quarter-deck with an elated  
grandeur not surpassed in any military navy; nay, extorting almost  
as much outward homage as if he wore the imperial purple, and not the  
shabbiest of pilot-cloth.  
  
And though of all men the moody captain of the Pequod was the least  
given to that sort of shallowest assumption; and though the only homage  
he ever exacted, was implicit, instantaneous obedience; though he  
required no man to remove the shoes from his feet ere stepping upon  
the quarter-deck; and though there were times when, owing to peculiar  
circumstances connected with events hereafter to be detailed, he  
addressed them in unusual terms, whether of condescension or IN  
TERROREM, or otherwise; yet even Captain Ahab was by no means  
unobservant of the paramount forms and usages of the sea.  
  
Nor, perhaps, will it fail to be eventually perceived, that behind those  
forms and usages, as it were, he sometimes masked himself; incidentally  
making use of them for other and more private ends than they were  
legitimately intended to subserve. That certain sultanism of his brain,  
which had otherwise in a good degree remained unmanifested; through  
those forms that same sultanism became incarnate in an irresistible  
dictatorship. For be a man's intellectual superiority what it will,  
it can never assume the practical, available supremacy over other men,  
without the aid of some sort of external arts and entrenchments, always,  
in themselves, more or less paltry and base. This it is, that for ever  
keeps God's true princes of the Empire from the world's hustings; and  
leaves the highest honours that this air can give, to those men who  
become famous more through their infinite inferiority to the choice  
hidden handful of the Divine Inert, than through their undoubted  
superiority over the dead level of the mass. Such large virtue lurks  
in these small things when extreme political superstitions invest them,  
that in some royal instances even to idiot imbecility they have imparted  
potency. But when, as in the case of Nicholas the Czar, the ringed crown  
of geographical empire encircles an imperial brain; then, the plebeian  
herds crouch abased before the tremendous centralization. Nor, will the  
tragic dramatist who would depict mortal indomitableness in its fullest  
sweep and direct swing, ever forget a hint, incidentally so important in  
his art, as the one now alluded to.  
  
But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket  
grimness and shagginess; and in this episode touching Emperors and  
Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old  
whale-hunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestical trappings  
and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! what shall be grand in thee, it  
must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and  
featured in the unbodied air!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 34. The Cabin-Table.  
  
  
It is noon; and Dough-Boy, the steward, thrusting his pale loaf-of-bread  
face from the cabin-scuttle, announces dinner to his lord and  
master; who, sitting in the lee quarter-boat, has just been taking an  
observation of the sun; and is now mutely reckoning the latitude on the  
smooth, medallion-shaped tablet, reserved for that daily purpose on  
the upper part of his ivory leg. From his complete inattention to the  
tidings, you would think that moody Ahab had not heard his menial. But  
presently, catching hold of the mizen shrouds, he swings himself to  
the deck, and in an even, unexhilarated voice, saying, "Dinner, Mr.  
Starbuck," disappears into the cabin.  
  
When the last echo of his sultan's step has died away, and Starbuck, the  
first Emir, has every reason to suppose that he is seated, then Starbuck  
rouses from his quietude, takes a few turns along the planks, and, after  
a grave peep into the binnacle, says, with some touch of pleasantness,  
"Dinner, Mr. Stubb," and descends the scuttle. The second Emir lounges  
about the rigging awhile, and then slightly shaking the main brace, to  
see whether it will be all right with that important rope, he likewise  
takes up the old burden, and with a rapid "Dinner, Mr. Flask," follows  
after his predecessors.  
  
But the third Emir, now seeing himself all alone on the quarter-deck,  
seems to feel relieved from some curious restraint; for, tipping all  
sorts of knowing winks in all sorts of directions, and kicking off his  
shoes, he strikes into a sharp but noiseless squall of a hornpipe right  
over the Grand Turk's head; and then, by a dexterous sleight, pitching  
his cap up into the mizentop for a shelf, he goes down rollicking so  
far at least as he remains visible from the deck, reversing all other  
processions, by bringing up the rear with music. But ere stepping into  
the cabin doorway below, he pauses, ships a new face altogether, and,  
then, independent, hilarious little Flask enters King Ahab's presence,  
in the character of Abjectus, or the Slave.  
  
It is not the least among the strange things bred by the intense  
artificialness of sea-usages, that while in the open air of the deck  
some officers will, upon provocation, bear themselves boldly and  
defyingly enough towards their commander; yet, ten to one, let those  
very officers the next moment go down to their customary dinner in that  
same commander's cabin, and straightway their inoffensive, not to say  
deprecatory and humble air towards him, as he sits at the head of  
the table; this is marvellous, sometimes most comical. Wherefore this  
difference? A problem? Perhaps not. To have been Belshazzar, King of  
Babylon; and to have been Belshazzar, not haughtily but courteously,  
therein certainly must have been some touch of mundane grandeur. But he  
who in the rightly regal and intelligent spirit presides over his own  
private dinner-table of invited guests, that man's unchallenged power  
and dominion of individual influence for the time; that man's royalty of  
state transcends Belshazzar's, for Belshazzar was not the greatest. Who  
has but once dined his friends, has tasted what it is to be Caesar. It  
is a witchery of social czarship which there is no withstanding. Now,  
if to this consideration you superadd the official supremacy of a  
ship-master, then, by inference, you will derive the cause of that  
peculiarity of sea-life just mentioned.  
  
Over his ivory-inlaid table, Ahab presided like a mute, maned  
sea-lion on the white coral beach, surrounded by his warlike but still  
deferential cubs. In his own proper turn, each officer waited to be  
served. They were as little children before Ahab; and yet, in Ahab,  
there seemed not to lurk the smallest social arrogance. With one mind,  
their intent eyes all fastened upon the old man's knife, as he carved  
the chief dish before him. I do not suppose that for the world they  
would have profaned that moment with the slightest observation, even  
upon so neutral a topic as the weather. No! And when reaching out his  
knife and fork, between which the slice of beef was locked, Ahab thereby  
motioned Starbuck's plate towards him, the mate received his meat as  
though receiving alms; and cut it tenderly; and a little started  
if, perchance, the knife grazed against the plate; and chewed it  
noiselessly; and swallowed it, not without circumspection. For, like  
the Coronation banquet at Frankfort, where the German Emperor profoundly  
dines with the seven Imperial Electors, so these cabin meals were  
somehow solemn meals, eaten in awful silence; and yet at table old Ahab  
forbade not conversation; only he himself was dumb. What a relief it was  
to choking Stubb, when a rat made a sudden racket in the hold below. And  
poor little Flask, he was the youngest son, and little boy of this weary  
family party. His were the shinbones of the saline beef; his would have  
been the drumsticks. For Flask to have presumed to help himself, this  
must have seemed to him tantamount to larceny in the first degree. Had  
he helped himself at that table, doubtless, never more would he have  
been able to hold his head up in this honest world; nevertheless,  
strange to say, Ahab never forbade him. And had Flask helped himself,  
the chances were Ahab had never so much as noticed it. Least of all, did  
Flask presume to help himself to butter. Whether he thought the owners  
of the ship denied it to him, on account of its clotting his clear,  
sunny complexion; or whether he deemed that, on so long a voyage in such  
marketless waters, butter was at a premium, and therefore was not for  
him, a subaltern; however it was, Flask, alas! was a butterless man!  
  
Another thing. Flask was the last person down at the dinner, and Flask  
is the first man up. Consider! For hereby Flask's dinner was badly  
jammed in point of time. Starbuck and Stubb both had the start of him;  
and yet they also have the privilege of lounging in the rear. If Stubb  
even, who is but a peg higher than Flask, happens to have but a small  
appetite, and soon shows symptoms of concluding his repast, then Flask  
must bestir himself, he will not get more than three mouthfuls that day;  
for it is against holy usage for Stubb to precede Flask to the deck.  
Therefore it was that Flask once admitted in private, that ever since he  
had arisen to the dignity of an officer, from that moment he had never  
known what it was to be otherwise than hungry, more or less. For what  
he ate did not so much relieve his hunger, as keep it immortal in him.  
Peace and satisfaction, thought Flask, have for ever departed from  
my stomach. I am an officer; but, how I wish I could fish a bit of  
old-fashioned beef in the forecastle, as I used to when I was before the  
mast. There's the fruits of promotion now; there's the vanity of glory:  
there's the insanity of life! Besides, if it were so that any mere  
sailor of the Pequod had a grudge against Flask in Flask's official  
capacity, all that sailor had to do, in order to obtain ample vengeance,  
was to go aft at dinner-time, and get a peep at Flask through the cabin  
sky-light, sitting silly and dumfoundered before awful Ahab.  
  
Now, Ahab and his three mates formed what may be called the first table  
in the Pequod's cabin. After their departure, taking place in inverted  
order to their arrival, the canvas cloth was cleared, or rather was  
restored to some hurried order by the pallid steward. And then the three  
harpooneers were bidden to the feast, they being its residuary legatees.  
They made a sort of temporary servants' hall of the high and mighty  
cabin.  
  
In strange contrast to the hardly tolerable constraint and nameless  
invisible domineerings of the captain's table, was the entire care-free  
license and ease, the almost frantic democracy of those inferior fellows  
the harpooneers. While their masters, the mates, seemed afraid of the  
sound of the hinges of their own jaws, the harpooneers chewed their food  
with such a relish that there was a report to it. They dined like lords;  
they filled their bellies like Indian ships all day loading with spices.  
Such portentous appetites had Queequeg and Tashtego, that to fill out  
the vacancies made by the previous repast, often the pale Dough-Boy was  
fain to bring on a great baron of salt-junk, seemingly quarried out of  
the solid ox. And if he were not lively about it, if he did not go with  
a nimble hop-skip-and-jump, then Tashtego had an ungentlemanly way of  
accelerating him by darting a fork at his back, harpoon-wise. And once  
Daggoo, seized with a sudden humor, assisted Dough-Boy's memory by  
snatching him up bodily, and thrusting his head into a great empty  
wooden trencher, while Tashtego, knife in hand, began laying out the  
circle preliminary to scalping him. He was naturally a very nervous,  
shuddering sort of little fellow, this bread-faced steward; the progeny  
of a bankrupt baker and a hospital nurse. And what with the standing  
spectacle of the black terrific Ahab, and the periodical tumultuous  
visitations of these three savages, Dough-Boy's whole life was one  
continual lip-quiver. Commonly, after seeing the harpooneers furnished  
with all things they demanded, he would escape from their clutches into  
his little pantry adjoining, and fearfully peep out at them through the  
blinds of its door, till all was over.  
  
It was a sight to see Queequeg seated over against Tashtego, opposing  
his filed teeth to the Indian's: crosswise to them, Daggoo seated on the  
floor, for a bench would have brought his hearse-plumed head to the low  
carlines; at every motion of his colossal limbs, making the low cabin  
framework to shake, as when an African elephant goes passenger in a  
ship. But for all this, the great negro was wonderfully abstemious,  
not to say dainty. It seemed hardly possible that by such comparatively  
small mouthfuls he could keep up the vitality diffused through so broad,  
baronial, and superb a person. But, doubtless, this noble savage fed  
strong and drank deep of the abounding element of air; and through his  
dilated nostrils snuffed in the sublime life of the worlds. Not by  
beef or by bread, are giants made or nourished. But Queequeg, he had a  
mortal, barbaric smack of the lip in eating--an ugly sound enough--so  
much so, that the trembling Dough-Boy almost looked to see whether  
any marks of teeth lurked in his own lean arms. And when he would hear  
Tashtego singing out for him to produce himself, that his bones might be  
picked, the simple-witted steward all but shattered the crockery hanging  
round him in the pantry, by his sudden fits of the palsy. Nor did the  
whetstone which the harpooneers carried in their pockets, for their  
lances and other weapons; and with which whetstones, at dinner, they  
would ostentatiously sharpen their knives; that grating sound did not at  
all tend to tranquillize poor Dough-Boy. How could he forget that in his  
Island days, Queequeg, for one, must certainly have been guilty of some  
murderous, convivial indiscretions. Alas! Dough-Boy! hard fares the  
white waiter who waits upon cannibals. Not a napkin should he carry on  
his arm, but a buckler. In good time, though, to his great delight,  
the three salt-sea warriors would rise and depart; to his credulous,  
fable-mongering ears, all their martial bones jingling in them at every  
step, like Moorish scimetars in scabbards.  
  
But, though these barbarians dined in the cabin, and nominally lived  
there; still, being anything but sedentary in their habits, they were  
scarcely ever in it except at mealtimes, and just before sleeping-time,  
when they passed through it to their own peculiar quarters.  
  
In this one matter, Ahab seemed no exception to most American whale  
captains, who, as a set, rather incline to the opinion that by rights  
the ship's cabin belongs to them; and that it is by courtesy alone that  
anybody else is, at any time, permitted there. So that, in real truth,  
the mates and harpooneers of the Pequod might more properly be said to  
have lived out of the cabin than in it. For when they did enter it, it  
was something as a street-door enters a house; turning inwards for  
a moment, only to be turned out the next; and, as a permanent thing,  
residing in the open air. Nor did they lose much hereby; in the cabin  
was no companionship; socially, Ahab was inaccessible. Though nominally  
included in the census of Christendom, he was still an alien to it. He  
lived in the world, as the last of the Grisly Bears lived in settled  
Missouri. And as when Spring and Summer had departed, that wild Logan of  
the woods, burying himself in the hollow of a tree, lived out the winter  
there, sucking his own paws; so, in his inclement, howling old age,  
Ahab's soul, shut up in the caved trunk of his body, there fed upon the  
sullen paws of its gloom!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 35. The Mast-Head.  
  
  
It was during the more pleasant weather, that in due rotation with the  
other seamen my first mast-head came round.  
  
In most American whalemen the mast-heads are manned almost  
simultaneously with the vessel's leaving her port; even though she may  
have fifteen thousand miles, and more, to sail ere reaching her proper  
cruising ground. And if, after a three, four, or five years' voyage  
she is drawing nigh home with anything empty in her--say, an empty vial  
even--then, her mast-heads are kept manned to the last; and not till her  
skysail-poles sail in among the spires of the port, does she altogether  
relinquish the hope of capturing one whale more.  
  
Now, as the business of standing mast-heads, ashore or afloat, is a very  
ancient and interesting one, let us in some measure expatiate here.  
I take it, that the earliest standers of mast-heads were the old  
Egyptians; because, in all my researches, I find none prior to them.  
For though their progenitors, the builders of Babel, must doubtless, by  
their tower, have intended to rear the loftiest mast-head in all Asia,  
or Africa either; yet (ere the final truck was put to it) as that great  
stone mast of theirs may be said to have gone by the board, in the dread  
gale of God's wrath; therefore, we cannot give these Babel builders  
priority over the Egyptians. And that the Egyptians were a nation of  
mast-head standers, is an assertion based upon the general belief among  
archaeologists, that the first pyramids were founded for astronomical  
purposes: a theory singularly supported by the peculiar stair-like  
formation of all four sides of those edifices; whereby, with prodigious  
long upliftings of their legs, those old astronomers were wont to mount  
to the apex, and sing out for new stars; even as the look-outs of a  
modern ship sing out for a sail, or a whale just bearing in sight. In  
Saint Stylites, the famous Christian hermit of old times, who built him  
a lofty stone pillar in the desert and spent the whole latter portion of  
his life on its summit, hoisting his food from the ground with a  
tackle; in him we have a remarkable instance of a dauntless  
stander-of-mast-heads; who was not to be driven from his place by fogs  
or frosts, rain, hail, or sleet; but valiantly facing everything out to  
the last, literally died at his post. Of modern standers-of-mast-heads  
we have but a lifeless set; mere stone, iron, and bronze men; who,  
though well capable of facing out a stiff gale, are still entirely  
incompetent to the business of singing out upon discovering any strange  
sight. There is Napoleon; who, upon the top of the column of Vendome,  
stands with arms folded, some one hundred and fifty feet in the air;  
careless, now, who rules the decks below; whether Louis Philippe, Louis  
Blanc, or Louis the Devil. Great Washington, too, stands high aloft on  
his towering main-mast in Baltimore, and like one of Hercules' pillars,  
his column marks that point of human grandeur beyond which few mortals  
will go. Admiral Nelson, also, on a capstan of gun-metal, stands his  
mast-head in Trafalgar Square; and ever when most obscured by that  
London smoke, token is yet given that a hidden hero is there; for  
where there is smoke, must be fire. But neither great Washington, nor  
Napoleon, nor Nelson, will answer a single hail from below, however  
madly invoked to befriend by their counsels the distracted decks  
upon which they gaze; however it may be surmised, that their spirits  
penetrate through the thick haze of the future, and descry what shoals  
and what rocks must be shunned.  
  
It may seem unwarrantable to couple in any respect the mast-head  
standers of the land with those of the sea; but that in truth it is  
not so, is plainly evinced by an item for which Obed Macy, the sole  
historian of Nantucket, stands accountable. The worthy Obed tells us,  
that in the early times of the whale fishery, ere ships were regularly  
launched in pursuit of the game, the people of that island erected lofty  
spars along the sea-coast, to which the look-outs ascended by means  
of nailed cleats, something as fowls go upstairs in a hen-house. A few  
years ago this same plan was adopted by the Bay whalemen of New Zealand,  
who, upon descrying the game, gave notice to the ready-manned boats nigh  
the beach. But this custom has now become obsolete; turn we then to the  
one proper mast-head, that of a whale-ship at sea. The three mast-heads  
are kept manned from sun-rise to sun-set; the seamen taking their  
regular turns (as at the helm), and relieving each other every two  
hours. In the serene weather of the tropics it is exceedingly pleasant  
the mast-head; nay, to a dreamy meditative man it is delightful. There  
you stand, a hundred feet above the silent decks, striding along the  
deep, as if the masts were gigantic stilts, while beneath you and  
between your legs, as it were, swim the hugest monsters of the sea, even  
as ships once sailed between the boots of the famous Colossus at old  
Rhodes. There you stand, lost in the infinite series of the sea, with  
nothing ruffled but the waves. The tranced ship indolently rolls; the  
drowsy trade winds blow; everything resolves you into languor. For the  
most part, in this tropic whaling life, a sublime uneventfulness invests  
you; you hear no news; read no gazettes; extras with startling accounts  
of commonplaces never delude you into unnecessary excitements; you hear  
of no domestic afflictions; bankrupt securities; fall of stocks; are  
never troubled with the thought of what you shall have for dinner--for  
all your meals for three years and more are snugly stowed in casks, and  
your bill of fare is immutable.  
  
In one of those southern whalesmen, on a long three or four years'  
voyage, as often happens, the sum of the various hours you spend at the  
mast-head would amount to several entire months. And it is much to be  
deplored that the place to which you devote so considerable a portion  
of the whole term of your natural life, should be so sadly destitute  
of anything approaching to a cosy inhabitiveness, or adapted to breed a  
comfortable localness of feeling, such as pertains to a bed, a hammock,  
a hearse, a sentry box, a pulpit, a coach, or any other of those small  
and snug contrivances in which men temporarily isolate themselves. Your  
most usual point of perch is the head of the t' gallant-mast, where you  
stand upon two thin parallel sticks (almost peculiar to whalemen) called  
the t' gallant cross-trees. Here, tossed about by the sea, the beginner  
feels about as cosy as he would standing on a bull's horns. To be sure,  
in cold weather you may carry your house aloft with you, in the shape of  
a watch-coat; but properly speaking the thickest watch-coat is no more  
of a house than the unclad body; for as the soul is glued inside of its  
fleshy tabernacle, and cannot freely move about in it, nor even move out  
of it, without running great risk of perishing (like an ignorant pilgrim  
crossing the snowy Alps in winter); so a watch-coat is not so much of  
a house as it is a mere envelope, or additional skin encasing you. You  
cannot put a shelf or chest of drawers in your body, and no more can you  
make a convenient closet of your watch-coat.  
  
Concerning all this, it is much to be deplored that the mast-heads of a  
southern whale ship are unprovided with those enviable little tents  
or pulpits, called CROW'S-NESTS, in which the look-outs of a Greenland  
whaler are protected from the inclement weather of the frozen seas. In  
the fireside narrative of Captain Sleet, entitled "A Voyage among the  
Icebergs, in quest of the Greenland Whale, and incidentally for the  
re-discovery of the Lost Icelandic Colonies of Old Greenland;" in  
this admirable volume, all standers of mast-heads are furnished with  
a charmingly circumstantial account of the then recently invented  
CROW'S-NEST of the Glacier, which was the name of Captain Sleet's good  
craft. He called it the SLEET'S CROW'S-NEST, in honour of himself; he  
being the original inventor and patentee, and free from all ridiculous  
false delicacy, and holding that if we call our own children after our  
own names (we fathers being the original inventors and patentees), so  
likewise should we denominate after ourselves any other apparatus we  
may beget. In shape, the Sleet's crow's-nest is something like a large  
tierce or pipe; it is open above, however, where it is furnished with  
a movable side-screen to keep to windward of your head in a hard gale.  
Being fixed on the summit of the mast, you ascend into it through a  
little trap-hatch in the bottom. On the after side, or side next the  
stern of the ship, is a comfortable seat, with a locker underneath for  
umbrellas, comforters, and coats. In front is a leather rack, in which  
to keep your speaking trumpet, pipe, telescope, and other nautical  
conveniences. When Captain Sleet in person stood his mast-head in this  
crow's-nest of his, he tells us that he always had a rifle with him  
(also fixed in the rack), together with a powder flask and shot, for  
the purpose of popping off the stray narwhales, or vagrant sea unicorns  
infesting those waters; for you cannot successfully shoot at them from  
the deck owing to the resistance of the water, but to shoot down upon  
them is a very different thing. Now, it was plainly a labor of love  
for Captain Sleet to describe, as he does, all the little detailed  
conveniences of his crow's-nest; but though he so enlarges upon many  
of these, and though he treats us to a very scientific account of his  
experiments in this crow's-nest, with a small compass he kept there for  
the purpose of counteracting the errors resulting from what is called  
the "local attraction" of all binnacle magnets; an error ascribable to  
the horizontal vicinity of the iron in the ship's planks, and in the  
Glacier's case, perhaps, to there having been so many broken-down  
blacksmiths among her crew; I say, that though the Captain is very  
discreet and scientific here, yet, for all his learned "binnacle  
deviations," "azimuth compass observations," and "approximate errors,"  
he knows very well, Captain Sleet, that he was not so much immersed  
in those profound magnetic meditations, as to fail being attracted  
occasionally towards that well replenished little case-bottle, so nicely  
tucked in on one side of his crow's nest, within easy reach of his hand.  
Though, upon the whole, I greatly admire and even love the brave, the  
honest, and learned Captain; yet I take it very ill of him that he  
should so utterly ignore that case-bottle, seeing what a faithful friend  
and comforter it must have been, while with mittened fingers and hooded  
head he was studying the mathematics aloft there in that bird's nest  
within three or four perches of the pole.  
  
But if we Southern whale-fishers are not so snugly housed aloft as  
Captain Sleet and his Greenlandmen were; yet that disadvantage is  
greatly counter-balanced by the widely contrasting serenity of those  
seductive seas in which we South fishers mostly float. For one, I used  
to lounge up the rigging very leisurely, resting in the top to have a  
chat with Queequeg, or any one else off duty whom I might find there;  
then ascending a little way further, and throwing a lazy leg over the  
top-sail yard, take a preliminary view of the watery pastures, and so at  
last mount to my ultimate destination.  
  
Let me make a clean breast of it here, and frankly admit that I kept but  
sorry guard. With the problem of the universe revolving in me, how  
could I--being left completely to myself at such a thought-engendering  
altitude--how could I but lightly hold my obligations to observe all  
whale-ships' standing orders, "Keep your weather eye open, and sing out  
every time."  
  
And let me in this place movingly admonish you, ye ship-owners of  
Nantucket! Beware of enlisting in your vigilant fisheries any lad with  
lean brow and hollow eye; given to unseasonable meditativeness; and who  
offers to ship with the Phaedon instead of Bowditch in his head. Beware  
of such an one, I say; your whales must be seen before they can be  
killed; and this sunken-eyed young Platonist will tow you ten wakes  
round the world, and never make you one pint of sperm the richer. Nor  
are these monitions at all unneeded. For nowadays, the whale-fishery  
furnishes an asylum for many romantic, melancholy, and absent-minded  
young men, disgusted with the carking cares of earth, and seeking  
sentiment in tar and blubber. Childe Harold not unfrequently perches  
himself upon the mast-head of some luckless disappointed whale-ship, and  
in moody phrase ejaculates:--  
  
"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll! Ten thousand  
blubber-hunters sweep over thee in vain."  
  
Very often do the captains of such ships take those absent-minded  
young philosophers to task, upbraiding them with not feeling sufficient  
"interest" in the voyage; half-hinting that they are so hopelessly lost  
to all honourable ambition, as that in their secret souls they would  
rather not see whales than otherwise. But all in vain; those young  
Platonists have a notion that their vision is imperfect; they are  
short-sighted; what use, then, to strain the visual nerve? They have  
left their opera-glasses at home.  
  
"Why, thou monkey," said a harpooneer to one of these lads, "we've been  
cruising now hard upon three years, and thou hast not raised a whale  
yet. Whales are scarce as hen's teeth whenever thou art up here."  
Perhaps they were; or perhaps there might have been shoals of them in  
the far horizon; but lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of  
vacant, unconscious reverie is this absent-minded youth by the blending  
cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity;  
takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep,  
blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every  
strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every  
dimly-discovered, uprising fin of some undiscernible form, seems to him  
the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by  
continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs  
away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space; like  
Crammer's sprinkled Pantheistic ashes, forming at last a part of every  
shore the round globe over.  
  
There is no life in thee, now, except that rocking life imparted by a  
gently rolling ship; by her, borrowed from the sea; by the sea, from  
the inscrutable tides of God. But while this sleep, this dream is on ye,  
move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity  
comes back in horror. Over Descartian vortices you hover. And perhaps,  
at mid-day, in the fairest weather, with one half-throttled shriek you  
drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise  
for ever. Heed it well, ye Pantheists!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 36. The Quarter-Deck.  
  
  
(ENTER AHAB: THEN, ALL)  
  
  
It was not a great while after the affair of the pipe, that one  
morning shortly after breakfast, Ahab, as was his wont, ascended the  
cabin-gangway to the deck. There most sea-captains usually walk at that  
hour, as country gentlemen, after the same meal, take a few turns in the  
garden.  
  
Soon his steady, ivory stride was heard, as to and fro he paced his old  
rounds, upon planks so familiar to his tread, that they were all over  
dented, like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of his walk. Did  
you fixedly gaze, too, upon that ribbed and dented brow; there also,  
you would see still stranger foot-prints--the foot-prints of his one  
unsleeping, ever-pacing thought.  
  
But on the occasion in question, those dents looked deeper, even as  
his nervous step that morning left a deeper mark. And, so full of his  
thought was Ahab, that at every uniform turn that he made, now at the  
main-mast and now at the binnacle, you could almost see that thought  
turn in him as he turned, and pace in him as he paced; so completely  
possessing him, indeed, that it all but seemed the inward mould of every  
outer movement.  
  
"D'ye mark him, Flask?" whispered Stubb; "the chick that's in him pecks  
the shell. 'Twill soon be out."  
  
The hours wore on;--Ahab now shut up within his cabin; anon, pacing the  
deck, with the same intense bigotry of purpose in his aspect.  
  
It drew near the close of day. Suddenly he came to a halt by the  
bulwarks, and inserting his bone leg into the auger-hole there, and with  
one hand grasping a shroud, he ordered Starbuck to send everybody aft.  
  
"Sir!" said the mate, astonished at an order seldom or never given on  
ship-board except in some extraordinary case.  
  
"Send everybody aft," repeated Ahab. "Mast-heads, there! come down!"  
  
When the entire ship's company were assembled, and with curious and not  
wholly unapprehensive faces, were eyeing him, for he looked not unlike  
the weather horizon when a storm is coming up, Ahab, after rapidly  
glancing over the bulwarks, and then darting his eyes among the crew,  
started from his standpoint; and as though not a soul were nigh him  
resumed his heavy turns upon the deck. With bent head and half-slouched  
hat he continued to pace, unmindful of the wondering whispering among  
the men; till Stubb cautiously whispered to Flask, that Ahab must have  
summoned them there for the purpose of witnessing a pedestrian feat. But  
this did not last long. Vehemently pausing, he cried:--  
  
"What do ye do when ye see a whale, men?"  
  
"Sing out for him!" was the impulsive rejoinder from a score of clubbed  
voices.  
  
"Good!" cried Ahab, with a wild approval in his tones; observing the  
hearty animation into which his unexpected question had so magnetically  
thrown them.  
  
"And what do ye next, men?"  
  
"Lower away, and after him!"  
  
"And what tune is it ye pull to, men?"  
  
"A dead whale or a stove boat!"  
  
More and more strangely and fiercely glad and approving, grew the  
countenance of the old man at every shout; while the mariners began  
to gaze curiously at each other, as if marvelling how it was that they  
themselves became so excited at such seemingly purposeless questions.  
  
But, they were all eagerness again, as Ahab, now half-revolving in his  
pivot-hole, with one hand reaching high up a shroud, and tightly, almost  
convulsively grasping it, addressed them thus:--  
  
"All ye mast-headers have before now heard me give orders about a white  
whale. Look ye! d'ye see this Spanish ounce of gold?"--holding up a  
broad bright coin to the sun--"it is a sixteen dollar piece, men. D'ye  
see it? Mr. Starbuck, hand me yon top-maul."  
  
While the mate was getting the hammer, Ahab, without speaking, was  
slowly rubbing the gold piece against the skirts of his jacket, as if  
to heighten its lustre, and without using any words was meanwhile  
lowly humming to himself, producing a sound so strangely muffled and  
inarticulate that it seemed the mechanical humming of the wheels of his  
vitality in him.  
  
Receiving the top-maul from Starbuck, he advanced towards the main-mast  
with the hammer uplifted in one hand, exhibiting the gold with the  
other, and with a high raised voice exclaiming: "Whosoever of ye  
raises me a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw;  
whosoever of ye raises me that white-headed whale, with three holes  
punctured in his starboard fluke--look ye, whosoever of ye raises me  
that same white whale, he shall have this gold ounce, my boys!"  
  
"Huzza! huzza!" cried the seamen, as with swinging tarpaulins they  
hailed the act of nailing the gold to the mast.  
  
"It's a white whale, I say," resumed Ahab, as he threw down the topmaul:  
"a white whale. Skin your eyes for him, men; look sharp for white water;  
if ye see but a bubble, sing out."  
  
All this while Tashtego, Daggoo, and Queequeg had looked on with even  
more intense interest and surprise than the rest, and at the mention  
of the wrinkled brow and crooked jaw they had started as if each was  
separately touched by some specific recollection.  
  
"Captain Ahab," said Tashtego, "that white whale must be the same that  
some call Moby Dick."  
  
"Moby Dick?" shouted Ahab. "Do ye know the white whale then, Tash?"  
  
"Does he fan-tail a little curious, sir, before he goes down?" said the  
Gay-Header deliberately.  
  
"And has he a curious spout, too," said Daggoo, "very bushy, even for a  
parmacetty, and mighty quick, Captain Ahab?"  
  
"And he have one, two, three--oh! good many iron in him hide, too,  
Captain," cried Queequeg disjointedly, "all twiske-tee be-twisk, like  
him--him--" faltering hard for a word, and screwing his hand round and  
round as though uncorking a bottle--"like him--him--"  
  
"Corkscrew!" cried Ahab, "aye, Queequeg, the harpoons lie all twisted  
and wrenched in him; aye, Daggoo, his spout is a big one, like a whole  
shock of wheat, and white as a pile of our Nantucket wool after the  
great annual sheep-shearing; aye, Tashtego, and he fan-tails like a  
split jib in a squall. Death and devils! men, it is Moby Dick ye have  
seen--Moby Dick--Moby Dick!"  
  
"Captain Ahab," said Starbuck, who, with Stubb and Flask, had thus far  
been eyeing his superior with increasing surprise, but at last seemed  
struck with a thought which somewhat explained all the wonder. "Captain  
Ahab, I have heard of Moby Dick--but it was not Moby Dick that took off  
thy leg?"  
  
"Who told thee that?" cried Ahab; then pausing, "Aye, Starbuck; aye, my  
hearties all round; it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that  
brought me to this dead stump I stand on now. Aye, aye," he shouted with  
a terrific, loud, animal sob, like that of a heart-stricken moose;  
"Aye, aye! it was that accursed white whale that razeed me; made a poor  
pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!" Then tossing both arms, with  
measureless imprecations he shouted out: "Aye, aye! and I'll chase him  
round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and  
round perdition's flames before I give him up. And this is what ye have  
shipped for, men! to chase that white whale on both sides of land, and  
over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out.  
What say ye, men, will ye splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look  
brave."  
  
"Aye, aye!" shouted the harpooneers and seamen, running closer to the  
excited old man: "A sharp eye for the white whale; a sharp lance for  
Moby Dick!"  
  
"God bless ye," he seemed to half sob and half shout. "God bless ye,  
men. Steward! go draw the great measure of grog. But what's this long  
face about, Mr. Starbuck; wilt thou not chase the white whale? art not  
game for Moby Dick?"  
  
"I am game for his crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death too, Captain  
Ahab, if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow; but I  
came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance. How many barrels  
will thy vengeance yield thee even if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it  
will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market."  
  
"Nantucket market! Hoot! But come closer, Starbuck; thou requirest  
a little lower layer. If money's to be the measurer, man, and the  
accountants have computed their great counting-house the globe, by  
girdling it with guineas, one to every three parts of an inch; then, let  
me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium HERE!"  
  
"He smites his chest," whispered Stubb, "what's that for? methinks it  
rings most vast, but hollow."  
  
"Vengeance on a dumb brute!" cried Starbuck, "that simply smote thee  
from blindest instinct! Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing,  
Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous."  
  
"Hark ye yet again--the little lower layer. All visible objects, man,  
are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event--in the living act, the  
undoubted deed--there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth  
the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man  
will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside  
except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that  
wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But  
'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength,  
with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is  
chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale  
principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy,  
man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that,  
then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play  
herein, jealousy presiding over all creations. But not my master, man,  
is even that fair play. Who's over me? Truth hath no confines. Take off  
thine eye! more intolerable than fiends' glarings is a doltish  
stare! So, so; thou reddenest and palest; my heat has melted thee to  
anger-glow. But look ye, Starbuck, what is said in heat, that thing  
unsays itself. There are men from whom warm words are small indignity. I  
meant not to incense thee. Let it go. Look! see yonder Turkish cheeks of  
spotted tawn--living, breathing pictures painted by the sun. The Pagan  
leopards--the unrecking and unworshipping things, that live; and seek,  
and give no reasons for the torrid life they feel! The crew, man, the  
crew! Are they not one and all with Ahab, in this matter of the whale?  
See Stubb! he laughs! See yonder Chilian! he snorts to think of it.  
Stand up amid the general hurricane, thy one tost sapling cannot,  
Starbuck! And what is it? Reckon it. 'Tis but to help strike a fin; no  
wondrous feat for Starbuck. What is it more? From this one poor hunt,  
then, the best lance out of all Nantucket, surely he will not hang back,  
when every foremast-hand has clutched a whetstone? Ah! constrainings  
seize thee; I see! the billow lifts thee! Speak, but speak!--Aye, aye!  
thy silence, then, THAT voices thee. (ASIDE) Something shot from my  
dilated nostrils, he has inhaled it in his lungs. Starbuck now is mine;  
cannot oppose me now, without rebellion."  
  
"God keep me!--keep us all!" murmured Starbuck, lowly.  
  
But in his joy at the enchanted, tacit acquiescence of the mate, Ahab  
did not hear his foreboding invocation; nor yet the low laugh from the  
hold; nor yet the presaging vibrations of the winds in the cordage;  
nor yet the hollow flap of the sails against the masts, as for a moment  
their hearts sank in. For again Starbuck's downcast eyes lighted up with  
the stubbornness of life; the subterranean laugh died away; the winds  
blew on; the sails filled out; the ship heaved and rolled as before. Ah,  
ye admonitions and warnings! why stay ye not when ye come? But  
rather are ye predictions than warnings, ye shadows! Yet not so much  
predictions from without, as verifications of the foregoing things  
within. For with little external to constrain us, the innermost  
necessities in our being, these still drive us on.  
  
"The measure! the measure!" cried Ahab.  
  
Receiving the brimming pewter, and turning to the harpooneers, he  
ordered them to produce their weapons. Then ranging them before him near  
the capstan, with their harpoons in their hands, while his three mates  
stood at his side with their lances, and the rest of the ship's company  
formed a circle round the group; he stood for an instant searchingly  
eyeing every man of his crew. But those wild eyes met his, as the  
bloodshot eyes of the prairie wolves meet the eye of their leader, ere  
he rushes on at their head in the trail of the bison; but, alas! only to  
fall into the hidden snare of the Indian.  
  
"Drink and pass!" he cried, handing the heavy charged flagon to the  
nearest seaman. "The crew alone now drink. Round with it, round! Short  
draughts--long swallows, men; 'tis hot as Satan's hoof. So, so; it  
goes round excellently. It spiralizes in ye; forks out at the  
serpent-snapping eye. Well done; almost drained. That way it went, this  
way it comes. Hand it me--here's a hollow! Men, ye seem the years; so  
brimming life is gulped and gone. Steward, refill!  
  
"Attend now, my braves. I have mustered ye all round this capstan; and  
ye mates, flank me with your lances; and ye harpooneers, stand there  
with your irons; and ye, stout mariners, ring me in, that I may in some  
sort revive a noble custom of my fisherman fathers before me. O men, you  
will yet see that--Ha! boy, come back? bad pennies come not sooner. Hand  
it me. Why, now, this pewter had run brimming again, were't not thou St.  
Vitus' imp--away, thou ague!  
  
"Advance, ye mates! Cross your lances full before me. Well done! Let  
me touch the axis." So saying, with extended arm, he grasped the  
three level, radiating lances at their crossed centre; while so doing,  
suddenly and nervously twitched them; meanwhile, glancing intently from  
Starbuck to Stubb; from Stubb to Flask. It seemed as though, by some  
nameless, interior volition, he would fain have shocked into them the  
same fiery emotion accumulated within the Leyden jar of his own magnetic  
life. The three mates quailed before his strong, sustained, and mystic  
aspect. Stubb and Flask looked sideways from him; the honest eye of  
Starbuck fell downright.  
  
"In vain!" cried Ahab; "but, maybe, 'tis well. For did ye three but  
once take the full-forced shock, then mine own electric thing, THAT had  
perhaps expired from out me. Perchance, too, it would have dropped ye  
dead. Perchance ye need it not. Down lances! And now, ye mates, I do  
appoint ye three cupbearers to my three pagan kinsmen there--yon three  
most honourable gentlemen and noblemen, my valiant harpooneers. Disdain  
the task? What, when the great Pope washes the feet of beggars, using  
his tiara for ewer? Oh, my sweet cardinals! your own condescension, THAT  
shall bend ye to it. I do not order ye; ye will it. Cut your seizings  
and draw the poles, ye harpooneers!"  
  
Silently obeying the order, the three harpooneers now stood with the  
detached iron part of their harpoons, some three feet long, held, barbs  
up, before him.  
  
"Stab me not with that keen steel! Cant them; cant them over! know ye  
not the goblet end? Turn up the socket! So, so; now, ye cup-bearers,  
advance. The irons! take them; hold them while I fill!" Forthwith,  
slowly going from one officer to the other, he brimmed the harpoon  
sockets with the fiery waters from the pewter.  
  
"Now, three to three, ye stand. Commend the murderous chalices! Bestow  
them, ye who are now made parties to this indissoluble league. Ha!  
Starbuck! but the deed is done! Yon ratifying sun now waits to sit upon  
it. Drink, ye harpooneers! drink and swear, ye men that man the deathful  
whaleboat's bow--Death to Moby Dick! God hunt us all, if we do not hunt  
Moby Dick to his death!" The long, barbed steel goblets were lifted;  
and to cries and maledictions against the white whale, the spirits were  
simultaneously quaffed down with a hiss. Starbuck paled, and turned, and  
shivered. Once more, and finally, the replenished pewter went the rounds  
among the frantic crew; when, waving his free hand to them, they all  
dispersed; and Ahab retired within his cabin.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 37. Sunset.  
  
  
THE CABIN; BY THE STERN WINDOWS; AHAB SITTING ALONE, AND GAZING OUT.  
  
  
I leave a white and turbid wake; pale waters, paler cheeks, where'er I  
sail. The envious billows sidelong swell to whelm my track; let them;  
but first I pass.  
  
Yonder, by ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm waves blush like wine.  
The gold brow plumbs the blue. The diver sun--slow dived from noon--goes  
down; my soul mounts up! she wearies with her endless hill. Is, then,  
the crown too heavy that I wear? this Iron Crown of Lombardy. Yet is  
it bright with many a gem; I the wearer, see not its far flashings; but  
darkly feel that I wear that, that dazzlingly confounds. 'Tis iron--that  
I know--not gold. 'Tis split, too--that I feel; the jagged edge galls  
me so, my brain seems to beat against the solid metal; aye, steel skull,  
mine; the sort that needs no helmet in the most brain-battering fight!  
  
Dry heat upon my brow? Oh! time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred  
me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me;  
all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with  
the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly  
and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise! Good night--good  
night! (WAVING HIS HAND, HE MOVES FROM THE WINDOW.)  
  
'Twas not so hard a task. I thought to find one stubborn, at the least;  
but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they  
revolve. Or, if you will, like so many ant-hills of powder, they all  
stand before me; and I their match. Oh, hard! that to fire others, the  
match itself must needs be wasting! What I've dared, I've willed; and  
what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad--Starbuck does; but I'm  
demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm  
to comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered;  
and--Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my  
dismemberer. Now, then, be the prophet and the fulfiller one. That's  
more than ye, ye great gods, ever were. I laugh and hoot at ye, ye  
cricket-players, ye pugilists, ye deaf Burkes and blinded Bendigoes!  
I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies--Take some one of your own  
size; don't pommel ME! No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again; but  
YE have run and hidden. Come forth from behind your cotton bags! I have  
no long gun to reach ye. Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see  
if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve  
yourselves! man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is  
laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded  
gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds,  
unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron  
way!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 38. Dusk.  
  
  
BY THE MAINMAST; STARBUCK LEANING AGAINST IT.  
  
  
My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman!  
Insufferable sting, that sanity should ground arms on such a field! But  
he drilled deep down, and blasted all my reason out of me! I think I see  
his impious end; but feel that I must help him to it. Will I, nill I,  
the ineffable thing has tied me to him; tows me with a cable I have no  
knife to cut. Horrible old man! Who's over him, he cries;--aye, he would  
be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below! Oh! I  
plainly see my miserable office,--to obey, rebelling; and worse yet,  
to hate with touch of pity! For in his eyes I read some lurid woe would  
shrivel me up, had I it. Yet is there hope. Time and tide flow wide.  
The hated whale has the round watery world to swim in, as the small  
gold-fish has its glassy globe. His heaven-insulting purpose, God may  
wedge aside. I would up heart, were it not like lead. But my whole  
clock's run down; my heart the all-controlling weight, I have no key to  
lift again.  
  
  
[A BURST OF REVELRY FROM THE FORECASTLE.]  
  
  
Oh, God! to sail with such a heathen crew that have small touch of human  
mothers in them! Whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea. The white whale  
is their demigorgon. Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward!  
mark the unfaltering silence aft! Methinks it pictures life. Foremost  
through the sparkling sea shoots on the gay, embattled, bantering  
bow, but only to drag dark Ahab after it, where he broods within his  
sternward cabin, builded over the dead water of the wake, and further  
on, hunted by its wolfish gurglings. The long howl thrills me through!  
Peace! ye revellers, and set the watch! Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like  
this, with soul beat down and held to knowledge,--as wild, untutored  
things are forced to feed--Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent  
horror in thee! but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me! and with the  
soft feeling of the human in me, yet will I try to fight ye, ye grim,  
phantom futures! Stand by me, hold me, bind me, O ye blessed influences!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 39. First Night Watch.  
  
Fore-Top.  
  
(STUBB SOLUS, AND MENDING A BRACE.)  
  
  
Ha! ha! ha! ha! hem! clear my throat!--I've been thinking over it  
ever since, and that ha, ha's the final consequence. Why so? Because a  
laugh's the wisest, easiest answer to all that's queer; and come what  
will, one comfort's always left--that unfailing comfort is, it's all  
predestinated. I heard not all his talk with Starbuck; but to my poor  
eye Starbuck then looked something as I the other evening felt. Be sure  
the old Mogul has fixed him, too. I twigged it, knew it; had had the  
gift, might readily have prophesied it--for when I clapped my eye upon  
his skull I saw it. Well, Stubb, WISE Stubb--that's my title--well,  
Stubb, what of it, Stubb? Here's a carcase. I know not all that may be  
coming, but be it what it will, I'll go to it laughing. Such a waggish  
leering as lurks in all your horribles! I feel funny. Fa, la! lirra,  
skirra! What's my juicy little pear at home doing now? Crying its eyes  
out?--Giving a party to the last arrived harpooneers, I dare say, gay as  
a frigate's pennant, and so am I--fa, la! lirra, skirra! Oh--  
  
We'll drink to-night with hearts as light, To love, as gay and fleeting  
As bubbles that swim, on the beaker's brim, And break on the lips while  
meeting.  
  
  
A brave stave that--who calls? Mr. Starbuck? Aye, aye, sir--(ASIDE) he's  
my superior, he has his too, if I'm not mistaken.--Aye, aye, sir, just  
through with this job--coming.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 40. Midnight, Forecastle.  
  
HARPOONEERS AND SAILORS.  
  
(FORESAIL RISES AND DISCOVERS THE WATCH STANDING, LOUNGING, LEANING, AND  
LYING IN VARIOUS ATTITUDES, ALL SINGING IN CHORUS.)  
  
 Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies!  
 Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain!  
 Our captain's commanded.--  
  
1ST NANTUCKET SAILOR. Oh, boys, don't be sentimental; it's bad for the  
digestion! Take a tonic, follow me! (SINGS, AND ALL FOLLOW)  
  
 Our captain stood upon the deck,  
 A spy-glass in his hand,  
 A viewing of those gallant whales  
 That blew at every strand.  
 Oh, your tubs in your boats, my boys,  
 And by your braces stand,  
 And we'll have one of those fine whales,  
 Hand, boys, over hand!  
 So, be cheery, my lads! may your hearts never fail!  
 While the bold harpooner is striking the whale!  
  
MATE'S VOICE FROM THE QUARTER-DECK. Eight bells there, forward!  
  
2ND NANTUCKET SAILOR. Avast the chorus! Eight bells there! d'ye hear,  
bell-boy? Strike the bell eight, thou Pip! thou blackling! and let me  
call the watch. I've the sort of mouth for that--the hogshead mouth.  
So, so, (THRUSTS HIS HEAD DOWN THE SCUTTLE,) Star-bo-l-e-e-n-s, a-h-o-y!  
Eight bells there below! Tumble up!  
  
DUTCH SAILOR. Grand snoozing to-night, maty; fat night for that. I  
mark this in our old Mogul's wine; it's quite as deadening to some as  
filliping to others. We sing; they sleep--aye, lie down there, like  
ground-tier butts. At 'em again! There, take this copper-pump, and hail  
'em through it. Tell 'em to avast dreaming of their lasses. Tell 'em  
it's the resurrection; they must kiss their last, and come to judgment.  
That's the way--THAT'S it; thy throat ain't spoiled with eating  
Amsterdam butter.  
  
FRENCH SAILOR. Hist, boys! let's have a jig or two before we ride to  
anchor in Blanket Bay. What say ye? There comes the other watch. Stand  
by all legs! Pip! little Pip! hurrah with your tambourine!  
  
PIP. (SULKY AND SLEEPY) Don't know where it is.  
  
FRENCH SAILOR. Beat thy belly, then, and wag thy ears. Jig it, men,  
I say; merry's the word; hurrah! Damn me, won't you dance? Form, now,  
Indian-file, and gallop into the double-shuffle? Throw yourselves! Legs!  
legs!  
  
ICELAND SAILOR. I don't like your floor, maty; it's too springy to my  
taste. I'm used to ice-floors. I'm sorry to throw cold water on the  
subject; but excuse me.  
  
MALTESE SAILOR. Me too; where's your girls? Who but a fool would take  
his left hand by his right, and say to himself, how d'ye do? Partners! I  
must have partners!  
  
SICILIAN SAILOR. Aye; girls and a green!--then I'll hop with ye; yea,  
turn grasshopper!  
  
LONG-ISLAND SAILOR. Well, well, ye sulkies, there's plenty more of us.  
Hoe corn when you may, say I. All legs go to harvest soon. Ah! here  
comes the music; now for it!  
  
AZORE SAILOR. (ASCENDING, AND PITCHING THE TAMBOURINE UP THE SCUTTLE.)  
Here you are, Pip; and there's the windlass-bitts; up you mount! Now,  
boys! (THE HALF OF THEM DANCE TO THE TAMBOURINE; SOME GO BELOW; SOME  
SLEEP OR LIE AMONG THE COILS OF RIGGING. OATHS A-PLENTY.)  
  
AZORE SAILOR. (DANCING) Go it, Pip! Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it, dig it,  
stig it, quig it, bell-boy! Make fire-flies; break the jinglers!  
  
PIP. Jinglers, you say?--there goes another, dropped off; I pound it so.  
  
CHINA SAILOR. Rattle thy teeth, then, and pound away; make a pagoda of  
thyself.  
  
  
FRENCH SAILOR. Merry-mad! Hold up thy hoop, Pip, till I jump through it!  
Split jibs! tear yourselves!  
  
TASHTEGO. (QUIETLY SMOKING) That's a white man; he calls that fun:  
humph! I save my sweat.  
  
OLD MANX SAILOR. I wonder whether those jolly lads bethink them of what  
they are dancing over. I'll dance over your grave, I will--that's  
the bitterest threat of your night-women, that beat head-winds round  
corners. O Christ! to think of the green navies and the green-skulled  
crews! Well, well; belike the whole world's a ball, as you scholars have  
it; and so 'tis right to make one ballroom of it. Dance on, lads, you're  
young; I was once.  
  
3D NANTUCKET SAILOR. Spell oh!--whew! this is worse than pulling after  
whales in a calm--give us a whiff, Tash.  
  
(THEY CEASE DANCING, AND GATHER IN CLUSTERS. MEANTIME THE SKY  
DARKENS--THE WIND RISES.)  
  
LASCAR SAILOR. By Brahma! boys, it'll be douse sail soon. The sky-born,  
high-tide Ganges turned to wind! Thou showest thy black brow, Seeva!  
  
MALTESE SAILOR. (RECLINING AND SHAKING HIS CAP.) It's the waves--the  
snow's caps turn to jig it now. They'll shake their tassels soon. Now  
would all the waves were women, then I'd go drown, and chassee with them  
evermore! There's naught so sweet on earth--heaven may not match  
it!--as those swift glances of warm, wild bosoms in the dance, when the  
over-arboring arms hide such ripe, bursting grapes.  
  
SICILIAN SAILOR. (RECLINING.) Tell me not of it! Hark ye, lad--fleet  
interlacings of the limbs--lithe swayings--coyings--flutterings! lip!  
heart! hip! all graze: unceasing touch and go! not taste, observe ye,  
else come satiety. Eh, Pagan? (NUDGING.)  
  
TAHITAN SAILOR. (RECLINING ON A MAT.) Hail, holy nakedness of our  
dancing girls!--the Heeva-Heeva! Ah! low veiled, high palmed Tahiti! I  
still rest me on thy mat, but the soft soil has slid! I saw thee woven  
in the wood, my mat! green the first day I brought ye thence; now worn  
and wilted quite. Ah me!--not thou nor I can bear the change! How  
then, if so be transplanted to yon sky? Hear I the roaring streams from  
Pirohitee's peak of spears, when they leap down the crags and drown the  
villages?--The blast! the blast! Up, spine, and meet it! (LEAPS TO HIS  
FEET.)  
  
PORTUGUESE SAILOR. How the sea rolls swashing 'gainst the side! Stand  
by for reefing, hearties! the winds are just crossing swords, pell-mell  
they'll go lunging presently.  
  
DANISH SAILOR. Crack, crack, old ship! so long as thou crackest, thou  
holdest! Well done! The mate there holds ye to it stiffly. He's no more  
afraid than the isle fort at Cattegat, put there to fight the Baltic  
with storm-lashed guns, on which the sea-salt cakes!  
  
4TH NANTUCKET SAILOR. He has his orders, mind ye that. I heard old  
Ahab tell him he must always kill a squall, something as they burst a  
waterspout with a pistol--fire your ship right into it!  
  
ENGLISH SAILOR. Blood! but that old man's a grand old cove! We are the  
lads to hunt him up his whale!  
  
ALL. Aye! aye!  
  
OLD MANX SAILOR. How the three pines shake! Pines are the hardest sort  
of tree to live when shifted to any other soil, and here there's none  
but the crew's cursed clay. Steady, helmsman! steady. This is the sort  
of weather when brave hearts snap ashore, and keeled hulls split at sea.  
Our captain has his birthmark; look yonder, boys, there's another in the  
sky--lurid-like, ye see, all else pitch black.  
  
DAGGOO. What of that? Who's afraid of black's afraid of me! I'm quarried  
out of it!  
  
SPANISH SAILOR. (ASIDE.) He wants to bully, ah!--the old grudge makes  
me touchy (ADVANCING.) Aye, harpooneer, thy race is the undeniable dark  
side of mankind--devilish dark at that. No offence.  
  
DAGGOO (GRIMLY). None.  
  
ST. JAGO'S SAILOR. That Spaniard's mad or drunk. But that can't be, or  
else in his one case our old Mogul's fire-waters are somewhat long in  
working.  
  
5TH NANTUCKET SAILOR. What's that I saw--lightning? Yes.  
  
SPANISH SAILOR. No; Daggoo showing his teeth.  
  
DAGGOO (SPRINGING). Swallow thine, mannikin! White skin, white liver!  
  
SPANISH SAILOR (MEETING HIM). Knife thee heartily! big frame, small  
spirit!  
  
ALL. A row! a row! a row!  
  
TASHTEGO (WITH A WHIFF). A row a'low, and a row aloft--Gods and  
men--both brawlers! Humph!  
  
BELFAST SAILOR. A row! arrah a row! The Virgin be blessed, a row! Plunge  
in with ye!  
  
ENGLISH SAILOR. Fair play! Snatch the Spaniard's knife! A ring, a ring!  
  
OLD MANX SAILOR. Ready formed. There! the ringed horizon. In that ring  
Cain struck Abel. Sweet work, right work! No? Why then, God, mad'st thou  
the ring?  
  
MATE'S VOICE FROM THE QUARTER-DECK. Hands by the halyards! in  
top-gallant sails! Stand by to reef topsails!  
  
ALL. The squall! the squall! jump, my jollies! (THEY SCATTER.)  
  
  
PIP (SHRINKING UNDER THE WINDLASS). Jollies? Lord help such jollies!  
Crish, crash! there goes the jib-stay! Blang-whang! God! Duck lower,  
Pip, here comes the royal yard! It's worse than being in the whirled  
woods, the last day of the year! Who'd go climbing after chestnuts now?  
But there they go, all cursing, and here I don't. Fine prospects to 'em;  
they're on the road to heaven. Hold on hard! Jimmini, what a squall!  
But those chaps there are worse yet--they are your white squalls, they.  
White squalls? white whale, shirr! shirr! Here have I heard all their  
chat just now, and the white whale--shirr! shirr!--but spoken of  
once! and only this evening--it makes me jingle all over like my  
tambourine--that anaconda of an old man swore 'em in to hunt him! Oh,  
thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on  
this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no  
bowels to feel fear!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 41. Moby Dick.  
  
  
I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest;  
my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more  
did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A  
wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud  
seemed mine. With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous  
monster against whom I and all the others had taken our oaths of  
violence and revenge.  
  
For some time past, though at intervals only, the unaccompanied,  
secluded White Whale had haunted those uncivilized seas mostly  
frequented by the Sperm Whale fishermen. But not all of them knew of his  
existence; only a few of them, comparatively, had knowingly seen him;  
while the number who as yet had actually and knowingly given battle to  
him, was small indeed. For, owing to the large number of whale-cruisers;  
the disorderly way they were sprinkled over the entire watery  
circumference, many of them adventurously pushing their quest along  
solitary latitudes, so as seldom or never for a whole twelvemonth or  
more on a stretch, to encounter a single news-telling sail of any sort;  
the inordinate length of each separate voyage; the irregularity of the  
times of sailing from home; all these, with other circumstances, direct  
and indirect, long obstructed the spread through the whole world-wide  
whaling-fleet of the special individualizing tidings concerning Moby  
Dick. It was hardly to be doubted, that several vessels reported to have  
encountered, at such or such a time, or on such or such a meridian,  
a Sperm Whale of uncommon magnitude and malignity, which whale, after  
doing great mischief to his assailants, had completely escaped them; to  
some minds it was not an unfair presumption, I say, that the whale in  
question must have been no other than Moby Dick. Yet as of late the  
Sperm Whale fishery had been marked by various and not unfrequent  
instances of great ferocity, cunning, and malice in the monster  
attacked; therefore it was, that those who by accident ignorantly gave  
battle to Moby Dick; such hunters, perhaps, for the most part, were  
content to ascribe the peculiar terror he bred, more, as it were, to  
the perils of the Sperm Whale fishery at large, than to the individual  
cause. In that way, mostly, the disastrous encounter between Ahab and  
the whale had hitherto been popularly regarded.  
  
And as for those who, previously hearing of the White Whale, by chance  
caught sight of him; in the beginning of the thing they had every one of  
them, almost, as boldly and fearlessly lowered for him, as for any other  
whale of that species. But at length, such calamities did ensue in these  
assaults--not restricted to sprained wrists and ankles, broken limbs, or  
devouring amputations--but fatal to the last degree of fatality; those  
repeated disastrous repulses, all accumulating and piling their terrors  
upon Moby Dick; those things had gone far to shake the fortitude of many  
brave hunters, to whom the story of the White Whale had eventually come.  
  
Nor did wild rumors of all sorts fail to exaggerate, and still the more  
horrify the true histories of these deadly encounters. For not only do  
fabulous rumors naturally grow out of the very body of all surprising  
terrible events,--as the smitten tree gives birth to its fungi; but, in  
maritime life, far more than in that of terra firma, wild rumors abound,  
wherever there is any adequate reality for them to cling to. And as the  
sea surpasses the land in this matter, so the whale fishery surpasses  
every other sort of maritime life, in the wonderfulness and fearfulness  
of the rumors which sometimes circulate there. For not only are whalemen  
as a body unexempt from that ignorance and superstitiousness hereditary  
to all sailors; but of all sailors, they are by all odds the most  
directly brought into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing  
in the sea; face to face they not only eye its greatest marvels, but,  
hand to jaw, give battle to them. Alone, in such remotest waters, that  
though you sailed a thousand miles, and passed a thousand shores, you  
would not come to any chiseled hearth-stone, or aught hospitable beneath  
that part of the sun; in such latitudes and longitudes, pursuing too  
such a calling as he does, the whaleman is wrapped by influences all  
tending to make his fancy pregnant with many a mighty birth.  
  
No wonder, then, that ever gathering volume from the mere transit over  
the widest watery spaces, the outblown rumors of the White Whale did  
in the end incorporate with themselves all manner of morbid hints,  
and half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies, which  
eventually invested Moby Dick with new terrors unborrowed from anything  
that visibly appears. So that in many cases such a panic did he finally  
strike, that few who by those rumors, at least, had heard of the White  
Whale, few of those hunters were willing to encounter the perils of his  
jaw.  
  
But there were still other and more vital practical influences at work.  
Not even at the present day has the original prestige of the Sperm  
Whale, as fearfully distinguished from all other species of the  
leviathan, died out of the minds of the whalemen as a body. There are  
those this day among them, who, though intelligent and courageous  
enough in offering battle to the Greenland or Right whale, would  
perhaps--either from professional inexperience, or incompetency, or  
timidity, decline a contest with the Sperm Whale; at any rate, there are  
plenty of whalemen, especially among those whaling nations not sailing  
under the American flag, who have never hostilely encountered the Sperm  
Whale, but whose sole knowledge of the leviathan is restricted to  
the ignoble monster primitively pursued in the North; seated on their  
hatches, these men will hearken with a childish fireside interest  
and awe, to the wild, strange tales of Southern whaling. Nor is the  
pre-eminent tremendousness of the great Sperm Whale anywhere more  
feelingly comprehended, than on board of those prows which stem him.  
  
And as if the now tested reality of his might had in former  
legendary times thrown its shadow before it; we find some book  
naturalists--Olassen and Povelson--declaring the Sperm Whale not only to  
be a consternation to every other creature in the sea, but also to be so  
incredibly ferocious as continually to be athirst for human blood. Nor  
even down to so late a time as Cuvier's, were these or almost similar  
impressions effaced. For in his Natural History, the Baron himself  
affirms that at sight of the Sperm Whale, all fish (sharks included) are  
"struck with the most lively terrors," and "often in the precipitancy of  
their flight dash themselves against the rocks with such violence as to  
cause instantaneous death." And however the general experiences in the  
fishery may amend such reports as these; yet in their full terribleness,  
even to the bloodthirsty item of Povelson, the superstitious belief in  
them is, in some vicissitudes of their vocation, revived in the minds of  
the hunters.  
  
So that overawed by the rumors and portents concerning him, not a few of  
the fishermen recalled, in reference to Moby Dick, the earlier days  
of the Sperm Whale fishery, when it was oftentimes hard to induce long  
practised Right whalemen to embark in the perils of this new and daring  
warfare; such men protesting that although other leviathans might be  
hopefully pursued, yet to chase and point lance at such an apparition  
as the Sperm Whale was not for mortal man. That to attempt it, would  
be inevitably to be torn into a quick eternity. On this head, there are  
some remarkable documents that may be consulted.  
  
Nevertheless, some there were, who even in the face of these things  
were ready to give chase to Moby Dick; and a still greater number who,  
chancing only to hear of him distantly and vaguely, without the  
specific details of any certain calamity, and without superstitious  
accompaniments, were sufficiently hardy not to flee from the battle if  
offered.  
  
One of the wild suggestions referred to, as at last coming to be linked  
with the White Whale in the minds of the superstitiously inclined,  
was the unearthly conceit that Moby Dick was ubiquitous; that he had  
actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same  
instant of time.  
  
Nor, credulous as such minds must have been, was this conceit altogether  
without some faint show of superstitious probability. For as the secrets  
of the currents in the seas have never yet been divulged, even to  
the most erudite research; so the hidden ways of the Sperm Whale  
when beneath the surface remain, in great part, unaccountable to his  
pursuers; and from time to time have originated the most curious and  
contradictory speculations regarding them, especially concerning the  
mystic modes whereby, after sounding to a great depth, he transports  
himself with such vast swiftness to the most widely distant points.  
  
It is a thing well known to both American and English whale-ships, and  
as well a thing placed upon authoritative record years ago by Scoresby,  
that some whales have been captured far north in the Pacific, in whose  
bodies have been found the barbs of harpoons darted in the Greenland  
seas. Nor is it to be gainsaid, that in some of these instances it has  
been declared that the interval of time between the two assaults could  
not have exceeded very many days. Hence, by inference, it has been  
believed by some whalemen, that the Nor' West Passage, so long a problem  
to man, was never a problem to the whale. So that here, in the real  
living experience of living men, the prodigies related in old times of  
the inland Strello mountain in Portugal (near whose top there was said  
to be a lake in which the wrecks of ships floated up to the surface);  
and that still more wonderful story of the Arethusa fountain near  
Syracuse (whose waters were believed to have come from the Holy Land  
by an underground passage); these fabulous narrations are almost fully  
equalled by the realities of the whalemen.  
  
Forced into familiarity, then, with such prodigies as these; and knowing  
that after repeated, intrepid assaults, the White Whale had escaped  
alive; it cannot be much matter of surprise that some whalemen should  
go still further in their superstitions; declaring Moby Dick not only  
ubiquitous, but immortal (for immortality is but ubiquity in time); that  
though groves of spears should be planted in his flanks, he would still  
swim away unharmed; or if indeed he should ever be made to spout thick  
blood, such a sight would be but a ghastly deception; for again in  
unensanguined billows hundreds of leagues away, his unsullied jet would  
once more be seen.  
  
But even stripped of these supernatural surmisings, there was enough in  
the earthly make and incontestable character of the monster to strike  
the imagination with unwonted power. For, it was not so much his  
uncommon bulk that so much distinguished him from other sperm whales,  
but, as was elsewhere thrown out--a peculiar snow-white wrinkled  
forehead, and a high, pyramidical white hump. These were his prominent  
features; the tokens whereby, even in the limitless, uncharted seas, he  
revealed his identity, at a long distance, to those who knew him.  
  
The rest of his body was so streaked, and spotted, and marbled with  
the same shrouded hue, that, in the end, he had gained his distinctive  
appellation of the White Whale; a name, indeed, literally justified by  
his vivid aspect, when seen gliding at high noon through a dark blue  
sea, leaving a milky-way wake of creamy foam, all spangled with golden  
gleamings.  
  
Nor was it his unwonted magnitude, nor his remarkable hue, nor yet his  
deformed lower jaw, that so much invested the whale with natural terror,  
as that unexampled, intelligent malignity which, according to specific  
accounts, he had over and over again evinced in his assaults. More than  
all, his treacherous retreats struck more of dismay than perhaps aught  
else. For, when swimming before his exulting pursuers, with every  
apparent symptom of alarm, he had several times been known to turn  
round suddenly, and, bearing down upon them, either stave their boats to  
splinters, or drive them back in consternation to their ship.  
  
Already several fatalities had attended his chase. But though similar  
disasters, however little bruited ashore, were by no means unusual  
in the fishery; yet, in most instances, such seemed the White Whale's  
infernal aforethought of ferocity, that every dismembering or death  
that he caused, was not wholly regarded as having been inflicted by an  
unintelligent agent.  
  
Judge, then, to what pitches of inflamed, distracted fury the minds of  
his more desperate hunters were impelled, when amid the chips of chewed  
boats, and the sinking limbs of torn comrades, they swam out of the  
white curds of the whale's direful wrath into the serene, exasperating  
sunlight, that smiled on, as if at a birth or a bridal.  
  
His three boats stove around him, and oars and men both whirling in the  
eddies; one captain, seizing the line-knife from his broken prow, had  
dashed at the whale, as an Arkansas duellist at his foe, blindly seeking  
with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale.  
That captain was Ahab. And then it was, that suddenly sweeping his  
sickle-shaped lower jaw beneath him, Moby Dick had reaped away Ahab's  
leg, as a mower a blade of grass in the field. No turbaned Turk, no  
hired Venetian or Malay, could have smote him with more seeming malice.  
Small reason was there to doubt, then, that ever since that almost fatal  
encounter, Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale,  
all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came  
to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his  
intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before  
him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which  
some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with  
half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been  
from the beginning; to whose dominion even the modern Christians ascribe  
one-half of the worlds; which the ancient Ophites of the east reverenced  
in their statue devil;--Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them;  
but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he  
pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and  
torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice  
in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle  
demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly  
personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon  
the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt  
by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a  
mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it.  
  
It is not probable that this monomania in him took its instant rise at  
the precise time of his bodily dismemberment. Then, in darting at the  
monster, knife in hand, he had but given loose to a sudden, passionate,  
corporal animosity; and when he received the stroke that tore him, he  
probably but felt the agonizing bodily laceration, but nothing more.  
Yet, when by this collision forced to turn towards home, and for long  
months of days and weeks, Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one  
hammock, rounding in mid winter that dreary, howling Patagonian Cape;  
then it was, that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another;  
and so interfusing, made him mad. That it was only then, on the homeward  
voyage, after the encounter, that the final monomania seized him, seems  
all but certain from the fact that, at intervals during the passage,  
he was a raving lunatic; and, though unlimbed of a leg, yet such vital  
strength yet lurked in his Egyptian chest, and was moreover intensified  
by his delirium, that his mates were forced to lace him fast, even  
there, as he sailed, raving in his hammock. In a strait-jacket, he swung  
to the mad rockings of the gales. And, when running into more sufferable  
latitudes, the ship, with mild stun'sails spread, floated across the  
tranquil tropics, and, to all appearances, the old man's delirium seemed  
left behind him with the Cape Horn swells, and he came forth from his  
dark den into the blessed light and air; even then, when he bore that  
firm, collected front, however pale, and issued his calm orders once  
again; and his mates thanked God the direful madness was now gone; even  
then, Ahab, in his hidden self, raved on. Human madness is oftentimes a  
cunning and most feline thing. When you think it fled, it may have but  
become transfigured into some still subtler form. Ahab's full lunacy  
subsided not, but deepeningly contracted; like the unabated Hudson,  
when that noble Northman flows narrowly, but unfathomably through the  
Highland gorge. But, as in his narrow-flowing monomania, not one jot of  
Ahab's broad madness had been left behind; so in that broad madness, not  
one jot of his great natural intellect had perished. That before living  
agent, now became the living instrument. If such a furious trope may  
stand, his special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it,  
and turned all its concentred cannon upon its own mad mark; so that far  
from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that one end, did now possess a  
thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon  
any one reasonable object.  
  
This is much; yet Ahab's larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted.  
But vain to popularize profundities, and all truth is profound. Winding  
far down from within the very heart of this spiked Hotel de Cluny where  
we here stand--however grand and wonderful, now quit it;--and take your  
way, ye nobler, sadder souls, to those vast Roman halls of Thermes;  
where far beneath the fantastic towers of man's upper earth, his root  
of grandeur, his whole awful essence sits in bearded state; an antique  
buried beneath antiquities, and throned on torsoes! So with a broken  
throne, the great gods mock that captive king; so like a Caryatid, he  
patient sits, upholding on his frozen brow the piled entablatures of  
ages. Wind ye down there, ye prouder, sadder souls! question that proud,  
sad king! A family likeness! aye, he did beget ye, ye young exiled  
royalties; and from your grim sire only will the old State-secret come.  
  
Now, in his heart, Ahab had some glimpse of this, namely: all my means  
are sane, my motive and my object mad. Yet without power to kill, or  
change, or shun the fact; he likewise knew that to mankind he did long  
dissemble; in some sort, did still. But that thing of his dissembling  
was only subject to his perceptibility, not to his will determinate.  
Nevertheless, so well did he succeed in that dissembling, that when  
with ivory leg he stepped ashore at last, no Nantucketer thought him  
otherwise than but naturally grieved, and that to the quick, with the  
terrible casualty which had overtaken him.  
  
The report of his undeniable delirium at sea was likewise popularly  
ascribed to a kindred cause. And so too, all the added moodiness which  
always afterwards, to the very day of sailing in the Pequod on the  
present voyage, sat brooding on his brow. Nor is it so very unlikely,  
that far from distrusting his fitness for another whaling voyage, on  
account of such dark symptoms, the calculating people of that prudent  
isle were inclined to harbor the conceit, that for those very reasons he  
was all the better qualified and set on edge, for a pursuit so full  
of rage and wildness as the bloody hunt of whales. Gnawed within and  
scorched without, with the infixed, unrelenting fangs of some incurable  
idea; such an one, could he be found, would seem the very man to dart  
his iron and lift his lance against the most appalling of all brutes.  
Or, if for any reason thought to be corporeally incapacitated for that,  
yet such an one would seem superlatively competent to cheer and howl on  
his underlings to the attack. But be all this as it may, certain it is,  
that with the mad secret of his unabated rage bolted up and keyed in  
him, Ahab had purposely sailed upon the present voyage with the one only  
and all-engrossing object of hunting the White Whale. Had any one of his  
old acquaintances on shore but half dreamed of what was lurking in him  
then, how soon would their aghast and righteous souls have wrenched the  
ship from such a fiendish man! They were bent on profitable cruises, the  
profit to be counted down in dollars from the mint. He was intent on an  
audacious, immitigable, and supernatural revenge.  
  
Here, then, was this grey-headed, ungodly old man, chasing with curses a  
Job's whale round the world, at the head of a crew, too, chiefly made  
up of mongrel renegades, and castaways, and cannibals--morally enfeebled  
also, by the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness in  
Starbuck, the invunerable jollity of indifference and recklessness in  
Stubb, and the pervading mediocrity in Flask. Such a crew, so officered,  
seemed specially picked and packed by some infernal fatality to help him  
to his monomaniac revenge. How it was that they so aboundingly responded  
to the old man's ire--by what evil magic their souls were possessed,  
that at times his hate seemed almost theirs; the White Whale as much  
their insufferable foe as his; how all this came to be--what the White  
Whale was to them, or how to their unconscious understandings, also, in  
some dim, unsuspected way, he might have seemed the gliding great demon  
of the seas of life,--all this to explain, would be to dive deeper than  
Ishmael can go. The subterranean miner that works in us all, how can one  
tell whither leads his shaft by the ever shifting, muffled sound of his  
pick? Who does not feel the irresistible arm drag? What skiff in tow  
of a seventy-four can stand still? For one, I gave myself up to the  
abandonment of the time and the place; but while yet all a-rush to  
encounter the whale, could see naught in that brute but the deadliest  
ill.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 42. The Whiteness of The Whale.  
  
  
What the white whale was to Ahab, has been hinted; what, at times, he  
was to me, as yet remains unsaid.  
  
Aside from those more obvious considerations touching Moby Dick, which  
could not but occasionally awaken in any man's soul some alarm, there  
was another thought, or rather vague, nameless horror concerning him,  
which at times by its intensity completely overpowered all the rest; and  
yet so mystical and well nigh ineffable was it, that I almost despair of  
putting it in a comprehensible form. It was the whiteness of the whale  
that above all things appalled me. But how can I hope to explain myself  
here; and yet, in some dim, random way, explain myself I must, else all  
these chapters might be naught.  
  
Though in many natural objects, whiteness refiningly enhances beauty, as  
if imparting some special virtue of its own, as in marbles, japonicas,  
and pearls; and though various nations have in some way recognised a  
certain royal preeminence in this hue; even the barbaric, grand old  
kings of Pegu placing the title "Lord of the White Elephants" above all  
their other magniloquent ascriptions of dominion; and the modern kings  
of Siam unfurling the same snow-white quadruped in the royal standard;  
and the Hanoverian flag bearing the one figure of a snow-white charger;  
and the great Austrian Empire, Caesarian, heir to overlording Rome,  
having for the imperial colour the same imperial hue; and though this  
pre-eminence in it applies to the human race itself, giving the white  
man ideal mastership over every dusky tribe; and though, besides, all  
this, whiteness has been even made significant of gladness, for among  
the Romans a white stone marked a joyful day; and though in other mortal  
sympathies and symbolizings, this same hue is made the emblem of many  
touching, noble things--the innocence of brides, the benignity of age;  
though among the Red Men of America the giving of the white belt  
of wampum was the deepest pledge of honour; though in many climes,  
whiteness typifies the majesty of Justice in the ermine of the Judge,  
and contributes to the daily state of kings and queens drawn by  
milk-white steeds; though even in the higher mysteries of the most  
august religions it has been made the symbol of the divine spotlessness  
and power; by the Persian fire worshippers, the white forked flame being  
held the holiest on the altar; and in the Greek mythologies, Great Jove  
himself being made incarnate in a snow-white bull; and though to the  
noble Iroquois, the midwinter sacrifice of the sacred White Dog was  
by far the holiest festival of their theology, that spotless, faithful  
creature being held the purest envoy they could send to the Great Spirit  
with the annual tidings of their own fidelity; and though directly from  
the Latin word for white, all Christian priests derive the name of  
one part of their sacred vesture, the alb or tunic, worn beneath the  
cassock; and though among the holy pomps of the Romish faith, white is  
specially employed in the celebration of the Passion of our Lord; though  
in the Vision of St. John, white robes are given to the redeemed, and  
the four-and-twenty elders stand clothed in white before the great-white  
throne, and the Holy One that sitteth there white like wool; yet for all  
these accumulated associations, with whatever is sweet, and honourable,  
and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea  
of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness  
which affrights in blood.  
  
This elusive quality it is, which causes the thought of whiteness, when  
divorced from more kindly associations, and coupled with any object  
terrible in itself, to heighten that terror to the furthest bounds.  
Witness the white bear of the poles, and the white shark of the tropics;  
what but their smooth, flaky whiteness makes them the transcendent  
horrors they are? That ghastly whiteness it is which imparts such an  
abhorrent mildness, even more loathsome than terrific, to the dumb  
gloating of their aspect. So that not the fierce-fanged tiger in his  
heraldic coat can so stagger courage as the white-shrouded bear or  
shark.\*  
  
  
\*With reference to the Polar bear, it may possibly be urged by him  
who would fain go still deeper into this matter, that it is not  
the whiteness, separately regarded, which heightens the intolerable  
hideousness of that brute; for, analysed, that heightened hideousness,  
it might be said, only rises from the circumstance, that the  
irresponsible ferociousness of the creature stands invested in the  
fleece of celestial innocence and love; and hence, by bringing together  
two such opposite emotions in our minds, the Polar bear frightens us  
with so unnatural a contrast. But even assuming all this to be true;  
yet, were it not for the whiteness, you would not have that intensified  
terror.  
  
As for the white shark, the white gliding ghostliness of repose in that  
creature, when beheld in his ordinary moods, strangely tallies with the  
same quality in the Polar quadruped. This peculiarity is most vividly  
hit by the French in the name they bestow upon that fish. The Romish  
mass for the dead begins with "Requiem eternam" (eternal rest), whence  
REQUIEM denominating the mass itself, and any other funeral music. Now,  
in allusion to the white, silent stillness of death in this shark, and  
the mild deadliness of his habits, the French call him REQUIN.  
  
  
Bethink thee of the albatross, whence come those clouds of spiritual  
wonderment and pale dread, in which that white phantom sails in all  
imaginations? Not Coleridge first threw that spell; but God's great,  
unflattering laureate, Nature.\*  
  
  
\*I remember the first albatross I ever saw. It was during a prolonged  
gale, in waters hard upon the Antarctic seas. From my forenoon watch  
below, I ascended to the overclouded deck; and there, dashed upon the  
main hatches, I saw a regal, feathery thing of unspotted whiteness, and  
with a hooked, Roman bill sublime. At intervals, it arched forth  
its vast archangel wings, as if to embrace some holy ark. Wondrous  
flutterings and throbbings shook it. Though bodily unharmed, it uttered  
cries, as some king's ghost in supernatural distress. Through its  
inexpressible, strange eyes, methought I peeped to secrets which took  
hold of God. As Abraham before the angels, I bowed myself; the white  
thing was so white, its wings so wide, and in those for ever exiled  
waters, I had lost the miserable warping memories of traditions and of  
towns. Long I gazed at that prodigy of plumage. I cannot tell, can only  
hint, the things that darted through me then. But at last I awoke; and  
turning, asked a sailor what bird was this. A goney, he replied. Goney!  
never had heard that name before; is it conceivable that this glorious  
thing is utterly unknown to men ashore! never! But some time after, I  
learned that goney was some seaman's name for albatross. So that by no  
possibility could Coleridge's wild Rhyme have had aught to do with those  
mystical impressions which were mine, when I saw that bird upon our  
deck. For neither had I then read the Rhyme, nor knew the bird to be  
an albatross. Yet, in saying this, I do but indirectly burnish a little  
brighter the noble merit of the poem and the poet.  
  
I assert, then, that in the wondrous bodily whiteness of the bird  
chiefly lurks the secret of the spell; a truth the more evinced in this,  
that by a solecism of terms there are birds called grey albatrosses;  
and these I have frequently seen, but never with such emotions as when I  
beheld the Antarctic fowl.  
  
But how had the mystic thing been caught? Whisper it not, and I will  
tell; with a treacherous hook and line, as the fowl floated on the sea.  
At last the Captain made a postman of it; tying a lettered, leathern  
tally round its neck, with the ship's time and place; and then letting  
it escape. But I doubt not, that leathern tally, meant for man, was  
taken off in Heaven, when the white fowl flew to join the wing-folding,  
the invoking, and adoring cherubim!  
  
  
Most famous in our Western annals and Indian traditions is that of  
the White Steed of the Prairies; a magnificent milk-white charger,  
large-eyed, small-headed, bluff-chested, and with the dignity of a  
thousand monarchs in his lofty, overscorning carriage. He was the  
elected Xerxes of vast herds of wild horses, whose pastures in those  
days were only fenced by the Rocky Mountains and the Alleghanies. At  
their flaming head he westward trooped it like that chosen star which  
every evening leads on the hosts of light. The flashing cascade of his  
mane, the curving comet of his tail, invested him with housings more  
resplendent than gold and silver-beaters could have furnished him. A  
most imperial and archangelical apparition of that unfallen, western  
world, which to the eyes of the old trappers and hunters revived the  
glories of those primeval times when Adam walked majestic as a god,  
bluff-browed and fearless as this mighty steed. Whether marching amid  
his aides and marshals in the van of countless cohorts that endlessly  
streamed it over the plains, like an Ohio; or whether with his  
circumambient subjects browsing all around at the horizon, the White  
Steed gallopingly reviewed them with warm nostrils reddening through his  
cool milkiness; in whatever aspect he presented himself, always to the  
bravest Indians he was the object of trembling reverence and awe. Nor  
can it be questioned from what stands on legendary record of this noble  
horse, that it was his spiritual whiteness chiefly, which so clothed him  
with divineness; and that this divineness had that in it which, though  
commanding worship, at the same time enforced a certain nameless terror.  
  
But there are other instances where this whiteness loses all that  
accessory and strange glory which invests it in the White Steed and  
Albatross.  
  
What is it that in the Albino man so peculiarly repels and often shocks  
the eye, as that sometimes he is loathed by his own kith and kin! It  
is that whiteness which invests him, a thing expressed by the name  
he bears. The Albino is as well made as other men--has no substantive  
deformity--and yet this mere aspect of all-pervading whiteness makes him  
more strangely hideous than the ugliest abortion. Why should this be so?  
  
Nor, in quite other aspects, does Nature in her least palpable but  
not the less malicious agencies, fail to enlist among her forces  
this crowning attribute of the terrible. From its snowy aspect, the  
gauntleted ghost of the Southern Seas has been denominated the White  
Squall. Nor, in some historic instances, has the art of human malice  
omitted so potent an auxiliary. How wildly it heightens the effect of  
that passage in Froissart, when, masked in the snowy symbol of their  
faction, the desperate White Hoods of Ghent murder their bailiff in the  
market-place!  
  
Nor, in some things, does the common, hereditary experience of all  
mankind fail to bear witness to the supernaturalism of this hue. It  
cannot well be doubted, that the one visible quality in the aspect of  
the dead which most appals the gazer, is the marble pallor lingering  
there; as if indeed that pallor were as much like the badge of  
consternation in the other world, as of mortal trepidation here. And  
from that pallor of the dead, we borrow the expressive hue of the shroud  
in which we wrap them. Nor even in our superstitions do we fail to  
throw the same snowy mantle round our phantoms; all ghosts rising in a  
milk-white fog--Yea, while these terrors seize us, let us add, that even  
the king of terrors, when personified by the evangelist, rides on his  
pallid horse.  
  
Therefore, in his other moods, symbolize whatever grand or gracious  
thing he will by whiteness, no man can deny that in its profoundest  
idealized significance it calls up a peculiar apparition to the soul.  
  
But though without dissent this point be fixed, how is mortal man to  
account for it? To analyse it, would seem impossible. Can we, then,  
by the citation of some of those instances wherein this thing of  
whiteness--though for the time either wholly or in great part stripped  
of all direct associations calculated to impart to it aught fearful,  
but nevertheless, is found to exert over us the same sorcery, however  
modified;--can we thus hope to light upon some chance clue to conduct us  
to the hidden cause we seek?  
  
Let us try. But in a matter like this, subtlety appeals to subtlety,  
and without imagination no man can follow another into these halls. And  
though, doubtless, some at least of the imaginative impressions about  
to be presented may have been shared by most men, yet few perhaps were  
entirely conscious of them at the time, and therefore may not be able to  
recall them now.  
  
Why to the man of untutored ideality, who happens to be but loosely  
acquainted with the peculiar character of the day, does the bare mention  
of Whitsuntide marshal in the fancy such long, dreary, speechless  
processions of slow-pacing pilgrims, down-cast and hooded with  
new-fallen snow? Or, to the unread, unsophisticated Protestant of the  
Middle American States, why does the passing mention of a White Friar or  
a White Nun, evoke such an eyeless statue in the soul?  
  
Or what is there apart from the traditions of dungeoned warriors and  
kings (which will not wholly account for it) that makes the White  
Tower of London tell so much more strongly on the imagination of  
an untravelled American, than those other storied structures, its  
neighbors--the Byward Tower, or even the Bloody? And those sublimer  
towers, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, whence, in peculiar moods,  
comes that gigantic ghostliness over the soul at the bare mention of  
that name, while the thought of Virginia's Blue Ridge is full of a soft,  
dewy, distant dreaminess? Or why, irrespective of all latitudes and  
longitudes, does the name of the White Sea exert such a spectralness  
over the fancy, while that of the Yellow Sea lulls us with mortal  
thoughts of long lacquered mild afternoons on the waves, followed by  
the gaudiest and yet sleepiest of sunsets? Or, to choose a wholly  
unsubstantial instance, purely addressed to the fancy, why, in reading  
the old fairy tales of Central Europe, does "the tall pale man" of the  
Hartz forests, whose changeless pallor unrustlingly glides through the  
green of the groves--why is this phantom more terrible than all the  
whooping imps of the Blocksburg?  
  
Nor is it, altogether, the remembrance of her cathedral-toppling  
earthquakes; nor the stampedoes of her frantic seas; nor the  
tearlessness of arid skies that never rain; nor the sight of her wide  
field of leaning spires, wrenched cope-stones, and crosses all adroop  
(like canted yards of anchored fleets); and her suburban avenues of  
house-walls lying over upon each other, as a tossed pack of cards;--it  
is not these things alone which make tearless Lima, the strangest,  
saddest city thou can'st see. For Lima has taken the white veil; and  
there is a higher horror in this whiteness of her woe. Old as Pizarro,  
this whiteness keeps her ruins for ever new; admits not the cheerful  
greenness of complete decay; spreads over her broken ramparts the rigid  
pallor of an apoplexy that fixes its own distortions.  
  
I know that, to the common apprehension, this phenomenon of whiteness  
is not confessed to be the prime agent in exaggerating the terror of  
objects otherwise terrible; nor to the unimaginative mind is there aught  
of terror in those appearances whose awfulness to another mind almost  
solely consists in this one phenomenon, especially when exhibited under  
any form at all approaching to muteness or universality. What I mean  
by these two statements may perhaps be respectively elucidated by the  
following examples.  
  
First: The mariner, when drawing nigh the coasts of foreign lands, if by  
night he hear the roar of breakers, starts to vigilance, and feels just  
enough of trepidation to sharpen all his faculties; but under precisely  
similar circumstances, let him be called from his hammock to view his  
ship sailing through a midnight sea of milky whiteness--as if from  
encircling headlands shoals of combed white bears were swimming round  
him, then he feels a silent, superstitious dread; the shrouded phantom  
of the whitened waters is horrible to him as a real ghost; in vain the  
lead assures him he is still off soundings; heart and helm they both go  
down; he never rests till blue water is under him again. Yet where is  
the mariner who will tell thee, "Sir, it was not so much the fear of  
striking hidden rocks, as the fear of that hideous whiteness that so  
stirred me?"  
  
Second: To the native Indian of Peru, the continual sight of the  
snowhowdahed Andes conveys naught of dread, except, perhaps, in the  
mere fancying of the eternal frosted desolateness reigning at such vast  
altitudes, and the natural conceit of what a fearfulness it would be  
to lose oneself in such inhuman solitudes. Much the same is it with the  
backwoodsman of the West, who with comparative indifference views an  
unbounded prairie sheeted with driven snow, no shadow of tree or twig  
to break the fixed trance of whiteness. Not so the sailor, beholding the  
scenery of the Antarctic seas; where at times, by some infernal trick  
of legerdemain in the powers of frost and air, he, shivering and half  
shipwrecked, instead of rainbows speaking hope and solace to his misery,  
views what seems a boundless churchyard grinning upon him with its lean  
ice monuments and splintered crosses.  
  
But thou sayest, methinks that white-lead chapter about whiteness is but  
a white flag hung out from a craven soul; thou surrenderest to a hypo,  
Ishmael.  
  
Tell me, why this strong young colt, foaled in some peaceful valley of  
Vermont, far removed from all beasts of prey--why is it that upon the  
sunniest day, if you but shake a fresh buffalo robe behind him, so that  
he cannot even see it, but only smells its wild animal muskiness--why  
will he start, snort, and with bursting eyes paw the ground in phrensies  
of affright? There is no remembrance in him of any gorings of wild  
creatures in his green northern home, so that the strange muskiness he  
smells cannot recall to him anything associated with the experience of  
former perils; for what knows he, this New England colt, of the black  
bisons of distant Oregon?  
  
No; but here thou beholdest even in a dumb brute, the instinct of the  
knowledge of the demonism in the world. Though thousands of miles from  
Oregon, still when he smells that savage musk, the rending, goring bison  
herds are as present as to the deserted wild foal of the prairies, which  
this instant they may be trampling into dust.  
  
Thus, then, the muffled rollings of a milky sea; the bleak rustlings  
of the festooned frosts of mountains; the desolate shiftings of the  
windrowed snows of prairies; all these, to Ishmael, are as the shaking  
of that buffalo robe to the frightened colt!  
  
Though neither knows where lie the nameless things of which the mystic  
sign gives forth such hints; yet with me, as with the colt, somewhere  
those things must exist. Though in many of its aspects this visible  
world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright.  
  
But not yet have we solved the incantation of this whiteness, and  
learned why it appeals with such power to the soul; and more strange  
and far more portentous--why, as we have seen, it is at once the  
most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the  
Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in  
things the most appalling to mankind.  
  
Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids  
and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the  
thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky  
way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a colour as  
the visible absence of colour; and at the same time the concrete of all  
colours; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness,  
full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows--a colourless, all-colour  
of atheism from which we shrink? And when we consider that other theory  
of the natural philosophers, that all other earthly hues--every stately  
or lovely emblazoning--the sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; yea,  
and the gilded velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of  
young girls; all these are but subtile deceits, not actually inherent  
in substances, but only laid on from without; so that all deified Nature  
absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but  
the charnel-house within; and when we proceed further, and consider that  
the mystical cosmetic which produces every one of her hues, the great  
principle of light, for ever remains white or colourless in itself, and  
if operating without medium upon matter, would touch all objects, even  
tulips and roses, with its own blank tinge--pondering all this, the  
palsied universe lies before us a leper; and like wilful travellers in  
Lapland, who refuse to wear coloured and colouring glasses upon their  
eyes, so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental  
white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these  
things the Albino whale was the symbol. Wonder ye then at the fiery  
hunt?  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 43. Hark!  
  
  
"HIST! Did you hear that noise, Cabaco?"  
  
It was the middle-watch; a fair moonlight; the seamen were standing in a  
cordon, extending from one of the fresh-water butts in the waist, to the  
scuttle-butt near the taffrail. In this manner, they passed the buckets  
to fill the scuttle-butt. Standing, for the most part, on the hallowed  
precincts of the quarter-deck, they were careful not to speak or rustle  
their feet. From hand to hand, the buckets went in the deepest silence,  
only broken by the occasional flap of a sail, and the steady hum of the  
unceasingly advancing keel.  
  
It was in the midst of this repose, that Archy, one of the cordon, whose  
post was near the after-hatches, whispered to his neighbor, a Cholo, the  
words above.  
  
"Hist! did you hear that noise, Cabaco?"  
  
"Take the bucket, will ye, Archy? what noise d'ye mean?"  
  
"There it is again--under the hatches--don't you hear it--a cough--it  
sounded like a cough."  
  
"Cough be damned! Pass along that return bucket."  
  
"There again--there it is!--it sounds like two or three sleepers turning  
over, now!"  
  
"Caramba! have done, shipmate, will ye? It's the three soaked biscuits  
ye eat for supper turning over inside of ye--nothing else. Look to the  
bucket!"  
  
"Say what ye will, shipmate; I've sharp ears."  
  
"Aye, you are the chap, ain't ye, that heard the hum of the old  
Quakeress's knitting-needles fifty miles at sea from Nantucket; you're  
the chap."  
  
"Grin away; we'll see what turns up. Hark ye, Cabaco, there is somebody  
down in the after-hold that has not yet been seen on deck; and I suspect  
our old Mogul knows something of it too. I heard Stubb tell Flask, one  
morning watch, that there was something of that sort in the wind."  
  
"Tish! the bucket!"  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 44. The Chart.  
  
  
Had you followed Captain Ahab down into his cabin after the squall that  
took place on the night succeeding that wild ratification of his purpose  
with his crew, you would have seen him go to a locker in the transom,  
and bringing out a large wrinkled roll of yellowish sea charts, spread  
them before him on his screwed-down table. Then seating himself before  
it, you would have seen him intently study the various lines and  
shadings which there met his eye; and with slow but steady pencil trace  
additional courses over spaces that before were blank. At intervals, he  
would refer to piles of old log-books beside him, wherein were set down  
the seasons and places in which, on various former voyages of various  
ships, sperm whales had been captured or seen.  
  
While thus employed, the heavy pewter lamp suspended in chains over his  
head, continually rocked with the motion of the ship, and for ever threw  
shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it  
almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses  
on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and  
courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead.  
  
But it was not this night in particular that, in the solitude of his  
cabin, Ahab thus pondered over his charts. Almost every night they were  
brought out; almost every night some pencil marks were effaced, and  
others were substituted. For with the charts of all four oceans before  
him, Ahab was threading a maze of currents and eddies, with a view to  
the more certain accomplishment of that monomaniac thought of his soul.  
  
Now, to any one not fully acquainted with the ways of the leviathans,  
it might seem an absurdly hopeless task thus to seek out one solitary  
creature in the unhooped oceans of this planet. But not so did it  
seem to Ahab, who knew the sets of all tides and currents; and thereby  
calculating the driftings of the sperm whale's food; and, also, calling  
to mind the regular, ascertained seasons for hunting him in particular  
latitudes; could arrive at reasonable surmises, almost approaching to  
certainties, concerning the timeliest day to be upon this or that ground  
in search of his prey.  
  
So assured, indeed, is the fact concerning the periodicalness of the  
sperm whale's resorting to given waters, that many hunters believe that,  
could he be closely observed and studied throughout the world; were the  
logs for one voyage of the entire whale fleet carefully collated,  
then the migrations of the sperm whale would be found to correspond in  
invariability to those of the herring-shoals or the flights of swallows.  
On this hint, attempts have been made to construct elaborate migratory  
charts of the sperm whale.\*  
  
 \*Since the above was written, the statement is happily borne  
 out by an official circular, issued by Lieutenant Maury, of  
 the National Observatory, Washington, April 16th, 1851. By  
 that circular, it appears that precisely such a chart is in  
 course of completion; and portions of it are presented in  
 the circular. "This chart divides the ocean into districts  
 of five degrees of latitude by five degrees of longitude;  
 perpendicularly through each of which districts are twelve  
 columns for the twelve months; and horizontally through each  
 of which districts are three lines; one to show the number  
 of days that have been spent in each month in every  
 district, and the two others to show the number of days in  
 which whales, sperm or right, have been seen."  
  
Besides, when making a passage from one feeding-ground to another, the  
sperm whales, guided by some infallible instinct--say, rather, secret  
intelligence from the Deity--mostly swim in VEINS, as they are called;  
continuing their way along a given ocean-line with such undeviating  
exactitude, that no ship ever sailed her course, by any chart, with  
one tithe of such marvellous precision. Though, in these cases, the  
direction taken by any one whale be straight as a surveyor's parallel,  
and though the line of advance be strictly confined to its own  
unavoidable, straight wake, yet the arbitrary VEIN in which at these  
times he is said to swim, generally embraces some few miles in width  
(more or less, as the vein is presumed to expand or contract); but  
never exceeds the visual sweep from the whale-ship's mast-heads,  
when circumspectly gliding along this magic zone. The sum is, that at  
particular seasons within that breadth and along that path, migrating  
whales may with great confidence be looked for.  
  
And hence not only at substantiated times, upon well known separate  
feeding-grounds, could Ahab hope to encounter his prey; but in crossing  
the widest expanses of water between those grounds he could, by his  
art, so place and time himself on his way, as even then not to be wholly  
without prospect of a meeting.  
  
There was a circumstance which at first sight seemed to entangle his  
delirious but still methodical scheme. But not so in the reality,  
perhaps. Though the gregarious sperm whales have their regular seasons  
for particular grounds, yet in general you cannot conclude that the  
herds which haunted such and such a latitude or longitude this year,  
say, will turn out to be identically the same with those that were found  
there the preceding season; though there are peculiar and unquestionable  
instances where the contrary of this has proved true. In general, the  
same remark, only within a less wide limit, applies to the solitaries  
and hermits among the matured, aged sperm whales. So that though Moby  
Dick had in a former year been seen, for example, on what is called the  
Seychelle ground in the Indian ocean, or Volcano Bay on the Japanese  
Coast; yet it did not follow, that were the Pequod to visit either of  
those spots at any subsequent corresponding season, she would infallibly  
encounter him there. So, too, with some other feeding grounds, where  
he had at times revealed himself. But all these seemed only his casual  
stopping-places and ocean-inns, so to speak, not his places of prolonged  
abode. And where Ahab's chances of accomplishing his object have  
hitherto been spoken of, allusion has only been made to whatever  
way-side, antecedent, extra prospects were his, ere a particular  
set time or place were attained, when all possibilities would become  
probabilities, and, as Ahab fondly thought, every possibility the next  
thing to a certainty. That particular set time and place were conjoined  
in the one technical phrase--the Season-on-the-Line. For there and then,  
for several consecutive years, Moby Dick had been periodically descried,  
lingering in those waters for awhile, as the sun, in its annual round,  
loiters for a predicted interval in any one sign of the Zodiac. There  
it was, too, that most of the deadly encounters with the white whale had  
taken place; there the waves were storied with his deeds; there also was  
that tragic spot where the monomaniac old man had found the awful motive  
to his vengeance. But in the cautious comprehensiveness and unloitering  
vigilance with which Ahab threw his brooding soul into this unfaltering  
hunt, he would not permit himself to rest all his hopes upon the one  
crowning fact above mentioned, however flattering it might be to those  
hopes; nor in the sleeplessness of his vow could he so tranquillize his  
unquiet heart as to postpone all intervening quest.  
  
Now, the Pequod had sailed from Nantucket at the very beginning of the  
Season-on-the-Line. No possible endeavor then could enable her commander  
to make the great passage southwards, double Cape Horn, and then running  
down sixty degrees of latitude arrive in the equatorial Pacific in time  
to cruise there. Therefore, he must wait for the next ensuing season.  
Yet the premature hour of the Pequod's sailing had, perhaps, been  
correctly selected by Ahab, with a view to this very complexion of  
things. Because, an interval of three hundred and sixty-five days  
and nights was before him; an interval which, instead of impatiently  
enduring ashore, he would spend in a miscellaneous hunt; if by chance  
the White Whale, spending his vacation in seas far remote from his  
periodical feeding-grounds, should turn up his wrinkled brow off the  
Persian Gulf, or in the Bengal Bay, or China Seas, or in any other  
waters haunted by his race. So that Monsoons, Pampas, Nor'-Westers,  
Harmattans, Trades; any wind but the Levanter and Simoon, might  
blow Moby Dick into the devious zig-zag world-circle of the Pequod's  
circumnavigating wake.  
  
But granting all this; yet, regarded discreetly and coolly, seems it not  
but a mad idea, this; that in the broad boundless ocean, one solitary  
whale, even if encountered, should be thought capable of individual  
recognition from his hunter, even as a white-bearded Mufti in the  
thronged thoroughfares of Constantinople? Yes. For the peculiar  
snow-white brow of Moby Dick, and his snow-white hump, could not but  
be unmistakable. And have I not tallied the whale, Ahab would mutter  
to himself, as after poring over his charts till long after midnight he  
would throw himself back in reveries--tallied him, and shall he escape?  
His broad fins are bored, and scalloped out like a lost sheep's ear! And  
here, his mad mind would run on in a breathless race; till a weariness  
and faintness of pondering came over him; and in the open air of the  
deck he would seek to recover his strength. Ah, God! what trances  
of torments does that man endure who is consumed with one unachieved  
revengeful desire. He sleeps with clenched hands; and wakes with his own  
bloody nails in his palms.  
  
Often, when forced from his hammock by exhausting and intolerably vivid  
dreams of the night, which, resuming his own intense thoughts through  
the day, carried them on amid a clashing of phrensies, and whirled them  
round and round and round in his blazing brain, till the very throbbing  
of his life-spot became insufferable anguish; and when, as was sometimes  
the case, these spiritual throes in him heaved his being up from its  
base, and a chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and  
lightnings shot up, and accursed fiends beckoned him to leap down among  
them; when this hell in himself yawned beneath him, a wild cry would be  
heard through the ship; and with glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his  
state room, as though escaping from a bed that was on fire. Yet these,  
perhaps, instead of being the unsuppressable symptoms of some latent  
weakness, or fright at his own resolve, were but the plainest tokens  
of its intensity. For, at such times, crazy Ahab, the scheming,  
unappeasedly steadfast hunter of the white whale; this Ahab that had  
gone to his hammock, was not the agent that so caused him to burst from  
it in horror again. The latter was the eternal, living principle or  
soul in him; and in sleep, being for the time dissociated from the  
characterizing mind, which at other times employed it for its outer  
vehicle or agent, it spontaneously sought escape from the scorching  
contiguity of the frantic thing, of which, for the time, it was no  
longer an integral. But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with  
the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab's case, yielding up  
all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose,  
by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and  
devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. Nay,  
could grimly live and burn, while the common vitality to which it was  
conjoined, fled horror-stricken from the unbidden and unfathered birth.  
Therefore, the tormented spirit that glared out of bodily eyes, when  
what seemed Ahab rushed from his room, was for the time but a vacated  
thing, a formless somnambulistic being, a ray of living light, to be  
sure, but without an object to colour, and therefore a blankness in  
itself. God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature  
in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a  
vulture feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature  
he creates.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 45. The Affidavit.  
  
  
So far as what there may be of a narrative in this book; and, indeed, as  
indirectly touching one or two very interesting and curious particulars  
in the habits of sperm whales, the foregoing chapter, in its earlier  
part, is as important a one as will be found in this volume; but the  
leading matter of it requires to be still further and more familiarly  
enlarged upon, in order to be adequately understood, and moreover to  
take away any incredulity which a profound ignorance of the entire  
subject may induce in some minds, as to the natural verity of the main  
points of this affair.  
  
I care not to perform this part of my task methodically; but shall  
be content to produce the desired impression by separate citations of  
items, practically or reliably known to me as a whaleman; and from these  
citations, I take it--the conclusion aimed at will naturally follow of  
itself.  
  
First: I have personally known three instances where a whale, after  
receiving a harpoon, has effected a complete escape; and, after an  
interval (in one instance of three years), has been again struck by  
the same hand, and slain; when the two irons, both marked by the same  
private cypher, have been taken from the body. In the instance where  
three years intervened between the flinging of the two harpoons; and I  
think it may have been something more than that; the man who darted  
them happening, in the interval, to go in a trading ship on a voyage to  
Africa, went ashore there, joined a discovery party, and penetrated far  
into the interior, where he travelled for a period of nearly two years,  
often endangered by serpents, savages, tigers, poisonous miasmas,  
with all the other common perils incident to wandering in the heart of  
unknown regions. Meanwhile, the whale he had struck must also have  
been on its travels; no doubt it had thrice circumnavigated the globe,  
brushing with its flanks all the coasts of Africa; but to no purpose.  
This man and this whale again came together, and the one vanquished the  
other. I say I, myself, have known three instances similar to this; that  
is in two of them I saw the whales struck; and, upon the second attack,  
saw the two irons with the respective marks cut in them, afterwards  
taken from the dead fish. In the three-year instance, it so fell out  
that I was in the boat both times, first and last, and the last time  
distinctly recognised a peculiar sort of huge mole under the whale's  
eye, which I had observed there three years previous. I say three years,  
but I am pretty sure it was more than that. Here are three instances,  
then, which I personally know the truth of; but I have heard of many  
other instances from persons whose veracity in the matter there is no  
good ground to impeach.  
  
Secondly: It is well known in the Sperm Whale Fishery, however ignorant  
the world ashore may be of it, that there have been several memorable  
historical instances where a particular whale in the ocean has been at  
distant times and places popularly cognisable. Why such a whale became  
thus marked was not altogether and originally owing to his bodily  
peculiarities as distinguished from other whales; for however peculiar  
in that respect any chance whale may be, they soon put an end to his  
peculiarities by killing him, and boiling him down into a peculiarly  
valuable oil. No: the reason was this: that from the fatal experiences  
of the fishery there hung a terrible prestige of perilousness about  
such a whale as there did about Rinaldo Rinaldini, insomuch that  
most fishermen were content to recognise him by merely touching their  
tarpaulins when he would be discovered lounging by them on the sea,  
without seeking to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance. Like some  
poor devils ashore that happen to know an irascible great man, they  
make distant unobtrusive salutations to him in the street, lest if they  
pursued the acquaintance further, they might receive a summary thump for  
their presumption.  
  
But not only did each of these famous whales enjoy great individual  
celebrity--Nay, you may call it an ocean-wide renown; not only was he  
famous in life and now is immortal in forecastle stories after death,  
but he was admitted into all the rights, privileges, and distinctions of  
a name; had as much a name indeed as Cambyses or Caesar. Was it not so,  
O Timor Tom! thou famed leviathan, scarred like an iceberg, who so long  
did'st lurk in the Oriental straits of that name, whose spout was oft  
seen from the palmy beach of Ombay? Was it not so, O New Zealand Jack!  
thou terror of all cruisers that crossed their wakes in the vicinity of  
the Tattoo Land? Was it not so, O Morquan! King of Japan, whose lofty  
jet they say at times assumed the semblance of a snow-white cross  
against the sky? Was it not so, O Don Miguel! thou Chilian whale, marked  
like an old tortoise with mystic hieroglyphics upon the back! In plain  
prose, here are four whales as well known to the students of Cetacean  
History as Marius or Sylla to the classic scholar.  
  
But this is not all. New Zealand Tom and Don Miguel, after at various  
times creating great havoc among the boats of different vessels, were  
finally gone in quest of, systematically hunted out, chased and killed  
by valiant whaling captains, who heaved up their anchors with  
that express object as much in view, as in setting out through the  
Narragansett Woods, Captain Butler of old had it in his mind to capture  
that notorious murderous savage Annawon, the headmost warrior of the  
Indian King Philip.  
  
I do not know where I can find a better place than just here, to make  
mention of one or two other things, which to me seem important, as in  
printed form establishing in all respects the reasonableness of the  
whole story of the White Whale, more especially the catastrophe. For  
this is one of those disheartening instances where truth requires full  
as much bolstering as error. So ignorant are most landsmen of some of  
the plainest and most palpable wonders of the world, that without  
some hints touching the plain facts, historical and otherwise, of the  
fishery, they might scout at Moby Dick as a monstrous fable, or still  
worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory.  
  
First: Though most men have some vague flitting ideas of the general  
perils of the grand fishery, yet they have nothing like a fixed, vivid  
conception of those perils, and the frequency with which they recur.  
One reason perhaps is, that not one in fifty of the actual disasters and  
deaths by casualties in the fishery, ever finds a public record at home,  
however transient and immediately forgotten that record. Do you suppose  
that that poor fellow there, who this moment perhaps caught by the  
whale-line off the coast of New Guinea, is being carried down to the  
bottom of the sea by the sounding leviathan--do you suppose that that  
poor fellow's name will appear in the newspaper obituary you will read  
to-morrow at your breakfast? No: because the mails are very irregular  
between here and New Guinea. In fact, did you ever hear what might be  
called regular news direct or indirect from New Guinea? Yet I tell you  
that upon one particular voyage which I made to the Pacific, among many  
others we spoke thirty different ships, every one of which had had a  
death by a whale, some of them more than one, and three that had each  
lost a boat's crew. For God's sake, be economical with your lamps and  
candles! not a gallon you burn, but at least one drop of man's blood was  
spilled for it.  
  
Secondly: People ashore have indeed some indefinite idea that a whale is  
an enormous creature of enormous power; but I have ever found that when  
narrating to them some specific example of this two-fold enormousness,  
they have significantly complimented me upon my facetiousness; when, I  
declare upon my soul, I had no more idea of being facetious than Moses,  
when he wrote the history of the plagues of Egypt.  
  
But fortunately the special point I here seek can be established upon  
testimony entirely independent of my own. That point is this: The Sperm  
Whale is in some cases sufficiently powerful, knowing, and judiciously  
malicious, as with direct aforethought to stave in, utterly destroy, and  
sink a large ship; and what is more, the Sperm Whale HAS done it.  
  
First: In the year 1820 the ship Essex, Captain Pollard, of Nantucket,  
was cruising in the Pacific Ocean. One day she saw spouts, lowered her  
boats, and gave chase to a shoal of sperm whales. Ere long, several of  
the whales were wounded; when, suddenly, a very large whale escaping  
from the boats, issued from the shoal, and bore directly down upon the  
ship. Dashing his forehead against her hull, he so stove her in, that in  
less than "ten minutes" she settled down and fell over. Not a surviving  
plank of her has been seen since. After the severest exposure, part of  
the crew reached the land in their boats. Being returned home at last,  
Captain Pollard once more sailed for the Pacific in command of another  
ship, but the gods shipwrecked him again upon unknown rocks and  
breakers; for the second time his ship was utterly lost, and forthwith  
forswearing the sea, he has never tempted it since. At this day Captain  
Pollard is a resident of Nantucket. I have seen Owen Chace, who was  
chief mate of the Essex at the time of the tragedy; I have read his  
plain and faithful narrative; I have conversed with his son; and all  
this within a few miles of the scene of the catastrophe.\*  
  
  
\*The following are extracts from Chace's narrative: "Every fact seemed  
to warrant me in concluding that it was anything but chance which  
directed his operations; he made two several attacks upon the ship, at  
a short interval between them, both of which, according to their  
direction, were calculated to do us the most injury, by being made  
ahead, and thereby combining the speed of the two objects for the shock;  
to effect which, the exact manoeuvres which he made were necessary. His  
aspect was most horrible, and such as indicated resentment and fury. He  
came directly from the shoal which we had just before entered, and in  
which we had struck three of his companions, as if fired with revenge  
for their sufferings." Again: "At all events, the whole circumstances  
taken together, all happening before my own eyes, and producing, at the  
time, impressions in my mind of decided, calculating mischief, on the  
part of the whale (many of which impressions I cannot now recall),  
induce me to be satisfied that I am correct in my opinion."  
  
Here are his reflections some time after quitting the ship, during  
a black night in an open boat, when almost despairing of reaching any  
hospitable shore. "The dark ocean and swelling waters were nothing; the  
fears of being swallowed up by some dreadful tempest, or dashed  
upon hidden rocks, with all the other ordinary subjects of fearful  
contemplation, seemed scarcely entitled to a moment's thought; the  
dismal looking wreck, and THE HORRID ASPECT AND REVENGE OF THE WHALE,  
wholly engrossed my reflections, until day again made its appearance."  
  
In another place--p. 45,--he speaks of "THE MYSTERIOUS AND MORTAL ATTACK  
OF THE ANIMAL."  
  
  
Secondly: The ship Union, also of Nantucket, was in the year 1807  
totally lost off the Azores by a similar onset, but the authentic  
particulars of this catastrophe I have never chanced to encounter,  
though from the whale hunters I have now and then heard casual allusions  
to it.  
  
Thirdly: Some eighteen or twenty years ago Commodore J---, then  
commanding an American sloop-of-war of the first class, happened to be  
dining with a party of whaling captains, on board a Nantucket ship in  
the harbor of Oahu, Sandwich Islands. Conversation turning upon whales,  
the Commodore was pleased to be sceptical touching the amazing strength  
ascribed to them by the professional gentlemen present. He peremptorily  
denied for example, that any whale could so smite his stout sloop-of-war  
as to cause her to leak so much as a thimbleful. Very good; but there  
is more coming. Some weeks after, the Commodore set sail in this  
impregnable craft for Valparaiso. But he was stopped on the way by a  
portly sperm whale, that begged a few moments' confidential business  
with him. That business consisted in fetching the Commodore's craft such  
a thwack, that with all his pumps going he made straight for the nearest  
port to heave down and repair. I am not superstitious, but I consider  
the Commodore's interview with that whale as providential. Was not Saul  
of Tarsus converted from unbelief by a similar fright? I tell you, the  
sperm whale will stand no nonsense.  
  
I will now refer you to Langsdorff's Voyages for a little circumstance  
in point, peculiarly interesting to the writer hereof. Langsdorff, you  
must know by the way, was attached to the Russian Admiral Krusenstern's  
famous Discovery Expedition in the beginning of the present century.  
Captain Langsdorff thus begins his seventeenth chapter:  
  
"By the thirteenth of May our ship was ready to sail, and the next day  
we were out in the open sea, on our way to Ochotsh. The weather was very  
clear and fine, but so intolerably cold that we were obliged to keep on  
our fur clothing. For some days we had very little wind; it was not  
till the nineteenth that a brisk gale from the northwest sprang up. An  
uncommon large whale, the body of which was larger than the ship itself,  
lay almost at the surface of the water, but was not perceived by any  
one on board till the moment when the ship, which was in full sail,  
was almost upon him, so that it was impossible to prevent its striking  
against him. We were thus placed in the most imminent danger, as this  
gigantic creature, setting up its back, raised the ship three feet at  
least out of the water. The masts reeled, and the sails fell altogether,  
while we who were below all sprang instantly upon the deck, concluding  
that we had struck upon some rock; instead of this we saw the monster  
sailing off with the utmost gravity and solemnity. Captain D'Wolf  
applied immediately to the pumps to examine whether or not the vessel  
had received any damage from the shock, but we found that very happily  
it had escaped entirely uninjured."  
  
Now, the Captain D'Wolf here alluded to as commanding the ship in  
question, is a New Englander, who, after a long life of unusual  
adventures as a sea-captain, this day resides in the village of  
Dorchester near Boston. I have the honour of being a nephew of his. I  
have particularly questioned him concerning this passage in Langsdorff.  
He substantiates every word. The ship, however, was by no means a large  
one: a Russian craft built on the Siberian coast, and purchased by my  
uncle after bartering away the vessel in which he sailed from home.  
  
In that up and down manly book of old-fashioned adventure, so full, too,  
of honest wonders--the voyage of Lionel Wafer, one of ancient Dampier's  
old chums--I found a little matter set down so like that just quoted  
from Langsdorff, that I cannot forbear inserting it here for a  
corroborative example, if such be needed.  
  
Lionel, it seems, was on his way to "John Ferdinando," as he calls  
the modern Juan Fernandes. "In our way thither," he says, "about four  
o'clock in the morning, when we were about one hundred and fifty leagues  
from the Main of America, our ship felt a terrible shock, which put our  
men in such consternation that they could hardly tell where they were  
or what to think; but every one began to prepare for death. And, indeed,  
the shock was so sudden and violent, that we took it for granted the  
ship had struck against a rock; but when the amazement was a little  
over, we cast the lead, and sounded, but found no ground..... The  
suddenness of the shock made the guns leap in their carriages, and  
several of the men were shaken out of their hammocks. Captain Davis, who  
lay with his head on a gun, was thrown out of his cabin!" Lionel then  
goes on to impute the shock to an earthquake, and seems to substantiate  
the imputation by stating that a great earthquake, somewhere about  
that time, did actually do great mischief along the Spanish land. But  
I should not much wonder if, in the darkness of that early hour of the  
morning, the shock was after all caused by an unseen whale vertically  
bumping the hull from beneath.  
  
I might proceed with several more examples, one way or another known to  
me, of the great power and malice at times of the sperm whale. In more  
than one instance, he has been known, not only to chase the assailing  
boats back to their ships, but to pursue the ship itself, and long  
withstand all the lances hurled at him from its decks. The English ship  
Pusie Hall can tell a story on that head; and, as for his strength,  
let me say, that there have been examples where the lines attached to a  
running sperm whale have, in a calm, been transferred to the ship, and  
secured there; the whale towing her great hull through the water, as a  
horse walks off with a cart. Again, it is very often observed that, if  
the sperm whale, once struck, is allowed time to rally, he then acts,  
not so often with blind rage, as with wilful, deliberate designs of  
destruction to his pursuers; nor is it without conveying some eloquent  
indication of his character, that upon being attacked he will frequently  
open his mouth, and retain it in that dread expansion for several  
consecutive minutes. But I must be content with only one more and a  
concluding illustration; a remarkable and most significant one, by which  
you will not fail to see, that not only is the most marvellous event in  
this book corroborated by plain facts of the present day, but that these  
marvels (like all marvels) are mere repetitions of the ages; so that for  
the millionth time we say amen with Solomon--Verily there is nothing new  
under the sun.  
  
In the sixth Christian century lived Procopius, a Christian magistrate  
of Constantinople, in the days when Justinian was Emperor and Belisarius  
general. As many know, he wrote the history of his own times, a work  
every way of uncommon value. By the best authorities, he has always been  
considered a most trustworthy and unexaggerating historian, except in  
some one or two particulars, not at all affecting the matter presently  
to be mentioned.  
  
Now, in this history of his, Procopius mentions that, during the term  
of his prefecture at Constantinople, a great sea-monster was captured  
in the neighboring Propontis, or Sea of Marmora, after having destroyed  
vessels at intervals in those waters for a period of more than fifty  
years. A fact thus set down in substantial history cannot easily be  
gainsaid. Nor is there any reason it should be. Of what precise species  
this sea-monster was, is not mentioned. But as he destroyed ships, as  
well as for other reasons, he must have been a whale; and I am strongly  
inclined to think a sperm whale. And I will tell you why. For a long  
time I fancied that the sperm whale had been always unknown in the  
Mediterranean and the deep waters connecting with it. Even now I am  
certain that those seas are not, and perhaps never can be, in the  
present constitution of things, a place for his habitual gregarious  
resort. But further investigations have recently proved to me, that in  
modern times there have been isolated instances of the presence of the  
sperm whale in the Mediterranean. I am told, on good authority, that  
on the Barbary coast, a Commodore Davis of the British navy found  
the skeleton of a sperm whale. Now, as a vessel of war readily passes  
through the Dardanelles, hence a sperm whale could, by the same route,  
pass out of the Mediterranean into the Propontis.  
  
In the Propontis, as far as I can learn, none of that peculiar substance  
called BRIT is to be found, the aliment of the right whale. But I have  
every reason to believe that the food of the sperm whale--squid or  
cuttle-fish--lurks at the bottom of that sea, because large creatures,  
but by no means the largest of that sort, have been found at its  
surface. If, then, you properly put these statements together, and  
reason upon them a bit, you will clearly perceive that, according to all  
human reasoning, Procopius's sea-monster, that for half a century stove  
the ships of a Roman Emperor, must in all probability have been a sperm  
whale.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 46. Surmises.  
  
  
Though, consumed with the hot fire of his purpose, Ahab in all his  
thoughts and actions ever had in view the ultimate capture of Moby Dick;  
though he seemed ready to sacrifice all mortal interests to that one  
passion; nevertheless it may have been that he was by nature and long  
habituation far too wedded to a fiery whaleman's ways, altogether to  
abandon the collateral prosecution of the voyage. Or at least if  
this were otherwise, there were not wanting other motives much more  
influential with him. It would be refining too much, perhaps, even  
considering his monomania, to hint that his vindictiveness towards the  
White Whale might have possibly extended itself in some degree to all  
sperm whales, and that the more monsters he slew by so much the more he  
multiplied the chances that each subsequently encountered whale would  
prove to be the hated one he hunted. But if such an hypothesis be indeed  
exceptionable, there were still additional considerations which, though  
not so strictly according with the wildness of his ruling passion, yet  
were by no means incapable of swaying him.  
  
To accomplish his object Ahab must use tools; and of all tools used in  
the shadow of the moon, men are most apt to get out of order. He knew,  
for example, that however magnetic his ascendency in some respects was  
over Starbuck, yet that ascendency did not cover the complete spiritual  
man any more than mere corporeal superiority involves intellectual  
mastership; for to the purely spiritual, the intellectual but stand in a  
sort of corporeal relation. Starbuck's body and Starbuck's coerced will  
were Ahab's, so long as Ahab kept his magnet at Starbuck's brain; still  
he knew that for all this the chief mate, in his soul, abhorred his  
captain's quest, and could he, would joyfully disintegrate himself from  
it, or even frustrate it. It might be that a long interval would elapse  
ere the White Whale was seen. During that long interval Starbuck  
would ever be apt to fall into open relapses of rebellion against his  
captain's leadership, unless some ordinary, prudential, circumstantial  
influences were brought to bear upon him. Not only that, but the subtle  
insanity of Ahab respecting Moby Dick was noways more significantly  
manifested than in his superlative sense and shrewdness in foreseeing  
that, for the present, the hunt should in some way be stripped of that  
strange imaginative impiousness which naturally invested it; that  
the full terror of the voyage must be kept withdrawn into the obscure  
background (for few men's courage is proof against protracted meditation  
unrelieved by action); that when they stood their long night watches,  
his officers and men must have some nearer things to think of than Moby  
Dick. For however eagerly and impetuously the savage crew had hailed the  
announcement of his quest; yet all sailors of all sorts are more or less  
capricious and unreliable--they live in the varying outer weather, and  
they inhale its fickleness--and when retained for any object remote and  
blank in the pursuit, however promissory of life and passion in the  
end, it is above all things requisite that temporary interests and  
employments should intervene and hold them healthily suspended for the  
final dash.  
  
Nor was Ahab unmindful of another thing. In times of strong emotion  
mankind disdain all base considerations; but such times are evanescent.  
The permanent constitutional condition of the manufactured man, thought  
Ahab, is sordidness. Granting that the White Whale fully incites the  
hearts of this my savage crew, and playing round their savageness even  
breeds a certain generous knight-errantism in them, still, while for the  
love of it they give chase to Moby Dick, they must also have food  
for their more common, daily appetites. For even the high lifted and  
chivalric Crusaders of old times were not content to traverse two  
thousand miles of land to fight for their holy sepulchre, without  
committing burglaries, picking pockets, and gaining other pious  
perquisites by the way. Had they been strictly held to their one final  
and romantic object--that final and romantic object, too many would have  
turned from in disgust. I will not strip these men, thought Ahab, of all  
hopes of cash--aye, cash. They may scorn cash now; but let some months  
go by, and no perspective promise of it to them, and then this same  
quiescent cash all at once mutinying in them, this same cash would soon  
cashier Ahab.  
  
Nor was there wanting still another precautionary motive more related  
to Ahab personally. Having impulsively, it is probable, and perhaps  
somewhat prematurely revealed the prime but private purpose of the  
Pequod's voyage, Ahab was now entirely conscious that, in so doing,  
he had indirectly laid himself open to the unanswerable charge of  
usurpation; and with perfect impunity, both moral and legal, his crew  
if so disposed, and to that end competent, could refuse all further  
obedience to him, and even violently wrest from him the command. From  
even the barely hinted imputation of usurpation, and the possible  
consequences of such a suppressed impression gaining ground, Ahab must  
of course have been most anxious to protect himself. That protection  
could only consist in his own predominating brain and heart and hand,  
backed by a heedful, closely calculating attention to every minute  
atmospheric influence which it was possible for his crew to be subjected  
to.  
  
For all these reasons then, and others perhaps too analytic to be  
verbally developed here, Ahab plainly saw that he must still in a good  
degree continue true to the natural, nominal purpose of the Pequod's  
voyage; observe all customary usages; and not only that, but force  
himself to evince all his well known passionate interest in the general  
pursuit of his profession.  
  
Be all this as it may, his voice was now often heard hailing the three  
mast-heads and admonishing them to keep a bright look-out, and not omit  
reporting even a porpoise. This vigilance was not long without reward.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 47. The Mat-Maker.  
  
  
It was a cloudy, sultry afternoon; the seamen were lazily lounging  
about the decks, or vacantly gazing over into the lead-coloured waters.  
Queequeg and I were mildly employed weaving what is called a sword-mat,  
for an additional lashing to our boat. So still and subdued and yet  
somehow preluding was all the scene, and such an incantation of reverie  
lurked in the air, that each silent sailor seemed resolved into his own  
invisible self.  
  
I was the attendant or page of Queequeg, while busy at the mat. As I  
kept passing and repassing the filling or woof of marline between  
the long yarns of the warp, using my own hand for the shuttle, and as  
Queequeg, standing sideways, ever and anon slid his heavy oaken sword  
between the threads, and idly looking off upon the water, carelessly and  
unthinkingly drove home every yarn: I say so strange a dreaminess did  
there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by  
the intermitting dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were  
the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving  
and weaving away at the Fates. There lay the fixed threads of the warp  
subject to but one single, ever returning, unchanging vibration, and  
that vibration merely enough to admit of the crosswise interblending  
of other threads with its own. This warp seemed necessity; and here,  
thought I, with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own  
destiny into these unalterable threads. Meantime, Queequeg's impulsive,  
indifferent sword, sometimes hitting the woof slantingly, or crookedly,  
or strongly, or weakly, as the case might be; and by this difference  
in the concluding blow producing a corresponding contrast in the final  
aspect of the completed fabric; this savage's sword, thought I,  
which thus finally shapes and fashions both warp and woof; this  
easy, indifferent sword must be chance--aye, chance, free will, and  
necessity--nowise incompatible--all interweavingly working together.  
The straight warp of necessity, not to be swerved from its ultimate  
course--its every alternating vibration, indeed, only tending to that;  
free will still free to ply her shuttle between given threads; and  
chance, though restrained in its play within the right lines of  
necessity, and sideways in its motions directed by free will, though  
thus prescribed to by both, chance by turns rules either, and has the  
last featuring blow at events.  
  
  
Thus we were weaving and weaving away when I started at a sound so  
strange, long drawn, and musically wild and unearthly, that the ball  
of free will dropped from my hand, and I stood gazing up at the clouds  
whence that voice dropped like a wing. High aloft in the cross-trees was  
that mad Gay-Header, Tashtego. His body was reaching eagerly forward,  
his hand stretched out like a wand, and at brief sudden intervals he  
continued his cries. To be sure the same sound was that very moment  
perhaps being heard all over the seas, from hundreds of whalemen's  
look-outs perched as high in the air; but from few of those lungs could  
that accustomed old cry have derived such a marvellous cadence as from  
Tashtego the Indian's.  
  
As he stood hovering over you half suspended in air, so wildly and  
eagerly peering towards the horizon, you would have thought him some  
prophet or seer beholding the shadows of Fate, and by those wild cries  
announcing their coming.  
  
"There she blows! there! there! there! she blows! she blows!"  
  
"Where-away?"  
  
"On the lee-beam, about two miles off! a school of them!"  
  
Instantly all was commotion.  
  
The Sperm Whale blows as a clock ticks, with the same undeviating and  
reliable uniformity. And thereby whalemen distinguish this fish from  
other tribes of his genus.  
  
"There go flukes!" was now the cry from Tashtego; and the whales  
disappeared.  
  
"Quick, steward!" cried Ahab. "Time! time!"  
  
Dough-Boy hurried below, glanced at the watch, and reported the exact  
minute to Ahab.  
  
The ship was now kept away from the wind, and she went gently rolling  
before it. Tashtego reporting that the whales had gone down heading to  
leeward, we confidently looked to see them again directly in advance of  
our bows. For that singular craft at times evinced by the Sperm Whale  
when, sounding with his head in one direction, he nevertheless, while  
concealed beneath the surface, mills round, and swiftly swims off in the  
opposite quarter--this deceitfulness of his could not now be in action;  
for there was no reason to suppose that the fish seen by Tashtego had  
been in any way alarmed, or indeed knew at all of our vicinity. One of  
the men selected for shipkeepers--that is, those not appointed to the  
boats, by this time relieved the Indian at the main-mast head. The  
sailors at the fore and mizzen had come down; the line tubs were fixed  
in their places; the cranes were thrust out; the mainyard was backed,  
and the three boats swung over the sea like three samphire baskets over  
high cliffs. Outside of the bulwarks their eager crews with one hand  
clung to the rail, while one foot was expectantly poised on the gunwale.  
So look the long line of man-of-war's men about to throw themselves on  
board an enemy's ship.  
  
But at this critical instant a sudden exclamation was heard that took  
every eye from the whale. With a start all glared at dark Ahab, who was  
surrounded by five dusky phantoms that seemed fresh formed out of air.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 48. The First Lowering.  
  
  
The phantoms, for so they then seemed, were flitting on the other side  
of the deck, and, with a noiseless celerity, were casting loose the  
tackles and bands of the boat which swung there. This boat had always  
been deemed one of the spare boats, though technically called the  
captain's, on account of its hanging from the starboard quarter. The  
figure that now stood by its bows was tall and swart, with one white  
tooth evilly protruding from its steel-like lips. A rumpled Chinese  
jacket of black cotton funereally invested him, with wide black trowsers  
of the same dark stuff. But strangely crowning this ebonness was a  
glistening white plaited turban, the living hair braided and coiled  
round and round upon his head. Less swart in aspect, the companions of  
this figure were of that vivid, tiger-yellow complexion peculiar to  
some of the aboriginal natives of the Manillas;--a race notorious for  
a certain diabolism of subtilty, and by some honest white mariners  
supposed to be the paid spies and secret confidential agents on the  
water of the devil, their lord, whose counting-room they suppose to be  
elsewhere.  
  
While yet the wondering ship's company were gazing upon these strangers,  
Ahab cried out to the white-turbaned old man at their head, "All ready  
there, Fedallah?"  
  
"Ready," was the half-hissed reply.  
  
"Lower away then; d'ye hear?" shouting across the deck. "Lower away  
there, I say."  
  
Such was the thunder of his voice, that spite of their amazement the men  
sprang over the rail; the sheaves whirled round in the blocks; with a  
wallow, the three boats dropped into the sea; while, with a dexterous,  
off-handed daring, unknown in any other vocation, the sailors,  
goat-like, leaped down the rolling ship's side into the tossed boats  
below.  
  
Hardly had they pulled out from under the ship's lee, when a fourth  
keel, coming from the windward side, pulled round under the stern, and  
showed the five strangers rowing Ahab, who, standing erect in the stern,  
loudly hailed Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask, to spread themselves widely,  
so as to cover a large expanse of water. But with all their eyes again  
riveted upon the swart Fedallah and his crew, the inmates of the other  
boats obeyed not the command.  
  
"Captain Ahab?--" said Starbuck.  
  
"Spread yourselves," cried Ahab; "give way, all four boats. Thou, Flask,  
pull out more to leeward!"  
  
"Aye, aye, sir," cheerily cried little King-Post, sweeping round  
his great steering oar. "Lay back!" addressing his crew.  
"There!--there!--there again! There she blows right ahead, boys!--lay  
back!"  
  
"Never heed yonder yellow boys, Archy."  
  
"Oh, I don't mind'em, sir," said Archy; "I knew it all before now.  
Didn't I hear 'em in the hold? And didn't I tell Cabaco here of it? What  
say ye, Cabaco? They are stowaways, Mr. Flask."  
  
"Pull, pull, my fine hearts-alive; pull, my children; pull, my little  
ones," drawlingly and soothingly sighed Stubb to his crew, some of whom  
still showed signs of uneasiness. "Why don't you break your backbones,  
my boys? What is it you stare at? Those chaps in yonder boat? Tut! They  
are only five more hands come to help us--never mind from where--the  
more the merrier. Pull, then, do pull; never mind the brimstone--devils  
are good fellows enough. So, so; there you are now; that's the stroke  
for a thousand pounds; that's the stroke to sweep the stakes! Hurrah  
for the gold cup of sperm oil, my heroes! Three cheers, men--all hearts  
alive! Easy, easy; don't be in a hurry--don't be in a hurry. Why don't  
you snap your oars, you rascals? Bite something, you dogs! So, so, so,  
then:--softly, softly! That's it--that's it! long and strong. Give way  
there, give way! The devil fetch ye, ye ragamuffin rapscallions; ye are  
all asleep. Stop snoring, ye sleepers, and pull. Pull, will ye? pull,  
can't ye? pull, won't ye? Why in the name of gudgeons and ginger-cakes  
don't ye pull?--pull and break something! pull, and start your eyes out!  
Here!" whipping out the sharp knife from his girdle; "every mother's son  
of ye draw his knife, and pull with the blade between his teeth. That's  
it--that's it. Now ye do something; that looks like it, my steel-bits.  
Start her--start her, my silver-spoons! Start her, marling-spikes!"  
  
Stubb's exordium to his crew is given here at large, because he had  
rather a peculiar way of talking to them in general, and especially in  
inculcating the religion of rowing. But you must not suppose from this  
specimen of his sermonizings that he ever flew into downright passions  
with his congregation. Not at all; and therein consisted his chief  
peculiarity. He would say the most terrific things to his crew, in a  
tone so strangely compounded of fun and fury, and the fury seemed so  
calculated merely as a spice to the fun, that no oarsman could hear such  
queer invocations without pulling for dear life, and yet pulling for  
the mere joke of the thing. Besides he all the time looked so easy and  
indolent himself, so loungingly managed his steering-oar, and so broadly  
gaped--open-mouthed at times--that the mere sight of such a yawning  
commander, by sheer force of contrast, acted like a charm upon the crew.  
Then again, Stubb was one of those odd sort of humorists, whose jollity  
is sometimes so curiously ambiguous, as to put all inferiors on their  
guard in the matter of obeying them.  
  
In obedience to a sign from Ahab, Starbuck was now pulling obliquely  
across Stubb's bow; and when for a minute or so the two boats were  
pretty near to each other, Stubb hailed the mate.  
  
"Mr. Starbuck! larboard boat there, ahoy! a word with ye, sir, if ye  
please!"  
  
"Halloa!" returned Starbuck, turning round not a single inch as he  
spoke; still earnestly but whisperingly urging his crew; his face set  
like a flint from Stubb's.  
  
"What think ye of those yellow boys, sir!  
  
"Smuggled on board, somehow, before the ship sailed. (Strong, strong,  
boys!)" in a whisper to his crew, then speaking out loud again: "A sad  
business, Mr. Stubb! (seethe her, seethe her, my lads!) but never mind,  
Mr. Stubb, all for the best. Let all your crew pull strong, come what  
will. (Spring, my men, spring!) There's hogsheads of sperm ahead, Mr.  
Stubb, and that's what ye came for. (Pull, my boys!) Sperm, sperm's the  
play! This at least is duty; duty and profit hand in hand."  
  
"Aye, aye, I thought as much," soliloquized Stubb, when the boats  
diverged, "as soon as I clapt eye on 'em, I thought so. Aye, and that's  
what he went into the after hold for, so often, as Dough-Boy long  
suspected. They were hidden down there. The White Whale's at the bottom  
of it. Well, well, so be it! Can't be helped! All right! Give way, men!  
It ain't the White Whale to-day! Give way!"  
  
Now the advent of these outlandish strangers at such a critical instant  
as the lowering of the boats from the deck, this had not unreasonably  
awakened a sort of superstitious amazement in some of the ship's  
company; but Archy's fancied discovery having some time previous got  
abroad among them, though indeed not credited then, this had in some  
small measure prepared them for the event. It took off the extreme edge  
of their wonder; and so what with all this and Stubb's confident way  
of accounting for their appearance, they were for the time freed from  
superstitious surmisings; though the affair still left abundant room for  
all manner of wild conjectures as to dark Ahab's precise agency in the  
matter from the beginning. For me, I silently recalled the mysterious  
shadows I had seen creeping on board the Pequod during the dim Nantucket  
dawn, as well as the enigmatical hintings of the unaccountable Elijah.  
  
Meantime, Ahab, out of hearing of his officers, having sided the  
furthest to windward, was still ranging ahead of the other boats; a  
circumstance bespeaking how potent a crew was pulling him. Those tiger  
yellow creatures of his seemed all steel and whalebone; like five  
trip-hammers they rose and fell with regular strokes of strength, which  
periodically started the boat along the water like a horizontal burst  
boiler out of a Mississippi steamer. As for Fedallah, who was seen  
pulling the harpooneer oar, he had thrown aside his black jacket, and  
displayed his naked chest with the whole part of his body above the  
gunwale, clearly cut against the alternating depressions of the watery  
horizon; while at the other end of the boat Ahab, with one arm, like a  
fencer's, thrown half backward into the air, as if to counterbalance any  
tendency to trip; Ahab was seen steadily managing his steering oar as in  
a thousand boat lowerings ere the White Whale had torn him. All at once  
the outstretched arm gave a peculiar motion and then remained fixed,  
while the boat's five oars were seen simultaneously peaked. Boat and  
crew sat motionless on the sea. Instantly the three spread boats in the  
rear paused on their way. The whales had irregularly settled bodily  
down into the blue, thus giving no distantly discernible token of the  
movement, though from his closer vicinity Ahab had observed it.  
  
"Every man look out along his oars!" cried Starbuck. "Thou, Queequeg,  
stand up!"  
  
Nimbly springing up on the triangular raised box in the bow, the savage  
stood erect there, and with intensely eager eyes gazed off towards the  
spot where the chase had last been descried. Likewise upon the extreme  
stern of the boat where it was also triangularly platformed level with  
the gunwale, Starbuck himself was seen coolly and adroitly balancing  
himself to the jerking tossings of his chip of a craft, and silently  
eyeing the vast blue eye of the sea.  
  
Not very far distant Flask's boat was also lying breathlessly still; its  
commander recklessly standing upon the top of the loggerhead, a stout  
sort of post rooted in the keel, and rising some two feet above the  
level of the stern platform. It is used for catching turns with the  
whale line. Its top is not more spacious than the palm of a man's hand,  
and standing upon such a base as that, Flask seemed perched at the  
mast-head of some ship which had sunk to all but her trucks. But little  
King-Post was small and short, and at the same time little King-Post was  
full of a large and tall ambition, so that this loggerhead stand-point  
of his did by no means satisfy King-Post.  
  
"I can't see three seas off; tip us up an oar there, and let me on to  
that."  
  
Upon this, Daggoo, with either hand upon the gunwale to steady his  
way, swiftly slid aft, and then erecting himself volunteered his lofty  
shoulders for a pedestal.  
  
"Good a mast-head as any, sir. Will you mount?"  
  
"That I will, and thank ye very much, my fine fellow; only I wish you  
fifty feet taller."  
  
Whereupon planting his feet firmly against two opposite planks of the  
boat, the gigantic negro, stooping a little, presented his flat palm to  
Flask's foot, and then putting Flask's hand on his hearse-plumed head  
and bidding him spring as he himself should toss, with one dexterous  
fling landed the little man high and dry on his shoulders. And here was  
Flask now standing, Daggoo with one lifted arm furnishing him with a  
breastband to lean against and steady himself by.  
  
At any time it is a strange sight to the tyro to see with what wondrous  
habitude of unconscious skill the whaleman will maintain an erect  
posture in his boat, even when pitched about by the most riotously  
perverse and cross-running seas. Still more strange to see him giddily  
perched upon the loggerhead itself, under such circumstances. But the  
sight of little Flask mounted upon gigantic Daggoo was yet more curious;  
for sustaining himself with a cool, indifferent, easy, unthought of,  
barbaric majesty, the noble negro to every roll of the sea harmoniously  
rolled his fine form. On his broad back, flaxen-haired Flask seemed  
a snow-flake. The bearer looked nobler than the rider. Though truly  
vivacious, tumultuous, ostentatious little Flask would now and then  
stamp with impatience; but not one added heave did he thereby give to  
the negro's lordly chest. So have I seen Passion and Vanity stamping the  
living magnanimous earth, but the earth did not alter her tides and her  
seasons for that.  
  
Meanwhile Stubb, the third mate, betrayed no such far-gazing  
solicitudes. The whales might have made one of their regular soundings,  
not a temporary dive from mere fright; and if that were the case,  
Stubb, as his wont in such cases, it seems, was resolved to solace the  
languishing interval with his pipe. He withdrew it from his hatband,  
where he always wore it aslant like a feather. He loaded it, and rammed  
home the loading with his thumb-end; but hardly had he ignited his match  
across the rough sandpaper of his hand, when Tashtego, his harpooneer,  
whose eyes had been setting to windward like two fixed stars, suddenly  
dropped like light from his erect attitude to his seat, crying out in a  
quick phrensy of hurry, "Down, down all, and give way!--there they are!"  
  
To a landsman, no whale, nor any sign of a herring, would have been  
visible at that moment; nothing but a troubled bit of greenish white  
water, and thin scattered puffs of vapour hovering over it, and  
suffusingly blowing off to leeward, like the confused scud from white  
rolling billows. The air around suddenly vibrated and tingled, as it  
were, like the air over intensely heated plates of iron. Beneath this  
atmospheric waving and curling, and partially beneath a thin layer of  
water, also, the whales were swimming. Seen in advance of all the other  
indications, the puffs of vapour they spouted, seemed their forerunning  
couriers and detached flying outriders.  
  
All four boats were now in keen pursuit of that one spot of troubled  
water and air. But it bade fair to outstrip them; it flew on and on,  
as a mass of interblending bubbles borne down a rapid stream from the  
hills.  
  
"Pull, pull, my good boys," said Starbuck, in the lowest possible but  
intensest concentrated whisper to his men; while the sharp fixed glance  
from his eyes darted straight ahead of the bow, almost seemed as two  
visible needles in two unerring binnacle compasses. He did not say much  
to his crew, though, nor did his crew say anything to him. Only the  
silence of the boat was at intervals startlingly pierced by one of his  
peculiar whispers, now harsh with command, now soft with entreaty.  
  
How different the loud little King-Post. "Sing out and say something,  
my hearties. Roar and pull, my thunderbolts! Beach me, beach me on their  
black backs, boys; only do that for me, and I'll sign over to you my  
Martha's Vineyard plantation, boys; including wife and children, boys.  
Lay me on--lay me on! O Lord, Lord! but I shall go stark, staring mad!  
See! see that white water!" And so shouting, he pulled his hat from his  
head, and stamped up and down on it; then picking it up, flirted it far  
off upon the sea; and finally fell to rearing and plunging in the boat's  
stern like a crazed colt from the prairie.  
  
"Look at that chap now," philosophically drawled Stubb, who, with his  
unlighted short pipe, mechanically retained between his teeth, at a  
short distance, followed after--"He's got fits, that Flask has. Fits?  
yes, give him fits--that's the very word--pitch fits into 'em. Merrily,  
merrily, hearts-alive. Pudding for supper, you know;--merry's the word.  
Pull, babes--pull, sucklings--pull, all. But what the devil are you  
hurrying about? Softly, softly, and steadily, my men. Only pull, and  
keep pulling; nothing more. Crack all your backbones, and bite your  
knives in two--that's all. Take it easy--why don't ye take it easy, I  
say, and burst all your livers and lungs!"  
  
But what it was that inscrutable Ahab said to that tiger-yellow crew of  
his--these were words best omitted here; for you live under the blessed  
light of the evangelical land. Only the infidel sharks in the audacious  
seas may give ear to such words, when, with tornado brow, and eyes of  
red murder, and foam-glued lips, Ahab leaped after his prey.  
  
Meanwhile, all the boats tore on. The repeated specific allusions of  
Flask to "that whale," as he called the fictitious monster which  
he declared to be incessantly tantalizing his boat's bow with its  
tail--these allusions of his were at times so vivid and life-like, that  
they would cause some one or two of his men to snatch a fearful look  
over the shoulder. But this was against all rule; for the oarsmen  
must put out their eyes, and ram a skewer through their necks; usage  
pronouncing that they must have no organs but ears, and no limbs but  
arms, in these critical moments.  
  
It was a sight full of quick wonder and awe! The vast swells of the  
omnipotent sea; the surging, hollow roar they made, as they rolled along  
the eight gunwales, like gigantic bowls in a boundless bowling-green;  
the brief suspended agony of the boat, as it would tip for an instant on  
the knife-like edge of the sharper waves, that almost seemed threatening  
to cut it in two; the sudden profound dip into the watery glens and  
hollows; the keen spurrings and goadings to gain the top of the opposite  
hill; the headlong, sled-like slide down its other side;--all these,  
with the cries of the headsmen and harpooneers, and the shuddering gasps  
of the oarsmen, with the wondrous sight of the ivory Pequod bearing  
down upon her boats with outstretched sails, like a wild hen after her  
screaming brood;--all this was thrilling.  
  
Not the raw recruit, marching from the bosom of his wife into the fever  
heat of his first battle; not the dead man's ghost encountering the  
first unknown phantom in the other world;--neither of these can feel  
stranger and stronger emotions than that man does, who for the first  
time finds himself pulling into the charmed, churned circle of the  
hunted sperm whale.  
  
The dancing white water made by the chase was now becoming more and more  
visible, owing to the increasing darkness of the dun cloud-shadows  
flung upon the sea. The jets of vapour no longer blended, but tilted  
everywhere to right and left; the whales seemed separating their wakes.  
The boats were pulled more apart; Starbuck giving chase to three whales  
running dead to leeward. Our sail was now set, and, with the still  
rising wind, we rushed along; the boat going with such madness through  
the water, that the lee oars could scarcely be worked rapidly enough to  
escape being torn from the row-locks.  
  
Soon we were running through a suffusing wide veil of mist; neither ship  
nor boat to be seen.  
  
"Give way, men," whispered Starbuck, drawing still further aft the sheet  
of his sail; "there is time to kill a fish yet before the squall comes.  
There's white water again!--close to! Spring!"  
  
Soon after, two cries in quick succession on each side of us denoted  
that the other boats had got fast; but hardly were they overheard, when  
with a lightning-like hurtling whisper Starbuck said: "Stand up!" and  
Queequeg, harpoon in hand, sprang to his feet.  
  
Though not one of the oarsmen was then facing the life and death peril  
so close to them ahead, yet with their eyes on the intense countenance  
of the mate in the stern of the boat, they knew that the imminent  
instant had come; they heard, too, an enormous wallowing sound as of  
fifty elephants stirring in their litter. Meanwhile the boat was still  
booming through the mist, the waves curling and hissing around us like  
the erected crests of enraged serpents.  
  
"That's his hump. THERE, THERE, give it to him!" whispered Starbuck.  
  
A short rushing sound leaped out of the boat; it was the darted iron of  
Queequeg. Then all in one welded commotion came an invisible push from  
astern, while forward the boat seemed striking on a ledge; the sail  
collapsed and exploded; a gush of scalding vapour shot up near by;  
something rolled and tumbled like an earthquake beneath us. The whole  
crew were half suffocated as they were tossed helter-skelter into the  
white curdling cream of the squall. Squall, whale, and harpoon had all  
blended together; and the whale, merely grazed by the iron, escaped.  
  
Though completely swamped, the boat was nearly unharmed. Swimming round  
it we picked up the floating oars, and lashing them across the gunwale,  
tumbled back to our places. There we sat up to our knees in the sea, the  
water covering every rib and plank, so that to our downward gazing eyes  
the suspended craft seemed a coral boat grown up to us from the bottom  
of the ocean.  
  
The wind increased to a howl; the waves dashed their bucklers together;  
the whole squall roared, forked, and crackled around us like a white  
fire upon the prairie, in which, unconsumed, we were burning; immortal  
in these jaws of death! In vain we hailed the other boats; as well roar  
to the live coals down the chimney of a flaming furnace as hail those  
boats in that storm. Meanwhile the driving scud, rack, and mist, grew  
darker with the shadows of night; no sign of the ship could be seen.  
The rising sea forbade all attempts to bale out the boat. The oars were  
useless as propellers, performing now the office of life-preservers.  
So, cutting the lashing of the waterproof match keg, after many failures  
Starbuck contrived to ignite the lamp in the lantern; then stretching  
it on a waif pole, handed it to Queequeg as the standard-bearer of this  
forlorn hope. There, then, he sat, holding up that imbecile candle in  
the heart of that almighty forlornness. There, then, he sat, the sign  
and symbol of a man without faith, hopelessly holding up hope in the  
midst of despair.  
  
Wet, drenched through, and shivering cold, despairing of ship or boat,  
we lifted up our eyes as the dawn came on. The mist still spread over  
the sea, the empty lantern lay crushed in the bottom of the boat.  
Suddenly Queequeg started to his feet, hollowing his hand to his ear.  
We all heard a faint creaking, as of ropes and yards hitherto muffled by  
the storm. The sound came nearer and nearer; the thick mists were dimly  
parted by a huge, vague form. Affrighted, we all sprang into the sea as  
the ship at last loomed into view, bearing right down upon us within a  
distance of not much more than its length.  
  
Floating on the waves we saw the abandoned boat, as for one instant it  
tossed and gaped beneath the ship's bows like a chip at the base of a  
cataract; and then the vast hull rolled over it, and it was seen no  
more till it came up weltering astern. Again we swam for it, were dashed  
against it by the seas, and were at last taken up and safely landed on  
board. Ere the squall came close to, the other boats had cut loose from  
their fish and returned to the ship in good time. The ship had given us  
up, but was still cruising, if haply it might light upon some token of  
our perishing,--an oar or a lance pole.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 49. The Hyena.  
  
  
There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair  
we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical  
joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than  
suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. However,  
nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts  
down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard  
things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of  
potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small  
difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of  
life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly,  
good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen  
and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking  
of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes  
in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might  
have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the  
general joke. There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this  
free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy; and with it I now  
regarded this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its  
object.  
  
"Queequeg," said I, when they had dragged me, the last man, to the deck,  
and I was still shaking myself in my jacket to fling off the water;  
"Queequeg, my fine friend, does this sort of thing often happen?"  
Without much emotion, though soaked through just like me, he gave me to  
understand that such things did often happen.  
  
"Mr. Stubb," said I, turning to that worthy, who, buttoned up in his  
oil-jacket, was now calmly smoking his pipe in the rain; "Mr. Stubb, I  
think I have heard you say that of all whalemen you ever met, our chief  
mate, Mr. Starbuck, is by far the most careful and prudent. I suppose  
then, that going plump on a flying whale with your sail set in a foggy  
squall is the height of a whaleman's discretion?"  
  
"Certain. I've lowered for whales from a leaking ship in a gale off Cape  
Horn."  
  
"Mr. Flask," said I, turning to little King-Post, who was standing close  
by; "you are experienced in these things, and I am not. Will you tell  
me whether it is an unalterable law in this fishery, Mr. Flask, for an  
oarsman to break his own back pulling himself back-foremost into death's  
jaws?"  
  
"Can't you twist that smaller?" said Flask. "Yes, that's the law.  
I should like to see a boat's crew backing water up to a whale face  
foremost. Ha, ha! the whale would give them squint for squint, mind  
that!"  
  
Here then, from three impartial witnesses, I had a deliberate statement  
of the entire case. Considering, therefore, that squalls and capsizings  
in the water and consequent bivouacks on the deep, were matters  
of common occurrence in this kind of life; considering that at the  
superlatively critical instant of going on to the whale I must resign my  
life into the hands of him who steered the boat--oftentimes a fellow who  
at that very moment is in his impetuousness upon the point of scuttling  
the craft with his own frantic stampings; considering that the  
particular disaster to our own particular boat was chiefly to be imputed  
to Starbuck's driving on to his whale almost in the teeth of a squall,  
and considering that Starbuck, notwithstanding, was famous for his  
great heedfulness in the fishery; considering that I belonged to this  
uncommonly prudent Starbuck's boat; and finally considering in what a  
devil's chase I was implicated, touching the White Whale: taking all  
things together, I say, I thought I might as well go below and make a  
rough draft of my will. "Queequeg," said I, "come along, you shall be my  
lawyer, executor, and legatee."  
  
It may seem strange that of all men sailors should be tinkering at their  
last wills and testaments, but there are no people in the world more  
fond of that diversion. This was the fourth time in my nautical life  
that I had done the same thing. After the ceremony was concluded upon  
the present occasion, I felt all the easier; a stone was rolled away  
from my heart. Besides, all the days I should now live would be as good  
as the days that Lazarus lived after his resurrection; a supplementary  
clean gain of so many months or weeks as the case might be. I survived  
myself; my death and burial were locked up in my chest. I looked  
round me tranquilly and contentedly, like a quiet ghost with a clean  
conscience sitting inside the bars of a snug family vault.  
  
Now then, thought I, unconsciously rolling up the sleeves of my frock,  
here goes for a cool, collected dive at death and destruction, and the  
devil fetch the hindmost.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 50. Ahab's Boat and Crew. Fedallah.  
  
  
"Who would have thought it, Flask!" cried Stubb; "if I had but one leg  
you would not catch me in a boat, unless maybe to stop the plug-hole  
with my timber toe. Oh! he's a wonderful old man!"  
  
"I don't think it so strange, after all, on that account," said Flask.  
"If his leg were off at the hip, now, it would be a different thing.  
That would disable him; but he has one knee, and good part of the other  
left, you know."  
  
"I don't know that, my little man; I never yet saw him kneel."  
  
  
Among whale-wise people it has often been argued whether, considering  
the paramount importance of his life to the success of the voyage, it is  
right for a whaling captain to jeopardize that life in the active perils  
of the chase. So Tamerlane's soldiers often argued with tears in their  
eyes, whether that invaluable life of his ought to be carried into the  
thickest of the fight.  
  
But with Ahab the question assumed a modified aspect. Considering  
that with two legs man is but a hobbling wight in all times of danger;  
considering that the pursuit of whales is always under great and  
extraordinary difficulties; that every individual moment, indeed, then  
comprises a peril; under these circumstances is it wise for any  
maimed man to enter a whale-boat in the hunt? As a general thing, the  
joint-owners of the Pequod must have plainly thought not.  
  
Ahab well knew that although his friends at home would think little of  
his entering a boat in certain comparatively harmless vicissitudes of  
the chase, for the sake of being near the scene of action and giving  
his orders in person, yet for Captain Ahab to have a boat actually  
apportioned to him as a regular headsman in the hunt--above all for  
Captain Ahab to be supplied with five extra men, as that same boat's  
crew, he well knew that such generous conceits never entered the heads  
of the owners of the Pequod. Therefore he had not solicited a boat's  
crew from them, nor had he in any way hinted his desires on that head.  
Nevertheless he had taken private measures of his own touching all  
that matter. Until Cabaco's published discovery, the sailors had little  
foreseen it, though to be sure when, after being a little while out  
of port, all hands had concluded the customary business of fitting the  
whaleboats for service; when some time after this Ahab was now and then  
found bestirring himself in the matter of making thole-pins with his  
own hands for what was thought to be one of the spare boats, and even  
solicitously cutting the small wooden skewers, which when the line is  
running out are pinned over the groove in the bow: when all this was  
observed in him, and particularly his solicitude in having an extra  
coat of sheathing in the bottom of the boat, as if to make it better  
withstand the pointed pressure of his ivory limb; and also the anxiety  
he evinced in exactly shaping the thigh board, or clumsy cleat, as it is  
sometimes called, the horizontal piece in the boat's bow for bracing the  
knee against in darting or stabbing at the whale; when it was observed  
how often he stood up in that boat with his solitary knee fixed in the  
semi-circular depression in the cleat, and with the carpenter's chisel  
gouged out a little here and straightened it a little there; all these  
things, I say, had awakened much interest and curiosity at the time. But  
almost everybody supposed that this particular preparative heedfulness  
in Ahab must only be with a view to the ultimate chase of Moby Dick;  
for he had already revealed his intention to hunt that mortal monster  
in person. But such a supposition did by no means involve the remotest  
suspicion as to any boat's crew being assigned to that boat.  
  
Now, with the subordinate phantoms, what wonder remained soon waned  
away; for in a whaler wonders soon wane. Besides, now and then such  
unaccountable odds and ends of strange nations come up from the unknown  
nooks and ash-holes of the earth to man these floating outlaws of  
whalers; and the ships themselves often pick up such queer castaway  
creatures found tossing about the open sea on planks, bits of wreck,  
oars, whaleboats, canoes, blown-off Japanese junks, and what not; that  
Beelzebub himself might climb up the side and step down into the cabin  
to chat with the captain, and it would not create any unsubduable  
excitement in the forecastle.  
  
But be all this as it may, certain it is that while the subordinate  
phantoms soon found their place among the crew, though still as it were  
somehow distinct from them, yet that hair-turbaned Fedallah remained  
a muffled mystery to the last. Whence he came in a mannerly world like  
this, by what sort of unaccountable tie he soon evinced himself to be  
linked with Ahab's peculiar fortunes; nay, so far as to have some sort  
of a half-hinted influence; Heaven knows, but it might have been even  
authority over him; all this none knew. But one cannot sustain  
an indifferent air concerning Fedallah. He was such a creature as  
civilized, domestic people in the temperate zone only see in their  
dreams, and that but dimly; but the like of whom now and then glide  
among the unchanging Asiatic communities, especially the Oriental isles  
to the east of the continent--those insulated, immemorial, unalterable  
countries, which even in these modern days still preserve much of the  
ghostly aboriginalness of earth's primal generations, when the memory of  
the first man was a distinct recollection, and all men his descendants,  
unknowing whence he came, eyed each other as real phantoms, and asked of  
the sun and the moon why they were created and to what end; when though,  
according to Genesis, the angels indeed consorted with the daughters of  
men, the devils also, add the uncanonical Rabbins, indulged in mundane  
amours.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 51. The Spirit-Spout.  
  
  
Days, weeks passed, and under easy sail, the ivory Pequod had slowly  
swept across four several cruising-grounds; that off the Azores; off the  
Cape de Verdes; on the Plate (so called), being off the mouth of the  
Rio de la Plata; and the Carrol Ground, an unstaked, watery locality,  
southerly from St. Helena.  
  
It was while gliding through these latter waters that one serene and  
moonlight night, when all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver;  
and, by their soft, suffusing seethings, made what seemed a silvery  
silence, not a solitude; on such a silent night a silvery jet was seen  
far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow. Lit up by the moon, it  
looked celestial; seemed some plumed and glittering god uprising from  
the sea. Fedallah first descried this jet. For of these moonlight  
nights, it was his wont to mount to the main-mast head, and stand a  
look-out there, with the same precision as if it had been day. And yet,  
though herds of whales were seen by night, not one whaleman in a hundred  
would venture a lowering for them. You may think with what emotions,  
then, the seamen beheld this old Oriental perched aloft at such unusual  
hours; his turban and the moon, companions in one sky. But when, after  
spending his uniform interval there for several successive nights  
without uttering a single sound; when, after all this silence, his  
unearthly voice was heard announcing that silvery, moon-lit jet, every  
reclining mariner started to his feet as if some winged spirit had  
lighted in the rigging, and hailed the mortal crew. "There she blows!"  
Had the trump of judgment blown, they could not have quivered more; yet  
still they felt no terror; rather pleasure. For though it was a most  
unwonted hour, yet so impressive was the cry, and so deliriously  
exciting, that almost every soul on board instinctively desired a  
lowering.  
  
Walking the deck with quick, side-lunging strides, Ahab commanded the  
t'gallant sails and royals to be set, and every stunsail spread. The  
best man in the ship must take the helm. Then, with every mast-head  
manned, the piled-up craft rolled down before the wind. The strange,  
upheaving, lifting tendency of the taffrail breeze filling the hollows  
of so many sails, made the buoyant, hovering deck to feel like air  
beneath the feet; while still she rushed along, as if two antagonistic  
influences were struggling in her--one to mount direct to heaven, the  
other to drive yawingly to some horizontal goal. And had you watched  
Ahab's face that night, you would have thought that in him also two  
different things were warring. While his one live leg made lively echoes  
along the deck, every stroke of his dead limb sounded like a coffin-tap.  
On life and death this old man walked. But though the ship so swiftly  
sped, and though from every eye, like arrows, the eager glances shot,  
yet the silvery jet was no more seen that night. Every sailor swore he  
saw it once, but not a second time.  
  
This midnight-spout had almost grown a forgotten thing, when, some days  
after, lo! at the same silent hour, it was again announced: again it  
was descried by all; but upon making sail to overtake it, once more it  
disappeared as if it had never been. And so it served us night after  
night, till no one heeded it but to wonder at it. Mysteriously  
jetted into the clear moonlight, or starlight, as the case might be;  
disappearing again for one whole day, or two days, or three; and somehow  
seeming at every distinct repetition to be advancing still further and  
further in our van, this solitary jet seemed for ever alluring us on.  
  
Nor with the immemorial superstition of their race, and in accordance  
with the preternaturalness, as it seemed, which in many things invested  
the Pequod, were there wanting some of the seamen who swore that  
whenever and wherever descried; at however remote times, or in however  
far apart latitudes and longitudes, that unnearable spout was cast  
by one self-same whale; and that whale, Moby Dick. For a time, there  
reigned, too, a sense of peculiar dread at this flitting apparition,  
as if it were treacherously beckoning us on and on, in order that the  
monster might turn round upon us, and rend us at last in the remotest  
and most savage seas.  
  
These temporary apprehensions, so vague but so awful, derived a wondrous  
potency from the contrasting serenity of the weather, in which, beneath  
all its blue blandness, some thought there lurked a devilish charm, as  
for days and days we voyaged along, through seas so wearily, lonesomely  
mild, that all space, in repugnance to our vengeful errand, seemed  
vacating itself of life before our urn-like prow.  
  
But, at last, when turning to the eastward, the Cape winds began howling  
around us, and we rose and fell upon the long, troubled seas that are  
there; when the ivory-tusked Pequod sharply bowed to the blast, and  
gored the dark waves in her madness, till, like showers of silver chips,  
the foam-flakes flew over her bulwarks; then all this desolate vacuity  
of life went away, but gave place to sights more dismal than before.  
  
Close to our bows, strange forms in the water darted hither and thither  
before us; while thick in our rear flew the inscrutable sea-ravens. And  
every morning, perched on our stays, rows of these birds were seen; and  
spite of our hootings, for a long time obstinately clung to the hemp,  
as though they deemed our ship some drifting, uninhabited craft; a thing  
appointed to desolation, and therefore fit roosting-place for their  
homeless selves. And heaved and heaved, still unrestingly heaved the  
black sea, as if its vast tides were a conscience; and the great mundane  
soul were in anguish and remorse for the long sin and suffering it had  
bred.  
  
Cape of Good Hope, do they call ye? Rather Cape Tormentoto, as called  
of yore; for long allured by the perfidious silences that before had  
attended us, we found ourselves launched into this tormented sea,  
where guilty beings transformed into those fowls and these fish, seemed  
condemned to swim on everlastingly without any haven in store, or beat  
that black air without any horizon. But calm, snow-white, and unvarying;  
still directing its fountain of feathers to the sky; still beckoning us  
on from before, the solitary jet would at times be descried.  
  
During all this blackness of the elements, Ahab, though assuming for the  
time the almost continual command of the drenched and dangerous deck,  
manifested the gloomiest reserve; and more seldom than ever addressed  
his mates. In tempestuous times like these, after everything above and  
aloft has been secured, nothing more can be done but passively to await  
the issue of the gale. Then Captain and crew become practical fatalists.  
So, with his ivory leg inserted into its accustomed hole, and with one  
hand firmly grasping a shroud, Ahab for hours and hours would stand  
gazing dead to windward, while an occasional squall of sleet or snow  
would all but congeal his very eyelashes together. Meantime, the crew  
driven from the forward part of the ship by the perilous seas that  
burstingly broke over its bows, stood in a line along the bulwarks in  
the waist; and the better to guard against the leaping waves, each man  
had slipped himself into a sort of bowline secured to the rail, in which  
he swung as in a loosened belt. Few or no words were spoken; and the  
silent ship, as if manned by painted sailors in wax, day after day tore  
on through all the swift madness and gladness of the demoniac waves.  
By night the same muteness of humanity before the shrieks of the  
ocean prevailed; still in silence the men swung in the bowlines; still  
wordless Ahab stood up to the blast. Even when wearied nature seemed  
demanding repose he would not seek that repose in his hammock. Never  
could Starbuck forget the old man's aspect, when one night going down  
into the cabin to mark how the barometer stood, he saw him with  
closed eyes sitting straight in his floor-screwed chair; the rain  
and half-melted sleet of the storm from which he had some time before  
emerged, still slowly dripping from the unremoved hat and coat. On the  
table beside him lay unrolled one of those charts of tides and currents  
which have previously been spoken of. His lantern swung from his tightly  
clenched hand. Though the body was erect, the head was thrown back so  
that the closed eyes were pointed towards the needle of the tell-tale  
that swung from a beam in the ceiling.\*  
  
  
\*The cabin-compass is called the tell-tale, because without going to the  
compass at the helm, the Captain, while below, can inform himself of the  
course of the ship.  
  
  
Terrible old man! thought Starbuck with a shudder, sleeping in this  
gale, still thou steadfastly eyest thy purpose.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 52. The Albatross.  
  
  
South-eastward from the Cape, off the distant Crozetts, a good cruising  
ground for Right Whalemen, a sail loomed ahead, the Goney (Albatross)  
by name. As she slowly drew nigh, from my lofty perch at the  
fore-mast-head, I had a good view of that sight so remarkable to a tyro  
in the far ocean fisheries--a whaler at sea, and long absent from home.  
  
As if the waves had been fullers, this craft was bleached like the  
skeleton of a stranded walrus. All down her sides, this spectral  
appearance was traced with long channels of reddened rust, while all her  
spars and her rigging were like the thick branches of trees furred over  
with hoar-frost. Only her lower sails were set. A wild sight it was to  
see her long-bearded look-outs at those three mast-heads. They seemed  
clad in the skins of beasts, so torn and bepatched the raiment that had  
survived nearly four years of cruising. Standing in iron hoops nailed to  
the mast, they swayed and swung over a fathomless sea; and though, when  
the ship slowly glided close under our stern, we six men in the air  
came so nigh to each other that we might almost have leaped from the  
mast-heads of one ship to those of the other; yet, those forlorn-looking  
fishermen, mildly eyeing us as they passed, said not one word to our own  
look-outs, while the quarter-deck hail was being heard from below.  
  
"Ship ahoy! Have ye seen the White Whale?"  
  
But as the strange captain, leaning over the pallid bulwarks, was in the  
act of putting his trumpet to his mouth, it somehow fell from his hand  
into the sea; and the wind now rising amain, he in vain strove to make  
himself heard without it. Meantime his ship was still increasing the  
distance between. While in various silent ways the seamen of the Pequod  
were evincing their observance of this ominous incident at the first  
mere mention of the White Whale's name to another ship, Ahab for a  
moment paused; it almost seemed as though he would have lowered a boat  
to board the stranger, had not the threatening wind forbade. But taking  
advantage of his windward position, he again seized his trumpet, and  
knowing by her aspect that the stranger vessel was a Nantucketer and  
shortly bound home, he loudly hailed--"Ahoy there! This is the Pequod,  
bound round the world! Tell them to address all future letters to the  
Pacific ocean! and this time three years, if I am not at home, tell them  
to address them to--"  
  
At that moment the two wakes were fairly crossed, and instantly, then,  
in accordance with their singular ways, shoals of small harmless fish,  
that for some days before had been placidly swimming by our side, darted  
away with what seemed shuddering fins, and ranged themselves fore and  
aft with the stranger's flanks. Though in the course of his continual  
voyagings Ahab must often before have noticed a similar sight, yet, to  
any monomaniac man, the veriest trifles capriciously carry meanings.  
  
"Swim away from me, do ye?" murmured Ahab, gazing over into the water.  
There seemed but little in the words, but the tone conveyed more of deep  
helpless sadness than the insane old man had ever before evinced. But  
turning to the steersman, who thus far had been holding the ship in the  
wind to diminish her headway, he cried out in his old lion voice,--"Up  
helm! Keep her off round the world!"  
  
Round the world! There is much in that sound to inspire proud feelings;  
but whereto does all that circumnavigation conduct? Only through  
numberless perils to the very point whence we started, where those that  
we left behind secure, were all the time before us.  
  
Were this world an endless plain, and by sailing eastward we could for  
ever reach new distances, and discover sights more sweet and strange  
than any Cyclades or Islands of King Solomon, then there were promise  
in the voyage. But in pursuit of those far mysteries we dream of, or in  
tormented chase of that demon phantom that, some time or other, swims  
before all human hearts; while chasing such over this round globe, they  
either lead us on in barren mazes or midway leave us whelmed.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 53. The Gam.  
  
  
The ostensible reason why Ahab did not go on board of the whaler we had  
spoken was this: the wind and sea betokened storms. But even had  
this not been the case, he would not after all, perhaps, have boarded  
her--judging by his subsequent conduct on similar occasions--if so it  
had been that, by the process of hailing, he had obtained a negative  
answer to the question he put. For, as it eventually turned out, he  
cared not to consort, even for five minutes, with any stranger captain,  
except he could contribute some of that information he so absorbingly  
sought. But all this might remain inadequately estimated, were not  
something said here of the peculiar usages of whaling-vessels when  
meeting each other in foreign seas, and especially on a common  
cruising-ground.  
  
If two strangers crossing the Pine Barrens in New York State, or the  
equally desolate Salisbury Plain in England; if casually encountering  
each other in such inhospitable wilds, these twain, for the life of  
them, cannot well avoid a mutual salutation; and stopping for a moment  
to interchange the news; and, perhaps, sitting down for a while  
and resting in concert: then, how much more natural that upon the  
illimitable Pine Barrens and Salisbury Plains of the sea, two whaling  
vessels descrying each other at the ends of the earth--off lone  
Fanning's Island, or the far away King's Mills; how much more natural,  
I say, that under such circumstances these ships should not only  
interchange hails, but come into still closer, more friendly and  
sociable contact. And especially would this seem to be a matter of  
course, in the case of vessels owned in one seaport, and whose captains,  
officers, and not a few of the men are personally known to each other;  
and consequently, have all sorts of dear domestic things to talk about.  
  
For the long absent ship, the outward-bounder, perhaps, has letters on  
board; at any rate, she will be sure to let her have some papers of a  
date a year or two later than the last one on her blurred and thumb-worn  
files. And in return for that courtesy, the outward-bound ship would  
receive the latest whaling intelligence from the cruising-ground to  
which she may be destined, a thing of the utmost importance to her. And  
in degree, all this will hold true concerning whaling vessels crossing  
each other's track on the cruising-ground itself, even though they  
are equally long absent from home. For one of them may have received a  
transfer of letters from some third, and now far remote vessel; and  
some of those letters may be for the people of the ship she now meets.  
Besides, they would exchange the whaling news, and have an agreeable  
chat. For not only would they meet with all the sympathies of sailors,  
but likewise with all the peculiar congenialities arising from a common  
pursuit and mutually shared privations and perils.  
  
Nor would difference of country make any very essential difference;  
that is, so long as both parties speak one language, as is the case  
with Americans and English. Though, to be sure, from the small number of  
English whalers, such meetings do not very often occur, and when they  
do occur there is too apt to be a sort of shyness between them; for your  
Englishman is rather reserved, and your Yankee, he does not fancy that  
sort of thing in anybody but himself. Besides, the English whalers  
sometimes affect a kind of metropolitan superiority over the American  
whalers; regarding the long, lean Nantucketer, with his nondescript  
provincialisms, as a sort of sea-peasant. But where this superiority  
in the English whalemen does really consist, it would be hard to say,  
seeing that the Yankees in one day, collectively, kill more whales than  
all the English, collectively, in ten years. But this is a harmless  
little foible in the English whale-hunters, which the Nantucketer does  
not take much to heart; probably, because he knows that he has a few  
foibles himself.  
  
So, then, we see that of all ships separately sailing the sea, the  
whalers have most reason to be sociable--and they are so. Whereas, some  
merchant ships crossing each other's wake in the mid-Atlantic, will  
oftentimes pass on without so much as a single word of recognition,  
mutually cutting each other on the high seas, like a brace of dandies in  
Broadway; and all the time indulging, perhaps, in finical criticism upon  
each other's rig. As for Men-of-War, when they chance to meet at sea,  
they first go through such a string of silly bowings and scrapings, such  
a ducking of ensigns, that there does not seem to be much right-down  
hearty good-will and brotherly love about it at all. As touching  
Slave-ships meeting, why, they are in such a prodigious hurry, they run  
away from each other as soon as possible. And as for Pirates, when they  
chance to cross each other's cross-bones, the first hail is--"How many  
skulls?"--the same way that whalers hail--"How many barrels?" And that  
question once answered, pirates straightway steer apart, for they are  
infernal villains on both sides, and don't like to see overmuch of each  
other's villanous likenesses.  
  
But look at the godly, honest, unostentatious, hospitable, sociable,  
free-and-easy whaler! What does the whaler do when she meets another  
whaler in any sort of decent weather? She has a "GAM," a thing so  
utterly unknown to all other ships that they never heard of the name  
even; and if by chance they should hear of it, they only grin at it, and  
repeat gamesome stuff about "spouters" and "blubber-boilers," and such  
like pretty exclamations. Why it is that all Merchant-seamen, and also  
all Pirates and Man-of-War's men, and Slave-ship sailors, cherish such  
a scornful feeling towards Whale-ships; this is a question it would be  
hard to answer. Because, in the case of pirates, say, I should like to  
know whether that profession of theirs has any peculiar glory about  
it. It sometimes ends in uncommon elevation, indeed; but only at the  
gallows. And besides, when a man is elevated in that odd fashion, he has  
no proper foundation for his superior altitude. Hence, I conclude,  
that in boasting himself to be high lifted above a whaleman, in that  
assertion the pirate has no solid basis to stand on.  
  
But what is a GAM? You might wear out your index-finger running up and  
down the columns of dictionaries, and never find the word. Dr. Johnson  
never attained to that erudition; Noah Webster's ark does not hold it.  
Nevertheless, this same expressive word has now for many years been in  
constant use among some fifteen thousand true born Yankees. Certainly,  
it needs a definition, and should be incorporated into the Lexicon. With  
that view, let me learnedly define it.  
  
GAM. NOUN--A SOCIAL MEETING OF TWO (OR MORE) WHALESHIPS, GENERALLY ON A  
CRUISING-GROUND; WHEN, AFTER EXCHANGING HAILS, THEY EXCHANGE VISITS BY  
BOATS' CREWS; THE TWO CAPTAINS REMAINING, FOR THE TIME, ON BOARD OF ONE  
SHIP, AND THE TWO CHIEF MATES ON THE OTHER.  
  
There is another little item about Gamming which must not be forgotten  
here. All professions have their own little peculiarities of detail; so  
has the whale fishery. In a pirate, man-of-war, or slave ship, when  
the captain is rowed anywhere in his boat, he always sits in the stern  
sheets on a comfortable, sometimes cushioned seat there, and often  
steers himself with a pretty little milliner's tiller decorated with  
gay cords and ribbons. But the whale-boat has no seat astern, no sofa of  
that sort whatever, and no tiller at all. High times indeed, if whaling  
captains were wheeled about the water on castors like gouty old aldermen  
in patent chairs. And as for a tiller, the whale-boat never admits of  
any such effeminacy; and therefore as in gamming a complete boat's crew  
must leave the ship, and hence as the boat steerer or harpooneer is of  
the number, that subordinate is the steersman upon the occasion, and  
the captain, having no place to sit in, is pulled off to his visit  
all standing like a pine tree. And often you will notice that being  
conscious of the eyes of the whole visible world resting on him from  
the sides of the two ships, this standing captain is all alive to the  
importance of sustaining his dignity by maintaining his legs. Nor is  
this any very easy matter; for in his rear is the immense projecting  
steering oar hitting him now and then in the small of his back, the  
after-oar reciprocating by rapping his knees in front. He is thus  
completely wedged before and behind, and can only expand himself  
sideways by settling down on his stretched legs; but a sudden, violent  
pitch of the boat will often go far to topple him, because length of  
foundation is nothing without corresponding breadth. Merely make a  
spread angle of two poles, and you cannot stand them up. Then, again,  
it would never do in plain sight of the world's riveted eyes, it would  
never do, I say, for this straddling captain to be seen steadying  
himself the slightest particle by catching hold of anything with  
his hands; indeed, as token of his entire, buoyant self-command, he  
generally carries his hands in his trowsers' pockets; but perhaps being  
generally very large, heavy hands, he carries them there for ballast.  
Nevertheless there have occurred instances, well authenticated ones too,  
where the captain has been known for an uncommonly critical moment or  
two, in a sudden squall say--to seize hold of the nearest oarsman's  
hair, and hold on there like grim death.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 54. The Town-Ho's Story.  
  
  
(AS TOLD AT THE GOLDEN INN)  
  
  
The Cape of Good Hope, and all the watery region round about there, is  
much like some noted four corners of a great highway, where you meet  
more travellers than in any other part.  
  
It was not very long after speaking the Goney that another  
homeward-bound whaleman, the Town-Ho,\* was encountered. She was manned  
almost wholly by Polynesians. In the short gam that ensued she gave  
us strong news of Moby Dick. To some the general interest in the White  
Whale was now wildly heightened by a circumstance of the Town-Ho's  
story, which seemed obscurely to involve with the whale a certain  
wondrous, inverted visitation of one of those so called judgments of God  
which at times are said to overtake some men. This latter circumstance,  
with its own particular accompaniments, forming what may be called the  
secret part of the tragedy about to be narrated, never reached the ears  
of Captain Ahab or his mates. For that secret part of the story was  
unknown to the captain of the Town-Ho himself. It was the private  
property of three confederate white seamen of that ship, one of whom, it  
seems, communicated it to Tashtego with Romish injunctions of secrecy,  
but the following night Tashtego rambled in his sleep, and revealed  
so much of it in that way, that when he was wakened he could not well  
withhold the rest. Nevertheless, so potent an influence did this thing  
have on those seamen in the Pequod who came to the full knowledge of  
it, and by such a strange delicacy, to call it so, were they governed in  
this matter, that they kept the secret among themselves so that it never  
transpired abaft the Pequod's main-mast. Interweaving in its proper  
place this darker thread with the story as publicly narrated on the  
ship, the whole of this strange affair I now proceed to put on lasting  
record.  
  
  
\*The ancient whale-cry upon first sighting a whale from the mast-head,  
still used by whalemen in hunting the famous Gallipagos terrapin.  
  
  
For my humor's sake, I shall preserve the style in which I once narrated  
it at Lima, to a lounging circle of my Spanish friends, one saint's eve,  
smoking upon the thick-gilt tiled piazza of the Golden Inn. Of those  
fine cavaliers, the young Dons, Pedro and Sebastian, were on the closer  
terms with me; and hence the interluding questions they occasionally  
put, and which are duly answered at the time.  
  
"Some two years prior to my first learning the events which I am about  
rehearsing to you, gentlemen, the Town-Ho, Sperm Whaler of Nantucket,  
was cruising in your Pacific here, not very many days' sail eastward  
from the eaves of this good Golden Inn. She was somewhere to the  
northward of the Line. One morning upon handling the pumps, according to  
daily usage, it was observed that she made more water in her hold than  
common. They supposed a sword-fish had stabbed her, gentlemen. But the  
captain, having some unusual reason for believing that rare good luck  
awaited him in those latitudes; and therefore being very averse to quit  
them, and the leak not being then considered at all dangerous, though,  
indeed, they could not find it after searching the hold as low down  
as was possible in rather heavy weather, the ship still continued her  
cruisings, the mariners working at the pumps at wide and easy intervals;  
but no good luck came; more days went by, and not only was the leak yet  
undiscovered, but it sensibly increased. So much so, that now taking  
some alarm, the captain, making all sail, stood away for the nearest  
harbor among the islands, there to have his hull hove out and repaired.  
  
"Though no small passage was before her, yet, if the commonest chance  
favoured, he did not at all fear that his ship would founder by the way,  
because his pumps were of the best, and being periodically relieved at  
them, those six-and-thirty men of his could easily keep the ship free;  
never mind if the leak should double on her. In truth, well nigh the  
whole of this passage being attended by very prosperous breezes, the  
Town-Ho had all but certainly arrived in perfect safety at her port  
without the occurrence of the least fatality, had it not been for the  
brutal overbearing of Radney, the mate, a Vineyarder, and the bitterly  
provoked vengeance of Steelkilt, a Lakeman and desperado from Buffalo.  
  
"'Lakeman!--Buffalo! Pray, what is a Lakeman, and where is Buffalo?'  
said Don Sebastian, rising in his swinging mat of grass.  
  
"On the eastern shore of our Lake Erie, Don; but--I crave your  
courtesy--may be, you shall soon hear further of all that. Now,  
gentlemen, in square-sail brigs and three-masted ships, well-nigh as  
large and stout as any that ever sailed out of your old Callao to far  
Manilla; this Lakeman, in the land-locked heart of our America, had yet  
been nurtured by all those agrarian freebooting impressions popularly  
connected with the open ocean. For in their interflowing aggregate,  
those grand fresh-water seas of ours,--Erie, and Ontario, and Huron, and  
Superior, and Michigan,--possess an ocean-like expansiveness, with many  
of the ocean's noblest traits; with many of its rimmed varieties of  
races and of climes. They contain round archipelagoes of romantic isles,  
even as the Polynesian waters do; in large part, are shored by two great  
contrasting nations, as the Atlantic is; they furnish long maritime  
approaches to our numerous territorial colonies from the East, dotted  
all round their banks; here and there are frowned upon by batteries,  
and by the goat-like craggy guns of lofty Mackinaw; they have heard the  
fleet thunderings of naval victories; at intervals, they yield their  
beaches to wild barbarians, whose red painted faces flash from out  
their peltry wigwams; for leagues and leagues are flanked by ancient  
and unentered forests, where the gaunt pines stand like serried lines  
of kings in Gothic genealogies; those same woods harboring wild Afric  
beasts of prey, and silken creatures whose exported furs give robes  
to Tartar Emperors; they mirror the paved capitals of Buffalo and  
Cleveland, as well as Winnebago villages; they float alike the  
full-rigged merchant ship, the armed cruiser of the State, the steamer,  
and the beech canoe; they are swept by Borean and dismasting blasts as  
direful as any that lash the salted wave; they know what shipwrecks are,  
for out of sight of land, however inland, they have drowned full many  
a midnight ship with all its shrieking crew. Thus, gentlemen, though  
an inlander, Steelkilt was wild-ocean born, and wild-ocean nurtured;  
as much of an audacious mariner as any. And for Radney, though in his  
infancy he may have laid him down on the lone Nantucket beach, to nurse  
at his maternal sea; though in after life he had long followed our  
austere Atlantic and your contemplative Pacific; yet was he quite as  
vengeful and full of social quarrel as the backwoods seaman, fresh  
from the latitudes of buck-horn handled bowie-knives. Yet was this  
Nantucketer a man with some good-hearted traits; and this Lakeman, a  
mariner, who though a sort of devil indeed, might yet by inflexible  
firmness, only tempered by that common decency of human recognition  
which is the meanest slave's right; thus treated, this Steelkilt had  
long been retained harmless and docile. At all events, he had proved  
so thus far; but Radney was doomed and made mad, and Steelkilt--but,  
gentlemen, you shall hear.  
  
"It was not more than a day or two at the furthest after pointing  
her prow for her island haven, that the Town-Ho's leak seemed again  
increasing, but only so as to require an hour or more at the pumps  
every day. You must know that in a settled and civilized ocean like our  
Atlantic, for example, some skippers think little of pumping their whole  
way across it; though of a still, sleepy night, should the officer of  
the deck happen to forget his duty in that respect, the probability  
would be that he and his shipmates would never again remember it, on  
account of all hands gently subsiding to the bottom. Nor in the  
solitary and savage seas far from you to the westward, gentlemen, is it  
altogether unusual for ships to keep clanging at their pump-handles in  
full chorus even for a voyage of considerable length; that is, if it lie  
along a tolerably accessible coast, or if any other reasonable retreat  
is afforded them. It is only when a leaky vessel is in some very out of  
the way part of those waters, some really landless latitude, that her  
captain begins to feel a little anxious.  
  
"Much this way had it been with the Town-Ho; so when her leak was found  
gaining once more, there was in truth some small concern manifested by  
several of her company; especially by Radney the mate. He commanded  
the upper sails to be well hoisted, sheeted home anew, and every way  
expanded to the breeze. Now this Radney, I suppose, was as little of a  
coward, and as little inclined to any sort of nervous apprehensiveness  
touching his own person as any fearless, unthinking creature on land or  
on sea that you can conveniently imagine, gentlemen. Therefore when  
he betrayed this solicitude about the safety of the ship, some of the  
seamen declared that it was only on account of his being a part owner in  
her. So when they were working that evening at the pumps, there was on  
this head no small gamesomeness slily going on among them, as they stood  
with their feet continually overflowed by the rippling clear water;  
clear as any mountain spring, gentlemen--that bubbling from the pumps  
ran across the deck, and poured itself out in steady spouts at the lee  
scupper-holes.  
  
"Now, as you well know, it is not seldom the case in this conventional  
world of ours--watery or otherwise; that when a person placed in command  
over his fellow-men finds one of them to be very significantly his  
superior in general pride of manhood, straightway against that man he  
conceives an unconquerable dislike and bitterness; and if he have a  
chance he will pull down and pulverize that subaltern's tower, and  
make a little heap of dust of it. Be this conceit of mine as it may,  
gentlemen, at all events Steelkilt was a tall and noble animal with a  
head like a Roman, and a flowing golden beard like the tasseled housings  
of your last viceroy's snorting charger; and a brain, and a heart, and  
a soul in him, gentlemen, which had made Steelkilt Charlemagne, had he  
been born son to Charlemagne's father. But Radney, the mate, was ugly  
as a mule; yet as hardy, as stubborn, as malicious. He did not love  
Steelkilt, and Steelkilt knew it.  
  
"Espying the mate drawing near as he was toiling at the pump with the  
rest, the Lakeman affected not to notice him, but unawed, went on with  
his gay banterings.  
  
"'Aye, aye, my merry lads, it's a lively leak this; hold a cannikin, one  
of ye, and let's have a taste. By the Lord, it's worth bottling! I tell  
ye what, men, old Rad's investment must go for it! he had best cut away  
his part of the hull and tow it home. The fact is, boys, that sword-fish  
only began the job; he's come back again with a gang of ship-carpenters,  
saw-fish, and file-fish, and what not; and the whole posse of 'em  
are now hard at work cutting and slashing at the bottom; making  
improvements, I suppose. If old Rad were here now, I'd tell him to jump  
overboard and scatter 'em. They're playing the devil with his estate, I  
can tell him. But he's a simple old soul,--Rad, and a beauty too. Boys,  
they say the rest of his property is invested in looking-glasses. I  
wonder if he'd give a poor devil like me the model of his nose.'  
  
"'Damn your eyes! what's that pump stopping for?' roared Radney,  
pretending not to have heard the sailors' talk. 'Thunder away at it!'  
  
"'Aye, aye, sir,' said Steelkilt, merry as a cricket. 'Lively, boys,  
lively, now!' And with that the pump clanged like fifty fire-engines;  
the men tossed their hats off to it, and ere long that peculiar gasping  
of the lungs was heard which denotes the fullest tension of life's  
utmost energies.  
  
"Quitting the pump at last, with the rest of his band, the Lakeman went  
forward all panting, and sat himself down on the windlass; his face  
fiery red, his eyes bloodshot, and wiping the profuse sweat from his  
brow. Now what cozening fiend it was, gentlemen, that possessed Radney  
to meddle with such a man in that corporeally exasperated state, I know  
not; but so it happened. Intolerably striding along the deck, the mate  
commanded him to get a broom and sweep down the planks, and also a  
shovel, and remove some offensive matters consequent upon allowing a pig  
to run at large.  
  
"Now, gentlemen, sweeping a ship's deck at sea is a piece of household  
work which in all times but raging gales is regularly attended to every  
evening; it has been known to be done in the case of ships actually  
foundering at the time. Such, gentlemen, is the inflexibility of  
sea-usages and the instinctive love of neatness in seamen; some of whom  
would not willingly drown without first washing their faces. But in all  
vessels this broom business is the prescriptive province of the boys,  
if boys there be aboard. Besides, it was the stronger men in the Town-Ho  
that had been divided into gangs, taking turns at the pumps; and being  
the most athletic seaman of them all, Steelkilt had been regularly  
assigned captain of one of the gangs; consequently he should have  
been freed from any trivial business not connected with truly nautical  
duties, such being the case with his comrades. I mention all these  
particulars so that you may understand exactly how this affair stood  
between the two men.  
  
"But there was more than this: the order about the shovel was almost as  
plainly meant to sting and insult Steelkilt, as though Radney had spat  
in his face. Any man who has gone sailor in a whale-ship will  
understand this; and all this and doubtless much more, the Lakeman fully  
comprehended when the mate uttered his command. But as he sat still for  
a moment, and as he steadfastly looked into the mate's malignant eye and  
perceived the stacks of powder-casks heaped up in him and the slow-match  
silently burning along towards them; as he instinctively saw all  
this, that strange forbearance and unwillingness to stir up the deeper  
passionateness in any already ireful being--a repugnance most felt, when  
felt at all, by really valiant men even when aggrieved--this nameless  
phantom feeling, gentlemen, stole over Steelkilt.  
  
"Therefore, in his ordinary tone, only a little broken by the bodily  
exhaustion he was temporarily in, he answered him saying that sweeping  
the deck was not his business, and he would not do it. And then, without  
at all alluding to the shovel, he pointed to three lads as the customary  
sweepers; who, not being billeted at the pumps, had done little or  
nothing all day. To this, Radney replied with an oath, in a most  
domineering and outrageous manner unconditionally reiterating his  
command; meanwhile advancing upon the still seated Lakeman, with an  
uplifted cooper's club hammer which he had snatched from a cask near by.  
  
"Heated and irritated as he was by his spasmodic toil at the pumps, for  
all his first nameless feeling of forbearance the sweating Steelkilt  
could but ill brook this bearing in the mate; but somehow still  
smothering the conflagration within him, without speaking he remained  
doggedly rooted to his seat, till at last the incensed Radney shook the  
hammer within a few inches of his face, furiously commanding him to do  
his bidding.  
  
"Steelkilt rose, and slowly retreating round the windlass, steadily  
followed by the mate with his menacing hammer, deliberately repeated his  
intention not to obey. Seeing, however, that his forbearance had not  
the slightest effect, by an awful and unspeakable intimation with his  
twisted hand he warned off the foolish and infatuated man; but it was to  
no purpose. And in this way the two went once slowly round the windlass;  
when, resolved at last no longer to retreat, bethinking him that he had  
now forborne as much as comported with his humor, the Lakeman paused on  
the hatches and thus spoke to the officer:  
  
"'Mr. Radney, I will not obey you. Take that hammer away, or look to  
yourself.' But the predestinated mate coming still closer to him, where  
the Lakeman stood fixed, now shook the heavy hammer within an inch of  
his teeth; meanwhile repeating a string of insufferable maledictions.  
Retreating not the thousandth part of an inch; stabbing him in the eye  
with the unflinching poniard of his glance, Steelkilt, clenching  
his right hand behind him and creepingly drawing it back, told his  
persecutor that if the hammer but grazed his cheek he (Steelkilt) would  
murder him. But, gentlemen, the fool had been branded for the slaughter  
by the gods. Immediately the hammer touched the cheek; the next instant  
the lower jaw of the mate was stove in his head; he fell on the hatch  
spouting blood like a whale.  
  
"Ere the cry could go aft Steelkilt was shaking one of the backstays  
leading far aloft to where two of his comrades were standing their  
mastheads. They were both Canallers.  
  
"'Canallers!' cried Don Pedro. 'We have seen many whale-ships in our  
harbours, but never heard of your Canallers. Pardon: who and what are  
they?'  
  
"'Canallers, Don, are the boatmen belonging to our grand Erie Canal. You  
must have heard of it.'  
  
"'Nay, Senor; hereabouts in this dull, warm, most lazy, and hereditary  
land, we know but little of your vigorous North.'  
  
"'Aye? Well then, Don, refill my cup. Your chicha's very fine; and  
ere proceeding further I will tell ye what our Canallers are; for such  
information may throw side-light upon my story.'  
  
"For three hundred and sixty miles, gentlemen, through the entire  
breadth of the state of New York; through numerous populous cities and  
most thriving villages; through long, dismal, uninhabited swamps, and  
affluent, cultivated fields, unrivalled for fertility; by billiard-room  
and bar-room; through the holy-of-holies of great forests; on Roman  
arches over Indian rivers; through sun and shade; by happy hearts or  
broken; through all the wide contrasting scenery of those noble Mohawk  
counties; and especially, by rows of snow-white chapels, whose spires  
stand almost like milestones, flows one continual stream of Venetianly  
corrupt and often lawless life. There's your true Ashantee, gentlemen;  
there howl your pagans; where you ever find them, next door to you;  
under the long-flung shadow, and the snug patronising lee of churches.  
For by some curious fatality, as it is often noted of your metropolitan  
freebooters that they ever encamp around the halls of justice, so  
sinners, gentlemen, most abound in holiest vicinities.  
  
"'Is that a friar passing?' said Don Pedro, looking downwards into the  
crowded plazza, with humorous concern.  
  
"'Well for our northern friend, Dame Isabella's Inquisition wanes in  
Lima,' laughed Don Sebastian. 'Proceed, Senor.'  
  
"'A moment! Pardon!' cried another of the company. 'In the name of all  
us Limeese, I but desire to express to you, sir sailor, that we have by  
no means overlooked your delicacy in not substituting present Lima  
for distant Venice in your corrupt comparison. Oh! do not bow and look  
surprised; you know the proverb all along this coast--"Corrupt as  
Lima." It but bears out your saying, too; churches more plentiful than  
billiard-tables, and for ever open--and "Corrupt as Lima." So, too,  
Venice; I have been there; the holy city of the blessed evangelist, St.  
Mark!--St. Dominic, purge it! Your cup! Thanks: here I refill; now, you  
pour out again.'  
  
"Freely depicted in his own vocation, gentlemen, the Canaller would make  
a fine dramatic hero, so abundantly and picturesquely wicked is he. Like  
Mark Antony, for days and days along his green-turfed, flowery Nile,  
he indolently floats, openly toying with his red-cheeked Cleopatra,  
ripening his apricot thigh upon the sunny deck. But ashore, all this  
effeminacy is dashed. The brigandish guise which the Canaller so proudly  
sports; his slouched and gaily-ribboned hat betoken his grand features.  
A terror to the smiling innocence of the villages through which he  
floats; his swart visage and bold swagger are not unshunned in cities.  
Once a vagabond on his own canal, I have received good turns from one of  
these Canallers; I thank him heartily; would fain be not ungrateful;  
but it is often one of the prime redeeming qualities of your man of  
violence, that at times he has as stiff an arm to back a poor stranger  
in a strait, as to plunder a wealthy one. In sum, gentlemen, what the  
wildness of this canal life is, is emphatically evinced by this; that  
our wild whale-fishery contains so many of its most finished graduates,  
and that scarce any race of mankind, except Sydney men, are so much  
distrusted by our whaling captains. Nor does it at all diminish the  
curiousness of this matter, that to many thousands of our rural boys and  
young men born along its line, the probationary life of the Grand Canal  
furnishes the sole transition between quietly reaping in a Christian  
corn-field, and recklessly ploughing the waters of the most barbaric  
seas.  
  
"'I see! I see!' impetuously exclaimed Don Pedro, spilling his chicha  
upon his silvery ruffles. 'No need to travel! The world's one Lima. I  
had thought, now, that at your temperate North the generations were cold  
and holy as the hills.--But the story.'  
  
"I left off, gentlemen, where the Lakeman shook the backstay. Hardly  
had he done so, when he was surrounded by the three junior mates and the  
four harpooneers, who all crowded him to the deck. But sliding down the  
ropes like baleful comets, the two Canallers rushed into the uproar, and  
sought to drag their man out of it towards the forecastle. Others of the  
sailors joined with them in this attempt, and a twisted turmoil ensued;  
while standing out of harm's way, the valiant captain danced up and down  
with a whale-pike, calling upon his officers to manhandle that atrocious  
scoundrel, and smoke him along to the quarter-deck. At intervals, he ran  
close up to the revolving border of the confusion, and prying into  
the heart of it with his pike, sought to prick out the object of his  
resentment. But Steelkilt and his desperadoes were too much for them  
all; they succeeded in gaining the forecastle deck, where, hastily  
slewing about three or four large casks in a line with the windlass,  
these sea-Parisians entrenched themselves behind the barricade.  
  
"'Come out of that, ye pirates!' roared the captain, now menacing them  
with a pistol in each hand, just brought to him by the steward. 'Come  
out of that, ye cut-throats!'  
  
"Steelkilt leaped on the barricade, and striding up and down there,  
defied the worst the pistols could do; but gave the captain to  
understand distinctly, that his (Steelkilt's) death would be the signal  
for a murderous mutiny on the part of all hands. Fearing in his heart  
lest this might prove but too true, the captain a little desisted, but  
still commanded the insurgents instantly to return to their duty.  
  
"'Will you promise not to touch us, if we do?' demanded their  
ringleader.  
  
"'Turn to! turn to!--I make no promise;--to your duty! Do you want to  
sink the ship, by knocking off at a time like this? Turn to!' and he  
once more raised a pistol.  
  
"'Sink the ship?' cried Steelkilt. 'Aye, let her sink. Not a man of us  
turns to, unless you swear not to raise a rope-yarn against us. What say  
ye, men?' turning to his comrades. A fierce cheer was their response.  
  
"The Lakeman now patrolled the barricade, all the while keeping his eye  
on the Captain, and jerking out such sentences as these:--'It's not our  
fault; we didn't want it; I told him to take his hammer away; it was  
boy's business; he might have known me before this; I told him not to  
prick the buffalo; I believe I have broken a finger here against his  
cursed jaw; ain't those mincing knives down in the forecastle there,  
men? look to those handspikes, my hearties. Captain, by God, look to  
yourself; say the word; don't be a fool; forget it all; we are ready  
to turn to; treat us decently, and we're your men; but we won't be  
flogged.'  
  
"'Turn to! I make no promises, turn to, I say!'  
  
"'Look ye, now,' cried the Lakeman, flinging out his arm towards him,  
'there are a few of us here (and I am one of them) who have shipped  
for the cruise, d'ye see; now as you well know, sir, we can claim our  
discharge as soon as the anchor is down; so we don't want a row; it's  
not our interest; we want to be peaceable; we are ready to work, but we  
won't be flogged.'  
  
"'Turn to!' roared the Captain.  
  
"Steelkilt glanced round him a moment, and then said:--'I tell you what  
it is now, Captain, rather than kill ye, and be hung for such a shabby  
rascal, we won't lift a hand against ye unless ye attack us; but till  
you say the word about not flogging us, we don't do a hand's turn.'  
  
"'Down into the forecastle then, down with ye, I'll keep ye there till  
ye're sick of it. Down ye go.'  
  
"'Shall we?' cried the ringleader to his men. Most of them were against  
it; but at length, in obedience to Steelkilt, they preceded him down  
into their dark den, growlingly disappearing, like bears into a cave.  
  
"As the Lakeman's bare head was just level with the planks, the Captain  
and his posse leaped the barricade, and rapidly drawing over the slide  
of the scuttle, planted their group of hands upon it, and loudly called  
for the steward to bring the heavy brass padlock belonging to the  
companionway.  
  
"Then opening the slide a little, the Captain whispered something  
down the crack, closed it, and turned the key upon them--ten in  
number--leaving on deck some twenty or more, who thus far had remained  
neutral.  
  
"All night a wide-awake watch was kept by all the officers, forward and  
aft, especially about the forecastle scuttle and fore hatchway; at which  
last place it was feared the insurgents might emerge, after breaking  
through the bulkhead below. But the hours of darkness passed in peace;  
the men who still remained at their duty toiling hard at the pumps,  
whose clinking and clanking at intervals through the dreary night  
dismally resounded through the ship.  
  
"At sunrise the Captain went forward, and knocking on the deck, summoned  
the prisoners to work; but with a yell they refused. Water was then  
lowered down to them, and a couple of handfuls of biscuit were tossed  
after it; when again turning the key upon them and pocketing it, the  
Captain returned to the quarter-deck. Twice every day for three days  
this was repeated; but on the fourth morning a confused wrangling, and  
then a scuffling was heard, as the customary summons was delivered; and  
suddenly four men burst up from the forecastle, saying they were ready  
to turn to. The fetid closeness of the air, and a famishing diet, united  
perhaps to some fears of ultimate retribution, had constrained them to  
surrender at discretion. Emboldened by this, the Captain reiterated his  
demand to the rest, but Steelkilt shouted up to him a terrific hint to  
stop his babbling and betake himself where he belonged. On the fifth  
morning three others of the mutineers bolted up into the air from the  
desperate arms below that sought to restrain them. Only three were left.  
  
"'Better turn to, now?' said the Captain with a heartless jeer.  
  
"'Shut us up again, will ye!' cried Steelkilt.  
  
"'Oh certainly,' said the Captain, and the key clicked.  
  
"It was at this point, gentlemen, that enraged by the defection of seven  
of his former associates, and stung by the mocking voice that had last  
hailed him, and maddened by his long entombment in a place as black as  
the bowels of despair; it was then that Steelkilt proposed to the two  
Canallers, thus far apparently of one mind with him, to burst out of  
their hole at the next summoning of the garrison; and armed with their  
keen mincing knives (long, crescentic, heavy implements with a handle  
at each end) run amuck from the bowsprit to the taffrail; and if by any  
devilishness of desperation possible, seize the ship. For himself, he  
would do this, he said, whether they joined him or not. That was the  
last night he should spend in that den. But the scheme met with no  
opposition on the part of the other two; they swore they were ready for  
that, or for any other mad thing, for anything in short but a surrender.  
And what was more, they each insisted upon being the first man on deck,  
when the time to make the rush should come. But to this their leader as  
fiercely objected, reserving that priority for himself; particularly as  
his two comrades would not yield, the one to the other, in the matter;  
and both of them could not be first, for the ladder would but admit one  
man at a time. And here, gentlemen, the foul play of these miscreants  
must come out.  
  
"Upon hearing the frantic project of their leader, each in his own  
separate soul had suddenly lighted, it would seem, upon the same piece  
of treachery, namely: to be foremost in breaking out, in order to be  
the first of the three, though the last of the ten, to surrender; and  
thereby secure whatever small chance of pardon such conduct might merit.  
But when Steelkilt made known his determination still to lead them to  
the last, they in some way, by some subtle chemistry of villany, mixed  
their before secret treacheries together; and when their leader  
fell into a doze, verbally opened their souls to each other in three  
sentences; and bound the sleeper with cords, and gagged him with cords;  
and shrieked out for the Captain at midnight.  
  
"Thinking murder at hand, and smelling in the dark for the blood, he and  
all his armed mates and harpooneers rushed for the forecastle. In a  
few minutes the scuttle was opened, and, bound hand and foot, the still  
struggling ringleader was shoved up into the air by his perfidious  
allies, who at once claimed the honour of securing a man who had been  
fully ripe for murder. But all these were collared, and dragged along  
the deck like dead cattle; and, side by side, were seized up into the  
mizzen rigging, like three quarters of meat, and there they hung till  
morning. 'Damn ye,' cried the Captain, pacing to and fro before them,  
'the vultures would not touch ye, ye villains!'  
  
"At sunrise he summoned all hands; and separating those who had rebelled  
from those who had taken no part in the mutiny, he told the former that  
he had a good mind to flog them all round--thought, upon the whole,  
he would do so--he ought to--justice demanded it; but for the present,  
considering their timely surrender, he would let them go with a  
reprimand, which he accordingly administered in the vernacular.  
  
"'But as for you, ye carrion rogues,' turning to the three men in the  
rigging--'for you, I mean to mince ye up for the try-pots;' and,  
seizing a rope, he applied it with all his might to the backs of the  
two traitors, till they yelled no more, but lifelessly hung their heads  
sideways, as the two crucified thieves are drawn.  
  
"'My wrist is sprained with ye!' he cried, at last; 'but there is still  
rope enough left for you, my fine bantam, that wouldn't give up. Take  
that gag from his mouth, and let us hear what he can say for himself.'  
  
"For a moment the exhausted mutineer made a tremulous motion of his  
cramped jaws, and then painfully twisting round his head, said in a sort  
of hiss, 'What I say is this--and mind it well--if you flog me, I murder  
you!'  
  
"'Say ye so? then see how ye frighten me'--and the Captain drew off with  
the rope to strike.  
  
"'Best not,' hissed the Lakeman.  
  
"'But I must,'--and the rope was once more drawn back for the stroke.  
  
"Steelkilt here hissed out something, inaudible to all but the Captain;  
who, to the amazement of all hands, started back, paced the deck rapidly  
two or three times, and then suddenly throwing down his rope, said, 'I  
won't do it--let him go--cut him down: d'ye hear?'  
  
"But as the junior mates were hurrying to execute the order, a pale man,  
with a bandaged head, arrested them--Radney the chief mate. Ever since  
the blow, he had lain in his berth; but that morning, hearing the tumult  
on the deck, he had crept out, and thus far had watched the whole  
scene. Such was the state of his mouth, that he could hardly speak;  
but mumbling something about his being willing and able to do what the  
captain dared not attempt, he snatched the rope and advanced to his  
pinioned foe.  
  
"'You are a coward!' hissed the Lakeman.  
  
"'So I am, but take that.' The mate was in the very act of striking,  
when another hiss stayed his uplifted arm. He paused: and then pausing  
no more, made good his word, spite of Steelkilt's threat, whatever that  
might have been. The three men were then cut down, all hands were turned  
to, and, sullenly worked by the moody seamen, the iron pumps clanged as  
before.  
  
"Just after dark that day, when one watch had retired below, a clamor  
was heard in the forecastle; and the two trembling traitors running up,  
besieged the cabin door, saying they durst not consort with the crew.  
Entreaties, cuffs, and kicks could not drive them back, so at their own  
instance they were put down in the ship's run for salvation. Still, no  
sign of mutiny reappeared among the rest. On the contrary, it seemed,  
that mainly at Steelkilt's instigation, they had resolved to maintain  
the strictest peacefulness, obey all orders to the last, and, when the  
ship reached port, desert her in a body. But in order to insure the  
speediest end to the voyage, they all agreed to another thing--namely,  
not to sing out for whales, in case any should be discovered. For,  
spite of her leak, and spite of all her other perils, the Town-Ho still  
maintained her mast-heads, and her captain was just as willing to  
lower for a fish that moment, as on the day his craft first struck the  
cruising ground; and Radney the mate was quite as ready to change his  
berth for a boat, and with his bandaged mouth seek to gag in death the  
vital jaw of the whale.  
  
"But though the Lakeman had induced the seamen to adopt this sort of  
passiveness in their conduct, he kept his own counsel (at least till all  
was over) concerning his own proper and private revenge upon the man who  
had stung him in the ventricles of his heart. He was in Radney the chief  
mate's watch; and as if the infatuated man sought to run more than  
half way to meet his doom, after the scene at the rigging, he insisted,  
against the express counsel of the captain, upon resuming the head  
of his watch at night. Upon this, and one or two other circumstances,  
Steelkilt systematically built the plan of his revenge.  
  
"During the night, Radney had an unseamanlike way of sitting on the  
bulwarks of the quarter-deck, and leaning his arm upon the gunwale of  
the boat which was hoisted up there, a little above the ship's side.  
In this attitude, it was well known, he sometimes dozed. There was a  
considerable vacancy between the boat and the ship, and down between  
this was the sea. Steelkilt calculated his time, and found that his next  
trick at the helm would come round at two o'clock, in the morning of the  
third day from that in which he had been betrayed. At his leisure,  
he employed the interval in braiding something very carefully in his  
watches below.  
  
"'What are you making there?' said a shipmate.  
  
"'What do you think? what does it look like?'  
  
"'Like a lanyard for your bag; but it's an odd one, seems to me.'  
  
"'Yes, rather oddish,' said the Lakeman, holding it at arm's length  
before him; 'but I think it will answer. Shipmate, I haven't enough  
twine,--have you any?'  
  
"But there was none in the forecastle.  
  
"'Then I must get some from old Rad;' and he rose to go aft.  
  
"'You don't mean to go a begging to HIM!' said a sailor.  
  
"'Why not? Do you think he won't do me a turn, when it's to help himself  
in the end, shipmate?' and going to the mate, he looked at him  
quietly, and asked him for some twine to mend his hammock. It was given  
him--neither twine nor lanyard were seen again; but the next night  
an iron ball, closely netted, partly rolled from the pocket of the  
Lakeman's monkey jacket, as he was tucking the coat into his hammock for  
a pillow. Twenty-four hours after, his trick at the silent helm--nigh  
to the man who was apt to doze over the grave always ready dug to  
the seaman's hand--that fatal hour was then to come; and in the  
fore-ordaining soul of Steelkilt, the mate was already stark and  
stretched as a corpse, with his forehead crushed in.  
  
"But, gentlemen, a fool saved the would-be murderer from the bloody  
deed he had planned. Yet complete revenge he had, and without being the  
avenger. For by a mysterious fatality, Heaven itself seemed to step in  
to take out of his hands into its own the damning thing he would have  
done.  
  
"It was just between daybreak and sunrise of the morning of the second  
day, when they were washing down the decks, that a stupid Teneriffe man,  
drawing water in the main-chains, all at once shouted out, 'There she  
rolls! there she rolls!' Jesu, what a whale! It was Moby Dick.  
  
"'Moby Dick!' cried Don Sebastian; 'St. Dominic! Sir sailor, but do  
whales have christenings? Whom call you Moby Dick?'  
  
"'A very white, and famous, and most deadly immortal monster, Don;--but  
that would be too long a story.'  
  
"'How? how?' cried all the young Spaniards, crowding.  
  
"'Nay, Dons, Dons--nay, nay! I cannot rehearse that now. Let me get more  
into the air, Sirs.'  
  
"'The chicha! the chicha!' cried Don Pedro; 'our vigorous friend looks  
faint;--fill up his empty glass!'  
  
"No need, gentlemen; one moment, and I proceed.--Now, gentlemen,  
so suddenly perceiving the snowy whale within fifty yards of the  
ship--forgetful of the compact among the crew--in the excitement of the  
moment, the Teneriffe man had instinctively and involuntarily lifted  
his voice for the monster, though for some little time past it had been  
plainly beheld from the three sullen mast-heads. All was now a phrensy.  
'The White Whale--the White Whale!' was the cry from captain, mates,  
and harpooneers, who, undeterred by fearful rumours, were all anxious  
to capture so famous and precious a fish; while the dogged crew eyed  
askance, and with curses, the appalling beauty of the vast milky mass,  
that lit up by a horizontal spangling sun, shifted and glistened like  
a living opal in the blue morning sea. Gentlemen, a strange fatality  
pervades the whole career of these events, as if verily mapped out  
before the world itself was charted. The mutineer was the bowsman of the  
mate, and when fast to a fish, it was his duty to sit next him, while  
Radney stood up with his lance in the prow, and haul in or slacken  
the line, at the word of command. Moreover, when the four boats were  
lowered, the mate's got the start; and none howled more fiercely with  
delight than did Steelkilt, as he strained at his oar. After a stiff  
pull, their harpooneer got fast, and, spear in hand, Radney sprang to  
the bow. He was always a furious man, it seems, in a boat. And now his  
bandaged cry was, to beach him on the whale's topmost back. Nothing  
loath, his bowsman hauled him up and up, through a blinding foam that  
blent two whitenesses together; till of a sudden the boat struck as  
against a sunken ledge, and keeling over, spilled out the standing mate.  
That instant, as he fell on the whale's slippery back, the boat righted,  
and was dashed aside by the swell, while Radney was tossed over into the  
sea, on the other flank of the whale. He struck out through the spray,  
and, for an instant, was dimly seen through that veil, wildly seeking to  
remove himself from the eye of Moby Dick. But the whale rushed round  
in a sudden maelstrom; seized the swimmer between his jaws; and rearing  
high up with him, plunged headlong again, and went down.  
  
"Meantime, at the first tap of the boat's bottom, the Lakeman had  
slackened the line, so as to drop astern from the whirlpool; calmly  
looking on, he thought his own thoughts. But a sudden, terrific,  
downward jerking of the boat, quickly brought his knife to the line. He  
cut it; and the whale was free. But, at some distance, Moby Dick rose  
again, with some tatters of Radney's red woollen shirt, caught in the  
teeth that had destroyed him. All four boats gave chase again; but the  
whale eluded them, and finally wholly disappeared.  
  
"In good time, the Town-Ho reached her port--a savage, solitary  
place--where no civilized creature resided. There, headed by the  
Lakeman, all but five or six of the foremastmen deliberately deserted  
among the palms; eventually, as it turned out, seizing a large double  
war-canoe of the savages, and setting sail for some other harbor.  
  
"The ship's company being reduced to but a handful, the captain called  
upon the Islanders to assist him in the laborious business of heaving  
down the ship to stop the leak. But to such unresting vigilance over  
their dangerous allies was this small band of whites necessitated, both  
by night and by day, and so extreme was the hard work they underwent,  
that upon the vessel being ready again for sea, they were in such a  
weakened condition that the captain durst not put off with them in so  
heavy a vessel. After taking counsel with his officers, he anchored the  
ship as far off shore as possible; loaded and ran out his two cannon  
from the bows; stacked his muskets on the poop; and warning the  
Islanders not to approach the ship at their peril, took one man with  
him, and setting the sail of his best whale-boat, steered straight  
before the wind for Tahiti, five hundred miles distant, to procure a  
reinforcement to his crew.  
  
"On the fourth day of the sail, a large canoe was descried, which seemed  
to have touched at a low isle of corals. He steered away from it; but  
the savage craft bore down on him; and soon the voice of Steelkilt  
hailed him to heave to, or he would run him under water. The captain  
presented a pistol. With one foot on each prow of the yoked war-canoes,  
the Lakeman laughed him to scorn; assuring him that if the pistol so  
much as clicked in the lock, he would bury him in bubbles and foam.  
  
"'What do you want of me?' cried the captain.  
  
"'Where are you bound? and for what are you bound?' demanded Steelkilt;  
'no lies.'  
  
"'I am bound to Tahiti for more men.'  
  
"'Very good. Let me board you a moment--I come in peace.' With that he  
leaped from the canoe, swam to the boat; and climbing the gunwale, stood  
face to face with the captain.  
  
"'Cross your arms, sir; throw back your head. Now, repeat after me.  
As soon as Steelkilt leaves me, I swear to beach this boat on yonder  
island, and remain there six days. If I do not, may lightning strike  
me!'  
  
"'A pretty scholar,' laughed the Lakeman. 'Adios, Senor!' and leaping  
into the sea, he swam back to his comrades.  
  
"Watching the boat till it was fairly beached, and drawn up to the  
roots of the cocoa-nut trees, Steelkilt made sail again, and in due time  
arrived at Tahiti, his own place of destination. There, luck befriended  
him; two ships were about to sail for France, and were providentially  
in want of precisely that number of men which the sailor headed. They  
embarked; and so for ever got the start of their former captain, had he  
been at all minded to work them legal retribution.  
  
"Some ten days after the French ships sailed, the whale-boat arrived,  
and the captain was forced to enlist some of the more civilized  
Tahitians, who had been somewhat used to the sea. Chartering a small  
native schooner, he returned with them to his vessel; and finding all  
right there, again resumed his cruisings.  
  
"Where Steelkilt now is, gentlemen, none know; but upon the island of  
Nantucket, the widow of Radney still turns to the sea which refuses  
to give up its dead; still in dreams sees the awful white whale that  
destroyed him.  
  
"'Are you through?' said Don Sebastian, quietly.  
  
"'I am, Don.'  
  
"'Then I entreat you, tell me if to the best of your own convictions,  
this your story is in substance really true? It is so passing wonderful!  
Did you get it from an unquestionable source? Bear with me if I seem to  
press.'  
  
"'Also bear with all of us, sir sailor; for we all join in Don  
Sebastian's suit,' cried the company, with exceeding interest.  
  
"'Is there a copy of the Holy Evangelists in the Golden Inn, gentlemen?'  
  
"'Nay,' said Don Sebastian; 'but I know a worthy priest near by, who  
will quickly procure one for me. I go for it; but are you well advised?  
this may grow too serious.'  
  
"'Will you be so good as to bring the priest also, Don?'  
  
"'Though there are no Auto-da-Fe's in Lima now,' said one of the company  
to another; 'I fear our sailor friend runs risk of the archiepiscopacy.  
Let us withdraw more out of the moonlight. I see no need of this.'  
  
"'Excuse me for running after you, Don Sebastian; but may I also beg  
that you will be particular in procuring the largest sized Evangelists  
you can.'  
  
"'This is the priest, he brings you the Evangelists,' said Don Sebastian,  
gravely, returning with a tall and solemn figure.  
  
"'Let me remove my hat. Now, venerable priest, further into the light,  
and hold the Holy Book before me that I may touch it.  
  
"'So help me Heaven, and on my honour the story I have told ye,  
gentlemen, is in substance and its great items, true. I know it to be  
true; it happened on this ball; I trod the ship; I knew the crew; I have  
seen and talked with Steelkilt since the death of Radney.'"  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 55. Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales.  
  
  
I shall ere long paint to you as well as one can without canvas,  
something like the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the  
eye of the whaleman when in his own absolute body the whale is moored  
alongside the whale-ship so that he can be fairly stepped upon there.  
It may be worth while, therefore, previously to advert to those  
curious imaginary portraits of him which even down to the present day  
confidently challenge the faith of the landsman. It is time to set the  
world right in this matter, by proving such pictures of the whale all  
wrong.  
  
It may be that the primal source of all those pictorial delusions will  
be found among the oldest Hindoo, Egyptian, and Grecian sculptures. For  
ever since those inventive but unscrupulous times when on the marble  
panellings of temples, the pedestals of statues, and on shields,  
medallions, cups, and coins, the dolphin was drawn in scales of  
chain-armor like Saladin's, and a helmeted head like St. George's; ever  
since then has something of the same sort of license prevailed, not  
only in most popular pictures of the whale, but in many scientific  
presentations of him.  
  
Now, by all odds, the most ancient extant portrait anyways purporting to  
be the whale's, is to be found in the famous cavern-pagoda of Elephanta,  
in India. The Brahmins maintain that in the almost endless sculptures of  
that immemorial pagoda, all the trades and pursuits, every conceivable  
avocation of man, were prefigured ages before any of them actually came  
into being. No wonder then, that in some sort our noble profession of  
whaling should have been there shadowed forth. The Hindoo whale  
referred to, occurs in a separate department of the wall, depicting the  
incarnation of Vishnu in the form of leviathan, learnedly known as the  
Matse Avatar. But though this sculpture is half man and half whale, so  
as only to give the tail of the latter, yet that small section of him is  
all wrong. It looks more like the tapering tail of an anaconda, than the  
broad palms of the true whale's majestic flukes.  
  
But go to the old Galleries, and look now at a great Christian painter's  
portrait of this fish; for he succeeds no better than the antediluvian  
Hindoo. It is Guido's picture of Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the  
sea-monster or whale. Where did Guido get the model of such a strange  
creature as that? Nor does Hogarth, in painting the same scene in his  
own "Perseus Descending," make out one whit better. The huge corpulence  
of that Hogarthian monster undulates on the surface, scarcely drawing  
one inch of water. It has a sort of howdah on its back, and its  
distended tusked mouth into which the billows are rolling, might be  
taken for the Traitors' Gate leading from the Thames by water into the  
Tower. Then, there are the Prodromus whales of old Scotch Sibbald, and  
Jonah's whale, as depicted in the prints of old Bibles and the cuts of  
old primers. What shall be said of these? As for the book-binder's whale  
winding like a vine-stalk round the stock of a descending anchor--as  
stamped and gilded on the backs and title-pages of many books both  
old and new--that is a very picturesque but purely fabulous creature,  
imitated, I take it, from the like figures on antique vases.  
Though universally denominated a dolphin, I nevertheless call this  
book-binder's fish an attempt at a whale; because it was so intended  
when the device was first introduced. It was introduced by an old  
Italian publisher somewhere about the 15th century, during the Revival  
of Learning; and in those days, and even down to a comparatively  
late period, dolphins were popularly supposed to be a species of the  
Leviathan.  
  
In the vignettes and other embellishments of some ancient books you will  
at times meet with very curious touches at the whale, where all manner  
of spouts, jets d'eau, hot springs and cold, Saratoga and Baden-Baden,  
come bubbling up from his unexhausted brain. In the title-page of the  
original edition of the "Advancement of Learning" you will find some  
curious whales.  
  
But quitting all these unprofessional attempts, let us glance at those  
pictures of leviathan purporting to be sober, scientific delineations,  
by those who know. In old Harris's collection of voyages there are some  
plates of whales extracted from a Dutch book of voyages, A.D. 1671,  
entitled "A Whaling Voyage to Spitzbergen in the ship Jonas in the  
Whale, Peter Peterson of Friesland, master." In one of those plates the  
whales, like great rafts of logs, are represented lying among ice-isles,  
with white bears running over their living backs. In another plate, the  
prodigious blunder is made of representing the whale with perpendicular  
flukes.  
  
Then again, there is an imposing quarto, written by one Captain Colnett,  
a Post Captain in the English navy, entitled "A Voyage round Cape Horn  
into the South Seas, for the purpose of extending the Spermaceti Whale  
Fisheries." In this book is an outline purporting to be a "Picture of  
a Physeter or Spermaceti whale, drawn by scale from one killed on the  
coast of Mexico, August, 1793, and hoisted on deck." I doubt not the  
captain had this veracious picture taken for the benefit of his marines.  
To mention but one thing about it, let me say that it has an eye which  
applied, according to the accompanying scale, to a full grown sperm  
whale, would make the eye of that whale a bow-window some five feet  
long. Ah, my gallant captain, why did ye not give us Jonah looking out  
of that eye!  
  
Nor are the most conscientious compilations of Natural History for  
the benefit of the young and tender, free from the same heinousness of  
mistake. Look at that popular work "Goldsmith's Animated Nature." In the  
abridged London edition of 1807, there are plates of an alleged "whale"  
and a "narwhale." I do not wish to seem inelegant, but this unsightly  
whale looks much like an amputated sow; and, as for the narwhale, one  
glimpse at it is enough to amaze one, that in this nineteenth century  
such a hippogriff could be palmed for genuine upon any intelligent  
public of schoolboys.  
  
Then, again, in 1825, Bernard Germain, Count de Lacepede, a great  
naturalist, published a scientific systemized whale book, wherein are  
several pictures of the different species of the Leviathan. All these  
are not only incorrect, but the picture of the Mysticetus or Greenland  
whale (that is to say, the Right whale), even Scoresby, a long  
experienced man as touching that species, declares not to have its  
counterpart in nature.  
  
But the placing of the cap-sheaf to all this blundering business was  
reserved for the scientific Frederick Cuvier, brother to the famous  
Baron. In 1836, he published a Natural History of Whales, in which he  
gives what he calls a picture of the Sperm Whale. Before showing that  
picture to any Nantucketer, you had best provide for your summary  
retreat from Nantucket. In a word, Frederick Cuvier's Sperm Whale is not  
a Sperm Whale, but a squash. Of course, he never had the benefit of  
a whaling voyage (such men seldom have), but whence he derived that  
picture, who can tell? Perhaps he got it as his scientific predecessor  
in the same field, Desmarest, got one of his authentic abortions; that  
is, from a Chinese drawing. And what sort of lively lads with the pencil  
those Chinese are, many queer cups and saucers inform us.  
  
As for the sign-painters' whales seen in the streets hanging over the  
shops of oil-dealers, what shall be said of them? They are generally  
Richard III. whales, with dromedary humps, and very savage; breakfasting  
on three or four sailor tarts, that is whaleboats full of mariners:  
their deformities floundering in seas of blood and blue paint.  
  
But these manifold mistakes in depicting the whale are not so very  
surprising after all. Consider! Most of the scientific drawings have  
been taken from the stranded fish; and these are about as correct as a  
drawing of a wrecked ship, with broken back, would correctly represent  
the noble animal itself in all its undashed pride of hull and spars.  
Though elephants have stood for their full-lengths, the living Leviathan  
has never yet fairly floated himself for his portrait. The living whale,  
in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in  
unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight,  
like a launched line-of-battle ship; and out of that element it is a  
thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the  
air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations. And, not  
to speak of the highly presumable difference of contour between a young  
sucking whale and a full-grown Platonian Leviathan; yet, even in the  
case of one of those young sucking whales hoisted to a ship's deck, such  
is then the outlandish, eel-like, limbered, varying shape of him, that  
his precise expression the devil himself could not catch.  
  
But it may be fancied, that from the naked skeleton of the stranded  
whale, accurate hints may be derived touching his true form. Not at all.  
For it is one of the more curious things about this Leviathan, that  
his skeleton gives very little idea of his general shape. Though Jeremy  
Bentham's skeleton, which hangs for candelabra in the library of one of  
his executors, correctly conveys the idea of a burly-browed utilitarian  
old gentleman, with all Jeremy's other leading personal characteristics;  
yet nothing of this kind could be inferred from any leviathan's  
articulated bones. In fact, as the great Hunter says, the mere skeleton  
of the whale bears the same relation to the fully invested and padded  
animal as the insect does to the chrysalis that so roundingly envelopes  
it. This peculiarity is strikingly evinced in the head, as in some  
part of this book will be incidentally shown. It is also very curiously  
displayed in the side fin, the bones of which almost exactly answer to  
the bones of the human hand, minus only the thumb. This fin has four  
regular bone-fingers, the index, middle, ring, and little finger. But  
all these are permanently lodged in their fleshy covering, as the human  
fingers in an artificial covering. "However recklessly the whale may  
sometimes serve us," said humorous Stubb one day, "he can never be truly  
said to handle us without mittens."  
  
For all these reasons, then, any way you may look at it, you must needs  
conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world  
which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit  
the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very  
considerable degree of exactness. So there is no earthly way of finding  
out precisely what the whale really looks like. And the only mode in  
which you can derive even a tolerable idea of his living contour, is  
by going a whaling yourself; but by so doing, you run no small risk of  
being eternally stove and sunk by him. Wherefore, it seems to me you had  
best not be too fastidious in your curiosity touching this Leviathan.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 56. Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales, and the True  
Pictures of Whaling Scenes.  
  
  
In connexion with the monstrous pictures of whales, I am strongly  
tempted here to enter upon those still more monstrous stories of  
them which are to be found in certain books, both ancient and modern,  
especially in Pliny, Purchas, Hackluyt, Harris, Cuvier, etc. But I pass  
that matter by.  
  
I know of only four published outlines of the great Sperm Whale;  
Colnett's, Huggins's, Frederick Cuvier's, and Beale's. In the previous  
chapter Colnett and Cuvier have been referred to. Huggins's is far  
better than theirs; but, by great odds, Beale's is the best. All Beale's  
drawings of this whale are good, excepting the middle figure in the  
picture of three whales in various attitudes, capping his second  
chapter. His frontispiece, boats attacking Sperm Whales, though no  
doubt calculated to excite the civil scepticism of some parlor men, is  
admirably correct and life-like in its general effect. Some of the Sperm  
Whale drawings in J. Ross Browne are pretty correct in contour; but they  
are wretchedly engraved. That is not his fault though.  
  
Of the Right Whale, the best outline pictures are in Scoresby; but they  
are drawn on too small a scale to convey a desirable impression. He has  
but one picture of whaling scenes, and this is a sad deficiency, because  
it is by such pictures only, when at all well done, that you can derive  
anything like a truthful idea of the living whale as seen by his living  
hunters.  
  
But, taken for all in all, by far the finest, though in some details  
not the most correct, presentations of whales and whaling scenes to  
be anywhere found, are two large French engravings, well executed,  
and taken from paintings by one Garnery. Respectively, they represent  
attacks on the Sperm and Right Whale. In the first engraving a noble  
Sperm Whale is depicted in full majesty of might, just risen beneath  
the boat from the profundities of the ocean, and bearing high in the air  
upon his back the terrific wreck of the stoven planks. The prow of  
the boat is partially unbroken, and is drawn just balancing upon  
the monster's spine; and standing in that prow, for that one single  
incomputable flash of time, you behold an oarsman, half shrouded by the  
incensed boiling spout of the whale, and in the act of leaping, as if  
from a precipice. The action of the whole thing is wonderfully good and  
true. The half-emptied line-tub floats on the whitened sea; the wooden  
poles of the spilled harpoons obliquely bob in it; the heads of the  
swimming crew are scattered about the whale in contrasting expressions  
of affright; while in the black stormy distance the ship is bearing down  
upon the scene. Serious fault might be found with the anatomical details  
of this whale, but let that pass; since, for the life of me, I could not  
draw so good a one.  
  
In the second engraving, the boat is in the act of drawing alongside  
the barnacled flank of a large running Right Whale, that rolls his black  
weedy bulk in the sea like some mossy rock-slide from the Patagonian  
cliffs. His jets are erect, full, and black like soot; so that from so  
abounding a smoke in the chimney, you would think there must be a brave  
supper cooking in the great bowels below. Sea fowls are pecking at the  
small crabs, shell-fish, and other sea candies and maccaroni, which the  
Right Whale sometimes carries on his pestilent back. And all the while  
the thick-lipped leviathan is rushing through the deep, leaving tons of  
tumultuous white curds in his wake, and causing the slight boat to rock  
in the swells like a skiff caught nigh the paddle-wheels of an ocean  
steamer. Thus, the foreground is all raging commotion; but behind, in  
admirable artistic contrast, is the glassy level of a sea becalmed, the  
drooping unstarched sails of the powerless ship, and the inert mass of  
a dead whale, a conquered fortress, with the flag of capture lazily  
hanging from the whale-pole inserted into his spout-hole.  
  
Who Garnery the painter is, or was, I know not. But my life for it he  
was either practically conversant with his subject, or else marvellously  
tutored by some experienced whaleman. The French are the lads for  
painting action. Go and gaze upon all the paintings of Europe, and  
where will you find such a gallery of living and breathing commotion  
on canvas, as in that triumphal hall at Versailles; where the beholder  
fights his way, pell-mell, through the consecutive great battles of  
France; where every sword seems a flash of the Northern Lights, and the  
successive armed kings and Emperors dash by, like a charge of crowned  
centaurs? Not wholly unworthy of a place in that gallery, are these sea  
battle-pieces of Garnery.  
  
The natural aptitude of the French for seizing the picturesqueness of  
things seems to be peculiarly evinced in what paintings and engravings  
they have of their whaling scenes. With not one tenth of England's  
experience in the fishery, and not the thousandth part of that of the  
Americans, they have nevertheless furnished both nations with the only  
finished sketches at all capable of conveying the real spirit of  
the whale hunt. For the most part, the English and American whale  
draughtsmen seem entirely content with presenting the mechanical outline  
of things, such as the vacant profile of the whale; which, so far as  
picturesqueness of effect is concerned, is about tantamount to sketching  
the profile of a pyramid. Even Scoresby, the justly renowned Right  
whaleman, after giving us a stiff full length of the Greenland whale,  
and three or four delicate miniatures of narwhales and porpoises, treats  
us to a series of classical engravings of boat hooks, chopping knives,  
and grapnels; and with the microscopic diligence of a Leuwenhoeck  
submits to the inspection of a shivering world ninety-six fac-similes of  
magnified Arctic snow crystals. I mean no disparagement to the excellent  
voyager (I honour him for a veteran), but in so important a matter it  
was certainly an oversight not to have procured for every crystal a  
sworn affidavit taken before a Greenland Justice of the Peace.  
  
In addition to those fine engravings from Garnery, there are two other  
French engravings worthy of note, by some one who subscribes himself  
"H. Durand." One of them, though not precisely adapted to our present  
purpose, nevertheless deserves mention on other accounts. It is a quiet  
noon-scene among the isles of the Pacific; a French whaler anchored,  
inshore, in a calm, and lazily taking water on board; the loosened sails  
of the ship, and the long leaves of the palms in the background, both  
drooping together in the breezeless air. The effect is very fine, when  
considered with reference to its presenting the hardy fishermen under  
one of their few aspects of oriental repose. The other engraving is  
quite a different affair: the ship hove-to upon the open sea, and in the  
very heart of the Leviathanic life, with a Right Whale alongside; the  
vessel (in the act of cutting-in) hove over to the monster as if to a  
quay; and a boat, hurriedly pushing off from this scene of activity, is  
about giving chase to whales in the distance. The harpoons and lances  
lie levelled for use; three oarsmen are just setting the mast in its  
hole; while from a sudden roll of the sea, the little craft stands  
half-erect out of the water, like a rearing horse. From the ship, the  
smoke of the torments of the boiling whale is going up like the smoke  
over a village of smithies; and to windward, a black cloud, rising up  
with earnest of squalls and rains, seems to quicken the activity of the  
excited seamen.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 57. Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in  
Stone; in Mountains; in Stars.  
  
  
On Tower-hill, as you go down to the London docks, you may have seen a  
crippled beggar (or KEDGER, as the sailors say) holding a painted board  
before him, representing the tragic scene in which he lost his leg.  
There are three whales and three boats; and one of the boats (presumed  
to contain the missing leg in all its original integrity) is being  
crunched by the jaws of the foremost whale. Any time these ten years,  
they tell me, has that man held up that picture, and exhibited that  
stump to an incredulous world. But the time of his justification has  
now come. His three whales are as good whales as were ever published in  
Wapping, at any rate; and his stump as unquestionable a stump as any you  
will find in the western clearings. But, though for ever mounted on  
that stump, never a stump-speech does the poor whaleman make; but, with  
downcast eyes, stands ruefully contemplating his own amputation.  
  
Throughout the Pacific, and also in Nantucket, and New Bedford, and  
Sag Harbor, you will come across lively sketches of whales and  
whaling-scenes, graven by the fishermen themselves on Sperm Whale-teeth,  
or ladies' busks wrought out of the Right Whale-bone, and other  
like skrimshander articles, as the whalemen call the numerous little  
ingenious contrivances they elaborately carve out of the rough material,  
in their hours of ocean leisure. Some of them have little boxes  
of dentistical-looking implements, specially intended for the  
skrimshandering business. But, in general, they toil with their  
jack-knives alone; and, with that almost omnipotent tool of the sailor,  
they will turn you out anything you please, in the way of a mariner's  
fancy.  
  
Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man  
to that condition in which God placed him, i.e. what is called savagery.  
Your true whale-hunter is as much a savage as an Iroquois. I myself am a  
savage, owning no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals; and ready  
at any moment to rebel against him.  
  
Now, one of the peculiar characteristics of the savage in his domestic  
hours, is his wonderful patience of industry. An ancient Hawaiian  
war-club or spear-paddle, in its full multiplicity and elaboration of  
carving, is as great a trophy of human perseverance as a Latin lexicon.  
For, with but a bit of broken sea-shell or a shark's tooth, that  
miraculous intricacy of wooden net-work has been achieved; and it has  
cost steady years of steady application.  
  
As with the Hawaiian savage, so with the white sailor-savage. With the  
same marvellous patience, and with the same single shark's tooth, of  
his one poor jack-knife, he will carve you a bit of bone sculpture, not  
quite as workmanlike, but as close packed in its maziness of design,  
as the Greek savage, Achilles's shield; and full of barbaric spirit  
and suggestiveness, as the prints of that fine old Dutch savage, Albert  
Durer.  
  
Wooden whales, or whales cut in profile out of the small dark slabs of  
the noble South Sea war-wood, are frequently met with in the forecastles  
of American whalers. Some of them are done with much accuracy.  
  
At some old gable-roofed country houses you will see brass whales hung  
by the tail for knockers to the road-side door. When the porter is  
sleepy, the anvil-headed whale would be best. But these knocking  
whales are seldom remarkable as faithful essays. On the spires of some  
old-fashioned churches you will see sheet-iron whales placed there for  
weather-cocks; but they are so elevated, and besides that are to all  
intents and purposes so labelled with "HANDS OFF!" you cannot examine  
them closely enough to decide upon their merit.  
  
In bony, ribby regions of the earth, where at the base of high broken  
cliffs masses of rock lie strewn in fantastic groupings upon the  
plain, you will often discover images as of the petrified forms of the  
Leviathan partly merged in grass, which of a windy day breaks against  
them in a surf of green surges.  
  
Then, again, in mountainous countries where the traveller is continually  
girdled by amphitheatrical heights; here and there from some lucky  
point of view you will catch passing glimpses of the profiles of  
whales defined along the undulating ridges. But you must be a thorough  
whaleman, to see these sights; and not only that, but if you wish  
to return to such a sight again, you must be sure and take the exact  
intersecting latitude and longitude of your first stand-point, else  
so chance-like are such observations of the hills, that your precise,  
previous stand-point would require a laborious re-discovery; like the  
Soloma Islands, which still remain incognita, though once high-ruffed  
Mendanna trod them and old Figuera chronicled them.  
  
Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out  
great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as  
when long filled with thoughts of war the Eastern nations saw armies  
locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased  
Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright  
points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic  
skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the  
starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying  
Fish.  
  
With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bitts and fasces of harpoons for  
spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to  
see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie  
encamped beyond my mortal sight!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 58. Brit.  
  
  
Steering north-eastward from the Crozetts, we fell in with vast meadows  
of brit, the minute, yellow substance, upon which the Right Whale  
largely feeds. For leagues and leagues it undulated round us, so that we  
seemed to be sailing through boundless fields of ripe and golden wheat.  
  
On the second day, numbers of Right Whales were seen, who, secure from  
the attack of a Sperm Whaler like the Pequod, with open jaws sluggishly  
swam through the brit, which, adhering to the fringing fibres of that  
wondrous Venetian blind in their mouths, was in that manner separated  
from the water that escaped at the lip.  
  
As morning mowers, who side by side slowly and seethingly advance  
their scythes through the long wet grass of marshy meads; even so these  
monsters swam, making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving  
behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea.\*  
  
  
\*That part of the sea known among whalemen as the "Brazil Banks" does  
not bear that name as the Banks of Newfoundland do, because of there  
being shallows and soundings there, but because of this remarkable  
meadow-like appearance, caused by the vast drifts of brit continually  
floating in those latitudes, where the Right Whale is often chased.  
  
  
But it was only the sound they made as they parted the brit which at all  
reminded one of mowers. Seen from the mast-heads, especially when they  
paused and were stationary for a while, their vast black forms looked  
more like lifeless masses of rock than anything else. And as in the  
great hunting countries of India, the stranger at a distance will  
sometimes pass on the plains recumbent elephants without knowing them  
to be such, taking them for bare, blackened elevations of the soil; even  
so, often, with him, who for the first time beholds this species of the  
leviathans of the sea. And even when recognised at last, their immense  
magnitude renders it very hard really to believe that such bulky masses  
of overgrowth can possibly be instinct, in all parts, with the same sort  
of life that lives in a dog or a horse.  
  
Indeed, in other respects, you can hardly regard any creatures of the  
deep with the same feelings that you do those of the shore. For though  
some old naturalists have maintained that all creatures of the land are  
of their kind in the sea; and though taking a broad general view of  
the thing, this may very well be; yet coming to specialties, where, for  
example, does the ocean furnish any fish that in disposition answers to  
the sagacious kindness of the dog? The accursed shark alone can in any  
generic respect be said to bear comparative analogy to him.  
  
But though, to landsmen in general, the native inhabitants of the  
seas have ever been regarded with emotions unspeakably unsocial and  
repelling; though we know the sea to be an everlasting terra incognita,  
so that Columbus sailed over numberless unknown worlds to discover his  
one superficial western one; though, by vast odds, the most terrific  
of all mortal disasters have immemorially and indiscriminately befallen  
tens and hundreds of thousands of those who have gone upon the waters;  
though but a moment's consideration will teach, that however baby man  
may brag of his science and skill, and however much, in a flattering  
future, that science and skill may augment; yet for ever and for ever,  
to the crack of doom, the sea will insult and murder him, and pulverize  
the stateliest, stiffest frigate he can make; nevertheless, by the  
continual repetition of these very impressions, man has lost that sense  
of the full awfulness of the sea which aboriginally belongs to it.  
  
The first boat we read of, floated on an ocean, that with Portuguese  
vengeance had whelmed a whole world without leaving so much as a widow.  
That same ocean rolls now; that same ocean destroyed the wrecked ships  
of last year. Yea, foolish mortals, Noah's flood is not yet subsided;  
two thirds of the fair world it yet covers.  
  
Wherein differ the sea and the land, that a miracle upon one is not a  
miracle upon the other? Preternatural terrors rested upon the Hebrews,  
when under the feet of Korah and his company the live ground opened  
and swallowed them up for ever; yet not a modern sun ever sets, but in  
precisely the same manner the live sea swallows up ships and crews.  
  
But not only is the sea such a foe to man who is an alien to it, but it  
is also a fiend to its own off-spring; worse than the Persian host who  
murdered his own guests; sparing not the creatures which itself hath  
spawned. Like a savage tigress that tossing in the jungle overlays her  
own cubs, so the sea dashes even the mightiest whales against the rocks,  
and leaves them there side by side with the split wrecks of ships. No  
mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad  
battle steed that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the  
globe.  
  
Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide  
under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden  
beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish  
brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the  
dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more,  
the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each  
other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.  
  
Consider all this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile  
earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a  
strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean  
surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular  
Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the  
half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst  
never return!  
  
  
CHAPTER 59. Squid.  
  
  
Slowly wading through the meadows of brit, the Pequod still held on her  
way north-eastward towards the island of Java; a gentle air impelling  
her keel, so that in the surrounding serenity her three tall tapering  
masts mildly waved to that languid breeze, as three mild palms on a  
plain. And still, at wide intervals in the silvery night, the lonely,  
alluring jet would be seen.  
  
But one transparent blue morning, when a stillness almost preternatural  
spread over the sea, however unattended with any stagnant calm; when  
the long burnished sun-glade on the waters seemed a golden finger laid  
across them, enjoining some secrecy; when the slippered waves whispered  
together as they softly ran on; in this profound hush of the visible  
sphere a strange spectre was seen by Daggoo from the main-mast-head.  
  
In the distance, a great white mass lazily rose, and rising higher and  
higher, and disentangling itself from the azure, at last gleamed before  
our prow like a snow-slide, new slid from the hills. Thus glistening  
for a moment, as slowly it subsided, and sank. Then once more arose,  
and silently gleamed. It seemed not a whale; and yet is this Moby Dick?  
thought Daggoo. Again the phantom went down, but on re-appearing once  
more, with a stiletto-like cry that startled every man from his nod, the  
negro yelled out--"There! there again! there she breaches! right ahead!  
The White Whale, the White Whale!"  
  
Upon this, the seamen rushed to the yard-arms, as in swarming-time the  
bees rush to the boughs. Bare-headed in the sultry sun, Ahab stood on  
the bowsprit, and with one hand pushed far behind in readiness to wave  
his orders to the helmsman, cast his eager glance in the direction  
indicated aloft by the outstretched motionless arm of Daggoo.  
  
Whether the flitting attendance of the one still and solitary jet had  
gradually worked upon Ahab, so that he was now prepared to connect the  
ideas of mildness and repose with the first sight of the particular  
whale he pursued; however this was, or whether his eagerness betrayed  
him; whichever way it might have been, no sooner did he distinctly  
perceive the white mass, than with a quick intensity he instantly gave  
orders for lowering.  
  
The four boats were soon on the water; Ahab's in advance, and all  
swiftly pulling towards their prey. Soon it went down, and while, with  
oars suspended, we were awaiting its reappearance, lo! in the same  
spot where it sank, once more it slowly rose. Almost forgetting for  
the moment all thoughts of Moby Dick, we now gazed at the most wondrous  
phenomenon which the secret seas have hitherto revealed to mankind.  
A vast pulpy mass, furlongs in length and breadth, of a glancing  
cream-colour, lay floating on the water, innumerable long arms radiating  
from its centre, and curling and twisting like a nest of anacondas, as  
if blindly to clutch at any hapless object within reach. No perceptible  
face or front did it have; no conceivable token of either sensation or  
instinct; but undulated there on the billows, an unearthly, formless,  
chance-like apparition of life.  
  
As with a low sucking sound it slowly disappeared again, Starbuck still  
gazing at the agitated waters where it had sunk, with a wild voice  
exclaimed--"Almost rather had I seen Moby Dick and fought him, than to  
have seen thee, thou white ghost!"  
  
"What was it, Sir?" said Flask.  
  
"The great live squid, which, they say, few whale-ships ever beheld, and  
returned to their ports to tell of it."  
  
But Ahab said nothing; turning his boat, he sailed back to the vessel;  
the rest as silently following.  
  
Whatever superstitions the sperm whalemen in general have connected with  
the sight of this object, certain it is, that a glimpse of it being  
so very unusual, that circumstance has gone far to invest it with  
portentousness. So rarely is it beheld, that though one and all of them  
declare it to be the largest animated thing in the ocean, yet very few  
of them have any but the most vague ideas concerning its true nature and  
form; notwithstanding, they believe it to furnish to the sperm whale  
his only food. For though other species of whales find their food above  
water, and may be seen by man in the act of feeding, the spermaceti  
whale obtains his whole food in unknown zones below the surface; and  
only by inference is it that any one can tell of what, precisely, that  
food consists. At times, when closely pursued, he will disgorge what  
are supposed to be the detached arms of the squid; some of them thus  
exhibited exceeding twenty and thirty feet in length. They fancy that  
the monster to which these arms belonged ordinarily clings by them to  
the bed of the ocean; and that the sperm whale, unlike other species, is  
supplied with teeth in order to attack and tear it.  
  
There seems some ground to imagine that the great Kraken of Bishop  
Pontoppodan may ultimately resolve itself into Squid. The manner in  
which the Bishop describes it, as alternately rising and sinking, with  
some other particulars he narrates, in all this the two correspond.  
But much abatement is necessary with respect to the incredible bulk he  
assigns it.  
  
By some naturalists who have vaguely heard rumors of the mysterious  
creature, here spoken of, it is included among the class of cuttle-fish,  
to which, indeed, in certain external respects it would seem to belong,  
but only as the Anak of the tribe.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 60. The Line.  
  
  
With reference to the whaling scene shortly to be described, as well as  
for the better understanding of all similar scenes elsewhere presented,  
I have here to speak of the magical, sometimes horrible whale-line.  
  
The line originally used in the fishery was of the best hemp, slightly  
vapoured with tar, not impregnated with it, as in the case of ordinary  
ropes; for while tar, as ordinarily used, makes the hemp more pliable to  
the rope-maker, and also renders the rope itself more convenient to the  
sailor for common ship use; yet, not only would the ordinary quantity  
too much stiffen the whale-line for the close coiling to which it must  
be subjected; but as most seamen are beginning to learn, tar in general  
by no means adds to the rope's durability or strength, however much it  
may give it compactness and gloss.  
  
Of late years the Manilla rope has in the American fishery almost  
entirely superseded hemp as a material for whale-lines; for, though not  
so durable as hemp, it is stronger, and far more soft and elastic; and  
I will add (since there is an aesthetics in all things), is much more  
handsome and becoming to the boat, than hemp. Hemp is a dusky, dark  
fellow, a sort of Indian; but Manilla is as a golden-haired Circassian  
to behold.  
  
The whale-line is only two-thirds of an inch in thickness. At first  
sight, you would not think it so strong as it really is. By experiment  
its one and fifty yarns will each suspend a weight of one hundred and  
twenty pounds; so that the whole rope will bear a strain nearly equal  
to three tons. In length, the common sperm whale-line measures something  
over two hundred fathoms. Towards the stern of the boat it is spirally  
coiled away in the tub, not like the worm-pipe of a still though, but so  
as to form one round, cheese-shaped mass of densely bedded "sheaves," or  
layers of concentric spiralizations, without any hollow but the "heart,"  
or minute vertical tube formed at the axis of the cheese. As the least  
tangle or kink in the coiling would, in running out, infallibly take  
somebody's arm, leg, or entire body off, the utmost precaution is used  
in stowing the line in its tub. Some harpooneers will consume almost an  
entire morning in this business, carrying the line high aloft and then  
reeving it downwards through a block towards the tub, so as in the act  
of coiling to free it from all possible wrinkles and twists.  
  
In the English boats two tubs are used instead of one; the same line  
being continuously coiled in both tubs. There is some advantage in this;  
because these twin-tubs being so small they fit more readily into the  
boat, and do not strain it so much; whereas, the American tub, nearly  
three feet in diameter and of proportionate depth, makes a rather bulky  
freight for a craft whose planks are but one half-inch in thickness; for  
the bottom of the whale-boat is like critical ice, which will bear up  
a considerable distributed weight, but not very much of a concentrated  
one. When the painted canvas cover is clapped on the American line-tub,  
the boat looks as if it were pulling off with a prodigious great  
wedding-cake to present to the whales.  
  
Both ends of the line are exposed; the lower end terminating in an  
eye-splice or loop coming up from the bottom against the side of the  
tub, and hanging over its edge completely disengaged from everything.  
This arrangement of the lower end is necessary on two accounts. First:  
In order to facilitate the fastening to it of an additional line from a  
neighboring boat, in case the stricken whale should sound so deep as  
to threaten to carry off the entire line originally attached to the  
harpoon. In these instances, the whale of course is shifted like a mug  
of ale, as it were, from the one boat to the other; though the  
first boat always hovers at hand to assist its consort. Second: This  
arrangement is indispensable for common safety's sake; for were the  
lower end of the line in any way attached to the boat, and were the  
whale then to run the line out to the end almost in a single, smoking  
minute as he sometimes does, he would not stop there, for the doomed  
boat would infallibly be dragged down after him into the profundity of  
the sea; and in that case no town-crier would ever find her again.  
  
Before lowering the boat for the chase, the upper end of the line is  
taken aft from the tub, and passing round the loggerhead there, is again  
carried forward the entire length of the boat, resting crosswise upon  
the loom or handle of every man's oar, so that it jogs against his wrist  
in rowing; and also passing between the men, as they alternately sit at  
the opposite gunwales, to the leaded chocks or grooves in the extreme  
pointed prow of the boat, where a wooden pin or skewer the size of a  
common quill, prevents it from slipping out. From the chocks it hangs  
in a slight festoon over the bows, and is then passed inside the boat  
again; and some ten or twenty fathoms (called box-line) being coiled  
upon the box in the bows, it continues its way to the gunwale still a  
little further aft, and is then attached to the short-warp--the rope  
which is immediately connected with the harpoon; but previous to that  
connexion, the short-warp goes through sundry mystifications too tedious  
to detail.  
  
Thus the whale-line folds the whole boat in its complicated coils,  
twisting and writhing around it in almost every direction. All the  
oarsmen are involved in its perilous contortions; so that to the timid  
eye of the landsman, they seem as Indian jugglers, with the deadliest  
snakes sportively festooning their limbs. Nor can any son of mortal  
woman, for the first time, seat himself amid those hempen intricacies,  
and while straining his utmost at the oar, bethink him that at any  
unknown instant the harpoon may be darted, and all these horrible  
contortions be put in play like ringed lightnings; he cannot be thus  
circumstanced without a shudder that makes the very marrow in his bones  
to quiver in him like a shaken jelly. Yet habit--strange thing! what  
cannot habit accomplish?--Gayer sallies, more merry mirth, better jokes,  
and brighter repartees, you never heard over your mahogany, than you  
will hear over the half-inch white cedar of the whale-boat, when thus  
hung in hangman's nooses; and, like the six burghers of Calais before  
King Edward, the six men composing the crew pull into the jaws of death,  
with a halter around every neck, as you may say.  
  
Perhaps a very little thought will now enable you to account for  
those repeated whaling disasters--some few of which are casually  
chronicled--of this man or that man being taken out of the boat by the  
line, and lost. For, when the line is darting out, to be seated then in  
the boat, is like being seated in the midst of the manifold whizzings  
of a steam-engine in full play, when every flying beam, and shaft, and  
wheel, is grazing you. It is worse; for you cannot sit motionless in the  
heart of these perils, because the boat is rocking like a cradle, and  
you are pitched one way and the other, without the slightest warning;  
and only by a certain self-adjusting buoyancy and simultaneousness of  
volition and action, can you escape being made a Mazeppa of, and run  
away with where the all-seeing sun himself could never pierce you out.  
  
Again: as the profound calm which only apparently precedes and  
prophesies of the storm, is perhaps more awful than the storm itself;  
for, indeed, the calm is but the wrapper and envelope of the storm; and  
contains it in itself, as the seemingly harmless rifle holds the fatal  
powder, and the ball, and the explosion; so the graceful repose of the  
line, as it silently serpentines about the oarsmen before being brought  
into actual play--this is a thing which carries more of true terror than  
any other aspect of this dangerous affair. But why say more? All men  
live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their  
necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death,  
that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life.  
And if you be a philosopher, though seated in the whale-boat, you would  
not at heart feel one whit more of terror, than though seated before  
your evening fire with a poker, and not a harpoon, by your side.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 61. Stubb Kills a Whale.  
  
  
If to Starbuck the apparition of the Squid was a thing of portents, to  
Queequeg it was quite a different object.  
  
"When you see him 'quid," said the savage, honing his harpoon in the bow  
of his hoisted boat, "then you quick see him 'parm whale."  
  
The next day was exceedingly still and sultry, and with nothing special  
to engage them, the Pequod's crew could hardly resist the spell of sleep  
induced by such a vacant sea. For this part of the Indian Ocean through  
which we then were voyaging is not what whalemen call a lively ground;  
that is, it affords fewer glimpses of porpoises, dolphins, flying-fish,  
and other vivacious denizens of more stirring waters, than those off the  
Rio de la Plata, or the in-shore ground off Peru.  
  
It was my turn to stand at the foremast-head; and with my shoulders  
leaning against the slackened royal shrouds, to and fro I idly swayed in  
what seemed an enchanted air. No resolution could withstand it; in that  
dreamy mood losing all consciousness, at last my soul went out of my  
body; though my body still continued to sway as a pendulum will, long  
after the power which first moved it is withdrawn.  
  
Ere forgetfulness altogether came over me, I had noticed that the seamen  
at the main and mizzen-mast-heads were already drowsy. So that at last  
all three of us lifelessly swung from the spars, and for every swing  
that we made there was a nod from below from the slumbering helmsman.  
The waves, too, nodded their indolent crests; and across the wide trance  
of the sea, east nodded to west, and the sun over all.  
  
Suddenly bubbles seemed bursting beneath my closed eyes; like vices my  
hands grasped the shrouds; some invisible, gracious agency preserved me;  
with a shock I came back to life. And lo! close under our lee, not forty  
fathoms off, a gigantic Sperm Whale lay rolling in the water like the  
capsized hull of a frigate, his broad, glossy back, of an Ethiopian hue,  
glistening in the sun's rays like a mirror. But lazily undulating in  
the trough of the sea, and ever and anon tranquilly spouting his vapoury  
jet, the whale looked like a portly burgher smoking his pipe of a warm  
afternoon. But that pipe, poor whale, was thy last. As if struck by some  
enchanter's wand, the sleepy ship and every sleeper in it all at once  
started into wakefulness; and more than a score of voices from all parts  
of the vessel, simultaneously with the three notes from aloft, shouted  
forth the accustomed cry, as the great fish slowly and regularly spouted  
the sparkling brine into the air.  
  
"Clear away the boats! Luff!" cried Ahab. And obeying his own order, he  
dashed the helm down before the helmsman could handle the spokes.  
  
The sudden exclamations of the crew must have alarmed the whale; and ere  
the boats were down, majestically turning, he swam away to the leeward,  
but with such a steady tranquillity, and making so few ripples as he  
swam, that thinking after all he might not as yet be alarmed, Ahab gave  
orders that not an oar should be used, and no man must speak but in  
whispers. So seated like Ontario Indians on the gunwales of the boats,  
we swiftly but silently paddled along; the calm not admitting of the  
noiseless sails being set. Presently, as we thus glided in chase, the  
monster perpendicularly flitted his tail forty feet into the air, and  
then sank out of sight like a tower swallowed up.  
  
"There go flukes!" was the cry, an announcement immediately followed by  
Stubb's producing his match and igniting his pipe, for now a respite was  
granted. After the full interval of his sounding had elapsed, the whale  
rose again, and being now in advance of the smoker's boat, and much  
nearer to it than to any of the others, Stubb counted upon the honour  
of the capture. It was obvious, now, that the whale had at length become  
aware of his pursuers. All silence of cautiousness was therefore no  
longer of use. Paddles were dropped, and oars came loudly into play. And  
still puffing at his pipe, Stubb cheered on his crew to the assault.  
  
Yes, a mighty change had come over the fish. All alive to his jeopardy,  
he was going "head out"; that part obliquely projecting from the mad  
yeast which he brewed.\*  
  
  
\*It will be seen in some other place of what a very light substance  
the entire interior of the sperm whale's enormous head consists. Though  
apparently the most massive, it is by far the most buoyant part about  
him. So that with ease he elevates it in the air, and invariably does  
so when going at his utmost speed. Besides, such is the breadth of the  
upper part of the front of his head, and such the tapering cut-water  
formation of the lower part, that by obliquely elevating his head, he  
thereby may be said to transform himself from a bluff-bowed sluggish  
galliot into a sharppointed New York pilot-boat.  
  
  
"Start her, start her, my men! Don't hurry yourselves; take plenty of  
time--but start her; start her like thunder-claps, that's all," cried  
Stubb, spluttering out the smoke as he spoke. "Start her, now; give 'em  
the long and strong stroke, Tashtego. Start her, Tash, my boy--start  
her, all; but keep cool, keep cool--cucumbers is the word--easy,  
easy--only start her like grim death and grinning devils, and raise the  
buried dead perpendicular out of their graves, boys--that's all. Start  
her!"  
  
"Woo-hoo! Wa-hee!" screamed the Gay-Header in reply, raising some  
old war-whoop to the skies; as every oarsman in the strained boat  
involuntarily bounced forward with the one tremendous leading stroke  
which the eager Indian gave.  
  
But his wild screams were answered by others quite as wild. "Kee-hee!  
Kee-hee!" yelled Daggoo, straining forwards and backwards on his seat,  
like a pacing tiger in his cage.  
  
"Ka-la! Koo-loo!" howled Queequeg, as if smacking his lips over a  
mouthful of Grenadier's steak. And thus with oars and yells the keels  
cut the sea. Meanwhile, Stubb retaining his place in the van, still  
encouraged his men to the onset, all the while puffing the smoke from  
his mouth. Like desperadoes they tugged and they strained, till the  
welcome cry was heard--"Stand up, Tashtego!--give it to him!" The  
harpoon was hurled. "Stern all!" The oarsmen backed water; the same  
moment something went hot and hissing along every one of their wrists.  
It was the magical line. An instant before, Stubb had swiftly caught two  
additional turns with it round the loggerhead, whence, by reason of its  
increased rapid circlings, a hempen blue smoke now jetted up and mingled  
with the steady fumes from his pipe. As the line passed round and  
round the loggerhead; so also, just before reaching that point, it  
blisteringly passed through and through both of Stubb's hands, from  
which the hand-cloths, or squares of quilted canvas sometimes worn at  
these times, had accidentally dropped. It was like holding an enemy's  
sharp two-edged sword by the blade, and that enemy all the time striving  
to wrest it out of your clutch.  
  
"Wet the line! wet the line!" cried Stubb to the tub oarsman (him seated  
by the tub) who, snatching off his hat, dashed sea-water into it.\* More  
turns were taken, so that the line began holding its place. The boat now  
flew through the boiling water like a shark all fins. Stubb and Tashtego  
here changed places--stem for stern--a staggering business truly in that  
rocking commotion.  
  
  
\*Partly to show the indispensableness of this act, it may here be  
stated, that, in the old Dutch fishery, a mop was used to dash the  
running line with water; in many other ships, a wooden piggin, or  
bailer, is set apart for that purpose. Your hat, however, is the most  
convenient.  
  
  
From the vibrating line extending the entire length of the upper part of  
the boat, and from its now being more tight than a harpstring, you would  
have thought the craft had two keels--one cleaving the water, the other  
the air--as the boat churned on through both opposing elements at once.  
A continual cascade played at the bows; a ceaseless whirling eddy in  
her wake; and, at the slightest motion from within, even but of a little  
finger, the vibrating, cracking craft canted over her spasmodic gunwale  
into the sea. Thus they rushed; each man with might and main clinging  
to his seat, to prevent being tossed to the foam; and the tall form of  
Tashtego at the steering oar crouching almost double, in order to bring  
down his centre of gravity. Whole Atlantics and Pacifics seemed passed  
as they shot on their way, till at length the whale somewhat slackened  
his flight.  
  
"Haul in--haul in!" cried Stubb to the bowsman! and, facing round  
towards the whale, all hands began pulling the boat up to him, while yet  
the boat was being towed on. Soon ranging up by his flank, Stubb, firmly  
planting his knee in the clumsy cleat, darted dart after dart into the  
flying fish; at the word of command, the boat alternately sterning  
out of the way of the whale's horrible wallow, and then ranging up for  
another fling.  
  
The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a  
hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood, which bubbled  
and seethed for furlongs behind in their wake. The slanting sun playing  
upon this crimson pond in the sea, sent back its reflection into every  
face, so that they all glowed to each other like red men. And all  
the while, jet after jet of white smoke was agonizingly shot from the  
spiracle of the whale, and vehement puff after puff from the mouth of  
the excited headsman; as at every dart, hauling in upon his crooked  
lance (by the line attached to it), Stubb straightened it again and  
again, by a few rapid blows against the gunwale, then again and again  
sent it into the whale.  
  
"Pull up--pull up!" he now cried to the bowsman, as the waning whale  
relaxed in his wrath. "Pull up!--close to!" and the boat ranged along  
the fish's flank. When reaching far over the bow, Stubb slowly churned  
his long sharp lance into the fish, and kept it there, carefully  
churning and churning, as if cautiously seeking to feel after some gold  
watch that the whale might have swallowed, and which he was fearful of  
breaking ere he could hook it out. But that gold watch he sought was the  
innermost life of the fish. And now it is struck; for, starting from  
his trance into that unspeakable thing called his "flurry," the monster  
horribly wallowed in his blood, overwrapped himself in impenetrable,  
mad, boiling spray, so that the imperilled craft, instantly dropping  
astern, had much ado blindly to struggle out from that phrensied  
twilight into the clear air of the day.  
  
And now abating in his flurry, the whale once more rolled out into view;  
surging from side to side; spasmodically dilating and contracting his  
spout-hole, with sharp, cracking, agonized respirations. At last, gush  
after gush of clotted red gore, as if it had been the purple lees of red  
wine, shot into the frighted air; and falling back again, ran dripping  
down his motionless flanks into the sea. His heart had burst!  
  
"He's dead, Mr. Stubb," said Daggoo.  
  
"Yes; both pipes smoked out!" and withdrawing his own from his mouth,  
Stubb scattered the dead ashes over the water; and, for a moment, stood  
thoughtfully eyeing the vast corpse he had made.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 62. The Dart.  
  
  
A word concerning an incident in the last chapter.  
  
According to the invariable usage of the fishery, the whale-boat pushes  
off from the ship, with the headsman or whale-killer as temporary  
steersman, and the harpooneer or whale-fastener pulling the foremost  
oar, the one known as the harpooneer-oar. Now it needs a strong, nervous  
arm to strike the first iron into the fish; for often, in what is called  
a long dart, the heavy implement has to be flung to the distance of  
twenty or thirty feet. But however prolonged and exhausting the chase,  
the harpooneer is expected to pull his oar meanwhile to the uttermost;  
indeed, he is expected to set an example of superhuman activity to the  
rest, not only by incredible rowing, but by repeated loud and intrepid  
exclamations; and what it is to keep shouting at the top of one's  
compass, while all the other muscles are strained and half started--what  
that is none know but those who have tried it. For one, I cannot bawl  
very heartily and work very recklessly at one and the same time. In this  
straining, bawling state, then, with his back to the fish, all at once  
the exhausted harpooneer hears the exciting cry--"Stand up, and give it  
to him!" He now has to drop and secure his oar, turn round on his  
centre half way, seize his harpoon from the crotch, and with what little  
strength may remain, he essays to pitch it somehow into the whale. No  
wonder, taking the whole fleet of whalemen in a body, that out of fifty  
fair chances for a dart, not five are successful; no wonder that so many  
hapless harpooneers are madly cursed and disrated; no wonder that some  
of them actually burst their blood-vessels in the boat; no wonder that  
some sperm whalemen are absent four years with four barrels; no wonder  
that to many ship owners, whaling is but a losing concern; for it is the  
harpooneer that makes the voyage, and if you take the breath out of his  
body how can you expect to find it there when most wanted!  
  
Again, if the dart be successful, then at the second critical instant,  
that is, when the whale starts to run, the boatheader and harpooneer  
likewise start to running fore and aft, to the imminent jeopardy of  
themselves and every one else. It is then they change places; and  
the headsman, the chief officer of the little craft, takes his proper  
station in the bows of the boat.  
  
Now, I care not who maintains the contrary, but all this is both foolish  
and unnecessary. The headsman should stay in the bows from first to  
last; he should both dart the harpoon and the lance, and no rowing  
whatever should be expected of him, except under circumstances obvious  
to any fisherman. I know that this would sometimes involve a slight loss  
of speed in the chase; but long experience in various whalemen of more  
than one nation has convinced me that in the vast majority of failures  
in the fishery, it has not by any means been so much the speed of the  
whale as the before described exhaustion of the harpooneer that has  
caused them.  
  
To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpooneers of this  
world must start to their feet from out of idleness, and not from out of  
toil.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 63. The Crotch.  
  
  
Out of the trunk, the branches grow; out of them, the twigs. So, in  
productive subjects, grow the chapters.  
  
The crotch alluded to on a previous page deserves independent mention.  
It is a notched stick of a peculiar form, some two feet in length, which  
is perpendicularly inserted into the starboard gunwale near the bow,  
for the purpose of furnishing a rest for the wooden extremity of the  
harpoon, whose other naked, barbed end slopingly projects from the prow.  
Thereby the weapon is instantly at hand to its hurler, who snatches it  
up as readily from its rest as a backwoodsman swings his rifle from  
the wall. It is customary to have two harpoons reposing in the crotch,  
respectively called the first and second irons.  
  
But these two harpoons, each by its own cord, are both connected with  
the line; the object being this: to dart them both, if possible, one  
instantly after the other into the same whale; so that if, in the coming  
drag, one should draw out, the other may still retain a hold. It is a  
doubling of the chances. But it very often happens that owing to the  
instantaneous, violent, convulsive running of the whale upon receiving  
the first iron, it becomes impossible for the harpooneer, however  
lightning-like in his movements, to pitch the second iron into him.  
Nevertheless, as the second iron is already connected with the line,  
and the line is running, hence that weapon must, at all events, be  
anticipatingly tossed out of the boat, somehow and somewhere; else the  
most terrible jeopardy would involve all hands. Tumbled into the water,  
it accordingly is in such cases; the spare coils of box line (mentioned  
in a preceding chapter) making this feat, in most instances, prudently  
practicable. But this critical act is not always unattended with the  
saddest and most fatal casualties.  
  
Furthermore: you must know that when the second iron is thrown  
overboard, it thenceforth becomes a dangling, sharp-edged terror,  
skittishly curvetting about both boat and whale, entangling the lines,  
or cutting them, and making a prodigious sensation in all directions.  
Nor, in general, is it possible to secure it again until the whale is  
fairly captured and a corpse.  
  
Consider, now, how it must be in the case of four boats all engaging  
one unusually strong, active, and knowing whale; when owing to these  
qualities in him, as well as to the thousand concurring accidents of  
such an audacious enterprise, eight or ten loose second irons may be  
simultaneously dangling about him. For, of course, each boat is supplied  
with several harpoons to bend on to the line should the first one  
be ineffectually darted without recovery. All these particulars are  
faithfully narrated here, as they will not fail to elucidate several  
most important, however intricate passages, in scenes hereafter to be  
painted.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 64. Stubb's Supper.  
  
  
Stubb's whale had been killed some distance from the ship. It was  
a calm; so, forming a tandem of three boats, we commenced the slow  
business of towing the trophy to the Pequod. And now, as we eighteen men  
with our thirty-six arms, and one hundred and eighty thumbs and fingers,  
slowly toiled hour after hour upon that inert, sluggish corpse in the  
sea; and it seemed hardly to budge at all, except at long intervals;  
good evidence was hereby furnished of the enormousness of the mass we  
moved. For, upon the great canal of Hang-Ho, or whatever they call  
it, in China, four or five laborers on the foot-path will draw a bulky  
freighted junk at the rate of a mile an hour; but this grand argosy we  
towed heavily forged along, as if laden with pig-lead in bulk.  
  
Darkness came on; but three lights up and down in the Pequod's  
main-rigging dimly guided our way; till drawing nearer we saw Ahab  
dropping one of several more lanterns over the bulwarks. Vacantly eyeing  
the heaving whale for a moment, he issued the usual orders for securing  
it for the night, and then handing his lantern to a seaman, went his way  
into the cabin, and did not come forward again until morning.  
  
Though, in overseeing the pursuit of this whale, Captain Ahab had  
evinced his customary activity, to call it so; yet now that the creature  
was dead, some vague dissatisfaction, or impatience, or despair, seemed  
working in him; as if the sight of that dead body reminded him that  
Moby Dick was yet to be slain; and though a thousand other whales were  
brought to his ship, all that would not one jot advance his grand,  
monomaniac object. Very soon you would have thought from the sound on  
the Pequod's decks, that all hands were preparing to cast anchor in  
the deep; for heavy chains are being dragged along the deck, and thrust  
rattling out of the port-holes. But by those clanking links, the vast  
corpse itself, not the ship, is to be moored. Tied by the head to the  
stern, and by the tail to the bows, the whale now lies with its black  
hull close to the vessel's and seen through the darkness of the night,  
which obscured the spars and rigging aloft, the two--ship and whale,  
seemed yoked together like colossal bullocks, whereof one reclines while  
the other remains standing.\*  
  
  
\*A little item may as well be related here. The strongest and most  
reliable hold which the ship has upon the whale when moored alongside,  
is by the flukes or tail; and as from its greater density that part  
is relatively heavier than any other (excepting the side-fins), its  
flexibility even in death, causes it to sink low beneath the surface; so  
that with the hand you cannot get at it from the boat, in order to  
put the chain round it. But this difficulty is ingeniously overcome: a  
small, strong line is prepared with a wooden float at its outer end, and  
a weight in its middle, while the other end is secured to the ship. By  
adroit management the wooden float is made to rise on the other side  
of the mass, so that now having girdled the whale, the chain is readily  
made to follow suit; and being slipped along the body, is at last locked  
fast round the smallest part of the tail, at the point of junction with  
its broad flukes or lobes.  
  
  
If moody Ahab was now all quiescence, at least so far as could be known  
on deck, Stubb, his second mate, flushed with conquest, betrayed an  
unusual but still good-natured excitement. Such an unwonted bustle was  
he in that the staid Starbuck, his official superior, quietly resigned  
to him for the time the sole management of affairs. One small, helping  
cause of all this liveliness in Stubb, was soon made strangely manifest.  
Stubb was a high liver; he was somewhat intemperately fond of the whale  
as a flavorish thing to his palate.  
  
"A steak, a steak, ere I sleep! You, Daggoo! overboard you go, and cut  
me one from his small!"  
  
Here be it known, that though these wild fishermen do not, as a general  
thing, and according to the great military maxim, make the enemy defray  
the current expenses of the war (at least before realizing the proceeds  
of the voyage), yet now and then you find some of these Nantucketers  
who have a genuine relish for that particular part of the Sperm Whale  
designated by Stubb; comprising the tapering extremity of the body.  
  
About midnight that steak was cut and cooked; and lighted by two  
lanterns of sperm oil, Stubb stoutly stood up to his spermaceti supper  
at the capstan-head, as if that capstan were a sideboard. Nor was Stubb  
the only banqueter on whale's flesh that night. Mingling their mumblings  
with his own mastications, thousands on thousands of sharks, swarming  
round the dead leviathan, smackingly feasted on its fatness. The few  
sleepers below in their bunks were often startled by the sharp slapping  
of their tails against the hull, within a few inches of the sleepers'  
hearts. Peering over the side you could just see them (as before you  
heard them) wallowing in the sullen, black waters, and turning over on  
their backs as they scooped out huge globular pieces of the whale of the  
bigness of a human head. This particular feat of the shark seems all  
but miraculous. How at such an apparently unassailable surface, they  
contrive to gouge out such symmetrical mouthfuls, remains a part of the  
universal problem of all things. The mark they thus leave on the whale,  
may best be likened to the hollow made by a carpenter in countersinking  
for a screw.  
  
Though amid all the smoking horror and diabolism of a sea-fight, sharks  
will be seen longingly gazing up to the ship's decks, like hungry dogs  
round a table where red meat is being carved, ready to bolt down  
every killed man that is tossed to them; and though, while the valiant  
butchers over the deck-table are thus cannibally carving each other's  
live meat with carving-knives all gilded and tasselled, the sharks,  
also, with their jewel-hilted mouths, are quarrelsomely carving away  
under the table at the dead meat; and though, were you to turn the whole  
affair upside down, it would still be pretty much the same thing, that  
is to say, a shocking sharkish business enough for all parties; and  
though sharks also are the invariable outriders of all slave ships  
crossing the Atlantic, systematically trotting alongside, to be handy in  
case a parcel is to be carried anywhere, or a dead slave to be decently  
buried; and though one or two other like instances might be set down,  
touching the set terms, places, and occasions, when sharks do most  
socially congregate, and most hilariously feast; yet is there no  
conceivable time or occasion when you will find them in such countless  
numbers, and in gayer or more jovial spirits, than around a dead sperm  
whale, moored by night to a whaleship at sea. If you have never  
seen that sight, then suspend your decision about the propriety of  
devil-worship, and the expediency of conciliating the devil.  
  
But, as yet, Stubb heeded not the mumblings of the banquet that was  
going on so nigh him, no more than the sharks heeded the smacking of his  
own epicurean lips.  
  
"Cook, cook!--where's that old Fleece?" he cried at length, widening  
his legs still further, as if to form a more secure base for his supper;  
and, at the same time darting his fork into the dish, as if stabbing  
with his lance; "cook, you cook!--sail this way, cook!"  
  
The old black, not in any very high glee at having been previously  
roused from his warm hammock at a most unseasonable hour, came shambling  
along from his galley, for, like many old blacks, there was something  
the matter with his knee-pans, which he did not keep well scoured like  
his other pans; this old Fleece, as they called him, came shuffling and  
limping along, assisting his step with his tongs, which, after a clumsy  
fashion, were made of straightened iron hoops; this old Ebony floundered  
along, and in obedience to the word of command, came to a dead stop on  
the opposite side of Stubb's sideboard; when, with both hands folded  
before him, and resting on his two-legged cane, he bowed his arched back  
still further over, at the same time sideways inclining his head, so as  
to bring his best ear into play.  
  
"Cook," said Stubb, rapidly lifting a rather reddish morsel to his  
mouth, "don't you think this steak is rather overdone? You've been  
beating this steak too much, cook; it's too tender. Don't I always say  
that to be good, a whale-steak must be tough? There are those sharks  
now over the side, don't you see they prefer it tough and rare? What a  
shindy they are kicking up! Cook, go and talk to 'em; tell 'em they are  
welcome to help themselves civilly, and in moderation, but they must  
keep quiet. Blast me, if I can hear my own voice. Away, cook, and  
deliver my message. Here, take this lantern," snatching one from his  
sideboard; "now then, go and preach to 'em!"  
  
Sullenly taking the offered lantern, old Fleece limped across the deck  
to the bulwarks; and then, with one hand dropping his light low over the  
sea, so as to get a good view of his congregation, with the other hand  
he solemnly flourished his tongs, and leaning far over the side in a  
mumbling voice began addressing the sharks, while Stubb, softly crawling  
behind, overheard all that was said.  
  
"Fellow-critters: I'se ordered here to say dat you must stop dat dam  
noise dare. You hear? Stop dat dam smackin' ob de lips! Massa Stubb say  
dat you can fill your dam bellies up to de hatchings, but by Gor! you  
must stop dat dam racket!"  
  
"Cook," here interposed Stubb, accompanying the word with a sudden slap  
on the shoulder,--"Cook! why, damn your eyes, you mustn't swear that way  
when you're preaching. That's no way to convert sinners, cook!"  
  
"Who dat? Den preach to him yourself," sullenly turning to go.  
  
"No, cook; go on, go on."  
  
"Well, den, Belubed fellow-critters:"--  
  
"Right!" exclaimed Stubb, approvingly, "coax 'em to it; try that," and  
Fleece continued.  
  
"Do you is all sharks, and by natur wery woracious, yet I zay to you,  
fellow-critters, dat dat woraciousness--'top dat dam slappin' ob de  
tail! How you tink to hear, spose you keep up such a dam slappin' and  
bitin' dare?"  
  
"Cook," cried Stubb, collaring him, "I won't have that swearing. Talk to  
'em gentlemanly."  
  
Once more the sermon proceeded.  
  
"Your woraciousness, fellow-critters, I don't blame ye so much for; dat  
is natur, and can't be helped; but to gobern dat wicked natur, dat is de  
pint. You is sharks, sartin; but if you gobern de shark in you, why den  
you be angel; for all angel is not'ing more dan de shark well goberned.  
Now, look here, bred'ren, just try wonst to be cibil, a helping  
yourselbs from dat whale. Don't be tearin' de blubber out your  
neighbour's mout, I say. Is not one shark dood right as toder to dat  
whale? And, by Gor, none on you has de right to dat whale; dat whale  
belong to some one else. I know some o' you has berry brig mout, brigger  
dan oders; but den de brig mouts sometimes has de small bellies; so dat  
de brigness of de mout is not to swaller wid, but to bit off de blubber  
for de small fry ob sharks, dat can't get into de scrouge to help  
demselves."  
  
"Well done, old Fleece!" cried Stubb, "that's Christianity; go on."  
  
"No use goin' on; de dam willains will keep a scougin' and slappin' each  
oder, Massa Stubb; dey don't hear one word; no use a-preaching to  
such dam g'uttons as you call 'em, till dare bellies is full, and dare  
bellies is bottomless; and when dey do get 'em full, dey wont hear you  
den; for den dey sink in the sea, go fast to sleep on de coral, and  
can't hear noting at all, no more, for eber and eber."  
  
"Upon my soul, I am about of the same opinion; so give the benediction,  
Fleece, and I'll away to my supper."  
  
Upon this, Fleece, holding both hands over the fishy mob, raised his  
shrill voice, and cried--  
  
"Cussed fellow-critters! Kick up de damndest row as ever you can; fill  
your dam bellies 'till dey bust--and den die."  
  
"Now, cook," said Stubb, resuming his supper at the capstan; "stand  
just where you stood before, there, over against me, and pay particular  
attention."  
  
"All 'dention," said Fleece, again stooping over upon his tongs in the  
desired position.  
  
"Well," said Stubb, helping himself freely meanwhile; "I shall now go  
back to the subject of this steak. In the first place, how old are you,  
cook?"  
  
"What dat do wid de 'teak," said the old black, testily.  
  
"Silence! How old are you, cook?"  
  
"'Bout ninety, dey say," he gloomily muttered.  
  
"And you have lived in this world hard upon one hundred years, cook,  
and don't know yet how to cook a whale-steak?" rapidly bolting another  
mouthful at the last word, so that morsel seemed a continuation of the  
question. "Where were you born, cook?"  
  
"'Hind de hatchway, in ferry-boat, goin' ober de Roanoke."  
  
"Born in a ferry-boat! That's queer, too. But I want to know what  
country you were born in, cook!"  
  
"Didn't I say de Roanoke country?" he cried sharply.  
  
"No, you didn't, cook; but I'll tell you what I'm coming to, cook.  
You must go home and be born over again; you don't know how to cook a  
whale-steak yet."  
  
"Bress my soul, if I cook noder one," he growled, angrily, turning round  
to depart.  
  
"Come back here, cook;--here, hand me those tongs;--now take that bit of  
steak there, and tell me if you think that steak cooked as it should be?  
Take it, I say"--holding the tongs towards him--"take it, and taste it."  
  
Faintly smacking his withered lips over it for a moment, the old negro  
muttered, "Best cooked 'teak I eber taste; joosy, berry joosy."  
  
"Cook," said Stubb, squaring himself once more; "do you belong to the  
church?"  
  
"Passed one once in Cape-Down," said the old man sullenly.  
  
"And you have once in your life passed a holy church in Cape-Town, where  
you doubtless overheard a holy parson addressing his hearers as his  
beloved fellow-creatures, have you, cook! And yet you come here, and  
tell me such a dreadful lie as you did just now, eh?" said Stubb. "Where  
do you expect to go to, cook?"  
  
"Go to bed berry soon," he mumbled, half-turning as he spoke.  
  
"Avast! heave to! I mean when you die, cook. It's an awful question. Now  
what's your answer?"  
  
"When dis old brack man dies," said the negro slowly, changing his whole  
air and demeanor, "he hisself won't go nowhere; but some bressed angel  
will come and fetch him."  
  
"Fetch him? How? In a coach and four, as they fetched Elijah? And fetch  
him where?"  
  
"Up dere," said Fleece, holding his tongs straight over his head, and  
keeping it there very solemnly.  
  
"So, then, you expect to go up into our main-top, do you, cook, when you  
are dead? But don't you know the higher you climb, the colder it gets?  
Main-top, eh?"  
  
"Didn't say dat t'all," said Fleece, again in the sulks.  
  
"You said up there, didn't you? and now look yourself, and see where  
your tongs are pointing. But, perhaps you expect to get into heaven by  
crawling through the lubber's hole, cook; but, no, no, cook, you don't  
get there, except you go the regular way, round by the rigging. It's a  
ticklish business, but must be done, or else it's no go. But none of  
us are in heaven yet. Drop your tongs, cook, and hear my orders. Do ye  
hear? Hold your hat in one hand, and clap t'other a'top of your heart,  
when I'm giving my orders, cook. What! that your heart, there?--that's  
your gizzard! Aloft! aloft!--that's it--now you have it. Hold it there  
now, and pay attention."  
  
"All 'dention," said the old black, with both hands placed as desired,  
vainly wriggling his grizzled head, as if to get both ears in front at  
one and the same time.  
  
"Well then, cook, you see this whale-steak of yours was so very bad,  
that I have put it out of sight as soon as possible; you see that, don't  
you? Well, for the future, when you cook another whale-steak for my  
private table here, the capstan, I'll tell you what to do so as not to  
spoil it by overdoing. Hold the steak in one hand, and show a live coal  
to it with the other; that done, dish it; d'ye hear? And now to-morrow,  
cook, when we are cutting in the fish, be sure you stand by to get  
the tips of his fins; have them put in pickle. As for the ends of the  
flukes, have them soused, cook. There, now ye may go."  
  
But Fleece had hardly got three paces off, when he was recalled.  
  
"Cook, give me cutlets for supper to-morrow night in the mid-watch.  
D'ye hear? away you sail, then.--Halloa! stop! make a bow before you  
go.--Avast heaving again! Whale-balls for breakfast--don't forget."  
  
"Wish, by gor! whale eat him, 'stead of him eat whale. I'm bressed if  
he ain't more of shark dan Massa Shark hisself," muttered the old man,  
limping away; with which sage ejaculation he went to his hammock.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 65. The Whale as a Dish.  
  
  
That mortal man should feed upon the creature that feeds his lamp, and,  
like Stubb, eat him by his own light, as you may say; this seems so  
outlandish a thing that one must needs go a little into the history and  
philosophy of it.  
  
It is upon record, that three centuries ago the tongue of the Right  
Whale was esteemed a great delicacy in France, and commanded large  
prices there. Also, that in Henry VIIIth's time, a certain cook of the  
court obtained a handsome reward for inventing an admirable sauce to be  
eaten with barbacued porpoises, which, you remember, are a species of  
whale. Porpoises, indeed, are to this day considered fine eating. The  
meat is made into balls about the size of billiard balls, and being well  
seasoned and spiced might be taken for turtle-balls or veal balls.  
The old monks of Dunfermline were very fond of them. They had a great  
porpoise grant from the crown.  
  
The fact is, that among his hunters at least, the whale would by all  
hands be considered a noble dish, were there not so much of him; but  
when you come to sit down before a meat-pie nearly one hundred feet  
long, it takes away your appetite. Only the most unprejudiced of men  
like Stubb, nowadays partake of cooked whales; but the Esquimaux are not  
so fastidious. We all know how they live upon whales, and have rare  
old vintages of prime old train oil. Zogranda, one of their most famous  
doctors, recommends strips of blubber for infants, as being exceedingly  
juicy and nourishing. And this reminds me that certain Englishmen, who  
long ago were accidentally left in Greenland by a whaling vessel--that  
these men actually lived for several months on the mouldy scraps of  
whales which had been left ashore after trying out the blubber. Among  
the Dutch whalemen these scraps are called "fritters"; which, indeed,  
they greatly resemble, being brown and crisp, and smelling something  
like old Amsterdam housewives' dough-nuts or oly-cooks, when fresh. They  
have such an eatable look that the most self-denying stranger can hardly  
keep his hands off.  
  
But what further depreciates the whale as a civilized dish, is his  
exceeding richness. He is the great prize ox of the sea, too fat to be  
delicately good. Look at his hump, which would be as fine eating as  
the buffalo's (which is esteemed a rare dish), were it not such a solid  
pyramid of fat. But the spermaceti itself, how bland and creamy that  
is; like the transparent, half-jellied, white meat of a cocoanut in the  
third month of its growth, yet far too rich to supply a substitute for  
butter. Nevertheless, many whalemen have a method of absorbing it into  
some other substance, and then partaking of it. In the long try  
watches of the night it is a common thing for the seamen to dip their  
ship-biscuit into the huge oil-pots and let them fry there awhile. Many  
a good supper have I thus made.  
  
In the case of a small Sperm Whale the brains are accounted a fine dish.  
The casket of the skull is broken into with an axe, and the two plump,  
whitish lobes being withdrawn (precisely resembling two large puddings),  
they are then mixed with flour, and cooked into a most delectable mess,  
in flavor somewhat resembling calves' head, which is quite a dish among  
some epicures; and every one knows that some young bucks among the  
epicures, by continually dining upon calves' brains, by and by get to  
have a little brains of their own, so as to be able to tell a  
calf's head from their own heads; which, indeed, requires uncommon  
discrimination. And that is the reason why a young buck with an  
intelligent looking calf's head before him, is somehow one of the  
saddest sights you can see. The head looks a sort of reproachfully at  
him, with an "Et tu Brute!" expression.  
  
It is not, perhaps, entirely because the whale is so excessively  
unctuous that landsmen seem to regard the eating of him with abhorrence;  
that appears to result, in some way, from the consideration before  
mentioned: i.e. that a man should eat a newly murdered thing of the sea,  
and eat it too by its own light. But no doubt the first man that ever  
murdered an ox was regarded as a murderer; perhaps he was hung; and if  
he had been put on his trial by oxen, he certainly would have been; and  
he certainly deserved it if any murderer does. Go to the meat-market  
of a Saturday night and see the crowds of live bipeds staring up at the  
long rows of dead quadrupeds. Does not that sight take a tooth out of  
the cannibal's jaw? Cannibals? who is not a cannibal? I tell you it will  
be more tolerable for the Fejee that salted down a lean missionary in  
his cellar against a coming famine; it will be more tolerable for that  
provident Fejee, I say, in the day of judgment, than for thee, civilized  
and enlightened gourmand, who nailest geese to the ground and feastest  
on their bloated livers in thy pate-de-foie-gras.  
  
But Stubb, he eats the whale by its own light, does he? and that is  
adding insult to injury, is it? Look at your knife-handle, there, my  
civilized and enlightened gourmand dining off that roast beef, what is  
that handle made of?--what but the bones of the brother of the very ox  
you are eating? And what do you pick your teeth with, after devouring  
that fat goose? With a feather of the same fowl. And with what quill did  
the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Ganders  
formally indite his circulars? It is only within the last month or two  
that that society passed a resolution to patronise nothing but steel  
pens.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 66. The Shark Massacre.  
  
  
When in the Southern Fishery, a captured Sperm Whale, after long and  
weary toil, is brought alongside late at night, it is not, as a general  
thing at least, customary to proceed at once to the business of cutting  
him in. For that business is an exceedingly laborious one; is not very  
soon completed; and requires all hands to set about it. Therefore, the  
common usage is to take in all sail; lash the helm a'lee; and then send  
every one below to his hammock till daylight, with the reservation that,  
until that time, anchor-watches shall be kept; that is, two and two for  
an hour, each couple, the crew in rotation shall mount the deck to see  
that all goes well.  
  
But sometimes, especially upon the Line in the Pacific, this plan will  
not answer at all; because such incalculable hosts of sharks gather  
round the moored carcase, that were he left so for six hours, say, on a  
stretch, little more than the skeleton would be visible by morning.  
In most other parts of the ocean, however, where these fish do not so  
largely abound, their wondrous voracity can be at times considerably  
diminished, by vigorously stirring them up with sharp whaling-spades,  
a procedure notwithstanding, which, in some instances, only seems to  
tickle them into still greater activity. But it was not thus in the  
present case with the Pequod's sharks; though, to be sure, any man  
unaccustomed to such sights, to have looked over her side that night,  
would have almost thought the whole round sea was one huge cheese, and  
those sharks the maggots in it.  
  
Nevertheless, upon Stubb setting the anchor-watch after his supper was  
concluded; and when, accordingly, Queequeg and a forecastle seaman  
came on deck, no small excitement was created among the sharks; for  
immediately suspending the cutting stages over the side, and lowering  
three lanterns, so that they cast long gleams of light over the turbid  
sea, these two mariners, darting their long whaling-spades, kept up an  
incessant murdering of the sharks,\* by striking the keen steel deep  
into their skulls, seemingly their only vital part. But in the foamy  
confusion of their mixed and struggling hosts, the marksmen could not  
always hit their mark; and this brought about new revelations of the  
incredible ferocity of the foe. They viciously snapped, not only at each  
other's disembowelments, but like flexible bows, bent round, and bit  
their own; till those entrails seemed swallowed over and over again by  
the same mouth, to be oppositely voided by the gaping wound. Nor was  
this all. It was unsafe to meddle with the corpses and ghosts of these  
creatures. A sort of generic or Pantheistic vitality seemed to lurk in  
their very joints and bones, after what might be called the individual  
life had departed. Killed and hoisted on deck for the sake of his skin,  
one of these sharks almost took poor Queequeg's hand off, when he tried  
to shut down the dead lid of his murderous jaw.  
  
  
\*The whaling-spade used for cutting-in is made of the very best steel;  
is about the bigness of a man's spread hand; and in general shape,  
corresponds to the garden implement after which it is named; only its  
sides are perfectly flat, and its upper end considerably narrower than  
the lower. This weapon is always kept as sharp as possible; and when  
being used is occasionally honed, just like a razor. In its socket, a  
stiff pole, from twenty to thirty feet long, is inserted for a handle.  
  
  
"Queequeg no care what god made him shark," said the savage, agonizingly  
lifting his hand up and down; "wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de  
god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 67. Cutting In.  
  
  
It was a Saturday night, and such a Sabbath as followed! Ex officio  
professors of Sabbath breaking are all whalemen. The ivory Pequod was  
turned into what seemed a shamble; every sailor a butcher. You would  
have thought we were offering up ten thousand red oxen to the sea gods.  
  
In the first place, the enormous cutting tackles, among other ponderous  
things comprising a cluster of blocks generally painted green, and which  
no single man can possibly lift--this vast bunch of grapes was swayed up  
to the main-top and firmly lashed to the lower mast-head, the strongest  
point anywhere above a ship's deck. The end of the hawser-like rope  
winding through these intricacies, was then conducted to the windlass,  
and the huge lower block of the tackles was swung over the whale; to  
this block the great blubber hook, weighing some one hundred pounds, was  
attached. And now suspended in stages over the side, Starbuck and Stubb,  
the mates, armed with their long spades, began cutting a hole in the  
body for the insertion of the hook just above the nearest of the two  
side-fins. This done, a broad, semicircular line is cut round the hole,  
the hook is inserted, and the main body of the crew striking up a wild  
chorus, now commence heaving in one dense crowd at the windlass. When  
instantly, the entire ship careens over on her side; every bolt in  
her starts like the nail-heads of an old house in frosty weather; she  
trembles, quivers, and nods her frighted mast-heads to the sky. More  
and more she leans over to the whale, while every gasping heave of the  
windlass is answered by a helping heave from the billows; till at last,  
a swift, startling snap is heard; with a great swash the ship rolls  
upwards and backwards from the whale, and the triumphant tackle rises  
into sight dragging after it the disengaged semicircular end of the  
first strip of blubber. Now as the blubber envelopes the whale precisely  
as the rind does an orange, so is it stripped off from the body  
precisely as an orange is sometimes stripped by spiralizing it. For the  
strain constantly kept up by the windlass continually keeps the whale  
rolling over and over in the water, and as the blubber in one strip  
uniformly peels off along the line called the "scarf," simultaneously  
cut by the spades of Starbuck and Stubb, the mates; and just as fast as  
it is thus peeled off, and indeed by that very act itself, it is all the  
time being hoisted higher and higher aloft till its upper end grazes the  
main-top; the men at the windlass then cease heaving, and for a moment  
or two the prodigious blood-dripping mass sways to and fro as if let  
down from the sky, and every one present must take good heed to dodge  
it when it swings, else it may box his ears and pitch him headlong  
overboard.  
  
One of the attending harpooneers now advances with a long, keen weapon  
called a boarding-sword, and watching his chance he dexterously slices  
out a considerable hole in the lower part of the swaying mass. Into this  
hole, the end of the second alternating great tackle is then hooked  
so as to retain a hold upon the blubber, in order to prepare for what  
follows. Whereupon, this accomplished swordsman, warning all hands to  
stand off, once more makes a scientific dash at the mass, and with a few  
sidelong, desperate, lunging slicings, severs it completely in twain;  
so that while the short lower part is still fast, the long upper strip,  
called a blanket-piece, swings clear, and is all ready for lowering.  
The heavers forward now resume their song, and while the one tackle is  
peeling and hoisting a second strip from the whale, the other is slowly  
slackened away, and down goes the first strip through the main hatchway  
right beneath, into an unfurnished parlor called the blubber-room. Into  
this twilight apartment sundry nimble hands keep coiling away the long  
blanket-piece as if it were a great live mass of plaited serpents.  
And thus the work proceeds; the two tackles hoisting and lowering  
simultaneously; both whale and windlass heaving, the heavers singing,  
the blubber-room gentlemen coiling, the mates scarfing, the ship  
straining, and all hands swearing occasionally, by way of assuaging the  
general friction.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 68. The Blanket.  
  
  
I have given no small attention to that not unvexed subject, the skin of  
the whale. I have had controversies about it with experienced whalemen  
afloat, and learned naturalists ashore. My original opinion remains  
unchanged; but it is only an opinion.  
  
The question is, what and where is the skin of the whale? Already you  
know what his blubber is. That blubber is something of the consistence  
of firm, close-grained beef, but tougher, more elastic and compact, and  
ranges from eight or ten to twelve and fifteen inches in thickness.  
  
Now, however preposterous it may at first seem to talk of any creature's  
skin as being of that sort of consistence and thickness, yet in point  
of fact these are no arguments against such a presumption; because you  
cannot raise any other dense enveloping layer from the whale's body but  
that same blubber; and the outermost enveloping layer of any animal, if  
reasonably dense, what can that be but the skin? True, from the unmarred  
dead body of the whale, you may scrape off with your hand an infinitely  
thin, transparent substance, somewhat resembling the thinnest shreds  
of isinglass, only it is almost as flexible and soft as satin; that is,  
previous to being dried, when it not only contracts and thickens, but  
becomes rather hard and brittle. I have several such dried bits, which  
I use for marks in my whale-books. It is transparent, as I said before;  
and being laid upon the printed page, I have sometimes pleased myself  
with fancying it exerted a magnifying influence. At any rate, it is  
pleasant to read about whales through their own spectacles, as you may  
say. But what I am driving at here is this. That same infinitely thin,  
isinglass substance, which, I admit, invests the entire body of the  
whale, is not so much to be regarded as the skin of the creature, as  
the skin of the skin, so to speak; for it were simply ridiculous to say,  
that the proper skin of the tremendous whale is thinner and more tender  
than the skin of a new-born child. But no more of this.  
  
Assuming the blubber to be the skin of the whale; then, when this skin,  
as in the case of a very large Sperm Whale, will yield the bulk of one  
hundred barrels of oil; and, when it is considered that, in quantity, or  
rather weight, that oil, in its expressed state, is only three fourths,  
and not the entire substance of the coat; some idea may hence be had  
of the enormousness of that animated mass, a mere part of whose mere  
integument yields such a lake of liquid as that. Reckoning ten barrels  
to the ton, you have ten tons for the net weight of only three quarters  
of the stuff of the whale's skin.  
  
In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among  
the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely  
crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array,  
something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. But these  
marks do not seem to be impressed upon the isinglass substance above  
mentioned, but seem to be seen through it, as if they were engraved  
upon the body itself. Nor is this all. In some instances, to the quick,  
observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but  
afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphical;  
that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids  
hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present  
connexion. By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm  
Whale in particular, I was much struck with a plate representing the old  
Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on  
the banks of the Upper Mississippi. Like those mystic rocks, too, the  
mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable. This allusion to the Indian  
rocks reminds me of another thing. Besides all the other phenomena which  
the exterior of the Sperm Whale presents, he not seldom displays the  
back, and more especially his flanks, effaced in great part of the  
regular linear appearance, by reason of numerous rude scratches,  
altogether of an irregular, random aspect. I should say that those New  
England rocks on the sea-coast, which Agassiz imagines to bear the marks  
of violent scraping contact with vast floating icebergs--I should say,  
that those rocks must not a little resemble the Sperm Whale in this  
particular. It also seems to me that such scratches in the whale are  
probably made by hostile contact with other whales; for I have most  
remarked them in the large, full-grown bulls of the species.  
  
A word or two more concerning this matter of the skin or blubber of  
the whale. It has already been said, that it is stript from him in long  
pieces, called blanket-pieces. Like most sea-terms, this one is very  
happy and significant. For the whale is indeed wrapt up in his blubber  
as in a real blanket or counterpane; or, still better, an Indian poncho  
slipt over his head, and skirting his extremity. It is by reason of this  
cosy blanketing of his body, that the whale is enabled to keep himself  
comfortable in all weathers, in all seas, times, and tides. What would  
become of a Greenland whale, say, in those shuddering, icy seas of the  
North, if unsupplied with his cosy surtout? True, other fish are  
found exceedingly brisk in those Hyperborean waters; but these, be it  
observed, are your cold-blooded, lungless fish, whose very bellies  
are refrigerators; creatures, that warm themselves under the lee of  
an iceberg, as a traveller in winter would bask before an inn fire;  
whereas, like man, the whale has lungs and warm blood. Freeze his blood,  
and he dies. How wonderful is it then--except after explanation--that  
this great monster, to whom corporeal warmth is as indispensable as it  
is to man; how wonderful that he should be found at home, immersed  
to his lips for life in those Arctic waters! where, when seamen fall  
overboard, they are sometimes found, months afterwards, perpendicularly  
frozen into the hearts of fields of ice, as a fly is found glued  
in amber. But more surprising is it to know, as has been proved by  
experiment, that the blood of a Polar whale is warmer than that of a  
Borneo negro in summer.  
  
It does seem to me, that herein we see the rare virtue of a strong  
individual vitality, and the rare virtue of thick walls, and the rare  
virtue of interior spaciousness. Oh, man! admire and model thyself after  
the whale! Do thou, too, remain warm among ice. Do thou, too, live in  
this world without being of it. Be cool at the equator; keep thy blood  
fluid at the Pole. Like the great dome of St. Peter's, and like the  
great whale, retain, O man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own.  
  
But how easy and how hopeless to teach these fine things! Of erections,  
how few are domed like St. Peter's! of creatures, how few vast as the  
whale!  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 69. The Funeral.  
  
  
Haul in the chains! Let the carcase go astern!  
  
The vast tackles have now done their duty. The peeled white body of the  
beheaded whale flashes like a marble sepulchre; though changed in hue,  
it has not perceptibly lost anything in bulk. It is still colossal.  
Slowly it floats more and more away, the water round it torn and  
splashed by the insatiate sharks, and the air above vexed with rapacious  
flights of screaming fowls, whose beaks are like so many insulting  
poniards in the whale. The vast white headless phantom floats further  
and further from the ship, and every rod that it so floats, what seem  
square roods of sharks and cubic roods of fowls, augment the murderous  
din. For hours and hours from the almost stationary ship that hideous  
sight is seen. Beneath the unclouded and mild azure sky, upon the fair  
face of the pleasant sea, wafted by the joyous breezes, that great mass  
of death floats on and on, till lost in infinite perspectives.  
  
There's a most doleful and most mocking funeral! The sea-vultures all in  
pious mourning, the air-sharks all punctiliously in black or speckled.  
In life but few of them would have helped the whale, I ween, if  
peradventure he had needed it; but upon the banquet of his funeral they  
most piously do pounce. Oh, horrible vultureism of earth! from which not  
the mightiest whale is free.  
  
Nor is this the end. Desecrated as the body is, a vengeful ghost  
survives and hovers over it to scare. Espied by some timid man-of-war or  
blundering discovery-vessel from afar, when the distance obscuring the  
swarming fowls, nevertheless still shows the white mass floating in  
the sun, and the white spray heaving high against it; straightway the  
whale's unharming corpse, with trembling fingers is set down in the  
log--SHOALS, ROCKS, AND BREAKERS HEREABOUTS: BEWARE! And for years  
afterwards, perhaps, ships shun the place; leaping over it as silly  
sheep leap over a vacuum, because their leader originally leaped there  
when a stick was held. There's your law of precedents; there's your  
utility of traditions; there's the story of your obstinate survival of  
old beliefs never bottomed on the earth, and now not even hovering in  
the air! There's orthodoxy!  
  
Thus, while in life the great whale's body may have been a real terror  
to his foes, in his death his ghost becomes a powerless panic to a  
world.  
  
Are you a believer in ghosts, my friend? There are other ghosts than  
the Cock-Lane one, and far deeper men than Doctor Johnson who believe in  
them.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 70. The Sphynx.  
  
  
It should not have been omitted that previous to completely stripping  
the body of the leviathan, he was beheaded. Now, the beheading of the  
Sperm Whale is a scientific anatomical feat, upon which experienced  
whale surgeons very much pride themselves: and not without reason.  
  
Consider that the whale has nothing that can properly be called a neck;  
on the contrary, where his head and body seem to join, there, in that  
very place, is the thickest part of him. Remember, also, that the  
surgeon must operate from above, some eight or ten feet intervening  
between him and his subject, and that subject almost hidden in a  
discoloured, rolling, and oftentimes tumultuous and bursting sea. Bear  
in mind, too, that under these untoward circumstances he has to cut many  
feet deep in the flesh; and in that subterraneous manner, without so  
much as getting one single peep into the ever-contracting gash thus  
made, he must skilfully steer clear of all adjacent, interdicted parts,  
and exactly divide the spine at a critical point hard by its insertion  
into the skull. Do you not marvel, then, at Stubb's boast, that he  
demanded but ten minutes to behead a sperm whale?  
  
When first severed, the head is dropped astern and held there by a cable  
till the body is stripped. That done, if it belong to a small whale  
it is hoisted on deck to be deliberately disposed of. But, with a full  
grown leviathan this is impossible; for the sperm whale's head embraces  
nearly one third of his entire bulk, and completely to suspend such a  
burden as that, even by the immense tackles of a whaler, this were as  
vain a thing as to attempt weighing a Dutch barn in jewellers' scales.  
  
The Pequod's whale being decapitated and the body stripped, the head was  
hoisted against the ship's side--about half way out of the sea, so that  
it might yet in great part be buoyed up by its native element. And there  
with the strained craft steeply leaning over to it, by reason of the  
enormous downward drag from the lower mast-head, and every yard-arm  
on that side projecting like a crane over the waves; there, that  
blood-dripping head hung to the Pequod's waist like the giant  
Holofernes's from the girdle of Judith.  
  
When this last task was accomplished it was noon, and the seamen went  
below to their dinner. Silence reigned over the before tumultuous but  
now deserted deck. An intense copper calm, like a universal yellow  
lotus, was more and more unfolding its noiseless measureless leaves upon  
the sea.  
  
A short space elapsed, and up into this noiselessness came Ahab alone  
from his cabin. Taking a few turns on the quarter-deck, he paused to  
gaze over the side, then slowly getting into the main-chains he  
took Stubb's long spade--still remaining there after the whale's  
Decapitation--and striking it into the lower part of the half-suspended  
mass, placed its other end crutch-wise under one arm, and so stood  
leaning over with eyes attentively fixed on this head.  
  
It was a black and hooded head; and hanging there in the midst of so  
intense a calm, it seemed the Sphynx's in the desert. "Speak, thou vast  
and venerable head," muttered Ahab, "which, though ungarnished with a  
beard, yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses; speak, mighty head,  
and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast  
dived the deepest. That head upon which the upper sun now gleams, has  
moved amid this world's foundations. Where unrecorded names and navies  
rust, and untold hopes and anchors rot; where in her murderous hold this  
frigate earth is ballasted with bones of millions of the drowned; there,  
in that awful water-land, there was thy most familiar home. Thou hast  
been where bell or diver never went; hast slept by many a sailor's side,  
where sleepless mothers would give their lives to lay them down. Thou  
saw'st the locked lovers when leaping from their flaming ship; heart  
to heart they sank beneath the exulting wave; true to each other, when  
heaven seemed false to them. Thou saw'st the murdered mate when tossed  
by pirates from the midnight deck; for hours he fell into the deeper  
midnight of the insatiate maw; and his murderers still sailed on  
unharmed--while swift lightnings shivered the neighboring ship that  
would have borne a righteous husband to outstretched, longing arms. O  
head! thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of  
Abraham, and not one syllable is thine!"  
  
"Sail ho!" cried a triumphant voice from the main-mast-head.  
  
"Aye? Well, now, that's cheering," cried Ahab, suddenly erecting  
himself, while whole thunder-clouds swept aside from his brow.  
"That lively cry upon this deadly calm might almost convert a better  
man.--Where away?"  
  
"Three points on the starboard bow, sir, and bringing down her breeze to  
us!  
  
"Better and better, man. Would now St. Paul would come along that way,  
and to my breezelessness bring his breeze! O Nature, and O soul of man!  
how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! not the smallest  
atom stirs or lives on matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind."  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 71. The Jeroboam's Story.  
  
  
Hand in hand, ship and breeze blew on; but the breeze came faster than  
the ship, and soon the Pequod began to rock.  
  
By and by, through the glass the stranger's boats and manned mast-heads  
proved her a whale-ship. But as she was so far to windward, and shooting  
by, apparently making a passage to some other ground, the Pequod could  
not hope to reach her. So the signal was set to see what response would  
be made.  
  
Here be it said, that like the vessels of military marines, the ships of  
the American Whale Fleet have each a private signal; all which signals  
being collected in a book with the names of the respective vessels  
attached, every captain is provided with it. Thereby, the whale  
commanders are enabled to recognise each other upon the ocean, even at  
considerable distances and with no small facility.  
  
The Pequod's signal was at last responded to by the stranger's setting  
her own; which proved the ship to be the Jeroboam of Nantucket. Squaring  
her yards, she bore down, ranged abeam under the Pequod's lee, and  
lowered a boat; it soon drew nigh; but, as the side-ladder was being  
rigged by Starbuck's order to accommodate the visiting captain, the  
stranger in question waved his hand from his boat's stern in token  
of that proceeding being entirely unnecessary. It turned out that  
the Jeroboam had a malignant epidemic on board, and that Mayhew, her  
captain, was fearful of infecting the Pequod's company. For, though  
himself and boat's crew remained untainted, and though his ship was half  
a rifle-shot off, and an incorruptible sea and air rolling and flowing  
between; yet conscientiously adhering to the timid quarantine of the  
land, he peremptorily refused to come into direct contact with the  
Pequod.  
  
But this did by no means prevent all communications. Preserving an  
interval of some few yards between itself and the ship, the Jeroboam's  
boat by the occasional use of its oars contrived to keep parallel to the  
Pequod, as she heavily forged through the sea (for by this time it blew  
very fresh), with her main-topsail aback; though, indeed, at times by  
the sudden onset of a large rolling wave, the boat would be pushed some  
way ahead; but would be soon skilfully brought to her proper bearings  
again. Subject to this, and other the like interruptions now and then, a  
conversation was sustained between the two parties; but at intervals not  
without still another interruption of a very different sort.  
  
Pulling an oar in the Jeroboam's boat, was a man of a singular  
appearance, even in that wild whaling life where individual notabilities  
make up all totalities. He was a small, short, youngish man, sprinkled  
all over his face with freckles, and wearing redundant yellow hair. A  
long-skirted, cabalistically-cut coat of a faded walnut tinge enveloped  
him; the overlapping sleeves of which were rolled up on his wrists. A  
deep, settled, fanatic delirium was in his eyes.  
  
So soon as this figure had been first descried, Stubb had  
exclaimed--"That's he! that's he!--the long-togged scaramouch the  
Town-Ho's company told us of!" Stubb here alluded to a strange story  
told of the Jeroboam, and a certain man among her crew, some time  
previous when the Pequod spoke the Town-Ho. According to this account  
and what was subsequently learned, it seemed that the scaramouch in  
question had gained a wonderful ascendency over almost everybody in the  
Jeroboam. His story was this:  
  
He had been originally nurtured among the crazy society of Neskyeuna  
Shakers, where he had been a great prophet; in their cracked, secret  
meetings having several times descended from heaven by the way of a  
trap-door, announcing the speedy opening of the seventh vial, which he  
carried in his vest-pocket; but, which, instead of containing gunpowder,  
was supposed to be charged with laudanum. A strange, apostolic whim  
having seized him, he had left Neskyeuna for Nantucket, where, with  
that cunning peculiar to craziness, he assumed a steady, common-sense  
exterior, and offered himself as a green-hand candidate for the  
Jeroboam's whaling voyage. They engaged him; but straightway upon  
the ship's getting out of sight of land, his insanity broke out in a  
freshet. He announced himself as the archangel Gabriel, and commanded  
the captain to jump overboard. He published his manifesto, whereby  
he set himself forth as the deliverer of the isles of the sea and  
vicar-general of all Oceanica. The unflinching earnestness with which he  
declared these things;--the dark, daring play of his sleepless, excited  
imagination, and all the preternatural terrors of real delirium, united  
to invest this Gabriel in the minds of the majority of the ignorant  
crew, with an atmosphere of sacredness. Moreover, they were afraid of  
him. As such a man, however, was not of much practical use in the ship,  
especially as he refused to work except when he pleased, the incredulous  
captain would fain have been rid of him; but apprised that that  
individual's intention was to land him in the first convenient port, the  
archangel forthwith opened all his seals and vials--devoting the ship  
and all hands to unconditional perdition, in case this intention was  
carried out. So strongly did he work upon his disciples among the crew,  
that at last in a body they went to the captain and told him if Gabriel  
was sent from the ship, not a man of them would remain. He was therefore  
forced to relinquish his plan. Nor would they permit Gabriel to be any  
way maltreated, say or do what he would; so that it came to pass that  
Gabriel had the complete freedom of the ship. The consequence of all  
this was, that the archangel cared little or nothing for the captain and  
mates; and since the epidemic had broken out, he carried a higher hand  
than ever; declaring that the plague, as he called it, was at his sole  
command; nor should it be stayed but according to his good pleasure.  
The sailors, mostly poor devils, cringed, and some of them fawned before  
him; in obedience to his instructions, sometimes rendering him personal  
homage, as to a god. Such things may seem incredible; but, however  
wondrous, they are true. Nor is the history of fanatics half so striking  
in respect to the measureless self-deception of the fanatic himself, as  
his measureless power of deceiving and bedevilling so many others. But  
it is time to return to the Pequod.  
  
"I fear not thy epidemic, man," said Ahab from the bulwarks, to Captain  
Mayhew, who stood in the boat's stern; "come on board."  
  
But now Gabriel started to his feet.  
  
"Think, think of the fevers, yellow and bilious! Beware of the horrible  
plague!"  
  
"Gabriel! Gabriel!" cried Captain Mayhew; "thou must either--" But  
that instant a headlong wave shot the boat far ahead, and its seethings  
drowned all speech.  
  
"Hast thou seen the White Whale?" demanded Ahab, when the boat drifted  
back.  
  
"Think, think of thy whale-boat, stoven and sunk! Beware of the horrible  
tail!"  
  
"I tell thee again, Gabriel, that--" But again the boat tore ahead as if  
dragged by fiends. Nothing was said for some moments, while a succession  
of riotous waves rolled by, which by one of those occasional caprices  
of the seas were tumbling, not heaving it. Meantime, the hoisted sperm  
whale's head jogged about very violently, and Gabriel was seen eyeing  
it with rather more apprehensiveness than his archangel nature seemed to  
warrant.  
  
When this interlude was over, Captain Mayhew began a dark story  
concerning Moby Dick; not, however, without frequent interruptions from  
Gabriel, whenever his name was mentioned, and the crazy sea that seemed  
leagued with him.  
  
It seemed that the Jeroboam had not long left home, when upon speaking  
a whale-ship, her people were reliably apprised of the existence of Moby  
Dick, and the havoc he had made. Greedily sucking in this intelligence,  
Gabriel solemnly warned the captain against attacking the White  
Whale, in case the monster should be seen; in his gibbering insanity,  
pronouncing the White Whale to be no less a being than the Shaker God  
incarnated; the Shakers receiving the Bible. But when, some year or two  
afterwards, Moby Dick was fairly sighted from the mast-heads, Macey, the  
chief mate, burned with ardour to encounter him; and the captain himself  
being not unwilling to let him have the opportunity, despite all  
the archangel's denunciations and forewarnings, Macey succeeded in  
persuading five men to man his boat. With them he pushed off; and, after  
much weary pulling, and many perilous, unsuccessful onsets, he at last  
succeeded in getting one iron fast. Meantime, Gabriel, ascending to  
the main-royal mast-head, was tossing one arm in frantic gestures, and  
hurling forth prophecies of speedy doom to the sacrilegious assailants  
of his divinity. Now, while Macey, the mate, was standing up in his  
boat's bow, and with all the reckless energy of his tribe was venting  
his wild exclamations upon the whale, and essaying to get a fair chance  
for his poised lance, lo! a broad white shadow rose from the sea; by its  
quick, fanning motion, temporarily taking the breath out of the bodies  
of the oarsmen. Next instant, the luckless mate, so full of furious  
life, was smitten bodily into the air, and making a long arc in his  
descent, fell into the sea at the distance of about fifty yards. Not a  
chip of the boat was harmed, nor a hair of any oarsman's head; but the  
mate for ever sank.  
  
It is well to parenthesize here, that of the fatal accidents in the  
Sperm-Whale Fishery, this kind is perhaps almost as frequent as any.  
Sometimes, nothing is injured but the man who is thus annihilated;  
oftener the boat's bow is knocked off, or the thigh-board, in which the  
headsman stands, is torn from its place and accompanies the body. But  
strangest of all is the circumstance, that in more instances than one,  
when the body has been recovered, not a single mark of violence is  
discernible; the man being stark dead.  
  
The whole calamity, with the falling form of Macey, was plainly descried  
from the ship. Raising a piercing shriek--"The vial! the vial!" Gabriel  
called off the terror-stricken crew from the further hunting of the  
whale. This terrible event clothed the archangel with added influence;  
because his credulous disciples believed that he had specifically  
fore-announced it, instead of only making a general prophecy, which any  
one might have done, and so have chanced to hit one of many marks in the  
wide margin allowed. He became a nameless terror to the ship.  
  
Mayhew having concluded his narration, Ahab put such questions to  
him, that the stranger captain could not forbear inquiring whether he  
intended to hunt the White Whale, if opportunity should offer. To which  
Ahab answered--"Aye." Straightway, then, Gabriel once more started  
to his feet, glaring upon the old man, and vehemently exclaimed, with  
downward pointed finger--"Think, think of the blasphemer--dead, and down  
there!--beware of the blasphemer's end!"  
  
Ahab stolidly turned aside; then said to Mayhew, "Captain, I have  
just bethought me of my letter-bag; there is a letter for one of thy  
officers, if I mistake not. Starbuck, look over the bag."  
  
Every whale-ship takes out a goodly number of letters for various ships,  
whose delivery to the persons to whom they may be addressed, depends  
upon the mere chance of encountering them in the four oceans. Thus,  
most letters never reach their mark; and many are only received after  
attaining an age of two or three years or more.  
  
Soon Starbuck returned with a letter in his hand. It was sorely tumbled,  
damp, and covered with a dull, spotted, green mould, in consequence  
of being kept in a dark locker of the cabin. Of such a letter, Death  
himself might well have been the post-boy.  
  
"Can'st not read it?" cried Ahab. "Give it me, man. Aye, aye, it's but  
a dim scrawl;--what's this?" As he was studying it out, Starbuck took a  
long cutting-spade pole, and with his knife slightly split the end, to  
insert the letter there, and in that way, hand it to the boat, without  
its coming any closer to the ship.  
  
Meantime, Ahab holding the letter, muttered, "Mr. Har--yes, Mr.  
Harry--(a woman's pinny hand,--the man's wife, I'll wager)--Aye--Mr.  
Harry Macey, Ship Jeroboam;--why it's Macey, and he's dead!"  
  
"Poor fellow! poor fellow! and from his wife," sighed Mayhew; "but let  
me have it."  
  
"Nay, keep it thyself," cried Gabriel to Ahab; "thou art soon going that  
way."  
  
"Curses throttle thee!" yelled Ahab. "Captain Mayhew, stand by now to  
receive it"; and taking the fatal missive from Starbuck's hands, he  
caught it in the slit of the pole, and reached it over towards the boat.  
But as he did so, the oarsmen expectantly desisted from rowing; the boat  
drifted a little towards the ship's stern; so that, as if by magic, the  
letter suddenly ranged along with Gabriel's eager hand. He clutched it  
in an instant, seized the boat-knife, and impaling the letter on it,  
sent it thus loaded back into the ship. It fell at Ahab's feet. Then  
Gabriel shrieked out to his comrades to give way with their oars, and in  
that manner the mutinous boat rapidly shot away from the Pequod.  
  
As, after this interlude, the seamen resumed their work upon the jacket  
of the whale, many strange things were hinted in reference to this wild  
affair.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 72. The Monkey-Rope.  
  
  
In the tumultuous business of cutting-in and attending to a whale, there  
is much running backwards and forwards among the crew. Now hands are  
wanted here, and then again hands are wanted there. There is no staying  
in any one place; for at one and the same time everything has to be done  
everywhere. It is much the same with him who endeavors the description  
of the scene. We must now retrace our way a little. It was mentioned  
that upon first breaking ground in the whale's back, the blubber-hook  
was inserted into the original hole there cut by the spades of the  
mates. But how did so clumsy and weighty a mass as that same hook  
get fixed in that hole? It was inserted there by my particular friend  
Queequeg, whose duty it was, as harpooneer, to descend upon the  
monster's back for the special purpose referred to. But in very many  
cases, circumstances require that the harpooneer shall remain on the  
whale till the whole tensing or stripping operation is concluded. The  
whale, be it observed, lies almost entirely submerged, excepting the  
immediate parts operated upon. So down there, some ten feet below the  
level of the deck, the poor harpooneer flounders about, half on the  
whale and half in the water, as the vast mass revolves like a tread-mill  
beneath him. On the occasion in question, Queequeg figured in the  
Highland costume--a shirt and socks--in which to my eyes, at least,  
he appeared to uncommon advantage; and no one had a better chance to  
observe him, as will presently be seen.  
  
Being the savage's bowsman, that is, the person who pulled the bow-oar  
in his boat (the second one from forward), it was my cheerful duty to  
attend upon him while taking that hard-scrabble scramble upon the dead  
whale's back. You have seen Italian organ-boys holding a dancing-ape by  
a long cord. Just so, from the ship's steep side, did I hold Queequeg  
down there in the sea, by what is technically called in the fishery  
a monkey-rope, attached to a strong strip of canvas belted round his  
waist.  
  
It was a humorously perilous business for both of us. For, before we  
proceed further, it must be said that the monkey-rope was fast at  
both ends; fast to Queequeg's broad canvas belt, and fast to my narrow  
leather one. So that for better or for worse, we two, for the time, were  
wedded; and should poor Queequeg sink to rise no more, then both usage  
and honour demanded, that instead of cutting the cord, it should drag  
me down in his wake. So, then, an elongated Siamese ligature united us.  
Queequeg was my own inseparable twin brother; nor could I any way get  
rid of the dangerous liabilities which the hempen bond entailed.  
  
So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that  
while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive  
that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of  
two; that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's  
mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster  
and death. Therefore, I saw that here was a sort of interregnum in  
Providence; for its even-handed equity never could have so gross an  
injustice. And yet still further pondering--while I jerked him now  
and then from between the whale and ship, which would threaten to jam  
him--still further pondering, I say, I saw that this situation of mine  
was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most  
cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion with a plurality  
of other mortals. If your banker breaks, you snap; if your apothecary by  
mistake sends you poison in your pills, you die. True, you may say  
that, by exceeding caution, you may possibly escape these and the  
multitudinous other evil chances of life. But handle Queequeg's  
monkey-rope heedfully as I would, sometimes he jerked it so, that I came  
very near sliding overboard. Nor could I possibly forget that, do what I  
would, I only had the management of one end of it.\*  
  
  
\*The monkey-rope is found in all whalers; but it was only in the Pequod  
that the monkey and his holder were ever tied together. This improvement  
upon the original usage was introduced by no less a man than Stubb,  
in order to afford the imperilled harpooneer the strongest possible  
guarantee for the faithfulness and vigilance of his monkey-rope holder.  
  
  
I have hinted that I would often jerk poor Queequeg from between the  
whale and the ship--where he would occasionally fall, from the incessant  
rolling and swaying of both. But this was not the only jamming jeopardy  
he was exposed to. Unappalled by the massacre made upon them during the  
night, the sharks now freshly and more keenly allured by the before pent  
blood which began to flow from the carcass--the rabid creatures swarmed  
round it like bees in a beehive.  
  
And right in among those sharks was Queequeg; who often pushed them  
aside with his floundering feet. A thing altogether incredible were  
it not that attracted by such prey as a dead whale, the otherwise  
miscellaneously carnivorous shark will seldom touch a man.  
  
Nevertheless, it may well be believed that since they have such a  
ravenous finger in the pie, it is deemed but wise to look sharp to them.  
Accordingly, besides the monkey-rope, with which I now and then jerked  
the poor fellow from too close a vicinity to the maw of what seemed  
a peculiarly ferocious shark--he was provided with still another  
protection. Suspended over the side in one of the stages, Tashtego  
and Daggoo continually flourished over his head a couple of keen  
whale-spades, wherewith they slaughtered as many sharks as they could  
reach. This procedure of theirs, to be sure, was very disinterested and  
benevolent of them. They meant Queequeg's best happiness, I admit; but  
in their hasty zeal to befriend him, and from the circumstance that both  
he and the sharks were at times half hidden by the blood-muddled water,  
those indiscreet spades of theirs would come nearer amputating a leg  
than a tail. But poor Queequeg, I suppose, straining and gasping there  
with that great iron hook--poor Queequeg, I suppose, only prayed to his  
Yojo, and gave up his life into the hands of his gods.  
  
Well, well, my dear comrade and twin-brother, thought I, as I drew in  
and then slacked off the rope to every swell of the sea--what matters  
it, after all? Are you not the precious image of each and all of us men  
in this whaling world? That unsounded ocean you gasp in, is Life; those  
sharks, your foes; those spades, your friends; and what between sharks  
and spades you are in a sad pickle and peril, poor lad.  
  
But courage! there is good cheer in store for you, Queequeg. For now, as  
with blue lips and blood-shot eyes the exhausted savage at last climbs  
up the chains and stands all dripping and involuntarily trembling over  
the side; the steward advances, and with a benevolent, consolatory  
glance hands him--what? Some hot Cognac? No! hands him, ye gods! hands  
him a cup of tepid ginger and water!  
  
"Ginger? Do I smell ginger?" suspiciously asked Stubb, coming near.  
"Yes, this must be ginger," peering into the as yet untasted cup. Then  
standing as if incredulous for a while, he calmly walked towards the  
astonished steward slowly saying, "Ginger? ginger? and will you have  
the goodness to tell me, Mr. Dough-Boy, where lies the virtue of ginger?  
Ginger! is ginger the sort of fuel you use, Dough-boy, to kindle a fire  
in this shivering cannibal? Ginger!--what the devil is ginger?  
Sea-coal? firewood?--lucifer matches?--tinder?--gunpowder?--what the  
devil is ginger, I say, that you offer this cup to our poor Queequeg  
here."  
  
"There is some sneaking Temperance Society movement about this  
business," he suddenly added, now approaching Starbuck, who had just  
come from forward. "Will you look at that kannakin, sir; smell of it,  
if you please." Then watching the mate's countenance, he added, "The  
steward, Mr. Starbuck, had the face to offer that calomel and jalap  
to Queequeg, there, this instant off the whale. Is the steward an  
apothecary, sir? and may I ask whether this is the sort of bitters by  
which he blows back the life into a half-drowned man?"  
  
"I trust not," said Starbuck, "it is poor stuff enough."  
  
"Aye, aye, steward," cried Stubb, "we'll teach you to drug a  
harpooneer; none of your apothecary's medicine here; you want to poison  
us, do ye? You have got out insurances on our lives and want to murder  
us all, and pocket the proceeds, do ye?"  
  
"It was not me," cried Dough-Boy, "it was Aunt Charity that brought the  
ginger on board; and bade me never give the harpooneers any spirits, but  
only this ginger-jub--so she called it."  
  
"Ginger-jub! you gingerly rascal! take that! and run along with ye  
to the lockers, and get something better. I hope I do no wrong, Mr.  
Starbuck. It is the captain's orders--grog for the harpooneer on a  
whale."  
  
"Enough," replied Starbuck, "only don't hit him again, but--"  
  
"Oh, I never hurt when I hit, except when I hit a whale or something of  
that sort; and this fellow's a weazel. What were you about saying, sir?"  
  
"Only this: go down with him, and get what thou wantest thyself."  
  
When Stubb reappeared, he came with a dark flask in one hand, and a sort  
of tea-caddy in the other. The first contained strong spirits, and was  
handed to Queequeg; the second was Aunt Charity's gift, and that was  
freely given to the waves.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 73. Stubb and Flask Kill a Right Whale; and Then Have a Talk  
Over Him.  
  
  
It must be borne in mind that all this time we have a Sperm Whale's  
prodigious head hanging to the Pequod's side. But we must let it  
continue hanging there a while till we can get a chance to attend to it.  
For the present other matters press, and the best we can do now for the  
head, is to pray heaven the tackles may hold.  
  
Now, during the past night and forenoon, the Pequod had gradually  
drifted into a sea, which, by its occasional patches of yellow brit,  
gave unusual tokens of the vicinity of Right Whales, a species of the  
Leviathan that but few supposed to be at this particular time lurking  
anywhere near. And though all hands commonly disdained the capture of  
those inferior creatures; and though the Pequod was not commissioned to  
cruise for them at all, and though she had passed numbers of them near  
the Crozetts without lowering a boat; yet now that a Sperm Whale  
had been brought alongside and beheaded, to the surprise of all, the  
announcement was made that a Right Whale should be captured that day, if  
opportunity offered.  
  
Nor was this long wanting. Tall spouts were seen to leeward; and two  
boats, Stubb's and Flask's, were detached in pursuit. Pulling further  
and further away, they at last became almost invisible to the men at  
the mast-head. But suddenly in the distance, they saw a great heap of  
tumultuous white water, and soon after news came from aloft that one or  
both the boats must be fast. An interval passed and the boats were in  
plain sight, in the act of being dragged right towards the ship by the  
towing whale. So close did the monster come to the hull, that at  
first it seemed as if he meant it malice; but suddenly going down in a  
maelstrom, within three rods of the planks, he wholly disappeared from  
view, as if diving under the keel. "Cut, cut!" was the cry from the  
ship to the boats, which, for one instant, seemed on the point of being  
brought with a deadly dash against the vessel's side. But having plenty  
of line yet in the tubs, and the whale not sounding very rapidly, they  
paid out abundance of rope, and at the same time pulled with all their  
might so as to get ahead of the ship. For a few minutes the struggle was  
intensely critical; for while they still slacked out the tightened line  
in one direction, and still plied their oars in another, the contending  
strain threatened to take them under. But it was only a few feet advance  
they sought to gain. And they stuck to it till they did gain it; when  
instantly, a swift tremor was felt running like lightning along the  
keel, as the strained line, scraping beneath the ship, suddenly rose  
to view under her bows, snapping and quivering; and so flinging off its  
drippings, that the drops fell like bits of broken glass on the water,  
while the whale beyond also rose to sight, and once more the boats were  
free to fly. But the fagged whale abated his speed, and blindly altering  
his course, went round the stern of the ship towing the two boats after  
him, so that they performed a complete circuit.  
  
Meantime, they hauled more and more upon their lines, till close  
flanking him on both sides, Stubb answered Flask with lance for  
lance; and thus round and round the Pequod the battle went, while the  
multitudes of sharks that had before swum round the Sperm Whale's body,  
rushed to the fresh blood that was spilled, thirstily drinking at every  
new gash, as the eager Israelites did at the new bursting fountains that  
poured from the smitten rock.  
  
At last his spout grew thick, and with a frightful roll and vomit, he  
turned upon his back a corpse.  
  
While the two headsmen were engaged in making fast cords to his flukes,  
and in other ways getting the mass in readiness for towing, some  
conversation ensued between them.  
  
"I wonder what the old man wants with this lump of foul lard," said  
Stubb, not without some disgust at the thought of having to do with so  
ignoble a leviathan.  
  
"Wants with it?" said Flask, coiling some spare line in the boat's bow,  
"did you never hear that the ship which but once has a Sperm Whale's  
head hoisted on her starboard side, and at the same time a Right Whale's  
on the larboard; did you never hear, Stubb, that that ship can never  
afterwards capsize?"  
  
"Why not?  
  
"I don't know, but I heard that gamboge ghost of a Fedallah saying so,  
and he seems to know all about ships' charms. But I sometimes think  
he'll charm the ship to no good at last. I don't half like that chap,  
Stubb. Did you ever notice how that tusk of his is a sort of carved into  
a snake's head, Stubb?"  
  
"Sink him! I never look at him at all; but if ever I get a chance of a  
dark night, and he standing hard by the bulwarks, and no one by; look  
down there, Flask"--pointing into the sea with a peculiar motion of  
both hands--"Aye, will I! Flask, I take that Fedallah to be the devil in  
disguise. Do you believe that cock and bull story about his having been  
stowed away on board ship? He's the devil, I say. The reason why you  
don't see his tail, is because he tucks it up out of sight; he carries  
it coiled away in his pocket, I guess. Blast him! now that I think of  
it, he's always wanting oakum to stuff into the toes of his boots."  
  
"He sleeps in his boots, don't he? He hasn't got any hammock; but I've  
seen him lay of nights in a coil of rigging."  
  
"No doubt, and it's because of his cursed tail; he coils it down, do ye  
see, in the eye of the rigging."  
  
"What's the old man have so much to do with him for?"  
  
"Striking up a swap or a bargain, I suppose."  
  
"Bargain?--about what?"  
  
"Why, do ye see, the old man is hard bent after that White Whale, and  
the devil there is trying to come round him, and get him to swap away  
his silver watch, or his soul, or something of that sort, and then he'll  
surrender Moby Dick."  
  
"Pooh! Stubb, you are skylarking; how can Fedallah do that?"  
  
"I don't know, Flask, but the devil is a curious chap, and a wicked  
one, I tell ye. Why, they say as how he went a sauntering into the  
old flag-ship once, switching his tail about devilish easy and  
gentlemanlike, and inquiring if the old governor was at home. Well, he  
was at home, and asked the devil what he wanted. The devil, switching  
his hoofs, up and says, 'I want John.' 'What for?' says the old  
governor. 'What business is that of yours,' says the devil, getting  
mad,--'I want to use him.' 'Take him,' says the governor--and by the  
Lord, Flask, if the devil didn't give John the Asiatic cholera before  
he got through with him, I'll eat this whale in one mouthful. But look  
sharp--ain't you all ready there? Well, then, pull ahead, and let's get  
the whale alongside."  
  
"I think I remember some such story as you were telling," said Flask,  
when at last the two boats were slowly advancing with their burden  
towards the ship, "but I can't remember where."  
  
"Three Spaniards? Adventures of those three bloody-minded soladoes? Did  
ye read it there, Flask? I guess ye did?"  
  
"No: never saw such a book; heard of it, though. But now, tell me,  
Stubb, do you suppose that that devil you was speaking of just now, was  
the same you say is now on board the Pequod?"  
  
"Am I the same man that helped kill this whale? Doesn't the devil live  
for ever; who ever heard that the devil was dead? Did you ever see  
any parson a wearing mourning for the devil? And if the devil has a  
latch-key to get into the admiral's cabin, don't you suppose he can  
crawl into a porthole? Tell me that, Mr. Flask?"  
  
"How old do you suppose Fedallah is, Stubb?"  
  
"Do you see that mainmast there?" pointing to the ship; "well, that's  
the figure one; now take all the hoops in the Pequod's hold, and string  
along in a row with that mast, for oughts, do you see; well, that  
wouldn't begin to be Fedallah's age. Nor all the coopers in creation  
couldn't show hoops enough to make oughts enough."  
  
"But see here, Stubb, I thought you a little boasted just now, that you  
meant to give Fedallah a sea-toss, if you got a good chance. Now, if  
he's so old as all those hoops of yours come to, and if he is going  
to live for ever, what good will it do to pitch him overboard--tell me  
that?  
  
"Give him a good ducking, anyhow."  
  
"But he'd crawl back."  
  
"Duck him again; and keep ducking him."  
  
"Suppose he should take it into his head to duck you, though--yes, and  
drown you--what then?"  
  
"I should like to see him try it; I'd give him such a pair of black eyes  
that he wouldn't dare to show his face in the admiral's cabin again for  
a long while, let alone down in the orlop there, where he lives, and  
hereabouts on the upper decks where he sneaks so much. Damn the devil,  
Flask; so you suppose I'm afraid of the devil? Who's afraid of  
him, except the old governor who daresn't catch him and put him in  
double-darbies, as he deserves, but lets him go about kidnapping  
people; aye, and signed a bond with him, that all the people the devil  
kidnapped, he'd roast for him? There's a governor!"  
  
"Do you suppose Fedallah wants to kidnap Captain Ahab?"  
  
"Do I suppose it? You'll know it before long, Flask. But I am going now  
to keep a sharp look-out on him; and if I see anything very suspicious  
going on, I'll just take him by the nape of his neck, and say--Look  
here, Beelzebub, you don't do it; and if he makes any fuss, by the Lord  
I'll make a grab into his pocket for his tail, take it to the capstan,  
and give him such a wrenching and heaving, that his tail will come short  
off at the stump--do you see; and then, I rather guess when he finds  
himself docked in that queer fashion, he'll sneak off without the poor  
satisfaction of feeling his tail between his legs."  
  
"And what will you do with the tail, Stubb?"  
  
"Do with it? Sell it for an ox whip when we get home;--what else?"  
  
"Now, do you mean what you say, and have been saying all along, Stubb?"  
  
"Mean or not mean, here we are at the ship."  
  
The boats were here hailed, to tow the whale on the larboard side, where  
fluke chains and other necessaries were already prepared for securing  
him.  
  
"Didn't I tell you so?" said Flask; "yes, you'll soon see this right  
whale's head hoisted up opposite that parmacetti's."  
  
In good time, Flask's saying proved true. As before, the Pequod steeply  
leaned over towards the sperm whale's head, now, by the counterpoise of  
both heads, she regained her even keel; though sorely strained, you may  
well believe. So, when on one side you hoist in Locke's head, you go  
over that way; but now, on the other side, hoist in Kant's and you come  
back again; but in very poor plight. Thus, some minds for ever keep  
trimming boat. Oh, ye foolish! throw all these thunder-heads overboard,  
and then you will float light and right.  
  
In disposing of the body of a right whale, when brought alongside the  
ship, the same preliminary proceedings commonly take place as in the  
case of a sperm whale; only, in the latter instance, the head is cut off  
whole, but in the former the lips and tongue are separately removed and  
hoisted on deck, with all the well known black bone attached to what is  
called the crown-piece. But nothing like this, in the present case,  
had been done. The carcases of both whales had dropped astern; and  
the head-laden ship not a little resembled a mule carrying a pair of  
overburdening panniers.  
  
Meantime, Fedallah was calmly eyeing the right whale's head, and ever  
and anon glancing from the deep wrinkles there to the lines in his own  
hand. And Ahab chanced so to stand, that the Parsee occupied his shadow;  
while, if the Parsee's shadow was there at all it seemed only to  
blend with, and lengthen Ahab's. As the crew toiled on, Laplandish  
speculations were bandied among them, concerning all these passing  
things.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 74. The Sperm Whale's Head--Contrasted View.  
  
  
Here, now, are two great whales, laying their heads together; let us  
join them, and lay together our own.  
  
Of the grand order of folio leviathans, the Sperm Whale and the Right  
Whale are by far the most noteworthy. They are the only whales regularly  
hunted by man. To the Nantucketer, they present the two extremes of all  
the known varieties of the whale. As the external difference between  
them is mainly observable in their heads; and as a head of each is this  
moment hanging from the Pequod's side; and as we may freely go from one  
to the other, by merely stepping across the deck:--where, I should like  
to know, will you obtain a better chance to study practical cetology  
than here?  
  
In the first place, you are struck by the general contrast between these  
heads. Both are massive enough in all conscience; but there is a certain  
mathematical symmetry in the Sperm Whale's which the Right Whale's sadly  
lacks. There is more character in the Sperm Whale's head. As you behold  
it, you involuntarily yield the immense superiority to him, in point  
of pervading dignity. In the present instance, too, this dignity is  
heightened by the pepper and salt colour of his head at the summit,  
giving token of advanced age and large experience. In short, he is what  
the fishermen technically call a "grey-headed whale."  
  
Let us now note what is least dissimilar in these heads--namely, the two  
most important organs, the eye and the ear. Far back on the side of  
the head, and low down, near the angle of either whale's jaw, if you  
narrowly search, you will at last see a lashless eye, which you would  
fancy to be a young colt's eye; so out of all proportion is it to the  
magnitude of the head.  
  
Now, from this peculiar sideway position of the whale's eyes, it is  
plain that he can never see an object which is exactly ahead, no more  
than he can one exactly astern. In a word, the position of the whale's  
eyes corresponds to that of a man's ears; and you may fancy, for  
yourself, how it would fare with you, did you sideways survey objects  
through your ears. You would find that you could only command some  
thirty degrees of vision in advance of the straight side-line of sight;  
and about thirty more behind it. If your bitterest foe were walking  
straight towards you, with dagger uplifted in broad day, you would not  
be able to see him, any more than if he were stealing upon you from  
behind. In a word, you would have two backs, so to speak; but, at the  
same time, also, two fronts (side fronts): for what is it that makes the  
front of a man--what, indeed, but his eyes?  
  
Moreover, while in most other animals that I can now think of, the eyes  
are so planted as imperceptibly to blend their visual power, so as to  
produce one picture and not two to the brain; the peculiar position of  
the whale's eyes, effectually divided as they are by many cubic feet of  
solid head, which towers between them like a great mountain separating  
two lakes in valleys; this, of course, must wholly separate the  
impressions which each independent organ imparts. The whale, therefore,  
must see one distinct picture on this side, and another distinct  
picture on that side; while all between must be profound darkness and  
nothingness to him. Man may, in effect, be said to look out on the world  
from a sentry-box with two joined sashes for his window. But with the  
whale, these two sashes are separately inserted, making two distinct  
windows, but sadly impairing the view. This peculiarity of the whale's  
eyes is a thing always to be borne in mind in the fishery; and to be  
remembered by the reader in some subsequent scenes.  
  
A curious and most puzzling question might be started concerning this  
visual matter as touching the Leviathan. But I must be content with a  
hint. So long as a man's eyes are open in the light, the act of seeing  
is involuntary; that is, he cannot then help mechanically seeing  
whatever objects are before him. Nevertheless, any one's experience  
will teach him, that though he can take in an undiscriminating sweep of  
things at one glance, it is quite impossible for him, attentively,  
and completely, to examine any two things--however large or however  
small--at one and the same instant of time; never mind if they lie side  
by side and touch each other. But if you now come to separate these two  
objects, and surround each by a circle of profound darkness; then, in  
order to see one of them, in such a manner as to bring your mind to  
bear on it, the other will be utterly excluded from your contemporary  
consciousness. How is it, then, with the whale? True, both his eyes,  
in themselves, must simultaneously act; but is his brain so much more  
comprehensive, combining, and subtle than man's, that he can at the same  
moment of time attentively examine two distinct prospects, one on one  
side of him, and the other in an exactly opposite direction? If he  
can, then is it as marvellous a thing in him, as if a man were able  
simultaneously to go through the demonstrations of two distinct problems  
in Euclid. Nor, strictly investigated, is there any incongruity in this  
comparison.  
  
It may be but an idle whim, but it has always seemed to me, that the  
extraordinary vacillations of movement displayed by some whales when  
beset by three or four boats; the timidity and liability to queer  
frights, so common to such whales; I think that all this indirectly  
proceeds from the helpless perplexity of volition, in which their  
divided and diametrically opposite powers of vision must involve them.  
  
But the ear of the whale is full as curious as the eye. If you are an  
entire stranger to their race, you might hunt over these two heads  
for hours, and never discover that organ. The ear has no external leaf  
whatever; and into the hole itself you can hardly insert a quill, so  
wondrously minute is it. It is lodged a little behind the eye. With  
respect to their ears, this important difference is to be observed  
between the sperm whale and the right. While the ear of the former has  
an external opening, that of the latter is entirely and evenly covered  
over with a membrane, so as to be quite imperceptible from without.  
  
Is it not curious, that so vast a being as the whale should see the  
world through so small an eye, and hear the thunder through an ear which  
is smaller than a hare's? But if his eyes were broad as the lens of  
Herschel's great telescope; and his ears capacious as the porches of  
cathedrals; would that make him any longer of sight, or sharper of  
hearing? Not at all.--Why then do you try to "enlarge" your mind?  
Subtilize it.  
  
Let us now with whatever levers and steam-engines we have at hand, cant  
over the sperm whale's head, that it may lie bottom up; then, ascending  
by a ladder to the summit, have a peep down the mouth; and were it not  
that the body is now completely separated from it, with a lantern we  
might descend into the great Kentucky Mammoth Cave of his stomach. But  
let us hold on here by this tooth, and look about us where we are. What  
a really beautiful and chaste-looking mouth! from floor to ceiling,  
lined, or rather papered with a glistening white membrane, glossy as  
bridal satins.  
  
But come out now, and look at this portentous lower jaw, which seems  
like the long narrow lid of an immense snuff-box, with the hinge at one  
end, instead of one side. If you pry it up, so as to get it overhead,  
and expose its rows of teeth, it seems a terrific portcullis; and such,  
alas! it proves to many a poor wight in the fishery, upon whom these  
spikes fall with impaling force. But far more terrible is it to behold,  
when fathoms down in the sea, you see some sulky whale, floating there  
suspended, with his prodigious jaw, some fifteen feet long, hanging  
straight down at right-angles with his body, for all the world like a  
ship's jib-boom. This whale is not dead; he is only dispirited; out of  
sorts, perhaps; hypochondriac; and so supine, that the hinges of his  
jaw have relaxed, leaving him there in that ungainly sort of plight, a  
reproach to all his tribe, who must, no doubt, imprecate lock-jaws upon  
him.  
  
In most cases this lower jaw--being easily unhinged by a practised  
artist--is disengaged and hoisted on deck for the purpose of extracting  
the ivory teeth, and furnishing a supply of that hard white whalebone  
with which the fishermen fashion all sorts of curious articles,  
including canes, umbrella-stocks, and handles to riding-whips.  
  
With a long, weary hoist the jaw is dragged on board, as if it were an  
anchor; and when the proper time comes--some few days after the other  
work--Queequeg, Daggoo, and Tashtego, being all accomplished dentists,  
are set to drawing teeth. With a keen cutting-spade, Queequeg lances  
the gums; then the jaw is lashed down to ringbolts, and a tackle being  
rigged from aloft, they drag out these teeth, as Michigan oxen drag  
stumps of old oaks out of wild wood lands. There are generally forty-two  
teeth in all; in old whales, much worn down, but undecayed; nor filled  
after our artificial fashion. The jaw is afterwards sawn into slabs, and  
piled away like joists for building houses.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 75. The Right Whale's Head--Contrasted View.  
  
  
Crossing the deck, let us now have a good long look at the Right Whale's  
head.  
  
As in general shape the noble Sperm Whale's head may be compared to a  
Roman war-chariot (especially in front, where it is so broadly rounded);  
so, at a broad view, the Right Whale's head bears a rather inelegant  
resemblance to a gigantic galliot-toed shoe. Two hundred years ago an  
old Dutch voyager likened its shape to that of a shoemaker's last. And  
in this same last or shoe, that old woman of the nursery tale, with  
the swarming brood, might very comfortably be lodged, she and all her  
progeny.  
  
But as you come nearer to this great head it begins to assume different  
aspects, according to your point of view. If you stand on its summit and  
look at these two F-shaped spoutholes, you would take the whole head  
for an enormous bass-viol, and these spiracles, the apertures in its  
sounding-board. Then, again, if you fix your eye upon this strange,  
crested, comb-like incrustation on the top of the mass--this green,  
barnacled thing, which the Greenlanders call the "crown," and the  
Southern fishers the "bonnet" of the Right Whale; fixing your eyes  
solely on this, you would take the head for the trunk of some huge oak,  
with a bird's nest in its crotch. At any rate, when you watch those live  
crabs that nestle here on this bonnet, such an idea will be almost  
sure to occur to you; unless, indeed, your fancy has been fixed by the  
technical term "crown" also bestowed upon it; in which case you will  
take great interest in thinking how this mighty monster is actually a  
diademed king of the sea, whose green crown has been put together for  
him in this marvellous manner. But if this whale be a king, he is a very  
sulky looking fellow to grace a diadem. Look at that hanging lower lip!  
what a huge sulk and pout is there! a sulk and pout, by carpenter's  
measurement, about twenty feet long and five feet deep; a sulk and pout  
that will yield you some 500 gallons of oil and more.  
  
A great pity, now, that this unfortunate whale should be hare-lipped.  
The fissure is about a foot across. Probably the mother during an  
important interval was sailing down the Peruvian coast, when earthquakes  
caused the beach to gape. Over this lip, as over a slippery threshold,  
we now slide into the mouth. Upon my word were I at Mackinaw, I should  
take this to be the inside of an Indian wigwam. Good Lord! is this the  
road that Jonah went? The roof is about twelve feet high, and runs to a  
pretty sharp angle, as if there were a regular ridge-pole there; while  
these ribbed, arched, hairy sides, present us with those wondrous, half  
vertical, scimetar-shaped slats of whalebone, say three hundred on a  
side, which depending from the upper part of the head or crown  
bone, form those Venetian blinds which have elsewhere been cursorily  
mentioned. The edges of these bones are fringed with hairy fibres,  
through which the Right Whale strains the water, and in whose  
intricacies he retains the small fish, when openmouthed he goes through  
the seas of brit in feeding time. In the central blinds of bone, as they  
stand in their natural order, there are certain curious marks, curves,  
hollows, and ridges, whereby some whalemen calculate the creature's age,  
as the age of an oak by its circular rings. Though the certainty of this  
criterion is far from demonstrable, yet it has the savor of analogical  
probability. At any rate, if we yield to it, we must grant a far greater  
age to the Right Whale than at first glance will seem reasonable.  
  
In old times, there seem to have prevailed the most curious fancies  
concerning these blinds. One voyager in Purchas calls them the wondrous  
"whiskers" inside of the whale's mouth;\* another, "hogs' bristles"; a  
third old gentleman in Hackluyt uses the following elegant language:  
"There are about two hundred and fifty fins growing on each side of his  
upper CHOP, which arch over his tongue on each side of his mouth."  
  
  
\*This reminds us that the Right Whale really has a sort of whisker, or  
rather a moustache, consisting of a few scattered white hairs on the  
upper part of the outer end of the lower jaw. Sometimes these  
tufts impart a rather brigandish expression to his otherwise solemn  
countenance.  
  
  
As every one knows, these same "hogs' bristles," "fins," "whiskers,"  
"blinds," or whatever you please, furnish to the ladies their busks and  
other stiffening contrivances. But in this particular, the demand has  
long been on the decline. It was in Queen Anne's time that the bone was  
in its glory, the farthingale being then all the fashion. And as those  
ancient dames moved about gaily, though in the jaws of the whale, as  
you may say; even so, in a shower, with the like thoughtlessness, do we  
nowadays fly under the same jaws for protection; the umbrella being a  
tent spread over the same bone.  
  
But now forget all about blinds and whiskers for a moment, and, standing  
in the Right Whale's mouth, look around you afresh. Seeing all these  
colonnades of bone so methodically ranged about, would you not think  
you were inside of the great Haarlem organ, and gazing upon its  
thousand pipes? For a carpet to the organ we have a rug of the softest  
Turkey--the tongue, which is glued, as it were, to the floor of the  
mouth. It is very fat and tender, and apt to tear in pieces in hoisting  
it on deck. This particular tongue now before us; at a passing glance I  
should say it was a six-barreler; that is, it will yield you about that  
amount of oil.  
  
Ere this, you must have plainly seen the truth of what I started  
with--that the Sperm Whale and the Right Whale have almost entirely  
different heads. To sum up, then: in the Right Whale's there is no great  
well of sperm; no ivory teeth at all; no long, slender mandible of a  
lower jaw, like the Sperm Whale's. Nor in the Sperm Whale are there any  
of those blinds of bone; no huge lower lip; and scarcely anything of a  
tongue. Again, the Right Whale has two external spout-holes, the Sperm  
Whale only one.  
  
Look your last, now, on these venerable hooded heads, while they yet lie  
together; for one will soon sink, unrecorded, in the sea; the other will  
not be very long in following.  
  
Can you catch the expression of the Sperm Whale's there? It is the same  
he died with, only some of the longer wrinkles in the forehead seem  
now faded away. I think his broad brow to be full of a prairie-like  
placidity, born of a speculative indifference as to death. But mark the  
other head's expression. See that amazing lower lip, pressed by accident  
against the vessel's side, so as firmly to embrace the jaw. Does not  
this whole head seem to speak of an enormous practical resolution in  
facing death? This Right Whale I take to have been a Stoic; the Sperm  
Whale, a Platonian, who might have taken up Spinoza in his latter years.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 76. The Battering-Ram.  
  
  
Ere quitting, for the nonce, the Sperm Whale's head, I would have  
you, as a sensible physiologist, simply--particularly remark its front  
aspect, in all its compacted collectedness. I would have you investigate  
it now with the sole view of forming to yourself some unexaggerated,  
intelligent estimate of whatever battering-ram power may be lodged  
there. Here is a vital point; for you must either satisfactorily settle  
this matter with yourself, or for ever remain an infidel as to one of  
the most appalling, but not the less true events, perhaps anywhere to be  
found in all recorded history.  
  
You observe that in the ordinary swimming position of the Sperm Whale,  
the front of his head presents an almost wholly vertical plane to the  
water; you observe that the lower part of that front slopes considerably  
backwards, so as to furnish more of a retreat for the long socket which  
receives the boom-like lower jaw; you observe that the mouth is entirely  
under the head, much in the same way, indeed, as though your own mouth  
were entirely under your chin. Moreover you observe that the whale has  
no external nose; and that what nose he has--his spout hole--is on the  
top of his head; you observe that his eyes and ears are at the sides  
of his head, nearly one third of his entire length from the front.  
Wherefore, you must now have perceived that the front of the Sperm  
Whale's head is a dead, blind wall, without a single organ or tender  
prominence of any sort whatsoever. Furthermore, you are now to consider  
that only in the extreme, lower, backward sloping part of the front of  
the head, is there the slightest vestige of bone; and not till you  
get near twenty feet from the forehead do you come to the full cranial  
development. So that this whole enormous boneless mass is as one wad.  
Finally, though, as will soon be revealed, its contents partly comprise  
the most delicate oil; yet, you are now to be apprised of the nature of  
the substance which so impregnably invests all that apparent effeminacy.  
In some previous place I have described to you how the blubber wraps the  
body of the whale, as the rind wraps an orange. Just so with the head;  
but with this difference: about the head this envelope, though not so  
thick, is of a boneless toughness, inestimable by any man who has not  
handled it. The severest pointed harpoon, the sharpest lance darted by  
the strongest human arm, impotently rebounds from it. It is as though  
the forehead of the Sperm Whale were paved with horses' hoofs. I do not  
think that any sensation lurks in it.  
  
Bethink yourself also of another thing. When two large, loaded Indiamen  
chance to crowd and crush towards each other in the docks, what do the  
sailors do? They do not suspend between them, at the point of coming  
contact, any merely hard substance, like iron or wood. No, they hold  
there a large, round wad of tow and cork, enveloped in the thickest  
and toughest of ox-hide. That bravely and uninjured takes the jam which  
would have snapped all their oaken handspikes and iron crow-bars. By  
itself this sufficiently illustrates the obvious fact I drive at. But  
supplementary to this, it has hypothetically occurred to me, that  
as ordinary fish possess what is called a swimming bladder in them,  
capable, at will, of distension or contraction; and as the Sperm Whale,  
as far as I know, has no such provision in him; considering, too,  
the otherwise inexplicable manner in which he now depresses his head  
altogether beneath the surface, and anon swims with it high elevated out  
of the water; considering the unobstructed elasticity of its envelope;  
considering the unique interior of his head; it has hypothetically  
occurred to me, I say, that those mystical lung-celled honeycombs there  
may possibly have some hitherto unknown and unsuspected connexion with  
the outer air, so as to be susceptible to atmospheric distension and  
contraction. If this be so, fancy the irresistibleness of that might, to  
which the most impalpable and destructive of all elements contributes.  
  
Now, mark. Unerringly impelling this dead, impregnable, uninjurable  
wall, and this most buoyant thing within; there swims behind it all a  
mass of tremendous life, only to be adequately estimated as piled wood  
is--by the cord; and all obedient to one volition, as the smallest  
insect. So that when I shall hereafter detail to you all the  
specialities and concentrations of potency everywhere lurking in this  
expansive monster; when I shall show you some of his more inconsiderable  
braining feats; I trust you will have renounced all ignorant  
incredulity, and be ready to abide by this; that though the Sperm Whale  
stove a passage through the Isthmus of Darien, and mixed the Atlantic  
with the Pacific, you would not elevate one hair of your eye-brow. For  
unless you own the whale, you are but a provincial and sentimentalist  
in Truth. But clear Truth is a thing for salamander giants only to  
encounter; how small the chances for the provincials then? What befell  
the weakling youth lifting the dread goddess's veil at Lais?  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 77. The Great Heidelburgh Tun.  
  
  
Now comes the Baling of the Case. But to comprehend it aright, you must  
know something of the curious internal structure of the thing operated  
upon.  
  
Regarding the Sperm Whale's head as a solid oblong, you may, on an  
inclined plane, sideways divide it into two quoins,\* whereof the lower  
is the bony structure, forming the cranium and jaws, and the upper an  
unctuous mass wholly free from bones; its broad forward end forming the  
expanded vertical apparent forehead of the whale. At the middle of the  
forehead horizontally subdivide this upper quoin, and then you have two  
almost equal parts, which before were naturally divided by an internal  
wall of a thick tendinous substance.  
  
  
\*Quoin is not a Euclidean term. It belongs to the pure nautical  
mathematics. I know not that it has been defined before. A quoin is a  
solid which differs from a wedge in having its sharp end formed by the  
steep inclination of one side, instead of the mutual tapering of both  
sides.  
  
  
The lower subdivided part, called the junk, is one immense honeycomb  
of oil, formed by the crossing and recrossing, into ten thousand  
infiltrated cells, of tough elastic white fibres throughout its whole  
extent. The upper part, known as the Case, may be regarded as the great  
Heidelburgh Tun of the Sperm Whale. And as that famous great tierce is  
mystically carved in front, so the whale's vast plaited forehead forms  
innumerable strange devices for the emblematical adornment of his  
wondrous tun. Moreover, as that of Heidelburgh was always replenished  
with the most excellent of the wines of the Rhenish valleys, so the tun  
of the whale contains by far the most precious of all his oily vintages;  
namely, the highly-prized spermaceti, in its absolutely pure, limpid,  
and odoriferous state. Nor is this precious substance found unalloyed  
in any other part of the creature. Though in life it remains perfectly  
fluid, yet, upon exposure to the air, after death, it soon begins to  
concrete; sending forth beautiful crystalline shoots, as when the  
first thin delicate ice is just forming in water. A large whale's  
case generally yields about five hundred gallons of sperm, though from  
unavoidable circumstances, considerable of it is spilled, leaks, and  
dribbles away, or is otherwise irrevocably lost in the ticklish business  
of securing what you can.  
  
I know not with what fine and costly material the Heidelburgh Tun  
was coated within, but in superlative richness that coating could not  
possibly have compared with the silken pearl-coloured membrane, like the  
lining of a fine pelisse, forming the inner surface of the Sperm Whale's  
case.  
  
It will have been seen that the Heidelburgh Tun of the Sperm Whale  
embraces the entire length of the entire top of the head; and since--as  
has been elsewhere set forth--the head embraces one third of the whole  
length of the creature, then setting that length down at eighty feet for  
a good sized whale, you have more than twenty-six feet for the depth  
of the tun, when it is lengthwise hoisted up and down against a ship's  
side.  
  
As in decapitating the whale, the operator's instrument is brought close  
to the spot where an entrance is subsequently forced into the spermaceti  
magazine; he has, therefore, to be uncommonly heedful, lest a careless,  
untimely stroke should invade the sanctuary and wastingly let out its  
invaluable contents. It is this decapitated end of the head, also, which  
is at last elevated out of the water, and retained in that position by  
the enormous cutting tackles, whose hempen combinations, on one side,  
make quite a wilderness of ropes in that quarter.  
  
Thus much being said, attend now, I pray you, to that marvellous and--in  
this particular instance--almost fatal operation whereby the Sperm  
Whale's great Heidelburgh Tun is tapped.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 78. Cistern and Buckets.  
  
  
Nimble as a cat, Tashtego mounts aloft; and without altering his erect  
posture, runs straight out upon the overhanging mainyard-arm, to the  
part where it exactly projects over the hoisted Tun. He has carried  
with him a light tackle called a whip, consisting of only two parts,  
travelling through a single-sheaved block. Securing this block, so that  
it hangs down from the yard-arm, he swings one end of the rope, till it  
is caught and firmly held by a hand on deck. Then, hand-over-hand, down  
the other part, the Indian drops through the air, till dexterously he  
lands on the summit of the head. There--still high elevated above the  
rest of the company, to whom he vivaciously cries--he seems some Turkish  
Muezzin calling the good people to prayers from the top of a tower. A  
short-handled sharp spade being sent up to him, he diligently searches  
for the proper place to begin breaking into the Tun. In this business  
he proceeds very heedfully, like a treasure-hunter in some old house,  
sounding the walls to find where the gold is masoned in. By the time  
this cautious search is over, a stout iron-bound bucket, precisely like  
a well-bucket, has been attached to one end of the whip; while the other  
end, being stretched across the deck, is there held by two or three  
alert hands. These last now hoist the bucket within grasp of the Indian,  
to whom another person has reached up a very long pole. Inserting this  
pole into the bucket, Tashtego downward guides the bucket into the Tun,  
till it entirely disappears; then giving the word to the seamen at the  
whip, up comes the bucket again, all bubbling like a dairy-maid's pail  
of new milk. Carefully lowered from its height, the full-freighted  
vessel is caught by an appointed hand, and quickly emptied into a large  
tub. Then remounting aloft, it again goes through the same round until  
the deep cistern will yield no more. Towards the end, Tashtego has to  
ram his long pole harder and harder, and deeper and deeper into the Tun,  
until some twenty feet of the pole have gone down.  
  
Now, the people of the Pequod had been baling some time in this way;  
several tubs had been filled with the fragrant sperm; when all at once a  
queer accident happened. Whether it was that Tashtego, that wild Indian,  
was so heedless and reckless as to let go for a moment his one-handed  
hold on the great cabled tackles suspending the head; or whether the  
place where he stood was so treacherous and oozy; or whether the Evil  
One himself would have it to fall out so, without stating his particular  
reasons; how it was exactly, there is no telling now; but, on a sudden,  
as the eightieth or ninetieth bucket came suckingly up--my God! poor  
Tashtego--like the twin reciprocating bucket in a veritable well,  
dropped head-foremost down into this great Tun of Heidelburgh, and with  
a horrible oily gurgling, went clean out of sight!  
  
"Man overboard!" cried Daggoo, who amid the general consternation first  
came to his senses. "Swing the bucket this way!" and putting one foot  
into it, so as the better to secure his slippery hand-hold on the whip  
itself, the hoisters ran him high up to the top of the head, almost  
before Tashtego could have reached its interior bottom. Meantime,  
there was a terrible tumult. Looking over the side, they saw the before  
lifeless head throbbing and heaving just below the surface of the sea,  
as if that moment seized with some momentous idea; whereas it was only  
the poor Indian unconsciously revealing by those struggles the perilous  
depth to which he had sunk.  
  
At this instant, while Daggoo, on the summit of the head, was clearing  
the whip--which had somehow got foul of the great cutting tackles--a  
sharp cracking noise was heard; and to the unspeakable horror of all,  
one of the two enormous hooks suspending the head tore out, and with  
a vast vibration the enormous mass sideways swung, till the drunk ship  
reeled and shook as if smitten by an iceberg. The one remaining hook,  
upon which the entire strain now depended, seemed every instant to be  
on the point of giving way; an event still more likely from the violent  
motions of the head.  
  
"Come down, come down!" yelled the seamen to Daggoo, but with one hand  
holding on to the heavy tackles, so that if the head should drop, he  
would still remain suspended; the negro having cleared the foul line,  
rammed down the bucket into the now collapsed well, meaning that the  
buried harpooneer should grasp it, and so be hoisted out.  
  
"In heaven's name, man," cried Stubb, "are you ramming home a cartridge  
there?--Avast! How will that help him; jamming that iron-bound bucket on  
top of his head? Avast, will ye!"  
  
"Stand clear of the tackle!" cried a voice like the bursting of a  
rocket.  
  
Almost in the same instant, with a thunder-boom, the enormous mass  
dropped into the sea, like Niagara's Table-Rock into the whirlpool; the  
suddenly relieved hull rolled away from it, to far down her glittering  
copper; and all caught their breath, as half swinging--now over the  
sailors' heads, and now over the water--Daggoo, through a thick mist of  
spray, was dimly beheld clinging to the pendulous tackles, while poor,  
buried-alive Tashtego was sinking utterly down to the bottom of the sea!  
But hardly had the blinding vapour cleared away, when a naked figure  
with a boarding-sword in his hand, was for one swift moment seen  
hovering over the bulwarks. The next, a loud splash announced that my  
brave Queequeg had dived to the rescue. One packed rush was made to the  
side, and every eye counted every ripple, as moment followed moment, and  
no sign of either the sinker or the diver could be seen. Some hands now  
jumped into a boat alongside, and pushed a little off from the ship.  
  
"Ha! ha!" cried Daggoo, all at once, from his now quiet, swinging perch  
overhead; and looking further off from the side, we saw an arm thrust  
upright from the blue waves; a sight strange to see, as an arm thrust  
forth from the grass over a grave.  
  
"Both! both!--it is both!"--cried Daggoo again with a joyful shout; and  
soon after, Queequeg was seen boldly striking out with one hand, and  
with the other clutching the long hair of the Indian. Drawn into the  
waiting boat, they were quickly brought to the deck; but Tashtego was  
long in coming to, and Queequeg did not look very brisk.  
  
Now, how had this noble rescue been accomplished? Why, diving after  
the slowly descending head, Queequeg with his keen sword had made  
side lunges near its bottom, so as to scuttle a large hole there; then  
dropping his sword, had thrust his long arm far inwards and upwards,  
and so hauled out poor Tash by the head. He averred, that upon first  
thrusting in for him, a leg was presented; but well knowing that that  
was not as it ought to be, and might occasion great trouble;--he had  
thrust back the leg, and by a dexterous heave and toss, had wrought a  
somerset upon the Indian; so that with the next trial, he came forth in  
the good old way--head foremost. As for the great head itself, that was  
doing as well as could be expected.  
  
And thus, through the courage and great skill in obstetrics of Queequeg,  
the deliverance, or rather, delivery of Tashtego, was successfully  
accomplished, in the teeth, too, of the most untoward and apparently  
hopeless impediments; which is a lesson by no means to be forgotten.  
Midwifery should be taught in the same course with fencing and boxing,  
riding and rowing.  
  
I know that this queer adventure of the Gay-Header's will be sure to  
seem incredible to some landsmen, though they themselves may have either  
seen or heard of some one's falling into a cistern ashore; an accident  
which not seldom happens, and with much less reason too than the  
Indian's, considering the exceeding slipperiness of the curb of the  
Sperm Whale's well.  
  
But, peradventure, it may be sagaciously urged, how is this? We thought  
the tissued, infiltrated head of the Sperm Whale, was the lightest and  
most corky part about him; and yet thou makest it sink in an element of  
a far greater specific gravity than itself. We have thee there. Not at  
all, but I have ye; for at the time poor Tash fell in, the case had been  
nearly emptied of its lighter contents, leaving little but the dense  
tendinous wall of the well--a double welded, hammered substance, as I  
have before said, much heavier than the sea water, and a lump of which  
sinks in it like lead almost. But the tendency to rapid sinking in this  
substance was in the present instance materially counteracted by the  
other parts of the head remaining undetached from it, so that it sank  
very slowly and deliberately indeed, affording Queequeg a fair chance  
for performing his agile obstetrics on the run, as you may say. Yes, it  
was a running delivery, so it was.  
  
Now, had Tashtego perished in that head, it had been a very precious  
perishing; smothered in the very whitest and daintiest of fragrant  
spermaceti; coffined, hearsed, and tombed in the secret inner chamber  
and sanctum sanctorum of the whale. Only one sweeter end can readily be  
recalled--the delicious death of an Ohio honey-hunter, who seeking honey  
in the crotch of a hollow tree, found such exceeding store of it, that  
leaning too far over, it sucked him in, so that he died embalmed.  
How many, think ye, have likewise fallen into Plato's honey head, and  
sweetly perished there?  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 79. The Prairie.  
  
  
To scan the lines of his face, or feel the bumps on the head of this  
Leviathan; this is a thing which no Physiognomist or Phrenologist has as  
yet undertaken. Such an enterprise would seem almost as hopeful as for  
Lavater to have scrutinized the wrinkles on the Rock of Gibraltar,  
or for Gall to have mounted a ladder and manipulated the Dome of the  
Pantheon. Still, in that famous work of his, Lavater not only treats  
of the various faces of men, but also attentively studies the faces  
of horses, birds, serpents, and fish; and dwells in detail upon the  
modifications of expression discernible therein. Nor have Gall and  
his disciple Spurzheim failed to throw out some hints touching the  
phrenological characteristics of other beings than man. Therefore,  
though I am but ill qualified for a pioneer, in the application of these  
two semi-sciences to the whale, I will do my endeavor. I try all things;  
I achieve what I can.  
  
Physiognomically regarded, the Sperm Whale is an anomalous creature.  
He has no proper nose. And since the nose is the central and most  
conspicuous of the features; and since it perhaps most modifies and  
finally controls their combined expression; hence it would seem that its  
entire absence, as an external appendage, must very largely affect  
the countenance of the whale. For as in landscape gardening, a spire,  
cupola, monument, or tower of some sort, is deemed almost indispensable  
to the completion of the scene; so no face can be physiognomically in  
keeping without the elevated open-work belfry of the nose. Dash the nose  
from Phidias's marble Jove, and what a sorry remainder! Nevertheless,  
Leviathan is of so mighty a magnitude, all his proportions are so  
stately, that the same deficiency which in the sculptured Jove were  
hideous, in him is no blemish at all. Nay, it is an added grandeur. A  
nose to the whale would have been impertinent. As on your physiognomical  
voyage you sail round his vast head in your jolly-boat, your noble  
conceptions of him are never insulted by the reflection that he has a  
nose to be pulled. A pestilent conceit, which so often will insist upon  
obtruding even when beholding the mightiest royal beadle on his throne.  
  
In some particulars, perhaps the most imposing physiognomical view to  
be had of the Sperm Whale, is that of the full front of his head. This  
aspect is sublime.  
  
In thought, a fine human brow is like the East when troubled with the  
morning. In the repose of the pasture, the curled brow of the bull has a  
touch of the grand in it. Pushing heavy cannon up mountain defiles, the  
elephant's brow is majestic. Human or animal, the mystical brow is as  
that great golden seal affixed by the German Emperors to their decrees.  
It signifies--"God: done this day by my hand." But in most creatures,  
nay in man himself, very often the brow is but a mere strip of alpine  
land lying along the snow line. Few are the foreheads which like  
Shakespeare's or Melancthon's rise so high, and descend so low, that the  
eyes themselves seem clear, eternal, tideless mountain lakes; and all  
above them in the forehead's wrinkles, you seem to track the antlered  
thoughts descending there to drink, as the Highland hunters track the  
snow prints of the deer. But in the great Sperm Whale, this high and  
mighty god-like dignity inherent in the brow is so immensely amplified,  
that gazing on it, in that full front view, you feel the Deity and the  
dread powers more forcibly than in beholding any other object in living  
nature. For you see no one point precisely; not one distinct feature is  
revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper;  
nothing but that one broad firmament of a forehead, pleated with  
riddles; dumbly lowering with the doom of boats, and ships, and men.  
Nor, in profile, does this wondrous brow diminish; though that way  
viewed its grandeur does not domineer upon you so. In profile, you  
plainly perceive that horizontal, semi-crescentic depression in the  
forehead's middle, which, in man, is Lavater's mark of genius.  
  
But how? Genius in the Sperm Whale? Has the Sperm Whale ever written  
a book, spoken a speech? No, his great genius is declared in his  
doing nothing particular to prove it. It is moreover declared in his  
pyramidical silence. And this reminds me that had the great Sperm Whale  
been known to the young Orient World, he would have been deified by  
their child-magian thoughts. They deified the crocodile of the Nile,  
because the crocodile is tongueless; and the Sperm Whale has no  
tongue, or at least it is so exceedingly small, as to be incapable of  
protrusion. If hereafter any highly cultured, poetical nation shall lure  
back to their birth-right, the merry May-day gods of old; and livingly  
enthrone them again in the now egotistical sky; in the now unhaunted  
hill; then be sure, exalted to Jove's high seat, the great Sperm Whale  
shall lord it.  
  
Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics. But there is  
no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's  
face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing  
fable. If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could  
not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle  
meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of  
the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you  
can.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 80. The Nut.  
  
  
If the Sperm Whale be physiognomically a Sphinx, to the phrenologist his  
brain seems that geometrical circle which it is impossible to square.  
  
In the full-grown creature the skull will measure at least twenty feet  
in length. Unhinge the lower jaw, and the side view of this skull is as  
the side of a moderately inclined plane resting throughout on a level  
base. But in life--as we have elsewhere seen--this inclined plane is  
angularly filled up, and almost squared by the enormous superincumbent  
mass of the junk and sperm. At the high end the skull forms a crater to  
bed that part of the mass; while under the long floor of this crater--in  
another cavity seldom exceeding ten inches in length and as many in  
depth--reposes the mere handful of this monster's brain. The brain is at  
least twenty feet from his apparent forehead in life; it is hidden  
away behind its vast outworks, like the innermost citadel within the  
amplified fortifications of Quebec. So like a choice casket is it  
secreted in him, that I have known some whalemen who peremptorily deny  
that the Sperm Whale has any other brain than that palpable semblance  
of one formed by the cubic-yards of his sperm magazine. Lying in strange  
folds, courses, and convolutions, to their apprehensions, it seems more  
in keeping with the idea of his general might to regard that mystic part  
of him as the seat of his intelligence.  
  
It is plain, then, that phrenologically the head of this Leviathan, in  
the creature's living intact state, is an entire delusion. As for his  
true brain, you can then see no indications of it, nor feel any. The  
whale, like all things that are mighty, wears a false brow to the common  
world.  
  
If you unload his skull of its spermy heaps and then take a rear view  
of its rear end, which is the high end, you will be struck by its  
resemblance to the human skull, beheld in the same situation, and from  
the same point of view. Indeed, place this reversed skull (scaled down  
to the human magnitude) among a plate of men's skulls, and you would  
involuntarily confound it with them; and remarking the depressions on  
one part of its summit, in phrenological phrase you would say--This  
man had no self-esteem, and no veneration. And by those negations,  
considered along with the affirmative fact of his prodigious bulk and  
power, you can best form to yourself the truest, though not the most  
exhilarating conception of what the most exalted potency is.  
  
But if from the comparative dimensions of the whale's proper brain, you  
deem it incapable of being adequately charted, then I have another idea  
for you. If you attentively regard almost any quadruped's spine,  
you will be struck with the resemblance of its vertebrae to a strung  
necklace of dwarfed skulls, all bearing rudimental resemblance to the  
skull proper. It is a German conceit, that the vertebrae are absolutely  
undeveloped skulls. But the curious external resemblance, I take it  
the Germans were not the first men to perceive. A foreign friend once  
pointed it out to me, in the skeleton of a foe he had slain, and with  
the vertebrae of which he was inlaying, in a sort of basso-relievo, the  
beaked prow of his canoe. Now, I consider that the phrenologists have  
omitted an important thing in not pushing their investigations from the  
cerebellum through the spinal canal. For I believe that much of a man's  
character will be found betokened in his backbone. I would rather feel  
your spine than your skull, whoever you are. A thin joist of a spine  
never yet upheld a full and noble soul. I rejoice in my spine, as in the  
firm audacious staff of that flag which I fling half out to the world.  
  
Apply this spinal branch of phrenology to the Sperm Whale. His cranial  
cavity is continuous with the first neck-vertebra; and in that vertebra  
the bottom of the spinal canal will measure ten inches across, being  
eight in height, and of a triangular figure with the base downwards. As  
it passes through the remaining vertebrae the canal tapers in size, but  
for a considerable distance remains of large capacity. Now, of course,  
this canal is filled with much the same strangely fibrous substance--the  
spinal cord--as the brain; and directly communicates with the brain.  
And what is still more, for many feet after emerging from the brain's  
cavity, the spinal cord remains of an undecreasing girth, almost  
equal to that of the brain. Under all these circumstances, would it be  
unreasonable to survey and map out the whale's spine phrenologically?  
For, viewed in this light, the wonderful comparative smallness of his  
brain proper is more than compensated by the wonderful comparative  
magnitude of his spinal cord.  
  
But leaving this hint to operate as it may with the phrenologists, I  
would merely assume the spinal theory for a moment, in reference to the  
Sperm Whale's hump. This august hump, if I mistake not, rises over one  
of the larger vertebrae, and is, therefore, in some sort, the outer  
convex mould of it. From its relative situation then, I should call this  
high hump the organ of firmness or indomitableness in the Sperm Whale.  
And that the great monster is indomitable, you will yet have reason to  
know.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 81. The Pequod Meets The Virgin.  
  
  
The predestinated day arrived, and we duly met the ship Jungfrau, Derick  
De Deer, master, of Bremen.  
  
At one time the greatest whaling people in the world, the Dutch and  
Germans are now among the least; but here and there at very wide  
intervals of latitude and longitude, you still occasionally meet with  
their flag in the Pacific.  
  
For some reason, the Jungfrau seemed quite eager to pay her respects.  
While yet some distance from the Pequod, she rounded to, and dropping a  
boat, her captain was impelled towards us, impatiently standing in the  
bows instead of the stern.  
  
"What has he in his hand there?" cried Starbuck, pointing to something  
wavingly held by the German. "Impossible!--a lamp-feeder!"  
  
"Not that," said Stubb, "no, no, it's a coffee-pot, Mr. Starbuck; he's  
coming off to make us our coffee, is the Yarman; don't you see that big  
tin can there alongside of him?--that's his boiling water. Oh! he's all  
right, is the Yarman."  
  
"Go along with you," cried Flask, "it's a lamp-feeder and an oil-can.  
He's out of oil, and has come a-begging."  
  
However curious it may seem for an oil-ship to be borrowing oil on the  
whale-ground, and however much it may invertedly contradict the old  
proverb about carrying coals to Newcastle, yet sometimes such a thing  
really happens; and in the present case Captain Derick De Deer did  
indubitably conduct a lamp-feeder as Flask did declare.  
  
As he mounted the deck, Ahab abruptly accosted him, without at all  
heeding what he had in his hand; but in his broken lingo, the German  
soon evinced his complete ignorance of the White Whale; immediately  
turning the conversation to his lamp-feeder and oil can, with some  
remarks touching his having to turn into his hammock at night in  
profound darkness--his last drop of Bremen oil being gone, and not a  
single flying-fish yet captured to supply the deficiency; concluding  
by hinting that his ship was indeed what in the Fishery is technically  
called a CLEAN one (that is, an empty one), well deserving the name of  
Jungfrau or the Virgin.  
  
His necessities supplied, Derick departed; but he had not gained his  
ship's side, when whales were almost simultaneously raised from the  
mast-heads of both vessels; and so eager for the chase was Derick, that  
without pausing to put his oil-can and lamp-feeder aboard, he slewed  
round his boat and made after the leviathan lamp-feeders.  
  
Now, the game having risen to leeward, he and the other three German  
boats that soon followed him, had considerably the start of the Pequod's  
keels. There were eight whales, an average pod. Aware of their danger,  
they were going all abreast with great speed straight before the wind,  
rubbing their flanks as closely as so many spans of horses in harness.  
They left a great, wide wake, as though continually unrolling a great  
wide parchment upon the sea.  
  
Full in this rapid wake, and many fathoms in the rear, swam a huge,  
humped old bull, which by his comparatively slow progress, as well as  
by the unusual yellowish incrustations overgrowing him, seemed afflicted  
with the jaundice, or some other infirmity. Whether this whale belonged  
to the pod in advance, seemed questionable; for it is not customary for  
such venerable leviathans to be at all social. Nevertheless, he stuck  
to their wake, though indeed their back water must have retarded him,  
because the white-bone or swell at his broad muzzle was a dashed one,  
like the swell formed when two hostile currents meet. His spout was  
short, slow, and laborious; coming forth with a choking sort of gush,  
and spending itself in torn shreds, followed by strange subterranean  
commotions in him, which seemed to have egress at his other buried  
extremity, causing the waters behind him to upbubble.  
  
"Who's got some paregoric?" said Stubb, "he has the stomach-ache, I'm  
afraid. Lord, think of having half an acre of stomach-ache! Adverse  
winds are holding mad Christmas in him, boys. It's the first foul wind  
I ever knew to blow from astern; but look, did ever whale yaw so before?  
it must be, he's lost his tiller."  
  
As an overladen Indiaman bearing down the Hindostan coast with a deck  
load of frightened horses, careens, buries, rolls, and wallows on her  
way; so did this old whale heave his aged bulk, and now and then partly  
turning over on his cumbrous rib-ends, expose the cause of his devious  
wake in the unnatural stump of his starboard fin. Whether he had lost  
that fin in battle, or had been born without it, it were hard to say.  
  
"Only wait a bit, old chap, and I'll give ye a sling for that wounded  
arm," cried cruel Flask, pointing to the whale-line near him.  
  
"Mind he don't sling thee with it," cried Starbuck. "Give way, or the  
German will have him."  
  
With one intent all the combined rival boats were pointed for this  
one fish, because not only was he the largest, and therefore the most  
valuable whale, but he was nearest to them, and the other whales were  
going with such great velocity, moreover, as almost to defy pursuit  
for the time. At this juncture the Pequod's keels had shot by the three  
German boats last lowered; but from the great start he had had, Derick's  
boat still led the chase, though every moment neared by his foreign  
rivals. The only thing they feared, was, that from being already so  
nigh to his mark, he would be enabled to dart his iron before they  
could completely overtake and pass him. As for Derick, he seemed quite  
confident that this would be the case, and occasionally with a deriding  
gesture shook his lamp-feeder at the other boats.  
  
"The ungracious and ungrateful dog!" cried Starbuck; "he mocks and dares  
me with the very poor-box I filled for him not five minutes ago!"--then  
in his old intense whisper--"Give way, greyhounds! Dog to it!"  
  
"I tell ye what it is, men"--cried Stubb to his crew--"it's against  
my religion to get mad; but I'd like to eat that villainous  
Yarman--Pull--won't ye? Are ye going to let that rascal beat ye? Do  
ye love brandy? A hogshead of brandy, then, to the best man. Come,  
why don't some of ye burst a blood-vessel? Who's that been dropping an  
anchor overboard--we don't budge an inch--we're becalmed. Halloo, here's  
grass growing in the boat's bottom--and by the Lord, the mast there's  
budding. This won't do, boys. Look at that Yarman! The short and long of  
it is, men, will ye spit fire or not?"  
  
"Oh! see the suds he makes!" cried Flask, dancing up and down--"What  
a hump--Oh, DO pile on the beef--lays like a log! Oh! my lads, DO  
spring--slap-jacks and quahogs for supper, you know, my lads--baked  
clams and muffins--oh, DO, DO, spring,--he's a hundred barreller--don't  
lose him now--don't oh, DON'T!--see that Yarman--Oh, won't ye pull for  
your duff, my lads--such a sog! such a sogger! Don't ye love sperm?  
There goes three thousand dollars, men!--a bank!--a whole bank! The bank  
of England!--Oh, DO, DO, DO!--What's that Yarman about now?"  
  
At this moment Derick was in the act of pitching his lamp-feeder at the  
advancing boats, and also his oil-can; perhaps with the double view  
of retarding his rivals' way, and at the same time economically  
accelerating his own by the momentary impetus of the backward toss.  
  
"The unmannerly Dutch dogger!" cried Stubb. "Pull now, men, like fifty  
thousand line-of-battle-ship loads of red-haired devils. What d'ye say,  
Tashtego; are you the man to snap your spine in two-and-twenty pieces  
for the honour of old Gayhead? What d'ye say?"  
  
"I say, pull like god-dam,"--cried the Indian.  
  
Fiercely, but evenly incited by the taunts of the German, the Pequod's  
three boats now began ranging almost abreast; and, so disposed,  
momentarily neared him. In that fine, loose, chivalrous attitude of  
the headsman when drawing near to his prey, the three mates stood up  
proudly, occasionally backing the after oarsman with an exhilarating cry  
of, "There she slides, now! Hurrah for the white-ash breeze! Down with  
the Yarman! Sail over him!"  
  
But so decided an original start had Derick had, that spite of all  
their gallantry, he would have proved the victor in this race, had not  
a righteous judgment descended upon him in a crab which caught the blade  
of his midship oarsman. While this clumsy lubber was striving to free  
his white-ash, and while, in consequence, Derick's boat was nigh to  
capsizing, and he thundering away at his men in a mighty rage;--that was  
a good time for Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask. With a shout, they took a  
mortal start forwards, and slantingly ranged up on the German's quarter.  
An instant more, and all four boats were diagonically in the whale's  
immediate wake, while stretching from them, on both sides, was the  
foaming swell that he made.  
  
It was a terrific, most pitiable, and maddening sight. The whale was  
now going head out, and sending his spout before him in a continual  
tormented jet; while his one poor fin beat his side in an agony of  
fright. Now to this hand, now to that, he yawed in his faltering flight,  
and still at every billow that he broke, he spasmodically sank in the  
sea, or sideways rolled towards the sky his one beating fin. So have I  
seen a bird with clipped wing making affrighted broken circles in the  
air, vainly striving to escape the piratical hawks. But the bird has a  
voice, and with plaintive cries will make known her fear; but the fear  
of this vast dumb brute of the sea, was chained up and enchanted in him;  
he had no voice, save that choking respiration through his spiracle,  
and this made the sight of him unspeakably pitiable; while still, in his  
amazing bulk, portcullis jaw, and omnipotent tail, there was enough to  
appal the stoutest man who so pitied.  
  
Seeing now that but a very few moments more would give the Pequod's  
boats the advantage, and rather than be thus foiled of his game, Derick  
chose to hazard what to him must have seemed a most unusually long dart,  
ere the last chance would for ever escape.  
  
But no sooner did his harpooneer stand up for the stroke, than all three  
tigers--Queequeg, Tashtego, Daggoo--instinctively sprang to their feet,  
and standing in a diagonal row, simultaneously pointed their barbs; and  
darted over the head of the German harpooneer, their three Nantucket  
irons entered the whale. Blinding vapours of foam and white-fire! The  
three boats, in the first fury of the whale's headlong rush, bumped  
the German's aside with such force, that both Derick and his baffled  
harpooneer were spilled out, and sailed over by the three flying keels.  
  
"Don't be afraid, my butter-boxes," cried Stubb, casting a passing  
glance upon them as he shot by; "ye'll be picked up presently--all  
right--I saw some sharks astern--St. Bernard's dogs, you know--relieve  
distressed travellers. Hurrah! this is the way to sail now. Every keel a  
sunbeam! Hurrah!--Here we go like three tin kettles at the tail of a mad  
cougar! This puts me in mind of fastening to an elephant in a tilbury on  
a plain--makes the wheel-spokes fly, boys, when you fasten to him that  
way; and there's danger of being pitched out too, when you strike a  
hill. Hurrah! this is the way a fellow feels when he's going to Davy  
Jones--all a rush down an endless inclined plane! Hurrah! this whale  
carries the everlasting mail!"  
  
But the monster's run was a brief one. Giving a sudden gasp, he  
tumultuously sounded. With a grating rush, the three lines flew round  
the loggerheads with such a force as to gouge deep grooves in them;  
while so fearful were the harpooneers that this rapid sounding would  
soon exhaust the lines, that using all their dexterous might, they  
caught repeated smoking turns with the rope to hold on; till at  
last--owing to the perpendicular strain from the lead-lined chocks of  
the boats, whence the three ropes went straight down into the blue--the  
gunwales of the bows were almost even with the water, while the three  
sterns tilted high in the air. And the whale soon ceasing to sound,  
for some time they remained in that attitude, fearful of expending more  
line, though the position was a little ticklish. But though boats have  
been taken down and lost in this way, yet it is this "holding on," as it  
is called; this hooking up by the sharp barbs of his live flesh from  
the back; this it is that often torments the Leviathan into soon rising  
again to meet the sharp lance of his foes. Yet not to speak of the peril  
of the thing, it is to be doubted whether this course is always the  
best; for it is but reasonable to presume, that the longer the stricken  
whale stays under water, the more he is exhausted. Because, owing to the  
enormous surface of him--in a full grown sperm whale something less than  
2000 square feet--the pressure of the water is immense. We all know  
what an astonishing atmospheric weight we ourselves stand up under; even  
here, above-ground, in the air; how vast, then, the burden of a whale,  
bearing on his back a column of two hundred fathoms of ocean! It must at  
least equal the weight of fifty atmospheres. One whaleman has estimated  
it at the weight of twenty line-of-battle ships, with all their guns,  
and stores, and men on board.  
  
As the three boats lay there on that gently rolling sea, gazing down  
into its eternal blue noon; and as not a single groan or cry of any  
sort, nay, not so much as a ripple or a bubble came up from its depths;  
what landsman would have thought, that beneath all that silence and  
placidity, the utmost monster of the seas was writhing and wrenching in  
agony! Not eight inches of perpendicular rope were visible at the bows.  
Seems it credible that by three such thin threads the great Leviathan  
was suspended like the big weight to an eight day clock. Suspended? and  
to what? To three bits of board. Is this the creature of whom it was  
once so triumphantly said--"Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?  
or his head with fish-spears? The sword of him that layeth at him cannot  
hold, the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon: he esteemeth iron as  
straw; the arrow cannot make him flee; darts are counted as stubble;  
he laugheth at the shaking of a spear!" This the creature? this he? Oh!  
that unfulfilments should follow the prophets. For with the strength  
of a thousand thighs in his tail, Leviathan had run his head under the  
mountains of the sea, to hide him from the Pequod's fish-spears!  
  
In that sloping afternoon sunlight, the shadows that the three boats  
sent down beneath the surface, must have been long enough and broad  
enough to shade half Xerxes' army. Who can tell how appalling to the  
wounded whale must have been such huge phantoms flitting over his head!  
  
"Stand by, men; he stirs," cried Starbuck, as the three lines suddenly  
vibrated in the water, distinctly conducting upwards to them, as by  
magnetic wires, the life and death throbs of the whale, so that every  
oarsman felt them in his seat. The next moment, relieved in great part  
from the downward strain at the bows, the boats gave a sudden bounce  
upwards, as a small icefield will, when a dense herd of white bears are  
scared from it into the sea.  
  
"Haul in! Haul in!" cried Starbuck again; "he's rising."  
  
The lines, of which, hardly an instant before, not one hand's breadth  
could have been gained, were now in long quick coils flung back all  
dripping into the boats, and soon the whale broke water within two  
ship's lengths of the hunters.  
  
His motions plainly denoted his extreme exhaustion. In most land animals  
there are certain valves or flood-gates in many of their veins, whereby  
when wounded, the blood is in some degree at least instantly shut off in  
certain directions. Not so with the whale; one of whose peculiarities  
it is to have an entire non-valvular structure of the blood-vessels, so  
that when pierced even by so small a point as a harpoon, a deadly  
drain is at once begun upon his whole arterial system; and when this is  
heightened by the extraordinary pressure of water at a great distance  
below the surface, his life may be said to pour from him in incessant  
streams. Yet so vast is the quantity of blood in him, and so distant  
and numerous its interior fountains, that he will keep thus bleeding and  
bleeding for a considerable period; even as in a drought a river will  
flow, whose source is in the well-springs of far-off and undiscernible  
hills. Even now, when the boats pulled upon this whale, and perilously  
drew over his swaying flukes, and the lances were darted into him,  
they were followed by steady jets from the new made wound, which kept  
continually playing, while the natural spout-hole in his head was only  
at intervals, however rapid, sending its affrighted moisture into the  
air. From this last vent no blood yet came, because no vital part of him  
had thus far been struck. His life, as they significantly call it, was  
untouched.  
  
As the boats now more closely surrounded him, the whole upper part of  
his form, with much of it that is ordinarily submerged, was plainly  
revealed. His eyes, or rather the places where his eyes had been, were  
beheld. As strange misgrown masses gather in the knot-holes of the  
noblest oaks when prostrate, so from the points which the whale's eyes  
had once occupied, now protruded blind bulbs, horribly pitiable to see.  
But pity there was none. For all his old age, and his one arm, and his  
blind eyes, he must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the  
gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the  
solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all.  
Still rolling in his blood, at last he partially disclosed a strangely  
discoloured bunch or protuberance, the size of a bushel, low down on the  
flank.  
  
"A nice spot," cried Flask; "just let me prick him there once."  
  
"Avast!" cried Starbuck, "there's no need of that!"  
  
But humane Starbuck was too late. At the instant of the dart an  
ulcerous jet shot from this cruel wound, and goaded by it into more than  
sufferable anguish, the whale now spouting thick blood, with swift fury  
blindly darted at the craft, bespattering them and their glorying crews  
all over with showers of gore, capsizing Flask's boat and marring the  
bows. It was his death stroke. For, by this time, so spent was he by  
loss of blood, that he helplessly rolled away from the wreck he had  
made; lay panting on his side, impotently flapped with his stumped fin,  
then over and over slowly revolved like a waning world; turned up  
the white secrets of his belly; lay like a log, and died. It was most  
piteous, that last expiring spout. As when by unseen hands the water  
is gradually drawn off from some mighty fountain, and with half-stifled  
melancholy gurglings the spray-column lowers and lowers to the  
ground--so the last long dying spout of the whale.  
  
Soon, while the crews were awaiting the arrival of the ship, the body  
showed symptoms of sinking with all its treasures unrifled. Immediately,  
by Starbuck's orders, lines were secured to it at different points, so  
that ere long every boat was a buoy; the sunken whale being suspended a  
few inches beneath them by the cords. By very heedful management, when  
the ship drew nigh, the whale was transferred to her side, and was  
strongly secured there by the stiffest fluke-chains, for it was plain  
that unless artificially upheld, the body would at once sink to the  
bottom.  
  
It so chanced that almost upon first cutting into him with the spade,  
the entire length of a corroded harpoon was found imbedded in his flesh,  
on the lower part of the bunch before described. But as the stumps of  
harpoons are frequently found in the dead bodies of captured whales,  
with the flesh perfectly healed around them, and no prominence of any  
kind to denote their place; therefore, there must needs have been  
some other unknown reason in the present case fully to account for  
the ulceration alluded to. But still more curious was the fact of a  
lance-head of stone being found in him, not far from the buried iron,  
the flesh perfectly firm about it. Who had darted that stone lance? And  
when? It might have been darted by some Nor' West Indian long before  
America was discovered.  
  
What other marvels might have been rummaged out of this monstrous  
cabinet there is no telling. But a sudden stop was put to further  
discoveries, by the ship's being unprecedentedly dragged over sideways  
to the sea, owing to the body's immensely increasing tendency to sink.  
However, Starbuck, who had the ordering of affairs, hung on to it to the  
last; hung on to it so resolutely, indeed, that when at length the ship  
would have been capsized, if still persisting in locking arms with the  
body; then, when the command was given to break clear from it, such was  
the immovable strain upon the timber-heads to which the fluke-chains and  
cables were fastened, that it was impossible to cast them off. Meantime  
everything in the Pequod was aslant. To cross to the other side of the  
deck was like walking up the steep gabled roof of a house. The ship  
groaned and gasped. Many of the ivory inlayings of her bulwarks and  
cabins were started from their places, by the unnatural dislocation.  
In vain handspikes and crows were brought to bear upon the immovable  
fluke-chains, to pry them adrift from the timberheads; and so low  
had the whale now settled that the submerged ends could not be at all  
approached, while every moment whole tons of ponderosity seemed added to  
the sinking bulk, and the ship seemed on the point of going over.  
  
"Hold on, hold on, won't ye?" cried Stubb to the body, "don't be in such  
a devil of a hurry to sink! By thunder, men, we must do something or go  
for it. No use prying there; avast, I say with your handspikes, and run  
one of ye for a prayer book and a pen-knife, and cut the big chains."  
  
"Knife? Aye, aye," cried Queequeg, and seizing the carpenter's heavy  
hatchet, he leaned out of a porthole, and steel to iron, began slashing  
at the largest fluke-chains. But a few strokes, full of sparks, were  
given, when the exceeding strain effected the rest. With a terrific  
snap, every fastening went adrift; the ship righted, the carcase sank.  
  
Now, this occasional inevitable sinking of the recently killed Sperm  
Whale is a very curious thing; nor has any fisherman yet adequately  
accounted for it. Usually the dead Sperm Whale floats with great  
buoyancy, with its side or belly considerably elevated above the  
surface. If the only whales that thus sank were old, meagre, and  
broken-hearted creatures, their pads of lard diminished and all their  
bones heavy and rheumatic; then you might with some reason assert that  
this sinking is caused by an uncommon specific gravity in the fish so  
sinking, consequent upon this absence of buoyant matter in him. But it  
is not so. For young whales, in the highest health, and swelling with  
noble aspirations, prematurely cut off in the warm flush and May of  
life, with all their panting lard about them; even these brawny, buoyant  
heroes do sometimes sink.  
  
Be it said, however, that the Sperm Whale is far less liable to this  
accident than any other species. Where one of that sort go down, twenty  
Right Whales do. This difference in the species is no doubt imputable in  
no small degree to the greater quantity of bone in the Right Whale;  
his Venetian blinds alone sometimes weighing more than a ton; from this  
incumbrance the Sperm Whale is wholly free. But there are instances  
where, after the lapse of many hours or several days, the sunken whale  
again rises, more buoyant than in life. But the reason of this  
is obvious. Gases are generated in him; he swells to a prodigious  
magnitude; becomes a sort of animal balloon. A line-of-battle ship could  
hardly keep him under then. In the Shore Whaling, on soundings, among  
the Bays of New Zealand, when a Right Whale gives token of sinking, they  
fasten buoys to him, with plenty of rope; so that when the body has gone  
down, they know where to look for it when it shall have ascended again.  
  
It was not long after the sinking of the body that a cry was heard from  
the Pequod's mast-heads, announcing that the Jungfrau was again lowering  
her boats; though the only spout in sight was that of a Fin-Back,  
belonging to the species of uncapturable whales, because of its  
incredible power of swimming. Nevertheless, the Fin-Back's spout is so  
similar to the Sperm Whale's, that by unskilful fishermen it is often  
mistaken for it. And consequently Derick and all his host were now in  
valiant chase of this unnearable brute. The Virgin crowding all sail,  
made after her four young keels, and thus they all disappeared far to  
leeward, still in bold, hopeful chase.  
  
Oh! many are the Fin-Backs, and many are the Dericks, my friend.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 82. The Honour and Glory of Whaling.  
  
  
There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true  
method.  
  
The more I dive into this matter of whaling, and push my researches up  
to the very spring-head of it so much the more am I impressed with its  
great honourableness and antiquity; and especially when I find so many  
great demi-gods and heroes, prophets of all sorts, who one way or other  
have shed distinction upon it, I am transported with the reflection  
that I myself belong, though but subordinately, to so emblazoned a  
fraternity.  
  
The gallant Perseus, a son of Jupiter, was the first whaleman; and  
to the eternal honour of our calling be it said, that the first whale  
attacked by our brotherhood was not killed with any sordid intent. Those  
were the knightly days of our profession, when we only bore arms to  
succor the distressed, and not to fill men's lamp-feeders. Every one  
knows the fine story of Perseus and Andromeda; how the lovely Andromeda,  
the daughter of a king, was tied to a rock on the sea-coast, and as  
Leviathan was in the very act of carrying her off, Perseus, the prince  
of whalemen, intrepidly advancing, harpooned the monster, and delivered  
and married the maid. It was an admirable artistic exploit, rarely  
achieved by the best harpooneers of the present day; inasmuch as this  
Leviathan was slain at the very first dart. And let no man doubt this  
Arkite story; for in the ancient Joppa, now Jaffa, on the Syrian coast,  
in one of the Pagan temples, there stood for many ages the vast skeleton  
of a whale, which the city's legends and all the inhabitants asserted to  
be the identical bones of the monster that Perseus slew. When the Romans  
took Joppa, the same skeleton was carried to Italy in triumph. What  
seems most singular and suggestively important in this story, is this:  
it was from Joppa that Jonah set sail.  
  
Akin to the adventure of Perseus and Andromeda--indeed, by some supposed  
to be indirectly derived from it--is that famous story of St. George and  
the Dragon; which dragon I maintain to have been a whale; for in many  
old chronicles whales and dragons are strangely jumbled together, and  
often stand for each other. "Thou art as a lion of the waters, and as a  
dragon of the sea," saith Ezekiel; hereby, plainly meaning a whale;  
in truth, some versions of the Bible use that word itself. Besides, it  
would much subtract from the glory of the exploit had St. George but  
encountered a crawling reptile of the land, instead of doing battle  
with the great monster of the deep. Any man may kill a snake, but only a  
Perseus, a St. George, a Coffin, have the heart in them to march boldly  
up to a whale.  
  
Let not the modern paintings of this scene mislead us; for though  
the creature encountered by that valiant whaleman of old is vaguely  
represented of a griffin-like shape, and though the battle is depicted  
on land and the saint on horseback, yet considering the great ignorance  
of those times, when the true form of the whale was unknown to artists;  
and considering that as in Perseus' case, St. George's whale might have  
crawled up out of the sea on the beach; and considering that the animal  
ridden by St. George might have been only a large seal, or sea-horse;  
bearing all this in mind, it will not appear altogether incompatible  
with the sacred legend and the ancientest draughts of the scene, to  
hold this so-called dragon no other than the great Leviathan himself. In  
fact, placed before the strict and piercing truth, this whole story will  
fare like that fish, flesh, and fowl idol of the Philistines, Dagon by  
name; who being planted before the ark of Israel, his horse's head and  
both the palms of his hands fell off from him, and only the stump or  
fishy part of him remained. Thus, then, one of our own noble stamp, even  
a whaleman, is the tutelary guardian of England; and by good rights, we  
harpooneers of Nantucket should be enrolled in the most noble order  
of St. George. And therefore, let not the knights of that honourable  
company (none of whom, I venture to say, have ever had to do with a  
whale like their great patron), let them never eye a Nantucketer with  
disdain, since even in our woollen frocks and tarred trowsers we are  
much better entitled to St. George's decoration than they.  
  
Whether to admit Hercules among us or not, concerning this I long  
remained dubious: for though according to the Greek mythologies, that  
antique Crockett and Kit Carson--that brawny doer of rejoicing good  
deeds, was swallowed down and thrown up by a whale; still, whether  
that strictly makes a whaleman of him, that might be mooted. It nowhere  
appears that he ever actually harpooned his fish, unless, indeed,  
from the inside. Nevertheless, he may be deemed a sort of involuntary  
whaleman; at any rate the whale caught him, if he did not the whale. I  
claim him for one of our clan.  
  
But, by the best contradictory authorities, this Grecian story of  
Hercules and the whale is considered to be derived from the still more  
ancient Hebrew story of Jonah and the whale; and vice versa; certainly  
they are very similar. If I claim the demigod then, why not the prophet?  
  
Nor do heroes, saints, demigods, and prophets alone comprise the whole  
roll of our order. Our grand master is still to be named; for like royal  
kings of old times, we find the head waters of our fraternity in nothing  
short of the great gods themselves. That wondrous oriental story is now  
to be rehearsed from the Shaster, which gives us the dread Vishnoo, one  
of the three persons in the godhead of the Hindoos; gives us this divine  
Vishnoo himself for our Lord;--Vishnoo, who, by the first of his ten  
earthly incarnations, has for ever set apart and sanctified the whale.  
When Brahma, or the God of Gods, saith the Shaster, resolved to recreate  
the world after one of its periodical dissolutions, he gave birth to  
Vishnoo, to preside over the work; but the Vedas, or mystical books,  
whose perusal would seem to have been indispensable to Vishnoo before  
beginning the creation, and which therefore must have contained  
something in the shape of practical hints to young architects, these  
Vedas were lying at the bottom of the waters; so Vishnoo became  
incarnate in a whale, and sounding down in him to the uttermost depths,  
rescued the sacred volumes. Was not this Vishnoo a whaleman, then? even  
as a man who rides a horse is called a horseman?  
  
Perseus, St. George, Hercules, Jonah, and Vishnoo! there's a member-roll  
for you! What club but the whaleman's can head off like that?  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 83. Jonah Historically Regarded.  
  
  
Reference was made to the historical story of Jonah and the whale in the  
preceding chapter. Now some Nantucketers rather distrust this historical  
story of Jonah and the whale. But then there were some sceptical Greeks  
and Romans, who, standing out from the orthodox pagans of their times,  
equally doubted the story of Hercules and the whale, and Arion and the  
dolphin; and yet their doubting those traditions did not make those  
traditions one whit the less facts, for all that.  
  
One old Sag-Harbor whaleman's chief reason for questioning the Hebrew  
story was this:--He had one of those quaint old-fashioned Bibles,  
embellished with curious, unscientific plates; one of which represented  
Jonah's whale with two spouts in his head--a peculiarity only true  
with respect to a species of the Leviathan (the Right Whale, and the  
varieties of that order), concerning which the fishermen have this  
saying, "A penny roll would choke him"; his swallow is so very small.  
But, to this, Bishop Jebb's anticipative answer is ready. It is not  
necessary, hints the Bishop, that we consider Jonah as tombed in the  
whale's belly, but as temporarily lodged in some part of his mouth. And  
this seems reasonable enough in the good Bishop. For truly, the  
Right Whale's mouth would accommodate a couple of whist-tables, and  
comfortably seat all the players. Possibly, too, Jonah might have  
ensconced himself in a hollow tooth; but, on second thoughts, the Right  
Whale is toothless.  
  
Another reason which Sag-Harbor (he went by that name) urged for his  
want of faith in this matter of the prophet, was something obscurely in  
reference to his incarcerated body and the whale's gastric juices. But  
this objection likewise falls to the ground, because a German exegetist  
supposes that Jonah must have taken refuge in the floating body of a  
DEAD whale--even as the French soldiers in the Russian campaign turned  
their dead horses into tents, and crawled into them. Besides, it has  
been divined by other continental commentators, that when Jonah was  
thrown overboard from the Joppa ship, he straightway effected his escape  
to another vessel near by, some vessel with a whale for a figure-head;  
and, I would add, possibly called "The Whale," as some craft are  
nowadays christened the "Shark," the "Gull," the "Eagle." Nor have there  
been wanting learned exegetists who have opined that the whale mentioned  
in the book of Jonah merely meant a life-preserver--an inflated bag  
of wind--which the endangered prophet swam to, and so was saved from a  
watery doom. Poor Sag-Harbor, therefore, seems worsted all round. But  
he had still another reason for his want of faith. It was this, if I  
remember right: Jonah was swallowed by the whale in the Mediterranean  
Sea, and after three days he was vomited up somewhere within three days'  
journey of Nineveh, a city on the Tigris, very much more than three  
days' journey across from the nearest point of the Mediterranean coast.  
How is that?  
  
But was there no other way for the whale to land the prophet within that  
short distance of Nineveh? Yes. He might have carried him round by the  
way of the Cape of Good Hope. But not to speak of the passage through  
the whole length of the Mediterranean, and another passage up the  
Persian Gulf and Red Sea, such a supposition would involve the complete  
circumnavigation of all Africa in three days, not to speak of the Tigris  
waters, near the site of Nineveh, being too shallow for any whale to  
swim in. Besides, this idea of Jonah's weathering the Cape of Good Hope  
at so early a day would wrest the honour of the discovery of that great  
headland from Bartholomew Diaz, its reputed discoverer, and so make  
modern history a liar.  
  
But all these foolish arguments of old Sag-Harbor only evinced his  
foolish pride of reason--a thing still more reprehensible in him, seeing  
that he had but little learning except what he had picked up from the  
sun and the sea. I say it only shows his foolish, impious pride, and  
abominable, devilish rebellion against the reverend clergy. For by a  
Portuguese Catholic priest, this very idea of Jonah's going to Nineveh  
via the Cape of Good Hope was advanced as a signal magnification of  
the general miracle. And so it was. Besides, to this day, the highly  
enlightened Turks devoutly believe in the historical story of Jonah. And  
some three centuries ago, an English traveller in old Harris's Voyages,  
speaks of a Turkish Mosque built in honour of Jonah, in which Mosque was  
a miraculous lamp that burnt without any oil.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 84. Pitchpoling.  
  
  
To make them run easily and swiftly, the axles of carriages are  
anointed; and for much the same purpose, some whalers perform an  
analogous operation upon their boat; they grease the bottom. Nor is it  
to be doubted that as such a procedure can do no harm, it may possibly  
be of no contemptible advantage; considering that oil and water are  
hostile; that oil is a sliding thing, and that the object in view is to  
make the boat slide bravely. Queequeg believed strongly in anointing  
his boat, and one morning not long after the German ship Jungfrau  
disappeared, took more than customary pains in that occupation; crawling  
under its bottom, where it hung over the side, and rubbing in the  
unctuousness as though diligently seeking to insure a crop of hair from  
the craft's bald keel. He seemed to be working in obedience to some  
particular presentiment. Nor did it remain unwarranted by the event.  
  
Towards noon whales were raised; but so soon as the ship sailed down to  
them, they turned and fled with swift precipitancy; a disordered flight,  
as of Cleopatra's barges from Actium.  
  
Nevertheless, the boats pursued, and Stubb's was foremost. By great  
exertion, Tashtego at last succeeded in planting one iron; but the  
stricken whale, without at all sounding, still continued his horizontal  
flight, with added fleetness. Such unintermitted strainings upon the  
planted iron must sooner or later inevitably extract it. It became  
imperative to lance the flying whale, or be content to lose him. But  
to haul the boat up to his flank was impossible, he swam so fast and  
furious. What then remained?  
  
Of all the wondrous devices and dexterities, the sleights of hand and  
countless subtleties, to which the veteran whaleman is so often forced,  
none exceed that fine manoeuvre with the lance called pitchpoling. Small  
sword, or broad sword, in all its exercises boasts nothing like it. It  
is only indispensable with an inveterate running whale; its grand  
fact and feature is the wonderful distance to which the long lance is  
accurately darted from a violently rocking, jerking boat, under extreme  
headway. Steel and wood included, the entire spear is some ten or twelve  
feet in length; the staff is much slighter than that of the harpoon,  
and also of a lighter material--pine. It is furnished with a small rope  
called a warp, of considerable length, by which it can be hauled back to  
the hand after darting.  
  
But before going further, it is important to mention here, that though  
the harpoon may be pitchpoled in the same way with the lance, yet it  
is seldom done; and when done, is still less frequently successful,  
on account of the greater weight and inferior length of the harpoon as  
compared with the lance, which in effect become serious drawbacks. As a  
general thing, therefore, you must first get fast to a whale, before any  
pitchpoling comes into play.  
  
Look now at Stubb; a man who from his humorous, deliberate coolness and  
equanimity in the direst emergencies, was specially qualified to excel  
in pitchpoling. Look at him; he stands upright in the tossed bow of the  
flying boat; wrapt in fleecy foam, the towing whale is forty feet ahead.  
Handling the long lance lightly, glancing twice or thrice along its  
length to see if it be exactly straight, Stubb whistlingly gathers up  
the coil of the warp in one hand, so as to secure its free end in his  
grasp, leaving the rest unobstructed. Then holding the lance full before  
his waistband's middle, he levels it at the whale; when, covering  
him with it, he steadily depresses the butt-end in his hand, thereby  
elevating the point till the weapon stands fairly balanced upon his  
palm, fifteen feet in the air. He minds you somewhat of a juggler,  
balancing a long staff on his chin. Next moment with a rapid, nameless  
impulse, in a superb lofty arch the bright steel spans the foaming  
distance, and quivers in the life spot of the whale. Instead of  
sparkling water, he now spouts red blood.  
  
"That drove the spigot out of him!" cried Stubb. "'Tis July's immortal  
Fourth; all fountains must run wine today! Would now, it were old  
Orleans whiskey, or old Ohio, or unspeakable old Monongahela! Then,  
Tashtego, lad, I'd have ye hold a canakin to the jet, and we'd drink  
round it! Yea, verily, hearts alive, we'd brew choice punch in the  
spread of his spout-hole there, and from that live punch-bowl quaff the  
living stuff."  
  
Again and again to such gamesome talk, the dexterous dart is repeated,  
the spear returning to its master like a greyhound held in skilful  
leash. The agonized whale goes into his flurry; the tow-line is  
slackened, and the pitchpoler dropping astern, folds his hands, and  
mutely watches the monster die.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 85. The Fountain.  
  
  
That for six thousand years--and no one knows how many millions of ages  
before--the great whales should have been spouting all over the sea,  
and sprinkling and mistifying the gardens of the deep, as with so  
many sprinkling or mistifying pots; and that for some centuries back,  
thousands of hunters should have been close by the fountain of the  
whale, watching these sprinklings and spoutings--that all this should  
be, and yet, that down to this blessed minute (fifteen and a quarter  
minutes past one o'clock P.M. of this sixteenth day of December, A.D.  
1851), it should still remain a problem, whether these spoutings  
are, after all, really water, or nothing but vapour--this is surely a  
noteworthy thing.  
  
Let us, then, look at this matter, along with some interesting items  
contingent. Every one knows that by the peculiar cunning of their  
gills, the finny tribes in general breathe the air which at all times is  
combined with the element in which they swim; hence, a herring or a cod  
might live a century, and never once raise its head above the surface.  
But owing to his marked internal structure which gives him regular  
lungs, like a human being's, the whale can only live by inhaling the  
disengaged air in the open atmosphere. Wherefore the necessity for  
his periodical visits to the upper world. But he cannot in any degree  
breathe through his mouth, for, in his ordinary attitude, the Sperm  
Whale's mouth is buried at least eight feet beneath the surface; and  
what is still more, his windpipe has no connexion with his mouth. No, he  
breathes through his spiracle alone; and this is on the top of his head.  
  
If I say, that in any creature breathing is only a function  
indispensable to vitality, inasmuch as it withdraws from the air a  
certain element, which being subsequently brought into contact with the  
blood imparts to the blood its vivifying principle, I do not think I  
shall err; though I may possibly use some superfluous scientific words.  
Assume it, and it follows that if all the blood in a man could be  
aerated with one breath, he might then seal up his nostrils and not  
fetch another for a considerable time. That is to say, he would then  
live without breathing. Anomalous as it may seem, this is precisely the  
case with the whale, who systematically lives, by intervals, his full  
hour and more (when at the bottom) without drawing a single breath, or  
so much as in any way inhaling a particle of air; for, remember, he has  
no gills. How is this? Between his ribs and on each side of his spine  
he is supplied with a remarkable involved Cretan labyrinth of  
vermicelli-like vessels, which vessels, when he quits the surface, are  
completely distended with oxygenated blood. So that for an hour or more,  
a thousand fathoms in the sea, he carries a surplus stock of vitality in  
him, just as the camel crossing the waterless desert carries a surplus  
supply of drink for future use in its four supplementary stomachs.  
The anatomical fact of this labyrinth is indisputable; and that the  
supposition founded upon it is reasonable and true, seems the more  
cogent to me, when I consider the otherwise inexplicable obstinacy of  
that leviathan in HAVING HIS SPOUTINGS OUT, as the fishermen phrase  
it. This is what I mean. If unmolested, upon rising to the surface, the  
Sperm Whale will continue there for a period of time exactly uniform  
with all his other unmolested risings. Say he stays eleven minutes, and  
jets seventy times, that is, respires seventy breaths; then whenever he  
rises again, he will be sure to have his seventy breaths over again, to  
a minute. Now, if after he fetches a few breaths you alarm him, so that  
he sounds, he will be always dodging up again to make good his regular  
allowance of air. And not till those seventy breaths are told, will he  
finally go down to stay out his full term below. Remark, however, that  
in different individuals these rates are different; but in any one  
they are alike. Now, why should the whale thus insist upon having his  
spoutings out, unless it be to replenish his reservoir of air, ere  
descending for good? How obvious is it, too, that this necessity for the  
whale's rising exposes him to all the fatal hazards of the chase. For  
not by hook or by net could this vast leviathan be caught, when sailing  
a thousand fathoms beneath the sunlight. Not so much thy skill, then, O  
hunter, as the great necessities that strike the victory to thee!  
  
In man, breathing is incessantly going on--one breath only serving  
for two or three pulsations; so that whatever other business he has to  
attend to, waking or sleeping, breathe he must, or die he will. But the  
Sperm Whale only breathes about one seventh or Sunday of his time.  
  
It has been said that the whale only breathes through his spout-hole; if  
it could truthfully be added that his spouts are mixed with water, then  
I opine we should be furnished with the reason why his sense of smell  
seems obliterated in him; for the only thing about him that at all  
answers to his nose is that identical spout-hole; and being so clogged  
with two elements, it could not be expected to have the power of  
smelling. But owing to the mystery of the spout--whether it be water or  
whether it be vapour--no absolute certainty can as yet be arrived at on  
this head. Sure it is, nevertheless, that the Sperm Whale has no proper  
olfactories. But what does he want of them? No roses, no violets, no  
Cologne-water in the sea.  
  
Furthermore, as his windpipe solely opens into the tube of his spouting  
canal, and as that long canal--like the grand Erie Canal--is furnished  
with a sort of locks (that open and shut) for the downward retention of  
air or the upward exclusion of water, therefore the whale has no voice;  
unless you insult him by saying, that when he so strangely rumbles,  
he talks through his nose. But then again, what has the whale to say?  
Seldom have I known any profound being that had anything to say to  
this world, unless forced to stammer out something by way of getting a  
living. Oh! happy that the world is such an excellent listener!  
  
Now, the spouting canal of the Sperm Whale, chiefly intended as it  
is for the conveyance of air, and for several feet laid along,  
horizontally, just beneath the upper surface of his head, and a little  
to one side; this curious canal is very much like a gas-pipe laid down  
in a city on one side of a street. But the question returns whether this  
gas-pipe is also a water-pipe; in other words, whether the spout of the  
Sperm Whale is the mere vapour of the exhaled breath, or whether that  
exhaled breath is mixed with water taken in at the mouth, and  
discharged through the spiracle. It is certain that the mouth indirectly  
communicates with the spouting canal; but it cannot be proved that this  
is for the purpose of discharging water through the spiracle. Because  
the greatest necessity for so doing would seem to be, when in feeding he  
accidentally takes in water. But the Sperm Whale's food is far beneath  
the surface, and there he cannot spout even if he would. Besides, if  
you regard him very closely, and time him with your watch, you will find  
that when unmolested, there is an undeviating rhyme between the periods  
of his jets and the ordinary periods of respiration.  
  
But why pester one with all this reasoning on the subject? Speak out!  
You have seen him spout; then declare what the spout is; can you not  
tell water from air? My dear sir, in this world it is not so easy to  
settle these plain things. I have ever found your plain things the  
knottiest of all. And as for this whale spout, you might almost stand in  
it, and yet be undecided as to what it is precisely.  
  
The central body of it is hidden in the snowy sparkling mist enveloping  
it; and how can you certainly tell whether any water falls from it,  
when, always, when you are close enough to a whale to get a close view  
of his spout, he is in a prodigious commotion, the water cascading  
all around him. And if at such times you should think that you really  
perceived drops of moisture in the spout, how do you know that they are  
not merely condensed from its vapour; or how do you know that they  
are not those identical drops superficially lodged in the spout-hole  
fissure, which is countersunk into the summit of the whale's head? For  
even when tranquilly swimming through the mid-day sea in a calm, with  
his elevated hump sun-dried as a dromedary's in the desert; even then,  
the whale always carries a small basin of water on his head, as under  
a blazing sun you will sometimes see a cavity in a rock filled up with  
rain.  
  
Nor is it at all prudent for the hunter to be over curious touching the  
precise nature of the whale spout. It will not do for him to be peering  
into it, and putting his face in it. You cannot go with your pitcher to  
this fountain and fill it, and bring it away. For even when coming into  
slight contact with the outer, vapoury shreds of the jet, which will  
often happen, your skin will feverishly smart, from the acridness of  
the thing so touching it. And I know one, who coming into still closer  
contact with the spout, whether with some scientific object in view,  
or otherwise, I cannot say, the skin peeled off from his cheek and arm.  
Wherefore, among whalemen, the spout is deemed poisonous; they try to  
evade it. Another thing; I have heard it said, and I do not much doubt  
it, that if the jet is fairly spouted into your eyes, it will blind you.  
The wisest thing the investigator can do then, it seems to me, is to let  
this deadly spout alone.  
  
Still, we can hypothesize, even if we cannot prove and establish. My  
hypothesis is this: that the spout is nothing but mist. And besides  
other reasons, to this conclusion I am impelled, by considerations  
touching the great inherent dignity and sublimity of the Sperm Whale;  
I account him no common, shallow being, inasmuch as it is an undisputed  
fact that he is never found on soundings, or near shores; all other  
whales sometimes are. He is both ponderous and profound. And I am  
convinced that from the heads of all ponderous profound beings, such as  
Plato, Pyrrho, the Devil, Jupiter, Dante, and so on, there always goes  
up a certain semi-visible steam, while in the act of thinking deep  
thoughts. While composing a little treatise on Eternity, I had the  
curiosity to place a mirror before me; and ere long saw reflected there,  
a curious involved worming and undulation in the atmosphere over my  
head. The invariable moisture of my hair, while plunged in deep thought,  
after six cups of hot tea in my thin shingled attic, of an August noon;  
this seems an additional argument for the above supposition.  
  
And how nobly it raises our conceit of the mighty, misty monster, to  
behold him solemnly sailing through a calm tropical sea; his vast, mild  
head overhung by a canopy of vapour, engendered by his incommunicable  
contemplations, and that vapour--as you will sometimes see it--glorified  
by a rainbow, as if Heaven itself had put its seal upon his thoughts.  
For, d'ye see, rainbows do not visit the clear air; they only irradiate  
vapour. And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my  
mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a  
heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny;  
but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts  
of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this  
combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who  
regards them both with equal eye.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 86. The Tail.  
  
  
Other poets have warbled the praises of the soft eye of the antelope,  
and the lovely plumage of the bird that never alights; less celestial, I  
celebrate a tail.  
  
Reckoning the largest sized Sperm Whale's tail to begin at that point of  
the trunk where it tapers to about the girth of a man, it comprises  
upon its upper surface alone, an area of at least fifty square feet. The  
compact round body of its root expands into two broad, firm, flat palms  
or flukes, gradually shoaling away to less than an inch in thickness.  
At the crotch or junction, these flukes slightly overlap, then sideways  
recede from each other like wings, leaving a wide vacancy between. In  
no living thing are the lines of beauty more exquisitely defined than in  
the crescentic borders of these flukes. At its utmost expansion in the  
full grown whale, the tail will considerably exceed twenty feet across.  
  
The entire member seems a dense webbed bed of welded sinews; but cut  
into it, and you find that three distinct strata compose it:--upper,  
middle, and lower. The fibres in the upper and lower layers, are  
long and horizontal; those of the middle one, very short, and running  
crosswise between the outside layers. This triune structure, as much as  
anything else, imparts power to the tail. To the student of old Roman  
walls, the middle layer will furnish a curious parallel to the thin  
course of tiles always alternating with the stone in those wonderful  
relics of the antique, and which undoubtedly contribute so much to the  
great strength of the masonry.  
  
But as if this vast local power in the tendinous tail were not enough,  
the whole bulk of the leviathan is knit over with a warp and woof of  
muscular fibres and filaments, which passing on either side the loins  
and running down into the flukes, insensibly blend with them, and  
largely contribute to their might; so that in the tail the confluent  
measureless force of the whole whale seems concentrated to a point.  
Could annihilation occur to matter, this were the thing to do it.  
  
Nor does this--its amazing strength, at all tend to cripple the graceful  
flexion of its motions; where infantileness of ease undulates through  
a Titanism of power. On the contrary, those motions derive their most  
appalling beauty from it. Real strength never impairs beauty or harmony,  
but it often bestows it; and in everything imposingly beautiful,  
strength has much to do with the magic. Take away the tied tendons that  
all over seem bursting from the marble in the carved Hercules, and its  
charm would be gone. As devout Eckerman lifted the linen sheet from the  
naked corpse of Goethe, he was overwhelmed with the massive chest of the  
man, that seemed as a Roman triumphal arch. When Angelo paints even God  
the Father in human form, mark what robustness is there. And whatever  
they may reveal of the divine love in the Son, the soft, curled,  
hermaphroditical Italian pictures, in which his idea has been most  
successfully embodied; these pictures, so destitute as they are of all  
brawniness, hint nothing of any power, but the mere negative, feminine  
one of submission and endurance, which on all hands it is conceded, form  
the peculiar practical virtues of his teachings.  
  
Such is the subtle elasticity of the organ I treat of, that whether  
wielded in sport, or in earnest, or in anger, whatever be the mood it  
be in, its flexions are invariably marked by exceeding grace. Therein no  
fairy's arm can transcend it.  
  
Five great motions are peculiar to it. First, when used as a fin for  
progression; Second, when used as a mace in battle; Third, in sweeping;  
Fourth, in lobtailing; Fifth, in peaking flukes.  
  
First: Being horizontal in its position, the Leviathan's tail acts in  
a different manner from the tails of all other sea creatures. It never  
wriggles. In man or fish, wriggling is a sign of inferiority. To the  
whale, his tail is the sole means of propulsion. Scroll-wise coiled  
forwards beneath the body, and then rapidly sprung backwards, it is this  
which gives that singular darting, leaping motion to the monster when  
furiously swimming. His side-fins only serve to steer by.  
  
Second: It is a little significant, that while one sperm whale only  
fights another sperm whale with his head and jaw, nevertheless, in his  
conflicts with man, he chiefly and contemptuously uses his tail. In  
striking at a boat, he swiftly curves away his flukes from it, and the  
blow is only inflicted by the recoil. If it be made in the unobstructed  
air, especially if it descend to its mark, the stroke is then simply  
irresistible. No ribs of man or boat can withstand it. Your only  
salvation lies in eluding it; but if it comes sideways through the  
opposing water, then partly owing to the light buoyancy of the whale  
boat, and the elasticity of its materials, a cracked rib or a dashed  
plank or two, a sort of stitch in the side, is generally the most  
serious result. These submerged side blows are so often received in the  
fishery, that they are accounted mere child's play. Some one strips off  
a frock, and the hole is stopped.  
  
Third: I cannot demonstrate it, but it seems to me, that in the whale  
the sense of touch is concentrated in the tail; for in this respect  
there is a delicacy in it only equalled by the daintiness of the  
elephant's trunk. This delicacy is chiefly evinced in the action of  
sweeping, when in maidenly gentleness the whale with a certain soft  
slowness moves his immense flukes from side to side upon the surface  
of the sea; and if he feel but a sailor's whisker, woe to that sailor,  
whiskers and all. What tenderness there is in that preliminary touch!  
Had this tail any prehensile power, I should straightway bethink me of  
Darmonodes' elephant that so frequented the flower-market, and with  
low salutations presented nosegays to damsels, and then caressed their  
zones. On more accounts than one, a pity it is that the whale does not  
possess this prehensile virtue in his tail; for I have heard of yet  
another elephant, that when wounded in the fight, curved round his trunk  
and extracted the dart.  
  
Fourth: Stealing unawares upon the whale in the fancied security of the  
middle of solitary seas, you find him unbent from the vast corpulence  
of his dignity, and kitten-like, he plays on the ocean as if it were a  
hearth. But still you see his power in his play. The broad palms of  
his tail are flirted high into the air; then smiting the surface, the  
thunderous concussion resounds for miles. You would almost think a great  
gun had been discharged; and if you noticed the light wreath of vapour  
from the spiracle at his other extremity, you would think that that was  
the smoke from the touch-hole.  
  
Fifth: As in the ordinary floating posture of the leviathan the flukes  
lie considerably below the level of his back, they are then completely  
out of sight beneath the surface; but when he is about to plunge into  
the deeps, his entire flukes with at least thirty feet of his body are  
tossed erect in the air, and so remain vibrating a moment, till they  
downwards shoot out of view. Excepting the sublime BREACH--somewhere  
else to be described--this peaking of the whale's flukes is perhaps the  
grandest sight to be seen in all animated nature. Out of the bottomless  
profundities the gigantic tail seems spasmodically snatching at the  
highest heaven. So in dreams, have I seen majestic Satan thrusting forth  
his tormented colossal claw from the flame Baltic of Hell. But in  
gazing at such scenes, it is all in all what mood you are in; if in  
the Dantean, the devils will occur to you; if in that of Isaiah, the  
archangels. Standing at the mast-head of my ship during a sunrise that  
crimsoned sky and sea, I once saw a large herd of whales in the east,  
all heading towards the sun, and for a moment vibrating in concert with  
peaked flukes. As it seemed to me at the time, such a grand embodiment  
of adoration of the gods was never beheld, even in Persia, the home of  
the fire worshippers. As Ptolemy Philopater testified of the African  
elephant, I then testified of the whale, pronouncing him the most devout  
of all beings. For according to King Juba, the military elephants of  
antiquity often hailed the morning with their trunks uplifted in the  
profoundest silence.  
  
The chance comparison in this chapter, between the whale and the  
elephant, so far as some aspects of the tail of the one and the trunk  
of the other are concerned, should not tend to place those two  
opposite organs on an equality, much less the creatures to which they  
respectively belong. For as the mightiest elephant is but a terrier  
to Leviathan, so, compared with Leviathan's tail, his trunk is but the  
stalk of a lily. The most direful blow from the elephant's trunk were as  
the playful tap of a fan, compared with the measureless crush and crash  
of the sperm whale's ponderous flukes, which in repeated instances have  
one after the other hurled entire boats with all their oars and crews  
into the air, very much as an Indian juggler tosses his balls.\*  
  
  
\*Though all comparison in the way of general bulk between the whale  
and the elephant is preposterous, inasmuch as in that particular the  
elephant stands in much the same respect to the whale that a dog does to  
the elephant; nevertheless, there are not wanting some points of curious  
similitude; among these is the spout. It is well known that the elephant  
will often draw up water or dust in his trunk, and then elevating it,  
jet it forth in a stream.  
  
  
The more I consider this mighty tail, the more do I deplore my inability  
to express it. At times there are gestures in it, which, though they  
would well grace the hand of man, remain wholly inexplicable. In an  
extensive herd, so remarkable, occasionally, are these mystic gestures,  
that I have heard hunters who have declared them akin to Free-Mason  
signs and symbols; that the whale, indeed, by these methods  
intelligently conversed with the world. Nor are there wanting other  
motions of the whale in his general body, full of strangeness, and  
unaccountable to his most experienced assailant. Dissect him how I may,  
then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will. But if I know  
not even the tail of this whale, how understand his head? much more,  
how comprehend his face, when face he has none? Thou shalt see my back  
parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall not be seen. But I  
cannot completely make out his back parts; and hint what he will about  
his face, I say again he has no face.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 87. The Grand Armada.  
  
  
The long and narrow peninsula of Malacca, extending south-eastward from  
the territories of Birmah, forms the most southerly point of all Asia.  
In a continuous line from that peninsula stretch the long islands of  
Sumatra, Java, Bally, and Timor; which, with many others, form a  
vast mole, or rampart, lengthwise connecting Asia with Australia,  
and dividing the long unbroken Indian ocean from the thickly studded  
oriental archipelagoes. This rampart is pierced by several sally-ports  
for the convenience of ships and whales; conspicuous among which are the  
straits of Sunda and Malacca. By the straits of Sunda, chiefly, vessels  
bound to China from the west, emerge into the China seas.  
  
Those narrow straits of Sunda divide Sumatra from Java; and standing  
midway in that vast rampart of islands, buttressed by that bold green  
promontory, known to seamen as Java Head; they not a little correspond  
to the central gateway opening into some vast walled empire: and  
considering the inexhaustible wealth of spices, and silks, and jewels,  
and gold, and ivory, with which the thousand islands of that oriental  
sea are enriched, it seems a significant provision of nature, that such  
treasures, by the very formation of the land, should at least bear the  
appearance, however ineffectual, of being guarded from the all-grasping  
western world. The shores of the Straits of Sunda are unsupplied  
with those domineering fortresses which guard the entrances to the  
Mediterranean, the Baltic, and the Propontis. Unlike the Danes, these  
Orientals do not demand the obsequious homage of lowered top-sails from  
the endless procession of ships before the wind, which for centuries  
past, by night and by day, have passed between the islands of Sumatra  
and Java, freighted with the costliest cargoes of the east. But while  
they freely waive a ceremonial like this, they do by no means renounce  
their claim to more solid tribute.  
  
Time out of mind the piratical proas of the Malays, lurking among  
the low shaded coves and islets of Sumatra, have sallied out upon the  
vessels sailing through the straits, fiercely demanding tribute at the  
point of their spears. Though by the repeated bloody chastisements they  
have received at the hands of European cruisers, the audacity of these  
corsairs has of late been somewhat repressed; yet, even at the present  
day, we occasionally hear of English and American vessels, which, in  
those waters, have been remorselessly boarded and pillaged.  
  
With a fair, fresh wind, the Pequod was now drawing nigh to these  
straits; Ahab purposing to pass through them into the Javan sea, and  
thence, cruising northwards, over waters known to be frequented here and  
there by the Sperm Whale, sweep inshore by the Philippine Islands, and  
gain the far coast of Japan, in time for the great whaling season there.  
By these means, the circumnavigating Pequod would sweep almost all the  
known Sperm Whale cruising grounds of the world, previous to descending  
upon the Line in the Pacific; where Ahab, though everywhere else foiled  
in his pursuit, firmly counted upon giving battle to Moby Dick, in the  
sea he was most known to frequent; and at a season when he might most  
reasonably be presumed to be haunting it.  
  
But how now? in this zoned quest, does Ahab touch no land? does his crew  
drink air? Surely, he will stop for water. Nay. For a long time, now,  
the circus-running sun has raced within his fiery ring, and needs  
no sustenance but what's in himself. So Ahab. Mark this, too, in the  
whaler. While other hulls are loaded down with alien stuff, to be  
transferred to foreign wharves; the world-wandering whale-ship carries  
no cargo but herself and crew, their weapons and their wants. She has a  
whole lake's contents bottled in her ample hold. She is ballasted with  
utilities; not altogether with unusable pig-lead and kentledge. She  
carries years' water in her. Clear old prime Nantucket water; which,  
when three years afloat, the Nantucketer, in the Pacific, prefers to  
drink before the brackish fluid, but yesterday rafted off in casks, from  
the Peruvian or Indian streams. Hence it is, that, while other ships may  
have gone to China from New York, and back again, touching at a score  
of ports, the whale-ship, in all that interval, may not have sighted  
one grain of soil; her crew having seen no man but floating seamen like  
themselves. So that did you carry them the news that another flood had  
come; they would only answer--"Well, boys, here's the ark!"  
  
Now, as many Sperm Whales had been captured off the western coast of  
Java, in the near vicinity of the Straits of Sunda; indeed, as most of  
the ground, roundabout, was generally recognised by the fishermen as an  
excellent spot for cruising; therefore, as the Pequod gained more  
and more upon Java Head, the look-outs were repeatedly hailed, and  
admonished to keep wide awake. But though the green palmy cliffs of the  
land soon loomed on the starboard bow, and with delighted nostrils  
the fresh cinnamon was snuffed in the air, yet not a single jet was  
descried. Almost renouncing all thought of falling in with any game  
hereabouts, the ship had well nigh entered the straits, when the  
customary cheering cry was heard from aloft, and ere long a spectacle of  
singular magnificence saluted us.  
  
But here be it premised, that owing to the unwearied activity with which  
of late they have been hunted over all four oceans, the Sperm Whales,  
instead of almost invariably sailing in small detached companies, as in  
former times, are now frequently met with in extensive herds, sometimes  
embracing so great a multitude, that it would almost seem as if  
numerous nations of them had sworn solemn league and covenant for mutual  
assistance and protection. To this aggregation of the Sperm Whale into  
such immense caravans, may be imputed the circumstance that even in the  
best cruising grounds, you may now sometimes sail for weeks and months  
together, without being greeted by a single spout; and then be suddenly  
saluted by what sometimes seems thousands on thousands.  
  
Broad on both bows, at the distance of some two or three miles, and  
forming a great semicircle, embracing one half of the level horizon,  
a continuous chain of whale-jets were up-playing and sparkling in the  
noon-day air. Unlike the straight perpendicular twin-jets of the Right  
Whale, which, dividing at top, fall over in two branches, like the cleft  
drooping boughs of a willow, the single forward-slanting spout of the  
Sperm Whale presents a thick curled bush of white mist, continually  
rising and falling away to leeward.  
  
Seen from the Pequod's deck, then, as she would rise on a high hill of  
the sea, this host of vapoury spouts, individually curling up into the  
air, and beheld through a blending atmosphere of bluish haze, showed  
like the thousand cheerful chimneys of some dense metropolis, descried  
of a balmy autumnal morning, by some horseman on a height.  
  
As marching armies approaching an unfriendly defile in the mountains,  
accelerate their march, all eagerness to place that perilous passage in  
their rear, and once more expand in comparative security upon the plain;  
even so did this vast fleet of whales now seem hurrying forward through  
the straits; gradually contracting the wings of their semicircle, and  
swimming on, in one solid, but still crescentic centre.  
  
Crowding all sail the Pequod pressed after them; the harpooneers  
handling their weapons, and loudly cheering from the heads of their  
yet suspended boats. If the wind only held, little doubt had they, that  
chased through these Straits of Sunda, the vast host would only deploy  
into the Oriental seas to witness the capture of not a few of their  
number. And who could tell whether, in that congregated caravan, Moby  
Dick himself might not temporarily be swimming, like the worshipped  
white-elephant in the coronation procession of the Siamese! So with  
stun-sail piled on stun-sail, we sailed along, driving these leviathans  
before us; when, of a sudden, the voice of Tashtego was heard, loudly  
directing attention to something in our wake.  
  
Corresponding to the crescent in our van, we beheld another in our rear.  
It seemed formed of detached white vapours, rising and falling something  
like the spouts of the whales; only they did not so completely come and  
go; for they constantly hovered, without finally disappearing. Levelling  
his glass at this sight, Ahab quickly revolved in his pivot-hole,  
crying, "Aloft there, and rig whips and buckets to wet the  
sails;--Malays, sir, and after us!"  
  
As if too long lurking behind the headlands, till the Pequod should  
fairly have entered the straits, these rascally Asiatics were now in hot  
pursuit, to make up for their over-cautious delay. But when the swift  
Pequod, with a fresh leading wind, was herself in hot chase; how very  
kind of these tawny philanthropists to assist in speeding her on to  
her own chosen pursuit,--mere riding-whips and rowels to her, that they  
were. As with glass under arm, Ahab to-and-fro paced the deck; in his  
forward turn beholding the monsters he chased, and in the after one the  
bloodthirsty pirates chasing him; some such fancy as the above seemed  
his. And when he glanced upon the green walls of the watery defile in  
which the ship was then sailing, and bethought him that through that  
gate lay the route to his vengeance, and beheld, how that through that  
same gate he was now both chasing and being chased to his deadly end;  
and not only that, but a herd of remorseless wild pirates and  
inhuman atheistical devils were infernally cheering him on with their  
curses;--when all these conceits had passed through his brain, Ahab's  
brow was left gaunt and ribbed, like the black sand beach after some  
stormy tide has been gnawing it, without being able to drag the firm  
thing from its place.  
  
But thoughts like these troubled very few of the reckless crew; and  
when, after steadily dropping and dropping the pirates astern, the  
Pequod at last shot by the vivid green Cockatoo Point on the Sumatra  
side, emerging at last upon the broad waters beyond; then, the  
harpooneers seemed more to grieve that the swift whales had been gaining  
upon the ship, than to rejoice that the ship had so victoriously gained  
upon the Malays. But still driving on in the wake of the whales, at  
length they seemed abating their speed; gradually the ship neared them;  
and the wind now dying away, word was passed to spring to the boats. But  
no sooner did the herd, by some presumed wonderful instinct of the Sperm  
Whale, become notified of the three keels that were after them,--though  
as yet a mile in their rear,--than they rallied again, and forming  
in close ranks and battalions, so that their spouts all looked like  
flashing lines of stacked bayonets, moved on with redoubled velocity.  
  
Stripped to our shirts and drawers, we sprang to the white-ash, and  
after several hours' pulling were almost disposed to renounce the chase,  
when a general pausing commotion among the whales gave animating  
token that they were now at last under the influence of that strange  
perplexity of inert irresolution, which, when the fishermen perceive  
it in the whale, they say he is gallied. The compact martial columns  
in which they had been hitherto rapidly and steadily swimming, were now  
broken up in one measureless rout; and like King Porus' elephants in the  
Indian battle with Alexander, they seemed going mad with consternation.  
In all directions expanding in vast irregular circles, and aimlessly  
swimming hither and thither, by their short thick spoutings, they  
plainly betrayed their distraction of panic. This was still more  
strangely evinced by those of their number, who, completely paralysed  
as it were, helplessly floated like water-logged dismantled ships on the  
sea. Had these Leviathans been but a flock of simple sheep, pursued over  
the pasture by three fierce wolves, they could not possibly have evinced  
such excessive dismay. But this occasional timidity is characteristic  
of almost all herding creatures. Though banding together in tens of  
thousands, the lion-maned buffaloes of the West have fled before a  
solitary horseman. Witness, too, all human beings, how when herded  
together in the sheepfold of a theatre's pit, they will, at the  
slightest alarm of fire, rush helter-skelter for the outlets, crowding,  
trampling, jamming, and remorselessly dashing each other to death. Best,  
therefore, withhold any amazement at the strangely gallied whales  
before us, for there is no folly of the beasts of the earth which is not  
infinitely outdone by the madness of men.  
  
Though many of the whales, as has been said, were in violent motion,  
yet it is to be observed that as a whole the herd neither advanced nor  
retreated, but collectively remained in one place. As is customary in  
those cases, the boats at once separated, each making for some one  
lone whale on the outskirts of the shoal. In about three minutes' time,  
Queequeg's harpoon was flung; the stricken fish darted blinding spray  
in our faces, and then running away with us like light, steered straight  
for the heart of the herd. Though such a movement on the part of the  
whale struck under such circumstances, is in no wise unprecedented; and  
indeed is almost always more or less anticipated; yet does it present  
one of the more perilous vicissitudes of the fishery. For as the swift  
monster drags you deeper and deeper into the frantic shoal, you bid  
adieu to circumspect life and only exist in a delirious throb.  
  
As, blind and deaf, the whale plunged forward, as if by sheer power of  
speed to rid himself of the iron leech that had fastened to him; as we  
thus tore a white gash in the sea, on all sides menaced as we flew, by  
the crazed creatures to and fro rushing about us; our beset boat was  
like a ship mobbed by ice-isles in a tempest, and striving to steer  
through their complicated channels and straits, knowing not at what  
moment it may be locked in and crushed.  
  
But not a bit daunted, Queequeg steered us manfully; now sheering off  
from this monster directly across our route in advance; now edging away  
from that, whose colossal flukes were suspended overhead, while all the  
time, Starbuck stood up in the bows, lance in hand, pricking out of our  
way whatever whales he could reach by short darts, for there was no time  
to make long ones. Nor were the oarsmen quite idle, though their wonted  
duty was now altogether dispensed with. They chiefly attended to the  
shouting part of the business. "Out of the way, Commodore!" cried one,  
to a great dromedary that of a sudden rose bodily to the surface,  
and for an instant threatened to swamp us. "Hard down with your tail,  
there!" cried a second to another, which, close to our gunwale, seemed  
calmly cooling himself with his own fan-like extremity.  
  
All whaleboats carry certain curious contrivances, originally invented  
by the Nantucket Indians, called druggs. Two thick squares of wood  
of equal size are stoutly clenched together, so that they cross each  
other's grain at right angles; a line of considerable length is then  
attached to the middle of this block, and the other end of the line  
being looped, it can in a moment be fastened to a harpoon. It is chiefly  
among gallied whales that this drugg is used. For then, more whales  
are close round you than you can possibly chase at one time. But sperm  
whales are not every day encountered; while you may, then, you must  
kill all you can. And if you cannot kill them all at once, you must wing  
them, so that they can be afterwards killed at your leisure. Hence it  
is, that at times like these the drugg, comes into requisition. Our boat  
was furnished with three of them. The first and second were successfully  
darted, and we saw the whales staggeringly running off, fettered by the  
enormous sidelong resistance of the towing drugg. They were cramped like  
malefactors with the chain and ball. But upon flinging the third, in the  
act of tossing overboard the clumsy wooden block, it caught under one  
of the seats of the boat, and in an instant tore it out and carried it  
away, dropping the oarsman in the boat's bottom as the seat slid from  
under him. On both sides the sea came in at the wounded planks, but we  
stuffed two or three drawers and shirts in, and so stopped the leaks for  
the time.  
  
It had been next to impossible to dart these drugged-harpoons, were  
it not that as we advanced into the herd, our whale's way greatly  
diminished; moreover, that as we went still further and further from the  
circumference of commotion, the direful disorders seemed waning. So that  
when at last the jerking harpoon drew out, and the towing whale sideways  
vanished; then, with the tapering force of his parting momentum, we  
glided between two whales into the innermost heart of the shoal, as if  
from some mountain torrent we had slid into a serene valley lake. Here  
the storms in the roaring glens between the outermost whales, were heard  
but not felt. In this central expanse the sea presented that smooth  
satin-like surface, called a sleek, produced by the subtle moisture  
thrown off by the whale in his more quiet moods. Yes, we were now  
in that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every  
commotion. And still in the distracted distance we beheld the tumults of  
the outer concentric circles, and saw successive pods of whales, eight  
or ten in each, swiftly going round and round, like multiplied spans of  
horses in a ring; and so closely shoulder to shoulder, that a Titanic  
circus-rider might easily have over-arched the middle ones, and so have  
gone round on their backs. Owing to the density of the crowd of reposing  
whales, more immediately surrounding the embayed axis of the herd, no  
possible chance of escape was at present afforded us. We must watch for  
a breach in the living wall that hemmed us in; the wall that had only  
admitted us in order to shut us up. Keeping at the centre of the lake,  
we were occasionally visited by small tame cows and calves; the women  
and children of this routed host.  
  
Now, inclusive of the occasional wide intervals between the revolving  
outer circles, and inclusive of the spaces between the various pods in  
any one of those circles, the entire area at this juncture, embraced by  
the whole multitude, must have contained at least two or three square  
miles. At any rate--though indeed such a test at such a time might be  
deceptive--spoutings might be discovered from our low boat that  
seemed playing up almost from the rim of the horizon. I mention this  
circumstance, because, as if the cows and calves had been purposely  
locked up in this innermost fold; and as if the wide extent of the  
herd had hitherto prevented them from learning the precise cause of its  
stopping; or, possibly, being so young, unsophisticated, and every way  
innocent and inexperienced; however it may have been, these smaller  
whales--now and then visiting our becalmed boat from the margin of the  
lake--evinced a wondrous fearlessness and confidence, or else a still  
becharmed panic which it was impossible not to marvel at. Like household  
dogs they came snuffling round us, right up to our gunwales, and  
touching them; till it almost seemed that some spell had suddenly  
domesticated them. Queequeg patted their foreheads; Starbuck scratched  
their backs with his lance; but fearful of the consequences, for the  
time refrained from darting it.  
  
But far beneath this wondrous world upon the surface, another and still  
stranger world met our eyes as we gazed over the side. For, suspended  
in those watery vaults, floated the forms of the nursing mothers of the  
whales, and those that by their enormous girth seemed shortly to  
become mothers. The lake, as I have hinted, was to a considerable depth  
exceedingly transparent; and as human infants while suckling will calmly  
and fixedly gaze away from the breast, as if leading two different  
lives at the time; and while yet drawing mortal nourishment, be still  
spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence;--even so did the  
young of these whales seem looking up towards us, but not at us, as if  
we were but a bit of Gulfweed in their new-born sight. Floating on their  
sides, the mothers also seemed quietly eyeing us. One of these little  
infants, that from certain queer tokens seemed hardly a day old, might  
have measured some fourteen feet in length, and some six feet in  
girth. He was a little frisky; though as yet his body seemed scarce yet  
recovered from that irksome position it had so lately occupied in the  
maternal reticule; where, tail to head, and all ready for the final  
spring, the unborn whale lies bent like a Tartar's bow. The delicate  
side-fins, and the palms of his flukes, still freshly retained the  
plaited crumpled appearance of a baby's ears newly arrived from foreign  
parts.  
  
"Line! line!" cried Queequeg, looking over the gunwale; "him fast! him  
fast!--Who line him! Who struck?--Two whale; one big, one little!"  
  
"What ails ye, man?" cried Starbuck.  
  
"Look-e here," said Queequeg, pointing down.  
  
As when the stricken whale, that from the tub has reeled out hundreds of  
fathoms of rope; as, after deep sounding, he floats up again, and shows  
the slackened curling line buoyantly rising and spiralling towards the  
air; so now, Starbuck saw long coils of the umbilical cord of Madame  
Leviathan, by which the young cub seemed still tethered to its dam. Not  
seldom in the rapid vicissitudes of the chase, this natural line, with  
the maternal end loose, becomes entangled with the hempen one, so that  
the cub is thereby trapped. Some of the subtlest secrets of the seas  
seemed divulged to us in this enchanted pond. We saw young Leviathan  
amours in the deep.\*  
  
  
\*The sperm whale, as with all other species of the Leviathan, but unlike  
most other fish, breeds indifferently at all seasons; after a gestation  
which may probably be set down at nine months, producing but one at a  
time; though in some few known instances giving birth to an Esau and  
Jacob:--a contingency provided for in suckling by two teats, curiously  
situated, one on each side of the anus; but the breasts themselves  
extend upwards from that. When by chance these precious parts in a  
nursing whale are cut by the hunter's lance, the mother's pouring milk  
and blood rivallingly discolour the sea for rods. The milk is very sweet  
and rich; it has been tasted by man; it might do well with strawberries.  
When overflowing with mutual esteem, the whales salute MORE HOMINUM.  
  
  
And thus, though surrounded by circle upon circle of consternations  
and affrights, did these inscrutable creatures at the centre freely and  
fearlessly indulge in all peaceful concernments; yea, serenely revelled  
in dalliance and delight. But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of  
my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and  
while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and  
deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy.  
  
Meanwhile, as we thus lay entranced, the occasional sudden frantic  
spectacles in the distance evinced the activity of the other boats,  
still engaged in drugging the whales on the frontier of the host; or  
possibly carrying on the war within the first circle, where abundance of  
room and some convenient retreats were afforded them. But the sight  
of the enraged drugged whales now and then blindly darting to and fro  
across the circles, was nothing to what at last met our eyes. It is  
sometimes the custom when fast to a whale more than commonly powerful  
and alert, to seek to hamstring him, as it were, by sundering or  
maiming his gigantic tail-tendon. It is done by darting a short-handled  
cutting-spade, to which is attached a rope for hauling it back again.  
A whale wounded (as we afterwards learned) in this part, but not  
effectually, as it seemed, had broken away from the boat, carrying along  
with him half of the harpoon line; and in the extraordinary agony of  
the wound, he was now dashing among the revolving circles like the lone  
mounted desperado Arnold, at the battle of Saratoga, carrying dismay  
wherever he went.  
  
But agonizing as was the wound of this whale, and an appalling spectacle  
enough, any way; yet the peculiar horror with which he seemed to  
inspire the rest of the herd, was owing to a cause which at first the  
intervening distance obscured from us. But at length we perceived that  
by one of the unimaginable accidents of the fishery, this whale had  
become entangled in the harpoon-line that he towed; he had also run  
away with the cutting-spade in him; and while the free end of the rope  
attached to that weapon, had permanently caught in the coils of the  
harpoon-line round his tail, the cutting-spade itself had worked loose  
from his flesh. So that tormented to madness, he was now churning  
through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and  
tossing the keen spade about him, wounding and murdering his own  
comrades.  
  
This terrific object seemed to recall the whole herd from their  
stationary fright. First, the whales forming the margin of our lake  
began to crowd a little, and tumble against each other, as if lifted  
by half spent billows from afar; then the lake itself began faintly to  
heave and swell; the submarine bridal-chambers and nurseries vanished;  
in more and more contracting orbits the whales in the more central  
circles began to swim in thickening clusters. Yes, the long calm was  
departing. A low advancing hum was soon heard; and then like to the  
tumultuous masses of block-ice when the great river Hudson breaks up in  
Spring, the entire host of whales came tumbling upon their inner centre,  
as if to pile themselves up in one common mountain. Instantly Starbuck  
and Queequeg changed places; Starbuck taking the stern.  
  
"Oars! Oars!" he intensely whispered, seizing the helm--"gripe your  
oars, and clutch your souls, now! My God, men, stand by! Shove him off,  
you Queequeg--the whale there!--prick him!--hit him! Stand up--stand  
up, and stay so! Spring, men--pull, men; never mind their backs--scrape  
them!--scrape away!"  
  
The boat was now all but jammed between two vast black bulks, leaving a  
narrow Dardanelles between their long lengths. But by desperate endeavor  
we at last shot into a temporary opening; then giving way rapidly,  
and at the same time earnestly watching for another outlet. After many  
similar hair-breadth escapes, we at last swiftly glided into what had  
just been one of the outer circles, but now crossed by random whales,  
all violently making for one centre. This lucky salvation was cheaply  
purchased by the loss of Queequeg's hat, who, while standing in the bows  
to prick the fugitive whales, had his hat taken clean from his head by  
the air-eddy made by the sudden tossing of a pair of broad flukes close  
by.  
  
Riotous and disordered as the universal commotion now was, it soon  
resolved itself into what seemed a systematic movement; for having  
clumped together at last in one dense body, they then renewed their  
onward flight with augmented fleetness. Further pursuit was useless; but  
the boats still lingered in their wake to pick up what drugged whales  
might be dropped astern, and likewise to secure one which Flask had  
killed and waifed. The waif is a pennoned pole, two or three of which  
are carried by every boat; and which, when additional game is at hand,  
are inserted upright into the floating body of a dead whale, both to  
mark its place on the sea, and also as token of prior possession, should  
the boats of any other ship draw near.  
  
The result of this lowering was somewhat illustrative of that sagacious  
saying in the Fishery,--the more whales the less fish. Of all the  
drugged whales only one was captured. The rest contrived to escape for  
the time, but only to be taken, as will hereafter be seen, by some other  
craft than the Pequod.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 88. Schools and Schoolmasters.  
  
  
The previous chapter gave account of an immense body or herd of Sperm  
Whales, and there was also then given the probable cause inducing those  
vast aggregations.  
  
Now, though such great bodies are at times encountered, yet, as must  
have been seen, even at the present day, small detached bands are  
occasionally observed, embracing from twenty to fifty individuals each.  
Such bands are known as schools. They generally are of two sorts; those  
composed almost entirely of females, and those mustering none but young  
vigorous males, or bulls, as they are familiarly designated.  
  
In cavalier attendance upon the school of females, you invariably see a  
male of full grown magnitude, but not old; who, upon any alarm, evinces  
his gallantry by falling in the rear and covering the flight of his  
ladies. In truth, this gentleman is a luxurious Ottoman, swimming about  
over the watery world, surroundingly accompanied by all the solaces  
and endearments of the harem. The contrast between this Ottoman and  
his concubines is striking; because, while he is always of the largest  
leviathanic proportions, the ladies, even at full growth, are not  
more than one-third of the bulk of an average-sized male. They are  
comparatively delicate, indeed; I dare say, not to exceed half a dozen  
yards round the waist. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that upon the  
whole they are hereditarily entitled to EMBONPOINT.  
  
It is very curious to watch this harem and its lord in their indolent  
ramblings. Like fashionables, they are for ever on the move in leisurely  
search of variety. You meet them on the Line in time for the full flower  
of the Equatorial feeding season, having just returned, perhaps, from  
spending the summer in the Northern seas, and so cheating summer of all  
unpleasant weariness and warmth. By the time they have lounged up and  
down the promenade of the Equator awhile, they start for the Oriental  
waters in anticipation of the cool season there, and so evade the other  
excessive temperature of the year.  
  
When serenely advancing on one of these journeys, if any strange  
suspicious sights are seen, my lord whale keeps a wary eye on his  
interesting family. Should any unwarrantably pert young Leviathan coming  
that way, presume to draw confidentially close to one of the ladies,  
with what prodigious fury the Bashaw assails him, and chases him away!  
High times, indeed, if unprincipled young rakes like him are to be  
permitted to invade the sanctity of domestic bliss; though do what the  
Bashaw will, he cannot keep the most notorious Lothario out of his bed;  
for, alas! all fish bed in common. As ashore, the ladies often cause the  
most terrible duels among their rival admirers; just so with the whales,  
who sometimes come to deadly battle, and all for love. They fence with  
their long lower jaws, sometimes locking them together, and so striving  
for the supremacy like elks that warringly interweave their antlers. Not  
a few are captured having the deep scars of these encounters,--furrowed  
heads, broken teeth, scolloped fins; and in some instances, wrenched and  
dislocated mouths.  
  
But supposing the invader of domestic bliss to betake himself away at  
the first rush of the harem's lord, then is it very diverting to watch  
that lord. Gently he insinuates his vast bulk among them again and  
revels there awhile, still in tantalizing vicinity to young Lothario,  
like pious Solomon devoutly worshipping among his thousand concubines.  
Granting other whales to be in sight, the fishermen will seldom give  
chase to one of these Grand Turks; for these Grand Turks are too lavish  
of their strength, and hence their unctuousness is small. As for the  
sons and the daughters they beget, why, those sons and daughters must  
take care of themselves; at least, with only the maternal help. For  
like certain other omnivorous roving lovers that might be named, my Lord  
Whale has no taste for the nursery, however much for the bower; and so,  
being a great traveller, he leaves his anonymous babies all over the  
world; every baby an exotic. In good time, nevertheless, as the ardour  
of youth declines; as years and dumps increase; as reflection lends  
her solemn pauses; in short, as a general lassitude overtakes the sated  
Turk; then a love of ease and virtue supplants the love for maidens; our  
Ottoman enters upon the impotent, repentant, admonitory stage of life,  
forswears, disbands the harem, and grown to an exemplary, sulky old  
soul, goes about all alone among the meridians and parallels saying his  
prayers, and warning each young Leviathan from his amorous errors.  
  
Now, as the harem of whales is called by the fishermen a school, so  
is the lord and master of that school technically known as the  
schoolmaster. It is therefore not in strict character, however admirably  
satirical, that after going to school himself, he should then go abroad  
inculcating not what he learned there, but the folly of it. His title,  
schoolmaster, would very naturally seem derived from the name bestowed  
upon the harem itself, but some have surmised that the man who first  
thus entitled this sort of Ottoman whale, must have read the memoirs of  
Vidocq, and informed himself what sort of a country-schoolmaster that  
famous Frenchman was in his younger days, and what was the nature of  
those occult lessons he inculcated into some of his pupils.  
  
The same secludedness and isolation to which the schoolmaster whale  
betakes himself in his advancing years, is true of all aged Sperm  
Whales. Almost universally, a lone whale--as a solitary Leviathan is  
called--proves an ancient one. Like venerable moss-bearded Daniel Boone,  
he will have no one near him but Nature herself; and her he takes to  
wife in the wilderness of waters, and the best of wives she is, though  
she keeps so many moody secrets.  
  
The schools composing none but young and vigorous males, previously  
mentioned, offer a strong contrast to the harem schools. For while  
those female whales are characteristically timid, the young males, or  
forty-barrel-bulls, as they call them, are by far the most pugnacious  
of all Leviathans, and proverbially the most dangerous to encounter;  
excepting those wondrous grey-headed, grizzled whales, sometimes met,  
and these will fight you like grim fiends exasperated by a penal gout.  
  
The Forty-barrel-bull schools are larger than the harem schools. Like  
a mob of young collegians, they are full of fight, fun, and wickedness,  
tumbling round the world at such a reckless, rollicking rate, that no  
prudent underwriter would insure them any more than he would a riotous  
lad at Yale or Harvard. They soon relinquish this turbulence though,  
and when about three-fourths grown, break up, and separately go about in  
quest of settlements, that is, harems.  
  
Another point of difference between the male and female schools is  
still more characteristic of the sexes. Say you strike a  
Forty-barrel-bull--poor devil! all his comrades quit him. But strike  
a member of the harem school, and her companions swim around her with  
every token of concern, sometimes lingering so near her and so long, as  
themselves to fall a prey.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 89. Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish.  
  
  
The allusion to the waif and waif-poles in the last chapter but one,  
necessitates some account of the laws and regulations of the whale  
fishery, of which the waif may be deemed the grand symbol and badge.  
  
It frequently happens that when several ships are cruising in company,  
a whale may be struck by one vessel, then escape, and be finally killed  
and captured by another vessel; and herein are indirectly comprised  
many minor contingencies, all partaking of this one grand feature. For  
example,--after a weary and perilous chase and capture of a whale,  
the body may get loose from the ship by reason of a violent storm; and  
drifting far away to leeward, be retaken by a second whaler, who, in a  
calm, snugly tows it alongside, without risk of life or line. Thus  
the most vexatious and violent disputes would often arise between  
the fishermen, were there not some written or unwritten, universal,  
undisputed law applicable to all cases.  
  
Perhaps the only formal whaling code authorized by legislative  
enactment, was that of Holland. It was decreed by the States-General in  
A.D. 1695. But though no other nation has ever had any written whaling  
law, yet the American fishermen have been their own legislators and  
lawyers in this matter. They have provided a system which for terse  
comprehensiveness surpasses Justinian's Pandects and the By-laws of  
the Chinese Society for the Suppression of Meddling with other People's  
Business. Yes; these laws might be engraven on a Queen Anne's farthing,  
or the barb of a harpoon, and worn round the neck, so small are they.  
  
I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it.  
  
II. A Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it.  
  
But what plays the mischief with this masterly code is the admirable  
brevity of it, which necessitates a vast volume of commentaries to  
expound it.  
  
First: What is a Fast-Fish? Alive or dead a fish is technically fast,  
when it is connected with an occupied ship or boat, by any medium at all  
controllable by the occupant or occupants,--a mast, an oar, a nine-inch  
cable, a telegraph wire, or a strand of cobweb, it is all the same.  
Likewise a fish is technically fast when it bears a waif, or any other  
recognised symbol of possession; so long as the party waifing it plainly  
evince their ability at any time to take it alongside, as well as their  
intention so to do.  
  
These are scientific commentaries; but the commentaries of the whalemen  
themselves sometimes consist in hard words and harder knocks--the  
Coke-upon-Littleton of the fist. True, among the more upright and  
honourable whalemen allowances are always made for peculiar cases,  
where it would be an outrageous moral injustice for one party to claim  
possession of a whale previously chased or killed by another party. But  
others are by no means so scrupulous.  
  
Some fifty years ago there was a curious case of whale-trover litigated  
in England, wherein the plaintiffs set forth that after a hard chase of  
a whale in the Northern seas; and when indeed they (the plaintiffs) had  
succeeded in harpooning the fish; they were at last, through peril of  
their lives, obliged to forsake not only their lines, but their boat  
itself. Ultimately the defendants (the crew of another ship) came up  
with the whale, struck, killed, seized, and finally appropriated it  
before the very eyes of the plaintiffs. And when those defendants were  
remonstrated with, their captain snapped his fingers in the plaintiffs'  
teeth, and assured them that by way of doxology to the deed he had done,  
he would now retain their line, harpoons, and boat, which had remained  
attached to the whale at the time of the seizure. Wherefore the  
plaintiffs now sued for the recovery of the value of their whale, line,  
harpoons, and boat.  
  
Mr. Erskine was counsel for the defendants; Lord Ellenborough was  
the judge. In the course of the defence, the witty Erskine went on  
to illustrate his position, by alluding to a recent crim. con.  
case, wherein a gentleman, after in vain trying to bridle his wife's  
viciousness, had at last abandoned her upon the seas of life; but in  
the course of years, repenting of that step, he instituted an action to  
recover possession of her. Erskine was on the other side; and he  
then supported it by saying, that though the gentleman had originally  
harpooned the lady, and had once had her fast, and only by reason of the  
great stress of her plunging viciousness, had at last abandoned her; yet  
abandon her he did, so that she became a loose-fish; and therefore  
when a subsequent gentleman re-harpooned her, the lady then became that  
subsequent gentleman's property, along with whatever harpoon might have  
been found sticking in her.  
  
Now in the present case Erskine contended that the examples of the whale  
and the lady were reciprocally illustrative of each other.  
  
These pleadings, and the counter pleadings, being duly heard, the very  
learned Judge in set terms decided, to wit,--That as for the boat, he  
awarded it to the plaintiffs, because they had merely abandoned it  
to save their lives; but that with regard to the controverted whale,  
harpoons, and line, they belonged to the defendants; the whale, because  
it was a Loose-Fish at the time of the final capture; and the harpoons  
and line because when the fish made off with them, it (the fish)  
acquired a property in those articles; and hence anybody who afterwards  
took the fish had a right to them. Now the defendants afterwards took  
the fish; ergo, the aforesaid articles were theirs.  
  
A common man looking at this decision of the very learned Judge, might  
possibly object to it. But ploughed up to the primary rock of the  
matter, the two great principles laid down in the twin whaling laws  
previously quoted, and applied and elucidated by Lord Ellenborough in  
the above cited case; these two laws touching Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,  
I say, will, on reflection, be found the fundamentals of all human  
jurisprudence; for notwithstanding its complicated tracery of sculpture,  
the Temple of the Law, like the Temple of the Philistines, has but two  
props to stand on.  
  
Is it not a saying in every one's mouth, Possession is half of the law:  
that is, regardless of how the thing came into possession? But often  
possession is the whole of the law. What are the sinews and souls of  
Russian serfs and Republican slaves but Fast-Fish, whereof possession is  
the whole of the law? What to the rapacious landlord is the widow's last  
mite but a Fast-Fish? What is yonder undetected villain's marble mansion  
with a door-plate for a waif; what is that but a Fast-Fish? What is the  
ruinous discount which Mordecai, the broker, gets from poor Woebegone,  
the bankrupt, on a loan to keep Woebegone's family from starvation;  
what is that ruinous discount but a Fast-Fish? What is the Archbishop of  
Savesoul's income of L100,000 seized from the scant bread and cheese  
of hundreds of thousands of broken-backed laborers (all sure of heaven  
without any of Savesoul's help) what is that globular L100,000 but a  
Fast-Fish? What are the Duke of Dunder's hereditary towns and hamlets  
but Fast-Fish? What to that redoubted harpooneer, John Bull, is poor  
Ireland, but a Fast-Fish? What to that apostolic lancer, Brother  
Jonathan, is Texas but a Fast-Fish? And concerning all these, is not  
Possession the whole of the law?  
  
But if the doctrine of Fast-Fish be pretty generally applicable,  
the kindred doctrine of Loose-Fish is still more widely so. That is  
internationally and universally applicable.  
  
What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish, in which Columbus struck the  
Spanish standard by way of waifing it for his royal master and mistress?  
What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India  
to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All  
Loose-Fish.  
  
What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but  
Loose-Fish? What all men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is  
the principle of religious belief in them but a Loose-Fish? What to  
the ostentatious smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but  
Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what  
are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 90. Heads or Tails.  
  
  
"De balena vero sufficit, si rex habeat caput, et regina caudam."  
BRACTON, L. 3, C. 3.  
  
  
Latin from the books of the Laws of England, which taken along with the  
context, means, that of all whales captured by anybody on the coast of  
that land, the King, as Honourary Grand Harpooneer, must have the head,  
and the Queen be respectfully presented with the tail. A division which,  
in the whale, is much like halving an apple; there is no intermediate  
remainder. Now as this law, under a modified form, is to this day in  
force in England; and as it offers in various respects a strange anomaly  
touching the general law of Fast and Loose-Fish, it is here treated of  
in a separate chapter, on the same courteous principle that prompts  
the English railways to be at the expense of a separate car, specially  
reserved for the accommodation of royalty. In the first place, in  
curious proof of the fact that the above-mentioned law is still in  
force, I proceed to lay before you a circumstance that happened within  
the last two years.  
  
It seems that some honest mariners of Dover, or Sandwich, or some one  
of the Cinque Ports, had after a hard chase succeeded in killing and  
beaching a fine whale which they had originally descried afar off from  
the shore. Now the Cinque Ports are partially or somehow under the  
jurisdiction of a sort of policeman or beadle, called a Lord Warden.  
Holding the office directly from the crown, I believe, all the royal  
emoluments incident to the Cinque Port territories become by assignment  
his. By some writers this office is called a sinecure. But not so.  
Because the Lord Warden is busily employed at times in fobbing his  
perquisites; which are his chiefly by virtue of that same fobbing of  
them.  
  
Now when these poor sun-burnt mariners, bare-footed, and with their  
trowsers rolled high up on their eely legs, had wearily hauled their fat  
fish high and dry, promising themselves a good L150 from the precious  
oil and bone; and in fantasy sipping rare tea with their wives, and good  
ale with their cronies, upon the strength of their respective shares; up  
steps a very learned and most Christian and charitable gentleman, with  
a copy of Blackstone under his arm; and laying it upon the whale's head,  
he says--"Hands off! this fish, my masters, is a Fast-Fish. I seize it  
as the Lord Warden's." Upon this the poor mariners in their respectful  
consternation--so truly English--knowing not what to say, fall to  
vigorously scratching their heads all round; meanwhile ruefully glancing  
from the whale to the stranger. But that did in nowise mend the matter,  
or at all soften the hard heart of the learned gentleman with the copy  
of Blackstone. At length one of them, after long scratching about for  
his ideas, made bold to speak,  
  
"Please, sir, who is the Lord Warden?"  
  
"The Duke."  
  
"But the duke had nothing to do with taking this fish?"  
  
"It is his."  
  
"We have been at great trouble, and peril, and some expense, and is  
all that to go to the Duke's benefit; we getting nothing at all for our  
pains but our blisters?"  
  
"It is his."  
  
"Is the Duke so very poor as to be forced to this desperate mode of  
getting a livelihood?"  
  
"It is his."  
  
"I thought to relieve my old bed-ridden mother by part of my share of  
this whale."  
  
"It is his."  
  
"Won't the Duke be content with a quarter or a half?"  
  
"It is his."  
  
In a word, the whale was seized and sold, and his Grace the Duke of  
Wellington received the money. Thinking that viewed in some particular  
lights, the case might by a bare possibility in some small degree be  
deemed, under the circumstances, a rather hard one, an honest clergyman  
of the town respectfully addressed a note to his Grace, begging him to  
take the case of those unfortunate mariners into full consideration. To  
which my Lord Duke in substance replied (both letters were published)  
that he had already done so, and received the money, and would be  
obliged to the reverend gentleman if for the future he (the reverend  
gentleman) would decline meddling with other people's business. Is  
this the still militant old man, standing at the corners of the three  
kingdoms, on all hands coercing alms of beggars?  
  
It will readily be seen that in this case the alleged right of the  
Duke to the whale was a delegated one from the Sovereign. We must needs  
inquire then on what principle the Sovereign is originally invested with  
that right. The law itself has already been set forth. But Plowdon gives  
us the reason for it. Says Plowdon, the whale so caught belongs to  
the King and Queen, "because of its superior excellence." And by the  
soundest commentators this has ever been held a cogent argument in such  
matters.  
  
But why should the King have the head, and the Queen the tail? A reason  
for that, ye lawyers!  
  
In his treatise on "Queen-Gold," or Queen-pinmoney, an old King's Bench  
author, one William Prynne, thus discourseth: "Ye tail is ye Queen's,  
that ye Queen's wardrobe may be supplied with ye whalebone." Now this  
was written at a time when the black limber bone of the Greenland or  
Right whale was largely used in ladies' bodices. But this same bone  
is not in the tail; it is in the head, which is a sad mistake for  
a sagacious lawyer like Prynne. But is the Queen a mermaid, to be  
presented with a tail? An allegorical meaning may lurk here.  
  
There are two royal fish so styled by the English law writers--the whale  
and the sturgeon; both royal property under certain limitations, and  
nominally supplying the tenth branch of the crown's ordinary revenue.  
I know not that any other author has hinted of the matter; but by  
inference it seems to me that the sturgeon must be divided in the same  
way as the whale, the King receiving the highly dense and elastic head  
peculiar to that fish, which, symbolically regarded, may possibly be  
humorously grounded upon some presumed congeniality. And thus there  
seems a reason in all things, even in law.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER 91. The Pequod Meets The Rose-Bud.  
  
  
"In vain it was to rake for Ambergriese in the paunch of this Leviathan,  
insufferable fetor denying not inquiry." SIR T. BROWNE, V.E.  
  
  
It was a week or two after the last whaling scene recounted, and when we  
were slowly sailing over a sleepy, vapoury, mid-day sea, that the many  
noses on the Pequod's deck proved more vigilant discoverers than the  
three pairs of eyes aloft. A peculiar and not very pleasant smell was  
smelt in the sea.  
  
"I will bet something now," said Stubb, "that somewhere hereabouts are  
some of those drugged whales we tickled the other day. I thought they  
would keel up before long."  
  
Presently, the vapours in advance slid aside; and there in the distance  
lay a ship, whose furled sails betokened that some sort of whale must be  
alongside. As we glided nearer, the stranger showed French colours from  
his peak; and by the eddying cloud of vulture sea-fowl that circled, and  
hovered, and swooped around him, it was plain that the whale alongside  
must be what the fishermen call a blasted whale, that is, a whale that  
has died unmolested on the sea, and so floated an unappropriated corpse.  
It may well be conceived, what an unsavory odor such a mass must  
exhale; worse than an Assyrian city in the plague, when the living are  
incompetent to bury the departed. So intolerable indeed is it regarded  
by some, that no cupidity could persuade them to moor alongside of it.  
Yet are there those who will still do it; notwithstanding the fact that  
the oil obtained from such subjects is of a very inferior quality, and  
by no means of the nature of attar-of-rose.  
  
Coming still nearer with the expiring breeze, we saw that the Frenchman  
had a second whale alongside; and this second whale seemed even more  
of a nosegay than the first. In truth, it turned out to be one of  
those problematical whales that seem to dry up and die with a sort  
of prodigious dyspepsia, or indigestion; leaving their defunct bodies  
almost entirely bankrupt of anything like oil. Nevertheless, in the  
proper place we shall see that no knowing fisherman will ever turn  
up his nose at such a whale as this, however much he may shun blasted  
whales in general.  
  
The Pequod had now swept so nigh to the stranger, that Stubb vowed  
he recognised his cutting spade-pole entangled in the lines that were  
knotted round the tail of one of these whales.  
  
"There's a pretty fellow, now," he banteringly laughed, standing in the  
ship's bows, "there's a jackal for ye! I well know that these Crappoes  
of Frenchmen are but poor devils in the fishery; sometimes lowering  
their boats for breakers, mistaking them for Sperm Whale spouts; yes,  
and sometimes sailing from their port with their hold full of boxes of  
tallow candles, and cases of snuffers, foreseeing that all the oil they  
will get won't be enough to dip the Captain's wick into; aye, we all  
know these things; but look ye, here's a Crappo that is content with our  
leavings, the drugged whale there, I mean; aye, and is content too with  
scraping the dry bones of that other precious fish he has there. Poor  
devil! I say, pass round a hat, some one, and let's make him a present  
of a little oil for dear charity's sake. For what oil he'll get from  
that drugged whale there, wouldn't be fit to burn in a jail; no, not  
in a condemned cell. And as for the other whale, why, I'll agree to get  
more oil by chopping up and trying out these three masts of ours, than  
he'll get from that bundle of bones; though, now that I think of it, it  
may contain something worth a good deal more than oil; yes, ambergris.  
I wonder now if our old man has thought of that. It's worth trying. Yes,  
I'm for it;" and so saying he started for the quarter-deck.  
  
By this time the faint air had become a complete calm; so that whether  
or no, the Pequod was now fairly entrapped in the smell, with no hope of  
escaping except by its breezing up again. Issuing from the cabin, Stubb  
now called his boat's crew, and pulled off for the stranger. Drawing  
across her bow, he perceived that in accordance with the fanciful French  
taste, the upper part of her stem-piece was carved in the likeness of a  
huge drooping stalk, was painted green, and for thorns had copper  
spikes projecting from it here and there; the whole terminating in a  
symmetrical folded bulb of a bright red colour. Upon her head boards, in  
large gilt letters, he read "Bouton de Rose,"--Rose-button, or Rose-bud;  
and this was the romantic name of this aromatic ship.  
  
Though Stubb did not understand the BOUTON part of the inscription, yet  
the word ROSE, and the bulbous figure-head put together, sufficiently  
explained the whole to him.  
  
"A wooden rose-bud, eh?" he cried with his hand to his nose, "that will  
do very well; but how like all creation it smells!"  
  
Now in order to hold direct communication with the people on deck, he  
had to pull round the bows to the starboard side, and thus come close to  
the blasted whale; and so talk over it.  
  
Arrived then at this spot, with one hand still to his nose, he  
bawled--"Bouton-de-Rose, ahoy! are there any of you Bouton-de-Roses that  
speak English?"  
  
"Yes," rejoined a Guernsey-man from the bulwarks, who turned out to be  
the chief-mate.  
  
"Well, then, my Bouton-de-Rose-bud, have you seen the White Whale?"  
  
"WHAT whale?"  
  
"The WHITE Whale--a Sperm Whale--Moby Dick, have ye seen him?  
  
"Never heard of such a whale. Cachalot Blanche! White Whale--no."  
  
"Very good, then; good bye now, and I'll call again in a minute."  
  
Then rapidly pulling back towards the Pequod, and seeing Ahab leaning  
over the quarter-deck rail awaiting his report, he moulded his two hands  
into a trumpet and shouted--"No, Sir! No!" Upon which Ahab retired, and  
Stubb returned to the Frenchman.  
  
He now perceived that the Guernsey-man, who had just got into the  
chains, and was using a cutting-spade, had slung his nose in a sort of  
bag.  
  
"What's the matter with your nose, there?" said Stubb. "Broke it?"  
  
"I wish it was broken, or that I didn't have any nose at all!" answered  
the Guernsey-man, who did not seem to relish the job he was at very  
much. "But what are you holding YOURS for?"  
  
"Oh, nothing! It's a wax nose; I have to hold it on. Fine day, ain't it?  
Air rather gardenny, I should say; throw us a bunch of posies, will ye,  
Bouton-de-Rose?"  
  
"What in the devil's name do you want here?" roared the Guernseyman,  
flying into a sudden passion.  
  
"Oh! keep cool--cool? yes, that's the word! why don't you pack those  
whales in ice while you're working at 'em? But joking aside, though; do  
you know, Rose-bud, that it's all nonsense trying to get any oil out of  
such whales? As for that dried up one, there, he hasn't a gill in his  
whole carcase."  
  
"I know that well enough; but, d'ye see, the Captain here won't believe  
it; this is his first voyage; he was a Cologne manufacturer before. But  
come aboard, and mayhap he'll believe you, if he won't me; and so I'll  
get out of this dirty scrape."  
  
"Anything to oblige ye, my sweet and pleasant fellow," rejoined Stubb,  
and with that he soon mounted to the deck. There a queer scene presented  
itself. The sailors, in tasselled caps of red worsted, were getting the  
heavy tackles in readiness for the whales. But they worked rather slow  
and talked very fast, and seemed in anything but a good humor. All their  
noses upwardly projected from their faces like so many jib-booms.  
Now and then pairs of them would drop their work, and run up to the  
mast-head to get some fresh air. Some thinking they would catch the  
plague, dipped oakum in coal-tar, and at intervals held it to their  
nostrils. Others having broken the stems of their pipes almost short  
off at the bowl, were vigorously puffing tobacco-smoke, so that it  
constantly filled their olfactories.  
  
Stubb was struck by a shower of outcries and anathemas proceeding from  
the Captain's round-house abaft; and looking in that direction saw a  
fiery face thrust from behind the door, which was held ajar from within.  
This was the tormented surgeon, who, after in vain remonstrating  
against the proceedings of the day, had betaken himself to the Captain's  
round-house (CABINET he called it) to avoid the pest; but still, could  
not help yelling out his entreaties and indignations at times.  
  
Marking all this, Stubb argued well for his scheme, and turning to the  
Guernsey-man had a little chat with him, during which the stranger mate  
expressed his detestation of his Captain as a conceited ignoramus,  
who had brought them all into so unsavory and unprofitable a pickle.  
Sounding him carefully, Stubb further perceived that the Guernsey-man  
had not the slightest suspicion concerning the ambergris. He therefore  
held his peace on that head, but otherwise was quite frank and  
confidential with him, so that the two quickly concocted a little plan  
for both circumventing and satirizing the Captain, without his at all  
dreaming of distrusting their sincerity. According to this little plan  
of theirs, the Guernsey-man, under cover of an interpreter's office, was  
to tell the Captain what he pleased, but as coming from Stubb; and as  
for Stubb, he was to utter any nonsense that should come uppermost in  
him during the interview.  
  
By this time their destined victim appeared from his cabin. He was a  
small and dark, but rather delicate looking man for a sea-captain, with  
large whiskers and moustache, however; and wore a red cotton velvet vest  
with watch-seals at his side. To this gentleman, Stubb was now politely  
introduced by the Guernsey-man, who at once ostentatiously put on the  
aspect of interpreting between them.  
  
"What shall I say to him first?" said he.  
  
"Why," said Stubb, eyeing the velvet vest and the watch and seals, "you  
may as well begin by telling him that he looks a sort of babyish to me,  
though I don't pretend to be a judge."  
  
"He says, Monsieur," said the Guernsey-man, in French, turning to his  
captain, "that only yesterday his ship spoke a vessel, whose captain  
and chief-mate, with six sailors, had all died of a fever caught from a  
blasted whale they had brought alongside."  
  
Upon this the captain started, and eagerly desired to know more.  
  
"What now?" said the Guernsey-man to Stubb.  
  
"Why, since he takes it so easy, tell him that now I have eyed him  
carefully, I'm quite certain that he's no more fit to command a  
whale-ship than a St. Jago monkey. In fact, tell him from me he's a  
baboon."  
  
"He vows and declares, Monsieur, that the other whale, the dried one, is  
far more deadly than the blasted one; in fine, Monsieur, he conjures us,  
as we value our lives, to cut loose from these fish."  
  
Instantly the captain ran forward, and in a loud voice commanded his  
crew to desist from hoisting the cutting-tackles, and at once cast loose  
the cables and chains confining the whales to the ship.  
  
"What now?" said the Guernsey-man, when the Captain had returned to  
them.  
  
"Why, let me see; yes, you may as well tell him now that--that--in  
fact, tell him I've diddled him, and (aside to himself) perhaps somebody  
else."  
  
"He says, Monsieur, that he's very happy to have been of any service to  
us."  
  
Hearing this, the captain vowed that they were the grateful parties  
(meaning himself and mate) and concluded by inviting Stubb down into his  
cabin to drink a bottle of Bordeaux.  
  
"He wants you to take a glass of wine with him," said the interpreter.  
  
"Thank him heartily; but tell him it's against my principles to drink  
with the man I've diddled. In fact, tell him I must go."  
  
"He says, Monsieur, that his principles won't admit of his drinking; but  
that if Monsieur wants to live another day