MOBY DICK;

OR THE WHALE

by Herman Melville

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 glasses! 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 honorable

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 bakehouses the pyramids.

No, when I go to sea, I go as a simple sailor, right before the mast,

plumb down into the fore-castle, 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 honor, 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 on 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 monopolizing

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 "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 oil painting 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 favorite 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 around 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--yea, 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

snowstorm--"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.

After 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 corncobs 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 color,

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 headpeddling 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 color 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-colored 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 favor 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 sunlit 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 state--

neither caterpillar nor butterfly. He was just enough civilized

to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manner.

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 to 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 a 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 favorite.

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 color, 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 distant 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 favorable 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. "Star board 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 worldwide 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 look'st 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 upward,

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 wrestling 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 all-outward 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 so many white bolts, upon his prison.

Then Jonah prayed unto 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 dishonor!

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 drooped 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 for 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 as 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 firebrand. 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 headboard with our four knees drawn up

close together, and our two noses bending over them, as if

our knee-pans 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 blankets 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 Kokovoko, an island far away to the West

and South. It is not down on 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 farmer's 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 honor,

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 punch bowl;--

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 toward 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 toward 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 quahogs

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 biscuits,

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 slipshod, 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 on 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 Beckett 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 a top-knot on some old Pottowotamie 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 merchant 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 dost 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 Bildad. 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 shipowner; 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-colored 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 from 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 soulbolts, 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-colored 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 had 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 won'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 any 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 a 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 broadskirted 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

smallpox 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. Any how,

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!"

"Aint 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 vapor 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 nightcap 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 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 offices,

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 hardearned 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 the 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 mainyard 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 the 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 preeminently

presuming and ridiculous.

Doubtless one leading reason why the world declines honoring

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 honor. 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 1,000,000 pounds?

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 00824,000,000 of dollars; the ships worth,

at the time of sailing, 20,000,000 dollars; and every year importing

into our harbors a well reaped harvest of 00847,000,000 dollars.

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 Cooke 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 honor

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 Cookes, Your Krusensterns; but I say that scores of anonymous

Captains have sailed out of Nantucket, that were as great,

and greater, than your Cooke and your Krusenstern. For in

their succorless empty-handedness, they, in the heathenish

sharked waters, and by the beaches of unrecorded, javelin islands,

battled with virgin wonders and terrors that Cooke with all his

marines and muskets would not willingly have willingly 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 whalemen 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 honorable 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 honor 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 blame-worthy?

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 caster 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 hairoil, 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 the 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 valor 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 commoners; 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

whaleboat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner,

and his crew all invited guests. He was as particular

about the comfortable arrangements 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 peddlers, 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 honor 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 ringbolts, 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 the 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 literally 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 warranty 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 colorless 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 gladhearted 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 of 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,

and 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 unforeseen 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's 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 vapor 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 vapors 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 one.'

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 whale-bone 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 thought, '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 honor;

I consider it an honor. 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 honors; 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 harborless 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 and 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 the 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-outward 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 space 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 Humpbacked 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 baptized.

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 color, 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 fisherman's names for a few sorts.

In connexion 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 at 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 color, 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 naturalists. 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 fisher--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 colors, 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; &c. 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 cranes 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 Specksynder

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 Specksynder. 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 Specksynder 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 honors 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 super-add 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 war-like 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 shin-bones 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 fist a bit of old-fashioned

beef in the fore-castle, 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 dinnertime,

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 indiscretion. 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 streetdoor

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 stairlike 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 even 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 seacoast, 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 crosstrees.

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 convenience 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 honor 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

sidescreen 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 whaleships' 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 corking care 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 honorable 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 midday,

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, tree--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 fore-going 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, wert 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 honorable 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 the 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 over-manned; 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

(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 harpooneer 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 lassies. 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-bits;

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, has 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 chiselled 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 wildest 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.

Nor 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 preeminent 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

lances 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 around 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 now 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 invulnerable 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 color 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 honor; 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 honorable, 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-bowed 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 unrestingly 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 this 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 color as the visible absence of color; and at the same

time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there

is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape

of snows--a colorless, all-color 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 colorless 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 colored and coloring 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 color, 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 recognized 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 known 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 oceanwide 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 will 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 attempted 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 this catastrophe I have never chanced to their direction,

were calculated to do us 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 later, 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 uncommonly 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 honor 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 mastheads 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-colored 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 revelry

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--no wise 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 around, 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 silverspoons! 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 logger

head 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 onto 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 logger

head 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 vapor 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 vapor 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 far 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 his shoulder.

But this was against all rule; for the oarsmen must put

out their eyes, and ram a skewer through their necks;

usages announcing 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 vapor 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 vapor 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 may 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 Robbins,

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 selfsame 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 foamflakes 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 us.

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 whaleman 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 buckhorn 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 imagine,

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 had 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 whaleships

in our harbors, 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 patronizing 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 had 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 the 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 honor

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 while,

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 unseaman-like way of sitting

on the bulwarks of the quarterdeck, 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 risks 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 honor 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 whaleship 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 Elephants, 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 the 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 titlepages 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 suckling 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, &c. 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 fore-ground 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 in 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 honor 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 weathercocks; 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 Solomon 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 lips.

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 recognized 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-color, 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 vapored 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 whaleboat, 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, everpresent 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

vapory 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 honor 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 the 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 frightened 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 harpoons, 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 piglead 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

routed 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 them!"

Sullenly taking the offered lantern, old Fleece limped across

the deck to the bulwarks; and then, with one hand drooping 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 slapping

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 swallar 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 scrougin'

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 de 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 have 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 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 patronize 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 nailheads 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 seacoast,

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 vulturism 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 the 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 discolored, 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 crutchwise 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 distance,

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 the 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 trapdoor, 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 ardor 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, on 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, 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 honor 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 to 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 tall.

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 it 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 give way with

their oars, 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 masthead. 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 soldadoes?

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 'em 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; do 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 parmacety'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 color 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 ears 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, so, 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 jibboom. 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 woodlands. 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 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

spout-holes, you would take the whole head for an enormous bass viol,

and these spiracles, the apertures in its soundingboard.

Then, again, if you fix your eye upon this strange, crested,

comblike 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,

scimitar-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 Indian-men 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-colored 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 the 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 ironbound 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 vapor cleared away,

when a naked figure with a boardingsword 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 our 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 jollyboat, 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 a 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 if 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 view 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-relieve, 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 over-growing 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 barreler--

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 honor 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 vapors

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 wheelspokes 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 fishspears!

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 a 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 length 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 indiscernible 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 discolored 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 Honor 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 honorableness 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 honor 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," said 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 honorable 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 honor 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 honor 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 vapor--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 it 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 vapor--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

vapor 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 vapor; 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,

vapory 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 vapor,

engendered by his incommunicable contemplations, and that vapor--

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 vapor. 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 vapor 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

lies 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 Java 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, falls 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 vapory 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 vapors, 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 tokens 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.

\* To gally, or gallow, is to frighten excessively--

to confound with fright. It is an old Saxon word.

It occurs once in Shakespeare:--

The wrathful skies Gallow the very wanderers of the dark And make

them keep their caves.

To common language, the word is now completely obsolete.

When the polite landsman first hears it from the gaunt Nantucketer, he is

apt to set it down as one of the whaleman's self-derived savageries.

Much the same is it with many other sinewy Saxonisms of this sort,

which emigrated to New-England rocks with the noble brawn of the old

English emigrants in the time of the Commonwealth. Thus, some of

the best and furthest-descended English words--the etymological Howards

and Percys--are now democratised, nay, plebeianised--so to speak--

in the New World.

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 whale-boats 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 drug, 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

discolor 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 waited.

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 en bon point.

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 fisherman 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 ardor 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 waifs 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 recognized symbol of possession; so long as the party

wailing 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 honorable 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 doorplate for a waif;

what is that but a Fast-Fish? What is the ruinous discount

which Mordecai, the broker, gets from the 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 100,000 pounds 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

100,000 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 wailing 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 Honorary 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 150 pounds

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-pin-money, 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, vapory,

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 vapors 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 colors

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 recognized 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 color.

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 jibbooms. 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 to drink, then Monsieur

had best drop all four boats, and pull the ship away from these whales,

for it's so calm they won't drift."

By this time Stubb was over the side, and getting into his boat,

hailed the Guernsey-man to this effect,--that having a long

tow-line in his boat, he would do what he could to help them,

by pulling out the lighter whale of the two from the ship's side.

While the Frenchman's boats, then, were engaged in towing the ship

one way, Stubb benevolently towed away at his whale the other way,

ostentatiously slacking out a most unusually long tow-line.

Presently a breeze sprang up; Stubb feigned to cast off from the whale;

hoisting his boats, the Frenchman soon increased his distance,

while the Pequod slid in between him and Stubb's whale.

Whereupon Stubb quickly pulled to the floating body, and hailing

the Pequod to give notice of his intentions, at once proceeded to reap

the fruit of his unrighteous cunning. Seizing his sharp boat-spade,

he commenced an excavation in the body, a little behind the side fin.

You would almost have thought he was digging a cellar there in the sea;

and when at length his spade struck against the gaunt ribs, it was

like turning up old Roman tiles and pottery buried in fat English loam.

His boat's crew were all in high excitement, eagerly helping their chief,

and looking as anxious as gold-hunters.

And all the time numberless fowls were diving, and ducking,

and screaming, and yelling, and fighting around them.

Stubb was beginning to look disappointed, especially as the horrible

nosegay increased, when suddenly from out the very heart of

this plague, there stole a faint stream of perfume, which flowed

through the tide of bad smells without being absorbed by it,

as one river will flow into and then along with another,

without at all blending with it for a time.

"I have it, I have it," cried Stubb, with delight, striking something

in the subterranean regions, "a purse! a purse!"

Dropping his spade, he thrust both hands in, and drew out

handfuls of something that looked like ripe Windsor soap,

or rich mottled old cheese; very unctuous and savory withal.

You might easily dent it with your thumb; it is of a hue

between yellow and ash color. And this, good friends,

is ambergris, worth a gold guinea an ounce to any druggist.

Some six handfuls were obtained; but more was unavoidably lost

in the sea, and still more, perhaps, might have been secured

were it not for impatient Ahab's loud command to Stubb to desist,

and come on board, else the ship would bid them good-bye.

CHAPTER 92

Ambergris

Now this ambergris is a very curious substance, and so important as an

article of commerce, that in 1791 a certain Nantucket-born Captain Coffin

was examined at the bar of the English House of Commons on that subject.

For at that time, and indeed until a comparatively late day,

the precise origin of ambergris remained, like amber itself,

a problem to the learned. Though the word ambergris is but the French

compound for grey amber, yet the two substances are quite distinct.

For amber, though at times found on the sea-coast, is also dug up in some

far inland soils, whereas ambergris is never found except upon the sea.

Besides, amber is a hard, transparent, brittle, odorless substance,

used for mouth-pieces to pipes, for beads and ornaments; but ambergris

is soft, waxy, and so highly fragrant and spicy, that it is largely used

in perfumery, in pastiles, precious candles, hair-powders, and pomatum.

The Turks use it in cooking, and also carry it to Mecca, for the same

purpose that frankincense is carried to St. Peter's in Rome. Some wine

merchants drop a few grains into claret, to flavor it.

Who would think, then, that such fine ladies and gentlemen should

regale themselves with an essence found in the inglorious bowels

of a sick whale! Yet so it is. By some, ambergris is supposed to be

the cause, and by others the effect, of the dyspepsia in the whale.

How to cure such a dyspepsia it were hard to say, unless by administering

three or four boat loads of Brandreth's pills, and then running out

of harm's way, as laborers do in blasting rocks.

I have forgotten to say that there were found in this ambergris,

certain hard, round, bony plates, which at first Stubb thought

might be sailors' trousers buttons; but it afterwards turned

out that they were nothing, more than pieces of small squid

bones embalmed in that manner.

Now that the incorruption of this most fragrant ambergris

should be found in the heart of such decay; is this nothing?

Bethink thee of that saying of St. Paul in Corinthians,

about corruption and incorruption; how that we are sown in dishonor,

but raised in glory. And likewise call to mind that saying

of Paracelsus about what it is that maketh the best musk.

Also forget not the strange fact that of all things of ill-savor,

Cologne-water, in its rudimental manufacturing stages,

is the worst.

I should like to conclude the chapter with the above appeal,

but cannot, owing to my anxiety to repel a charge often made

against whalemen, and which, in the estimation of some already

biased minds, might be considered as indirectly substantiated

by what has been said of the Frenchman's two whales.

Elsewhere in this volume the slanderous aspersion has been disproved,

that the vocation of whaling is throughout a slatternly,

untidy business. But there is another thing to rebut.

They hint that all whales always smell bad. Now how did this

odious stigma originate?

I opine, that it is plainly traceable to the first arrival of

the Greenland whaling ships in London, more than two centuries ago.

Because those whalemen did not then, and do not now, try out

their oil at sea as the Southern ships have always done;

but cutting up the fresh blubber in small bits, thrust it through

the bung holes of large casks, and carry it home in that manner;

the shortness of the season in those Icy Seas, and the sudden and

violent storms to which they are exposed, forbidding any other course.

The consequence is, that upon breaking into the hold, and unloading

one of these whale cemeteries, in the Greenland dock, a savor is

given forth somewhat similar to that arising from excavating an old

city graveyard, for the foundations of a Lying-in Hospital.

I partly surmise also, that this wicked charge against

whalers may be likewise imputed to the existence on the coast

of Greenland, in former times, of a Dutch village called

Schmerenburgh or Smeerenberg, which latter name is the one used

by the learned Fogo Von Slack, in his great work on Smells,

a text-book on that subject. As its name imports (smeer, fat;

berg, to put up), this village was founded in order to afford

a place for the blubber of the Dutch whale fleet to be tried out,

without being taken home to Holland for that purpose.

It was a collection of furnaces, fat-kettles, and oil sheds;

and when the works were in full operation certainly gave forth

no very pleasant savor. But all this is quite different

from a South Sea Sperm Whaler; which in a voyage of four

years perhaps, after completely filling her hold with oil,

does not, perhaps, consume fifty days in the business of boiling out;

and in the state that it is casked, the oil is nearly scentless.

The truth is, that living or dead, if but decently treated,

whales as a species are by no means creatures of ill odor;

nor can whalemen be recognised, as the people of the middle

ages affected to detect a Jew in the company, by the nose.

Nor indeed can the whale possibly be otherwise than fragrant,

when, as a general thing, he enjoys such high health;

taking abundance of exercise; always out of doors; though, it is true,

seldom in the open air. I say, that the motion of a Sperm Whale's

flukes above water dispenses a perfume, as when a musk-scented

lady rustles her dress in a warm parlor. What then shall I liken

the Sperm Whale to for fragrance, considering his magnitude?

Must it not be to that famous elephant, with jewelled tusks,

and redolent with myrrh, which was led out of an Indian town

to do honor to Alexander the Great?

CHAPTER 93

The Castaway

It was but some few days after encountering the Frenchman, that a most

significant event befell the most insignificant of the Pequod's crew;

an event most lamentable; and which ended in providing the sometimes

madly merry and predestinated craft with a living and ever accompanying

prophecy of whatever shattered sequel might prove her own.

Now, in the whale ship, it is not every one that goes in the boats.

Some few hands are reserved called shipkeepers, whose province it

is to work the vessel while the boats are pursuing the whale.

As a general thing, these shipkeepers are as hardy fellows

as the men comprising the boats' crews. But if there happen

to be an unduly slender, clumsy, or timorous wight in the ship,

that wight is certain to be made a ship-keeper. It was so in the Pequod

with the little negro Pippin by nick-name, Pip by abbreviation.

Poor Pip! ye have heard of him before; ye must remember his tambourine

on that dramatic midnight, so gloomy-jolly.

In outer aspect, Pip and Dough-Boy made a match, like a black pony

and a white one, of equal developments, though of dissimilar color,

driven in one eccentric span. But while hapless Dough-Boy was by nature

dull and torpid in his intellects, Pip, though over tender-hearted,

was at bottom very bright, with that pleasant, genial, jolly brightness

peculiar to his tribe; a tribe, which ever enjoy all holidays

and festivities with finer, freer relish than any other race.

For blacks, the year's calendar should show naught but three hundred

and sixty-five Fourth of Julys and New Year's Days. Nor smile so,

while I write that this little black was brilliant, for even blackness has

its brilliancy; behold yon lustrous ebony, panelled in king's cabinets.

But Pip loved life, and all life's peaceable securities; so that

the panic-striking business in which he had somehow unaccountably

become entrapped, had most sadly blurred his brightness; though, as ere

long will be seen, what was thus temporarily subdued in him,

in the end was destined to be luridly illumined by strange wild fires,

that fictitiously showed him off to ten times the natural lustre

with which in his native Tolland County in Connecticut, he had once

enlivened many a fiddler's frolic on the green; and at melodious

even-tide, with his gay ha-ha! had turned the round horizon into

one star-belled tambourine. So, though in the clear air of day,

suspended against a blue-veined neck, the pure-watered diamond drop will

healthful glow; yet, when the cunning jeweller would show you the diamond

in its most impressive lustre, he lays it against a gloomy ground,

and then lights it up, not by the sun, but by some unnatural gases.

Then come out those fiery effulgences, infernally superb; then the

evil-blazing diamond, once the divinest symbol of the crystal skies,

looks like some crown-jewel stolen from the King of Hell. But let

us to the story.

It came to pass, that in the ambergris affair Stubb's after-oarsman

chanced so to sprain his hand, as for a time to become quite maimed;

and, temporarily, Pip was put into his place.

The first time Stubb lowered with him, Pip evinced much nervousness;

but happily, for that time, escaped close contact with the whale;

and therefore came off not altogether discreditably; though Stubb

observing him, took care, afterwards, to exhort him to cherish his

courageousness to the utmost, for he might often find it needful.

Now upon the second lowering, the boat paddled upon the whale;

and as the fish received the darted iron, it gave its customary rap,

which happened, in this instance, to be right under poor Pip's seat.

The involuntary consternation of the moment caused him to leap,

paddle in hand, out of the boat; and in such a way, that part of the slack

whale line coming against his chest, he breasted it overboard with him,

so as to become entangled in it, when at last plumping into the water.

That instant the stricken whale started on a fierce run, the line

swiftly straightened; and presto! poor Pip came all foaming up

to the chocks of the boat, remorselessly dragged there by the line,

which had taken several turns around his chest and neck.

Tashtego stood in the bows. He was full of the fire of the hunt.

He hated Pip for a poltroon. Snatching the boat-knife from its sheath,

he suspended its sharp edge over the line, and turning towards Stubb,

exclaimed interrogatively, "Cut?" Meantime Pip's blue, choked face

plainly looked, Do, for God's sake! All passed in a flash.

In less than half a minute, this entire thing happened.

"Damn him, cut!" roared Stubb; and so the whale was lost

and Pip was saved.

So soon as he recovered himself, the poor little negro was assailed

by yells and execrations from the crew. Tranquilly permitting

these irregular cursings to evaporate, Stubb then in a plain,

business-like, but still half humorous manner, cursed Pip officially;

and that done, unofficially gave him much wholesome advice.

The substance was, Never jump from a boat, Pip, except--but all

the rest was indefinite, as the soundest advice ever is.

Now, in general, Stick to the boat, is your true motto in whaling;

but cases will sometimes happen when Leap from the boat, is still better.

Moreover, as if perceiving at last that if he should give undiluted

conscientious advice to Pip, he would be leaving him too wide a margin

to jump in for the future; Stubb suddenly dropped all advice,

and concluded with a peremptory command "Stick to the boat, Pip,

or by the Lord, I won't pick you up if you jump; mind that.

We can't afford to lose whales by the likes of you; a whale would sell

for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind,

and don't jump any more." Hereby perhaps Stubb indirectly hinted,

that though man loved his fellow, yet man is a money-making animal,

which propensity too often interferes with his benevolence.

But we are all in the hands of the Gods; and Pip jumped again.

It was under very similar circumstances to the first performance;

but this time he did not breast out the line; and hence, when the whale

started to run, Pip was left behind on the sea, like a hurried

traveller's trunk. Alas! Stubb was but too true to his word.

It was a beautiful, bounteous, blue day! the spangled sea calm

and cool, and flatly stretching away, all round, to the horizon,

like gold-beater's skin hammered out to the extremest. Bobbing up

and down in that sea, Pip's ebon head showed like a head of cloves.

No boat-knife was lifted when he fell so rapidly astern.

Stubb's inexorable back was turned upon him; and the whale was winged.

In three minutes, a whole mile of shoreless ocean was between

Pip and Stubb. Out from the centre of the sea, poor Pip turned

his crisp, curling, black head to the sun, another lonely castaway,

though the loftiest and the brightest.

Now, in calm weather, to swim in the open ocean is as easy

to the practised swimmer as to ride in a spring-carriage ashore.

But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration

of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can

tell it? Mark, how when sailors in a dead calm bathe in the open sea--

mark how closely they hug their ship and only coast along her sides.

But had Stubb really abandoned the poor little negro

to his fate? No; he did not mean to, at least.

Because there were two boats in his wake, and he supposed,

no doubt, that they would of course come up to Pip very quickly,

and pick him up; though, indeed, such considerations towards

oarsmen jeopardized through their own timidity, is not

always manifested by the hunters in all similar instances;

and such instances not unfrequently occur; almost invariably

in the fishery, a coward, so called, is marked with the same

ruthless detestation peculiar to military navies and armies.

But it so happened, that those boats, without seeing Pip,

suddenly spying whales close to them on one side, turned,

and gave chase; and Stubb's boat was now so far away,

and he and all his crew so intent upon his fish, that Pip's

ringed horizon began to expand around him miserably.

By the merest chance the ship itself at last rescued him;

but from that hour the little negro went about the deck an idiot;

such, at least, they said he was. The sea had jeeringly kept

his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul.

Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive

to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped

primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes;

and the miser-merman, Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps;

and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities,

Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects,

that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs.

He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it;

and therefore his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity

is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason,

man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason,

is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised,

indifferent as his God.

For the rest blame not Stubb too hardly. The thing is common

in that fishery; and in the sequel of the narrative, it will then

be seen what like abandonment befell myself.

CHAPTER 94

A Squeeze of the Hand

That whale of Stubb's, so dearly purchased, was duly brought

to the Pequod's side, where all those cutting and hoisting

operations previously detailed, were regularly gone through,

even to the baling of the Heidelburgh Tun, or Case.

While some were occupied with this latter duty, others were employed

in dragging away the larger tubs, so soon as filled with the sperm;

and when the proper time arrived, this same sperm was carefully

manipulated ere going to the try-works, of which anon.

It had cooled and crystallized to such a degree, that when,

with several others, I sat down before a large Constantine's

bath of it, I found it strangely concreted into lumps,

here and there rolling about in the liquid part.

It was our business to squeeze these lumps back into fluid.

A sweet and unctuous duty! No wonder that in old times this

sperm was such a favorite cosmetic. Such a clearer! such

a sweetener! such a softener; such a delicious mollifier!

After having my hands in it for only a few minutes, my fingers felt

like eels, and began, as it were, to serpentine and spiralize.

As I sat there at my ease, cross-legged on the deck; after the bitter

exertion at the windlass; under a blue tranquil sky; the ship

under indolent sail, and gliding so serenely along; as I bathed

my hands among those soft, gentle globules of infiltrated tissues,

woven almost within the hour; as they richly broke to my fingers,

and discharged all their opulence, like fully ripe grapes

their wine; as. I snuffed up that uncontaminated aroma,--

literally and truly, like the smell of spring violets;

I declare to you, that for the time I lived as in a musky meadow;

I forgot all about our horrible oath; in that inexpressible sperm,

I washed my hands and my heart of it; I almost began to credit

the old Paracelsan superstition that sperm is of rare virtue

in allaying the heat of anger; while bathing in that bath,

I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice,

of any sort whatsoever.

Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed

that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed

that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me;

and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers'

hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules.

Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did

this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing

their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally;

as much as to say,--Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer

cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor

or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us

all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves

universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness.

Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever!

For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences,

I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower,

or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity;

not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy;

but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle,

the fire-side; the country; now that I have perceived all this,

I am ready to squeeze case eternally. In thoughts of the

visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise,

each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti.

Now, while discoursing of sperm it behooves to speak of other things akin

to it, in the business of preparing the sperm whale for the try-works.

First comes white-horse, so called, which is obtained from the tapering

part of the fish, and also from the thicker portions of his flukes.

It is tough with congealed tendons--a wad of muscle--but still contains

some oil. After being severed from the whale, the white-horse

is first cut into portable oblongs ere going to the mincer.

They look much like blocks of Berkshire marble.

Plum-pudding is the term bestowed upon certain fragmentary parts of

the whale's flesh, here and there adhering to the blanket of blubber,

and often participating to a considerable degree in its unctuousness.

It is a most refreshing, convivial, beautiful object to behold.

As its name imports, it is of an exceedingly rich, mottled tint, with a

bestreaked snowy and golden ground, dotted with spots of the deepest

crimson and purple. It is plums of rubies, in pictures of citron.

Spite of reason, it is hard to keep yourself from eating it.

I confess, that once I stole behind the foremast to try it.

It tasted something as I should conceive a royal cutlet from

the thigh of Louis le Gros might have tasted, supposing him

to have been killed the first day after the venison season,

and that particular venison season contemporary with an unusually

fine vintage of the vineyards of Champagne.

There is another substance, and a very singular one, which turns

up in the course of this business, but which I feel it to be

very puzzling adequately to describe. It is called slobgollion;

an appellation original with the whalemen, and even so is

the nature of the substance. It is an ineffably oozy,

stringy affair, most frequently found in the tubs of sperm,

after a prolonged squeezing, and subsequent decanting.

I hold it to be the wondrously thin, ruptured membranes

of the case, coalescing.

Gurry, so called, is a term properly belonging to right whalemen,

but sometimes incidentally used by the sperm fishermen.

It designates the dark, glutinous substance which is scraped off

the back of the Greenland or right whale, and much of which covers

the decks of those inferior souls who hunt that ignoble Leviathan.

Nippers. Strictly this word is not indigenous to the whale's vocabulary.

But as applied by whalemen, it becomes so. A whaleman's nipper

is a short firm strip of tendinous stuff cut from the tapering

part of Leviathan's tail: it averages an inch in thickness,

and for the rest, is about the size of the iron part of a hoe.

Edgewise moved along the oily deck, it operates like a leathern squilgee;

and by nameless blandishments, as of magic, allures along with

it all impurities.

But to learn all about these recondite matters, your best way is at once

to descend into the blubber-room, and have a long talk with its inmates.

This place has previously been mentioned as the receptacle

for the blanket-pieces, when stript and hoisted from the whale.

When the proper time arrives for cutting up its contents, this apartment

is a scene of terror to all tyros, especially by night. On one side,

lit by a dull lantern, a space has been left clear for the workmen.

They generally go in pairs,--a pike-and-gaffman and a spade-man. The

whaling-pike is similar to a frigate's boarding-weapon of the same name.

The gaff is something like a boat-hook. With his gaff, the gaffman

hooks on to a sheet of blubber, and strives to hold it from slipping,

as the ship pitches and lurches about. Meanwhile, the spade-man stands

on the sheet itself, perpendicularly chopping it into the portable

horse-pieces. This spade is sharp as hone can make it; the spademan's

feet are shoeless; the thing he stands on will sometimes irresistibly

slide away from him, like a sledge. If he cuts off one of his own toes,

or one of his assistants', would you be very much astonished?

Toes are scarce among veteran blubber-room men.

CHAPTER 95

The Cassock

Had you stepped on board the Pequod at a certain juncture of this

post-mortemizing of the whale; and had you strolled forward nigh

the windlass, pretty sure am I that you would have scanned with no

small curiosity a very strange, enigmatical object, which you would

have seen there, lying along lengthwise in the lee scuppers.

Not the wondrous cistern in the whale's huge head; not the prodigy

of his unhinged lower jaw; not the miracle of his symmetrical tail;

none of these would so surprise you, as half a glimpse of

that unaccountable cone,--longer than a Kentuckian is tall,

nigh a foot in diameter at the base, and jet-black as Yojo,

the ebony idol of Queequeg. And an idol, indeed, it is;

or rather, in old times, its likeness was. Such an idol

as that found in the secret groves of Queen Maachah in Judea;

and for worshipping which, King Asa, her son, did depose her,

and destroyed the idol, and burnt it for an abomination

at the brook Kedron, as darkly set forth in the 15th chapter

of the First Book of Kings.

Look at the sailor, called the mincer, who now comes along,

and assisted by two allies, heavily backs the grandissimus,

as the mariners call it, and with bowed shoulders, staggers off with it

as if he were a grenadier carrying a dead comrade from the field.

Extending it upon the forecastle deck, he now proceeds cylindrically

to remove its dark pelt, as an African hunter the pelt of a boa.

This done he turns the pelt inside out, like a pantaloon leg;

gives it a good stretching, so as almost to double its diameter;

and at last hangs it, well spread, in the rigging, to dry.

Ere long, it is taken down; when removing some three feet of it,

towards the pointed extremity, and then cutting two slits for arm-holes

at the other end, he lengthwise slips himself bodily into it.

The mincer now stands before you invested in the full canonicals

of his calling. Immemorial to all his order, this investiture

alone will adequately protect him, while employed in the peculiar

functions of his office.

That office consists in mincing the horse-pieces of blubber

for the pots; an operation which is conducted at a curious

wooden horse, planted endwise against the bulwarks,

and with a capacious tub beneath it, into which the minced

pieces drop, fast as the sheets from a rapt orator's desk.

Arrayed in decent black; occupying a conspicuous pulpit;

intent on bible leaves; what a candidate for an archbishopric,

what a lad for a Pope were this mincer!\*

\* Bible leaves! Bible leaves! This is the invariable cry

from the mates to the mincer. It enjoins him to be careful,

and cut his work into as thin slices as possible, inasmuch as by

so doing the business of boiling out the oil is much accelerated,

and its quantity considerably increased, besides perhaps improving

it in quality.

CHAPTER 96

The Try-Works

Besides her hoisted boats, an American whaler is outwardly distinguished

by her try-works. She presents the curious anomaly of the most solid

masonry joining with oak and hemp in constituting the completed ship.

It is as if from the open field a brick-kiln were transported

to her planks.

The try-works are planted between the foremast and mainmast,

the most roomy part of the deck. The timbers beneath are of a

peculiar strength, fitted to sustain the weight of an almost

solid mass of brick and mortar, some ten feet by eight square,

and five in height. The foundation does not penetrate the deck,

but the masonry is firmly secured to the surface by ponderous

knees of iron bracing it on all sides, and screwing it down

to the timbers. On the flanks it is cased with wood, and at top

completely covered by a large, sloping, battened hatchway.

Removing this hatch we expose the great try-pots, two in number,

and each of several barrels' capacity. When not in use,

they are kept remarkably clean. Sometimes they are polished with

soapstone and sand, till they shine within like silver punchbowls.

During the night-watches some cynical old sailors will

crawl into them and coil themselves away there for a nap.

While employed in polishing them--one man in each pot, side by side--

many confidential communications are carried on, over the iron lips.

It is a place also for profound mathematical meditation.

It was in the left hand try-pot of the Pequod, with the soapstone

diligently circling round me, that I was first indirectly struck

by the remarkable fact, that in geometry all bodies gliding

along the cycloid, my soapstone for example, will descend

from any point in precisely the same time.

Removing the fire-board from the front of the try-works,

the bare masonry of that side is exposed, penetrated by the two

iron mouths of the furnaces, directly underneath the pots.

These mouths are fitted with heavy doors of iron. The intense heat

of the fire is prevented from communicating itself to the deck,

by means of a shallow reservoir extending under the entire

inclosed surface of the works. By a tunnel inserted at the rear,

this reservoir is kept replenished with water as fast as it evaporates.

There are no external chimneys; they open direct from the rear wall.

And here let us go back for a moment.

It was about nine o'clock at night that the Pequod's

try-works were first started on this present voyage.

It belonged to Stubb to oversee the business.

"All ready there? Off hatch, then, and start her. You cook,

fire the works." This was an easy thing, for the carpenter had been

thrusting his shavings into the furnace throughout the passage.

Here be it said that in a whaling voyage the first fire in the

try-works has to be fed for a time with wood. After that no wood

is used, except as a means of quick ignition to the staple fuel.

In a word, after being tried out, the crisp, shrivelled blubber,

now called scraps or fritters, still contains considerable

of its unctuous properties. These fritters feed the flames.

Like a plethoric burning martyr, or a self-consuming misanthrope,

once ignited, the whale supplies his own fuel and burns by his own body.

Would that he consumed his own smoke! for his smoke is horrible

to inhale, and inhale it you must, and not only that, but you must

live in it for the time. It has an unspeakable, wild, Hindoo odor

about it, such as may lurk in the vicinity of funereal pyres.

It smells like the left wing of the day of judgment; it is an argument

for the pit.

By midnight the works were in full operation.

We were clear from the carcass; sail had been made;

the wind was freshening; the wild ocean darkness was intense.

But that darkness was licked up by the fierce flames, which at

intervals forked forth from the sooty flues, and illuminated

every lofty rope in the rigging, as with the famed Greek fire.

The burning ship drove on, as if remorselessly commissioned

to some vengeful deed. So the pitch and sulphur-freighted brigs

of the bold Hydriote, Canaris, issuing from their midnight harbors,

with broad sheets of flame for sails, bore down upon

the Turkish frigates, and folded them in conflagrations.

The hatch, removed from the top of the works, now afforded a wide

hearth in front of them. Standing on this were the Tartarean

shapes of the pagan harpooneers, always the whale-ship's stokers.

With huge pronged poles they pitched hissing masses of blubber into

the scalding pots, or stirred up the fires beneath, till the snaky

flames darted, curling, out of the doors to catch them by the feet.

The smoke rolled away in sullen heaps. To every pitch of the ship

there was a pitch of the boiling oil, which seemed all eagerness

to leap into their faces. Opposite the mouth of the works,

on the further side of the wide wooden hearth, was the windlass.

This served for a sea-sofa. Here lounged the watch, when not

otherwise employed, looking into the red heat of the fire,

till their eyes felt scorched in their heads. Their tawny features,

now all begrimed with smoke and sweat, their matted beards,

and the contrasting barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all these were

strangely revealed in the capricious emblazonings of the works.

As they narrated to each other their unholy adventures, their tales

of terror told in words of mirth; as their uncivilized laughter

forked upwards out of them, like the flames from the furnace;

as to and fro, in their front, the harpooneers wildly gesticulated

with their huge pronged forks and dippers; as the wind howled on,

and the sea leaped, and the ship groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly

shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea

and the night, and scornfully champed the white bone in her mouth,

and viciously spat round her on all sides; then the rushing Pequod,

freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse,

and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material

counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul.

So seemed it to me, as I stood at her helm, and for long

hours silently guided the way of this fire-ship on the sea.

Wrapped, for that interval, in darkness myself, I but the better

saw the redness, the madness, the ghastliness of others.

The continual sight of the fiend shapes before me, capering half

in smoke and half in fire, these at last begat kindred visions

in my soul, so soon as I began to yield to that unaccountable

drowsiness which ever would come over me at a midnight helm.

But that night, in particular, a strange (and ever since inexplicable)

thing occurred to me. Starting from a brief standing sleep,

I was horribly conscious of something fatally wrong.

The jaw-bone tiller smote my side, which leaned against it; in my

ears was the low hum of sails, just beginning to shake in the wind;

I thought my eyes were open; I was half conscious of putting

my fingers to the lids and mechanically stretching them still

further apart. But, spite of all this, I could see no compass

before me to steer by; though it seemed but a minute since I had been

watching the card, by the steady binnacle lamp illuminating it.

Nothing seemed before me but a jet gloom, now and then made

ghastly by flashes of redness. Uppermost was the impression,

that whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much

bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern.

A stark, bewildered feeling, as of death, came over me.

Convulsively my hands grasped the tiller, but with the crazy conceit

that the tiller was, somehow, in some enchanted way, inverted.

My God! what is the matter with me? thought I. Lo! in my

brief sleep I had turned myself about, and was fronting

the ship's stern, with my back to her prow and the compass.

In an instant I faced back, just in time to prevent the vessel

from flying up into the wind, and very probably capsizing her.

How glad and how grateful the relief from this unnatural

hallucination of the night, and the fatal contingency of being

brought by the lee!

Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man! Never dream

with thy hand on the helm! Turn not thy back to the compass;

accept the first hint of the hitching tiller; believe not the

artificial fire, when its redness makes all things look ghastly.

To-morrow, in the natural sun, the skies will be bright;

those who glared like devils in the forking flames, the morn

will show in far other, at least gentler, relief; the glorious,

golden, glad sun, the only true lamp--all others but liars!

Nevertheless the sun hides not Virginia's Dismal Swamp,

nor Rome's accursed Campagna, nor wide Sahara, nor all the

millions of miles of deserts and of griefs beneath the moon.

The sun hides not the ocean, which is the dark side of this earth,

and which is two thirds of this earth. So, therefore, that mortal

man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man

cannot be true--not true, or undeveloped. With books the same.

The truest of all men was the Man of Sorrows, and the truest

of all books is Solomon's, and Ecclesiastes is the fine

hammered steel of woe. "All is vanity." ALL. This wilful

world hath not got hold of unchristian Solomon's wisdom yet.

But he who dodges hospitals and jails, and walks fast

crossing graveyards, and would rather talk of operas than hell;

calls Cowper, Young, Pascal, Rousseau, poor devils all of sick men;

and throughout a care-free lifetime swears by Rabelais

as passing wise, and therefore jolly;--not that man is fitted

to sit down on tomb-stones, and break the green damp mould

with unfathomably wondrous Solomon.

But even Solomon, he says, "the man that wandereth out of

the way of understanding shall remain" (i.e. even while living)

"in the congregation of the dead." Give not thyself up, then, to fire,

lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me.

There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness.

And there is a Catskill eagle in some souls that can alike

dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again

and become invisible in the sunny spaces. And even if he for

ever flies within the gorge, that gorge is in the mountains;

so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still

higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar.

CHAPTER 97

The Lamp

Had you descended from the Pequod's try-works to the Pequod's forecastle,

where the off duty watch were sleeping, for one single moment you

would have almost thought you were standing in some illuminated

shrine of canonized kings and counsellors. There they lay in

their triangular oaken vaults, each mariner a chiselled muteness;

a score of lamps flashing upon his hooded eyes.

In merchantmen, oil for the sailor is more scarce than the milk

of queens. To dress in the dark, and eat in the dark,

and stumble in darkness to his pallet, this is his usual lot.

But the whaleman, as he seeks the food of light, so he lives in light.

He makes his berth an Aladdin's lamp, and lays him down in it;

so that in the pitchiest night the ship's black hull still

houses an illumination.

See with what entire freedom the whaleman takes his handful

of lamps--often but old bottles and vials, though--to the

copper cooler at the tryworks, and replenishes them there,

as mugs of ale at a vat. He burns, too, the purest of oil,

in its unmanufactured, and, therefore, unvitiated state;

a fluid unknown to solar, lunar, or astral contrivances ashore.

It is sweet as early grass butter in April. He goes and hunts

for his oil, so as to be sure of its freshness and genuineness,

even as the traveller on the prairie hunts up his own

supper of game.

CHAPTER 98

Stowing Down and Clearing Up

Already has it been related how the great leviathan is afar off

descried from the mast-head; how he is chased over the watery moors,

and slaughtered in the valleys of the deep; how he is then towed alongside

and beheaded; and how (on the principle which entitled the headsman

of old to the garments in which the beheaded was killed) his great padded

surtout becomes the property of his executioner; how, in due time,

he is condemned to the pots, and, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,

his spermaceti, oil, and bone pass unscathed through the fire;--but now

it remains to conclude the last chapter of this part of the description

by rehearsing--singing, if I may--the romantic proceeding of decanting

off his oil into the casks and striking them down into the hold,

where once again leviathan returns to his native profundities,

sliding along beneath the surface :is before; but, alas! never more

to rise and blow.

While still warm, the oil, like hot punch, is received into

the six-barrel casks; and while, perhaps, the ship is pitching

and rolling this way and that in the midnight sea, the enormous

casks are slewed round and headed over, end for end, and sometimes

perilously scoot across the slippery deck, like so many land slides,

till at last man-handled and stayed in their course; and all round

the hoops, rap, rap, go as many hammers as can play upon them,

for now, ex officio, every sailor is a cooper.

At length, when the last pint is casked, and all is cool,

then the great hatchways are unsealed, the bowels of the ship are

thrown open, and down go the casks to their final rest in the sea.

This done, the hatches are replaced, and hermetically closed,

like a closet walled up.

In the sperm fishery, this is perhaps one of the most

remarkable incidents in all the business of whaling.

One day the planks stream with freshets of blood and oil;

on the sacred quarter-deck enormous masses of the whale's head are

profanely piled; great rusty casks lie about, as in a brewery yard;

the smoke from the try-works has besooted all the bulwarks;

the mariners go about suffused with unctuousness; the entire

ship seems great leviathan himself; while on all hands

the din is deafening.

But a day or two after, you look about you, and prick your ears

in this self-same ship! and were it not for the tell-tale boats

and try-works, you would all but swear you trod some silent

merchant vessel, with a most scrupulously neat commander.

The unmanufactured sperm oil possesses a singularly cleansing virtue.

This is the reason why the decks never look so white as just

after what they call an affair of oil. Besides, from the ashes

of the burned scraps of the whale, a potent lye is readily made;

and whenever any adhesiveness from the back of the whale remains

clinging to the side, that lye quickly exterminates it.

Hands go diligently along the bulwarks, and with buckets

of water and rags restore them to their full tidiness.

The soot is brushed from the lower rigging. All the numerous

implements which have been in use are likewise faithfully

cleansed and put away. The great hatch is scrubbed and placed

upon the try-works, completely hiding the pots; every cask

is out of sight; all tackles are coiled in unseen nooks;

and when by the combined and, simultaneous industry of almost

the entire ship's company, the whole of this conscientious

duty is at last concluded, then the crew themselves proceed

to their own ablutions; shift themselves from top to toe;

and finally issue to the immaculate deck, fresh and all aglow

as bridegrooms new-leaped from out the daintiest Holland.

Now, with elated step, they pace the planks in twos and threes,

and humorously discourse of parlors, sofas, carpets, and fine cambrics;

propose to mat the deck; think of having hangings to the top;

object not to taking tea by moonlight on the piazza of the forecastle.

To hint to such musked mariners of oil, and bone, and blubber,

were little short of audacity. They know not the thing you distantly

allude to. Away, and bring us napkins!

But mark: aloft there, at the three mast heads, stand three

men intent on spying out more whales, which, if caught,

infallibly will again soil the old oaken furniture, and drop

at least one small grease-spot somewhere. Yes; and many is

the time, when, after the severest uninterrupted labors, which know

no night; continuing straight through for ninety-six hours;

when from the boat, where they have swelled their wrists

with all day rowing on the Line,--they only step to the deck

to carry vast chains, and heave the heavy windlass, and cut

and slash, yea, and in their very sweatings to be smoked

and burned anew by the combined fires of the equatorial sun

and the equatorial try-works; when, on the heel of all this,

they have finally bestirred themselves to cleanse the ship, and make

a spotless dairy room of it; many is the time the poor fellows,

just buttoning the necks of their clean frocks, are startled

by the cry of "There she blows!" and away they fly to fight

another whale, and go through the whole weary thing again.

Oh! my friends, but this is man-killing! Yet this is life.

For hardly have we mortals by long toilings extracted from this

world's vast bulk its small but valuable sperm; and then,

with weary patience, cleansed ourselves from its defilements,

and learned to live here in clean tabernacles of the soul;

hardly is this done, when--There she blows!--the ghost

is spouted up, and away we sail to fight some other world,

and go through young life's old routine again.

Oh! the metempsychosis! Oh! Pythagoras, that in bright Greece,

two thousand years ago, did die, so good, so wise, so mild; I sailed

with thee along the Peruvian coast last voyage--and, foolish as I am,

taught thee, a green simple boy, how to splice a rope.

CHAPTER 99

The Doubloon

Ere now it has been related how Ahab was wont to pace his quarter-deck,

taking regular turns at either limit, the binnacle and mainmast;

but in the multiplicity of other things requiring narration it

has not been added how that sometimes in these walks, when most

plunged in his mood, he was wont to pause in turn at each spot,

and stand there strangely eyeing the particular object before him.

When he halted before the binnacle, with his glance fastened on

the pointed needle in the compass, that glance shot like a javelin

with the pointed intensity of his purpose; and when resuming his walk

he again paused before the mainmast, then, as the same riveted glance

fastened upon the riveted gold coin there, he still wore the same

aspect of nailed firmness, only dashed with a certain wild longing,

if not hopefulness.

But one morning, turning to pass the doubloon, he seemed to be newly

attracted by the strange figures and inscriptions stamped on it,

as though now for the first time beginning to interpret for himself

in some monomaniac way whatever significance might lurk in them.

And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things

are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher,

except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston,

to fill up some morass in the Milky Way.

Now this doubloon was of purest, virgin gold, raked somewhere

out of the heart of gorgeous hills, whence, east and west,

over golden sands, the head-waters of many a Pactolus flows.

And though now nailed amidst all the rustiness of iron bolts

and the verdigris of copper spikes, yet, untouchable and immaculate

to any foulness, it still preserved its Quito glow. Nor, though placed

amongst a ruthless crew and every hour passed by ruthless hands,

and through the livelong nights shrouded with thick darkness

which might cover any pilfering approach, nevertheless every

sunrise found the doubloon where the sunset last left it last.

For it was set apart and sanctified to one awe-striking end;

and however wanton in their sailor ways, one and all,

the mariners revered it as the white whale's talisman.

Sometimes they talked it over in the weary watch by night,

wondering whose it was to be at last, and whether he would ever

live to spend it.

Now those noble golden coins of South America are as medals of the sun

and tropic token-pieces. Here palms, alpacas, and volcanoes; sun's disks

and stars, ecliptics, horns-of-plenty, and rich banners waving,

are in luxuriant profusion stamped; so that the precious gold seems

almost to derive an added preciousness and enhancing glories,

by passing through those fancy mints, so Spanishly poetic.

It so chanced that the doubloon of the Pequod was a most wealthy

example of these things. On its round border it bore the letters,

REPUBLICA DEL ECUADOR: QUITO. So this bright coin came from a country

planted in the middle of the world, and beneath the great equator,

and named after it; and it had been cast midway up the Andes,

in the unwaning clime that knows no autumn. Zoned by those letters

you saw the likeness of three Andes' summits; from one a flame;

a tower on another; on the third a crowing cock; while arching

over all was a segment of the partitioned zodiac, the signs all

marked with their usual cabalistics, and the keystone sun entering

the equinoctial point at Libra.

Before this equatorial coin, Ahab, not unobserved by others,

was now pausing.

"There's something ever egotistical in mountain-tops

and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look here,--

three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab;

the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted,

and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab;

and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe,

which, like a magician's glass, to each and every man in turn

but mirrors back his own mysterious self. Great pains,

small gains for those who ask the world to solve them; it cannot

solve itself. Methinks now this coined sun wears a ruddy face;

but see! aye, he enters the sign of storms, the equinox!

and but six months before he wheeled out of a former equinox

at Aries! From storm to storm! So be it, then. Born in throes,

't is fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs!

So be it, then! Here's stout stuff for woe to work on.

So be it, then."

"No fairy fingers can have pressed the gold, but devil's

claws must have left their mouldings there since yesterday,"

murmured Starbuck to himself, leaning against the bulwarks.

"The old man seems to read Belshazzar's awful writing.

I have never marked the coin inspectingly. He goes below; let me read.

A dark valley between three mighty, heaven-abiding peaks,

that almost seem the Trinity, in some faint earthly symbol.

So in this vale of Death, God girds us round; and over all our gloom,

the sun of Righteousness still shines a beacon and a hope.

If we bend down our eyes, the dark vale shows her mouldy soil;

but if we lift them, the bright sun meets our glance half way, to cheer.

Yet, oh, the great sun is no fixture; and if, at midnight, we would

fain snatch some sweet solace from him, we gaze for him in vain!

This coin speaks wisely, mildly, truly, but still sadly to me.

I will quit it, lest Truth shake me falsely."

"There now's the old Mogul," soliloquized Stubb by the try-works,

"he's been twigging it; and there goes Starbuck from the same,

and both with faces which I should say might be somewhere

within nine fathoms long. And all from looking at a piece

of gold, which did I have it now on Negro Hill or in

Corlaer's Hook, I'd not look at it very long ere spending it.

Humph! in my poor, insignificant opinion, I regard this as queer.

I have seen doubloons before now in my voyagings; your doubloons

of old Spain, your doubloons of Peru, your doubloons of Chili,

your doubloons of Bolivia, your doubloons of Popayan;

with plenty of gold moidores and pistoles, and joes,

and half joes, and quarter joes. What then should there be

in this doubloon of the Equator that is so killing wonderful?

By Golconda! let me read it once. Halloa! here's signs and

wonders truly! That, now, is what old Bowditch in his Epitome

calls the zodiac, and what my almanack below calls ditto.

I'll get the almanack; and as I have heard devils can be raised

with Daboll's arithmetic, I'll try my hand at raising a meaning

out of these queer curvicues here with the Massachusetts calendar.

Here's the book. Let's see now. Signs and wonders;

and the sun, he's always among 'em. Hem, hem, hem; here they are--

here they go--all alive: Aries, or the Ram; Taurus, or the Bull

and Jimimi! here's Gemini himself, or the Twins. Well; the sun

he wheels among 'em. Aye, here on the coin he's just crossing

the threshold between two of twelve sitting-rooms all in a ring.

Book! you lie there; the fact is, you books must know your places.

You'll do to give us the bare words and facts, but we come

in to supply the thoughts. That's my small experience,

so far as the Massachusetts calendar, and Bowditch's navigator,

and Daboll's arithmetic go. Signs and wonders, eh? Pity if there

is nothing wonderful in signs, and significant in wonders!

There's a clue somewhere; wait a bit; hist--hark! By Jove, I have it!

Look you, Doubloon, your zodiac here is the life of man in one

round chapter; and now I'll read it off, straight out of the book.

Come, Almanack! To begin: there's Aries, or the Ram--

lecherous dog, he begets us; then, Taurus, or the Bull--

he bumps us the first thing; then Gemini, or the Twins--

that is, Virtue and Vice; we try to reach Virtue,

when lo! comes Cancer the Crab, and drags us back; and here,

going from Virtue, Leo, a roaring Lion, lies in the path--

he gives a few fierce bites and surly dabs with his paw;

we escape, and hail Virgo, the Virgin! that's our first love;

we marry and think to be happy for aye, when pop comes Libra,

or the Scales--happiness weighed and found wanting; and while we

are very sad about that, Lord! how we suddenly jump, as Scorpio,

or the Scorpion, stings us in the rear; we are curing the wound,

when whang comes the arrows all round; Sagittarius, or the Archer,

is amusing himself. As we pluck out the shafts, stand aside!

here's the battering-ram, Capricornus, or the Goat; full tilt,

he comes rushing, and headlong we are tossed; when Aquarius,

or the Waterbearer, pours out his whole deluge and drowns us;

and to wind up with Pisces, or the Fishes, we sleep.

There's a sermon now, writ in high heaven, and the sun goes through

it every year, and yet comes out of it all alive and hearty.

Jollily he, aloft there, wheels through toil and trouble; and so,

alow here, does jolly Stubb. Oh, jolly's the word for aye!

Adieu, Doubloon! But stop; here comes little King-Post;

dodge round the try-works, now, and let's hear what he'll have

to say. There; he's before it; he'll out with something presently.

So, so; he's beginning."

"I see nothing here, but a round thing made of gold, and whoever raises

a certain whale, this round thing belongs to him. So, what's all

this staring been about? It is worth sixteen dollars, that's true;

and at two cents the cigar, that's nine hundred and sixty cigars.

I won't smoke dirty pipes like Stubb, but I like cigars, and here's nine

hundred and sixty of them; so here goes Flask aloft to spy 'em out."

"Shall I call that Wise or foolish, now; if it be really wise it has

a foolish look to it; yet, if it be really foolish, then has it a sort

of wiseish look to it. But, avast; here comes our old Manxman--the old

hearse-driver, he must have been, that is, before he took to the sea.

He luffs up before the doubloon; halloa, and goes round on the other

side of the mast; why, there's a horse-shoe nailed on that side;

and now he's back again; what does that mean? Hark! he's muttering--

voice like an old worn-out coffee-mill. Prick ears, and listen!"

"If the White Whale be raised, it must be in a month and a day,

when the sun stands in some one of these signs. I've studied signs,

and know their marks; they were taught me two score years ago,

by the old witch in Copenhagen. Now, in what sign will the sun then be?

The horse-shoe sign; for there it is, right opposite the gold.

And what's the horse-shoe sign? The lion is the horse-shoe sign--

the roaring and devouring lion. Ship, old ship! my old head shakes

to think of thee."

"There's another rendering now; but still one text. All sorts of men

in one kind of world, you see. Dodge again! here comes Queequeg--

all tattooing--looks like the signs of the Zodiac himself. What says

the Cannibal? As I live he's comparing notes; looking at his thigh bone;

thinks the sun is in the thigh, or in the calf, or in the bowels,

I suppose, as the old women talk Surgeon's Astronomy in the back country.

And by Jove, he's found something there in the vicinity of his thigh--

I guess it's Sagittarius, or the Archer. No: he don't know what to make

of the doubloon; he takes it for an old button off some king's trowsers.

But, aside again! here comes that ghost-devil, Fedallah; tail coiled

out of sight as usual, oakum in the toes of his pumps as usual.

What does he say, with that look of his? Ah, only makes a sign

to the sign and bows himself; there is a sun on the coin--

fire worshipper, depend upon it. Ho! more and more. This way comes Pip--

poor boy! would he had died, or I; he's half horrible to me.

He too has been watching all of these interpreters myself included--

and look now, he comes to read, with that unearthly idiot face.

Stand away again and hear him. Hark!"

"I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look."

"Upon my soul, he's been studying Murray's Grammar! Improving his mind,

poor fellow! But what's that he says now--hist!"

"I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look."

"Why, he's getting it by heart--hist! again."

"I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look."

"Well, that's funny."

"And I, you, and he; and we, ye, and they, are all bats;

and I'm a crow, especially when I stand a'top of this pine

tree here. Caw! caw! caw! caw! caw! caw! Ain't I a crow?

And where's the scare-crow? There he stands; two bones stuck

into a pair of old trowsers, and two more poked into the sleeves

of an old jacket."

"Wonder if he means me?--complimentary--poor lad!--I could go

hang myself. Any way, for the present, I'll quit Pip's vicinity.

I can stand the rest, for they have plain wits; but he's too

crazy-witty for my sanity. So, so, I leave him muttering."

"Here's the ship's navel, this doubloon here, and they are all one fire

to unscrew it. But, unscrew your navel, and what's the consequence?

Then again, if it stays here, that is ugly, too, for when aught's

nailed to the mast it's a sign that things grow desperate.

Ha! ha! old Ahab! the White Whale; he'll nail ye! This is a pine tree.

My father, in old Tolland county, cut down a pine tree once, and found

a silver ring grown over in it; some old darkey's wedding ring.

How did it get there? And so they'll say in the resurrection,

when they come to fish up this old mast, and find a doubloon lodged in it,

with bedded oysters for the shaggy bark. Oh, the gold! the precious,

precious gold!--the green miser'll hoard ye soon! Hish! hish!

God goes 'mong the worlds blackberrying. Cook! ho, cook! and cook us!

Jenny! hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, Jenny, Jenny! and get your hoe-cake done!"

CHAPTER 100

Leg and Arm

The Pequod of Nantucket, Meets the Samuel Enderby, of London

"Ship, ahoy! Hast seen the White Whale?"

So cried Ahab, once more hailing a ship showing English colors,

bearing down under the stern. Trumpet to mouth, the old man was standing

in his hoisted quarter-deck, his ivory leg plainly revealed to the

stranger captain, who was carelessly reclining in his own boat's bow.

He was a darkly-tanned, burly, goodnatured, fine-looking man, of sixty

or thereabouts, dressed in a spacious roundabout, that hung round him

in festoons of blue pilot-cloth; and one empty arm of this jacket

streamed behind him like the broidered arm of a huzzar's surcoat.

"Hast seen the White Whale!"

"See you this?" and withdrawing it from the folds that had hidden it,

he held up a white arm of sperm whale bone, terminating in a wooden

head like a mallet.

"Man my boat!" cried Ahab, impetuously, and tossing about the oars

near him--"Stand by to lower!"

In less than a minute, without quitting his little craft,

he and his crew were dropped to the water, and were soon alongside

of the stranger. But here a curious difficulty presented itself.

In the excitement of the moment, Ahab had forgotten that since

the loss of his leg he had never once stepped on board of any

vessel at sea but his own, and then it was always by an ingenious

and very handy mechanical contrivance peculiar to the Pequod,

and a thing not to be rigged and shipped in any other vessel at

a moment's warning. Now, it is no very easy matter for anybody--

except those who are almost hourly used to it, like whalemen--

to clamber up a ship's side from a boat on the open sea;

for the great swells now lift the boat high up towards the bulwarks,

and then instantaneously drop it half way down to the kelson.

So, deprived of one leg, and the strange ship of course being

altogether unsupplied with the kindly invention, Ahab now

found himself abjectly reduced to a clumsy landsman again;

hopelessly eyeing the uncertain changeful height he could hardly

hope to attain.

It has before been hinted, perhaps, that every little untoward

circumstance that befell him, and which indirectly sprang

from his luckless mishap, almost invariably irritated or

exasperated Ahab. And in the present instance, all this was heightened

by the sight of the two officers of the strange ship, leaning over

the side, by the perpendicular ladder of nailed cleets there,

and swinging towards him a pair of tastefully-ornamented man-ropes;

for at first they did not seem to bethink them that a one-legged

man must be too much of a cripple to use their sea bannisters.

But this awkwardness only lasted a minute, because the strange captain,

observing at a glance how affairs stood, cried out, "I see, I see!--

avast heaving there! Jump, boys, and swing over the cutting-tackle."

As good luck would have it, they had had a whale alongside a day or

two previous, and the great tackles were still aloft, and the massive

curved blubber-hook, now clean and dry, was still attached to the end.

This was quickly lowered to Ahab, who at once comprehending it all,

slid his solitary thigh into the curve of the hook (it was like

sitting in the fluke of an anchor, or the crotch of an apple tree),

and then giving the word, held himself fast, and at the same time

also helped to hoist his own weight, by pulling hand-over-hand upon

one of the running parts of the tackle. Soon he was carefully swung

inside the high bulwarks, and gently landed upon the capstan head.

With his ivory arm frankly thrust forth in welcome, the other

captain advanced, and Ahab, putting out his ivory leg, and crossing

the ivory arm (like two sword-fish blades) cried out in his walrus way,

"Aye, aye, hearty! let us shake bones together!--an arm and a leg!--

an arm that never can shrink, d'ye see; and a leg that never can run.

Where did'st thou see the White Whale?--how long ago?"

"The White Whale," said the Englishman, pointing his ivory arm

towards the East, and taking a rueful sight along it, as if it

had been a telescope; There I saw him, on the Line, last season."

"And he took that arm off, did he?" asked Ahab, now sliding

down from the capstan, and resting on the Englishman's shoulder,

as he did so.

"Aye, he was the cause of it, at least; and that leg, too?"

"Spin me the yarn," said Ahab; "how was it?"

"It was the first time in my life that I ever cruised on the Line,"

began the Englishman. "I was ignorant of the White Whale at that time.

Well, one day we lowered for a pod of four or five whales, and my

boat fastened to one of them; a regular circus horse he was, too,

that went milling and milling round so that my boat's crew could

only trim dish, by sitting all their sterns on the outer gunwale.

Presently up breaches from the bottom of the sea a bouncing great whale,

with a milky-white head and hump, all crows' feet and wrinkles."

"It was he, it was he!" cried Ahab, suddenly letting out

his suspended breath.

"And harpoons sticking in near his starboard fin. Aye, aye--

they were mine--my irons," cried Ahab, exultingly--"but on!"

"Give me a chance, then," said the Englishman, good-humoredly. "Well,

this old great-grandfather, with the white head and hump, runs all afoam

into the pod, and goes to snapping furiously at my fast-line!

"Aye, I see!--wanted to part it; free the fast-fish--an old trick--

I know him."

"How it was exactly," continued the one-armed commander,

"I do not know; but in biting the line, it got foul of his teeth,

caught there somehow; but we didn't know it then; so that when we

afterwards pulled on the line, bounce we came plump on to his hump!

instead of the other whale's; that went off to windward, all fluking.

Seeing how matters stood, and what a noble great whale it was--

the noblest and biggest I ever saw, sir, in my life--I resolved

to capture him, spite of the boiling rage he seemed to be in.

And thinking the hap-hazard line would get loose, or the tooth

it was tangled to might draw (for I have a devil of a boat's

crew for a pull on a whale-line); seeing all this, I say,

I jumped into my first mate's boat--Mr. Mounttop's here

(by the way, Captain--Mounttop; Mounttop--the captain);--

as I was saying, I jumped into Mounttop's boat, which, d'ye see,

was gunwale and gunwale with mine, then; and snatching the

first harpoon, let this old great-grandfather have it. But, Lord,

look you, sir--hearts and souls alive, man--the next instant,

in a jiff, I was blind as a bat--both eyes out--all befogged

and bedeadened with black foam--the whale's tail looming straight

up out of it, perpendicular in the air, like a marble steeple.

No use sterning all, then; but as I was groping at midday,

with a blinding sun, all crown-jewels; as I was groping, I say,

after the second iron, to toss it overboard--down comes the tail

like a Lima tower, cutting my boat in two, leaving each half

in splinters; and, flukes first, the white hump backed through

the wreck, as though it was all chips. We all struck out.

To escape his terrible flailings, I seized hold of my harpoon-pole

sticking in him, and for a moment clung to that like a sucking fish.

But a combing sea dashed me off, and at the same instant,

the fish, taking one good dart forwards, went down like a flash;

and the barb of that cursed second iron towing along near me

caught me here" (clapping his hand just below his shoulder);

"yes, caught me just here, I say, and bore me down to

Hell's flames, I was thinking; when, when, all of a sudden,

thank the good God, the barb ript its way along the flesh--

clear along the whole length of my arm--came out nigh my wrist,

and up I floated;--and that gentleman there will tell you the rest

(by the way, captain--Dr. Bunger, ship's surgeon: Bunger, my lad,--

the captain). Now, Bunger boy, spin your part of the yarn."

The professional gentleman thus familiarly pointed out,

had been all the time standing near them, with nothing

specific visible, to denote his gentlemanly rank on board.

His face was an exceedingly round but sober one; he was dressed

in a faded blue woollen frock or shirt, and patched trowsers;

and had thus far been dividing his attention between a marlingspike

he held in one hand, and a pill-box held in the other,

occasionally casting a critical glance at the ivory limbs of

the two crippled captains. But, at his superior's introduction

of him to Ahab, he politely bowed, and straightway went on

to do his captain's bidding.

"It was a shocking bad wound," began the whale-surgeon;

"and, taking my advice, Captain Boomer here, stood our old Sammy-"

"Samuel Enderby is the name of my ship," interrupted the

one-armed captain, addressing Ahab; "go on, boy."

"Stood our old Sammy off to the northward, to get out of the blazing

hot weather there on the Line. But it was no use--I did all I could;

sat up with him nights; was very severe with him in the matter of diet-"

"Oh, very severe!" chimed in the patient himself; then suddenly

altering his voice, "Drinking hot rum toddies with me every night,

till he couldn't see to put on the bandages; and sending me

to bed, half seas over, about three o'clock in the morning.

Oh, ye stars! he sat up with me indeed, and was very severe

in my diet. Oh! a great watcher, and very dietetically severe,

is Dr. Bunger. (Bunger, you dog, laugh out! why don't ye?

You know you're a precious jolly rascal.) But, heave ahead, boy,

I'd rather be killed by you than kept alive by any other man."

"My captain, you must have ere this perceived, respected sir"--

said the imperturbable godly-looking Bunger, slightly bowing

to Ahab--"is apt to be facetious at times; he spins us many

clever things of that sort. But I may as well say--en passant,

as the French remark--that I myself--that is to say, Jack Bunger,

late of the reverend clergy--am a strict total abstinence man;

I never drink-"

"Water!" cried the captain; "he never drinks it; it's a sort

of fits to him; fresh water throws him into the hydrophobia;

but go on--go on with the arm story."

"Yes, I may as well," said the surgeon, coolly. "I was about

observing, sir, before Captain Boomer's facetious interruption,

that spite of my best and severest endeavors, the wound kept getting

worse and worse; the truth was, sir, it was as ugly gaping wound

as surgeon ever saw; more than two feet and several inches long.

I measured it with the lead line. In short, it grew black;

I knew what was threatened, and off it came. But I had no hand

in shipping that ivory arm there; that thing is against all rule"--

pointing at it with the marlingspike--"that is the captain's work,

not mine; he ordered the carpenter to make it; he had that club-hammer

there put to the end, to knock some one's brains out with, I suppose,

as he tried mine once. He flies into diabolical passions sometimes.

Do ye see this dent, sir"--removing his hat, and brushing aside his hair,

and exposing a bowl-like cavity in his skull, but which bore not

the slightest scarry trace, or any token of ever having been a wound--

"Well, the captain there will tell you how that came there; he knows."

"No, I don't," said the captain, "but his mother did;

he was born with it. Oh, you solemn rogue, you--you Bunger!

was there ever such another Bunger in the watery world?

Bunger, when you die, you ought to die in pickle, you dog;

you should be preserved to future ages, you rascal."

"What became of the White Whale?" now cried Ahab, who thus far had been

impatiently listening to this byeplay between the two Englishmen.

"Oh!" cried the one-armed captain, Oh, yes! Well; after he sounded,

we didn't see him again for some time; in fact, as I before hinted,

I didn't then know what whale it was that had served me such a trick,

till some time afterwards, when coming back to the Line, we heard

about Moby Dick--as some call him--and then I knew it was he."

"Did'st thou cross his wake again?"

"Twice."

"But could not fasten?"

"Didn't want to try to; ain't one limb enough? What should I

do without this other arm? And I'm thinking Moby Dick doesn't

bite so much as he swallows."

"Well, then," interrupted Bunger, "give him your left arm for

bait to get the right. Do you know, gentlemen"--very gravely

and mathematically bowing to each Captain in succession--"Do

you know, gentlemen, that the digestive organs of the whale

are so inscrutably constructed by Divine Providence, that it is

quite impossible for him to completely digest even a man's arm?

And he knows it too. So that what you take for the White Whale's

malice is only his awkwardness. For he never means to

swallow a single limb; he only thinks to terrify by feints.

But sometimes he is like the old juggling fellow, formerly a patient

of mine in Ceylon, that making believe swallow jack-knives,

once upon a time let one drop into him in good earnest,

and there it stayed for a twelvemonth or more; when I gave

him an emetic, and he heaved it up in small tacks, d'ye see?

No possible way for him to digest that jack-knife, and fully

incorporate it into his general bodily system. Yes, Captain Boomer,

if you are quick enough about it, and have a mind to pawn

one arm for the sake of the privilege of giving decent burial

to the other, why, in that case the arm is yours; only let

the whale have another chance at you shortly, that's all."

"No, thank you, Bunger," said the English Captain, "he's welcome

to the arm he has, since I can't help it, and didn't know

him then; but not to another one. No more White Whales for me;

I've lowered for him once, and that has satisfied me.

There would be great glory in killing him, I know that;

and there is a ship-load of precious sperm in him, but, hark ye,

he's best let alone; don't you think so, Captain?"--glancing at

the ivory leg.

"He is. But he will still be hunted, for all that. What is best

let alone, that accursed thing is not always what least allures.

He's all a magnet! How long since thou saw'st him last?

Which way heading?"

"Bless my soul, and curse the foul fiend's," cried Bunger,

stoopingly walking round Ahab, and like a dog, strangely snuffing;

"this man's blood--bring the thermometer!--it's at the boiling point!--

his pulse makes these planks beat!--sir!"--taking a lancet from

his pocket, and drawing near to Ahab's arm.

"Avast!" roared Ahab, dashing him against the bulwarks--"Man the boat!

Which way heading?"

"Good God!" cried the English Captain, to whom the question was put.

"What's the matter? He was heading east, I think.--Is your

Captain crazy?" whispering Fedallah.

But Fedallah, putting a finger on his lip, slid over the bulwarks

to take the boat's steering oar, and Ahab, swinging the cutting-tackle

towards him commanded the ship's sailors to stand by to lower.

In a moment he was standing in the boat's stern, and the Manilla men

were springing to their oars. In vain the English Captain hailed him.

With back to the stranger ship, and face set like a flint to his own,

Ahab stood upright till alongside of the Pequod.

CHAPTER 101

The Decanter

Ere the English ship fades from sight be it set down here, that she

hailed from London, and was named after the late Samuel Enderby,

merchant of that city, the original of the famous whaling house

of enderby and sons; a house which in my poor whaleman's opinion,

comes not far behind the united royal houses of the Tudors and Bourbons,

in point of real historical interest. How long, prior to the year

of our Lord 1775, this great whaling house was in existence,

my numerous fish-documents do not make plain; but in that year

(1775) it fitted out the first English ships that ever regularly

hunted the Sperm Whale; though for some score of years previous

(ever since 1726) our valiant Coffins and Maceys of Nantucket

and the Vineyard had in large fleets pursued the Leviathan,

but only in the North and South Atlantic: not elsewhere.

Be it distinctly recorded here, that the Nantucketers were the first

among mankind to harpoon with civilized steel the great Sperm Whale;

and that for half a century they were the only people of the whole

globe who so harpooned him.

In 1778, a fine ship, the Amelia, fitted out for the express purpose,

and at the sole charge of the vigorous Enderbys, boldly rounded

Cape Horn, and was the first among the nations to lower a whale-boat

of any sort in the great South Sea. The voyage was a skilful

and lucky one; and returning to her berth with her hold full

of the precious sperm, the Amelia's example was soon followed

by other ships, English and American, and thus the vast Sperm Whale

grounds of the Pacific were thrown open. But not content with this

good deed, the indefatigable house again bestirred itself:

Samuel and all his Sons--how many, their mother only knows--and under

their immediate auspices, and partly, I think, at their expense,

the British government was induced to send the sloop-of-war Rattler

on a whaling voyage of discovery into the South Sea. Commanded by

a naval Post-Captain, the Rattler made a rattling voyage of it,

and did some service; how much does not appear. But this is not all.

In 1819, the same house fitted out a discovery whale ship of their own,

to go on a tasting cruise to the remote waters of Japan. That ship--

well called the "Syren"--made a noble experimental cruise;

and it was thus that the great Japanese Whaling Ground first became

generally known. The Syren in this famous voyage was commanded

by a Captain Coffin, a Nantucketer.

All honor to the Enderbies, therefore, whose house, I think,

exists to the present day; though doubtless the original Samuel

must long ago have slipped his cable for the great South Sea

of the other world.

The ship named after him was worthy of the honor, being a very fast sailer

and a noble craft every way. I boarded her once at midnight somewhere

off the Patagonian coast, and drank good flip down in the forecastle.

It was a fine gam we had, and they were all trumps--every soul on board.

A short life to them, and a jolly death. And that fine gam I had--

long, very long after old Ahab touched her planks with his ivory heel--

it minds me of the noble, solid, Saxon hospitality of that ship;

and may my parson forget me, and the devil remember me, if I ever

lose sight of it. Flip? Did I say we had flip? Yes, and we flipped

it at the rate of ten gallons the hour; and when the squall came

(for it's squally off there by Patagonia), and all hands--

visitors and all--were called to reef topsails, we were so top-heavy

that we had to swing each other aloft in bowlines; and we ignorantly

furled the skirts of our jackets into the sails, so that we hung there,

reefed fast in the howling gale, a warning example to all drunken tars.

However, the masts did not go overboard; and by and by we scrambled down,

so sober, that we had to pass the flip again, though the savage salt

spray bursting down the forecastle scuttle, rather too much diluted

and pickled it for my taste.

The beef was fine--tough, but with body in it.

They said it was bullbeef; others, that it was dromedary beef;

but I do not know, for certain, how that was. They had

dumplings too; small, but substantial, symmetrically globular,

and indestructible dumplings. I fancied that you could feel them,

and roll them about in you after they were swallowed.

If you stooped over too far forward, you risked their

pitching out of you like billiard-balls. The bread--

but that couldn't be helped; besides, it was an anti-scorbutic,

in short, the bread contained the only fresh fare they had.

But the forecastle was not very light, and it was very easy

to step over into a dark corner when you ate it. But all in all,

taking her from truck to helm, considering the dimensions

of the cook's boilers, including his own live parchment boilers;

fore and aft, I say, the Samuel Enderby was a jolly ship;

of good fare and plenty; fine flip and strong; crack fellows all,

and capital from boot heels to hat-band.

But why was it, think ye, that the Samuel Enderby, and some other

English whalers I know of--not all though--were such famous,

hospitable ships; that passed round the beef, and the bread,

and the can, and the joke; and were not soon weary of eating,

and drinking, and laughing? I will tell you. The abounding good

cheer of these English whalers is matter for historical research.

Nor have I been at all sparing of historical whale research,

when it has seemed needed.

The English were preceded in the whale fishery by

the Hollanders, Zealanders, and Danes; from whom they derived

many terms still extant in the fishery; and what is yet more,

their fat old fashions, touching plenty to eat and drink.

For, as a general thing, the English merchant-ship scrimps her crew;

but not so the English whaler. Hence, in the English, this thing

of whaling good cheer is not normal and natural, but incidental

and particular; and, therefore, must have some special origin,

which is here pointed out, and will be still further elucidated.

During my researches in the Leviathanic histories, I stumbled upon

an ancient Dutch volume, which, by the musty whaling smell of it,

I knew must be about whalers. The title was, "Dan Coopman,"

wherefore I concluded that this must be the invaluable memoirs

of some Amsterdam cooper in the fishery, as every whale ship must

carry its cooper. I was reinforced in this opinion by seeing

that it was the production of one "Fitz Swackhammer." But my

friend Dr. Snodhead, a very learned man, professor of Low Dutch

and High German in the college of Santa Claus and St. Potts,

to whom I handed the work for translation, giving him a box of sperm

candles for his trouble--this same Dr. Snodhead, so soon as he spied

the book, assured me that "Dan Coopman" did not mean "The Cooper,"

but "The Merchant." In short, this ancient and learned Low Dutch

book treated of the commerce of Holland; and, among other subjects,

contained a very interesting account of its whale fishery.

And in this chapter it was, headed, "Smeer," or "Fat," that I

found a long detailed list of the outfits for the larders

and cellars of 180 sail of Dutch whalemen; from which list,

as translated by Dr. Snodhead, I transcribe the following:

0084400,000 lbs. of beef.

60,000 lbs. Friesland pork.

150,000 lbs. of stock fish.

550,000 lbs. of biscuit.

72,000 lbs. of soft bread.

2,800 firkins of butter.

20,000 lbs. of Texel and Leyden cheese.

144,000 lbs. cheese (probably an inferior article).

550 ankers of Geneva.

10,800 barrels of beer.

Most statistical tables are parchingly dry in the reading;

not so in the present case, however, where the reader is flooded

with whole pipes, barrels, quarts, and gills of good gin

and good cheer.

At the time, I devoted three days to the studious digesting of all

this beer, beef, and bread, during which many profound thoughts

were incidentally suggested to me, capable of a transcendental

and Platonic application; and, furthermore, I compiled supplementary

tables of my own, touching the probable quantity of stock-fish, &c.,

consumed by every Low Dutch harpooneer in that ancient Greenland

and Spitzbergen whale fishery. In the first place, the amount

of butter, and Texel and Leyden cheese consumed, seems amazing.

I impute it, though, to their naturally unctuous natures,

being rendered still more unctuous by the nature of their vocation,

and especially by their pursuing their game in those frigid Polar Seas,

on the very coasts of that Esquimaux country where the convivial

natives pledge each other in bumpers of train oil.

The quantity of the beer, too, is very large, 10,800 barrels.

Now, as those polar fisheries could only be prosecuted in the short

summer of that climate, so that the whole cruise of one of these Dutch

whalemen, including the short voyage to and from the Spitzbergen sea,

did not much exceed three months, say, and reckoning 30 men

to each of their fleet of 180 sail, we have 5,400 Low Dutch seamen

in all; therefore, I say, we have precisely two barrels of beer

per man, for a twelve weeks' allowance, exclusive of his fair

proportion of that 550 ankers of gin. Now, whether these gin and

beer harpooneers, so fuddled as one might fancy them to have been,

were the right sort of men to stand up in a boat's head, and take

good aim at flying whales; this would seem somewhat improbable.

Yet they did aim at them, and hit them too. But this was very far North,

be it remembered, where beer agrees well with the constitution;

upon the Equator, in our southern fishery, beer would be apt to make

the harpooneer sleepy at the mast-head and boozy in his boat;

and grievous loss might ensue to Nantucket and New Bedford.

But no more; enough has been said to show that the old Dutch

whalers of two or three centuries ago were high livers; and that

the English whalers have not neglected so excellent an example.

For, say they, when cruising in an empty ship, if you can get nothing

better out of the world, get a good dinner out of it, at least.

And this empties the decanter.

CHAPTER 102

A Bower in the Arsacides

Hitherto, in descriptively treating of the Sperm Whale, I have

chiefly dwelt upon the marvels of his outer aspect; or separately

and in detail upon some few interior structural features.

But to a large and thorough sweeping comprehension of him,

it behoves me now to unbutton him still further, and untagging

the points of his hose, unbuckling his garters, and casting loose

the hooks and the eyes of the joints of his innermost bones,

set him before you in his ultimatum; that is to say,

in his unconditional skeleton.

But how now, Ishmael? How is it, that you, a mere oarsman in

the fishery, pretend to know aught about the subterranean parts

of the whale? Did erudite Stubb, mounted upon your capstan,

deliver lectures on the anatomy of the Cetacea; and by help

of the windlass, hold up a specimen rib for exhibition?

Explain thyself, Ishmael. Can you land a full-grown whale on your

deck for examination, as a cook dishes a roast-pig? Surely not.

A veritable witness have you hitherto been, Ishmael;

but have a care how you seize the privilege of Jonah alone;

the privilege of discoursing upon the joists and beams;

the rafters, ridge-pole, sleepers, and under-pinnings, making

up the frame-work of leviathan; and belike of the tallow-vats,

dairy-rooms, butteries, and cheeseries in his bowels.

I confess, that since Jonah, few whalemen have penetrated very far

beneath the skin of the adult whale; nevertheless, I have been

blessed with an opportunity to dissect him in miniature.

In a ship I belonged to, a small cub Sperm Whale was once

bodily hoisted to the deck for his poke or bag, to make sheaths

for the barbs of the harpoons, and for the heads of the lances.

Think you I let that chance go, without using my boat-hatchet

and jack-knife, and breaking the seal and reading all the contents

of that young cub?

And as for my exact knowledge of the bones of the leviathan

in their gigantic, full grown development, for that rare knowledge

I am indebted to my late royal friend Tranquo, king of Tranque,

one of the Arsacides. For being at Tranque, years ago,

when attached to the trading-ship Dey of Algiers, I was invited

to spend part of the Arsacidean holidays with the lord of Tranque,

at his retired palm villa at Pupella; a sea-side glen not very far

distant from what our sailors called Bamboo-Town, his capital.

Among many other fine qualities, my royal friend Tranquo,

being gifted with a devout love for all matters of barbaric vertu,

had brought together in Pupella whatever rare things the more ingenious

of his people could invent; chiefly carved woods of wonderful devices,

chiselled shells, inlaid spears, costly paddles, aromatic canoes;

and all these distributed among whatever natural wonders,

the wonder-freighted, tribute-rendering waves had cast upon his shores.

Chief among these latter was a great Sperm Whale, which, after an

unusually long raging gale, had been found dead and stranded, with his

head against a cocoa-nut tree, whose plumage-like, tufted droopings

seemed his verdant jet. When the vast body had at last been stripped

of its fathomdeep enfoldings, and the bones become dust dry in the sun,

then the skeleton was carefully transported up the Pupella glen,

where a grand temple of lordly palms now sheltered it.

The ribs were hung with trophies; the vertebrae were carved

with Arsacidean annals, in strange hieroglyphics; in the skull,

the priests kept up an unextinguished aromatic flame, so that the mystic

head again sent forth its vapory spout; while, suspended from

a bough, the terrific lower jaw vibrated over all the devotees,

like the hair-hung sword that so affrighted Damocles.

It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen;

the trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap;

the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver's loom,

with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils

formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures.

All the trees, with all their laden branches; all the shrubs,

and ferns, and grasses; the message-carrying air; all these

unceasingly were active. Through the lacings of the leaves,

the great sun seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure.

Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver!--pause!--one word!--

whither flows the fabric? what palace may it deck? wherefore

all these ceaseless toilings? Speak, weaver!--stay thy hand!--

but one single word with thee! Nay--the shuttle flies--

the figures float from forth the loom; the fresher-rushing

carpet for ever slides away. The weaver-god, he weaves;

and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice;

and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened;

and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that

speak through it. For even so it is in all material factories.

The spoken words that are inaudible among the flying spindles;

those same words are plainly heard without the walls, bursting from

the opened casements. Thereby have villainies been detected.

Ah, mortal! then, be heedful; for so, in all this din of the great

world's loom, thy subtlest thinkings may be overheard afar.

Now, amid the green, life-restless loom of that Arsacidean wood,

the great, white, worshipped skeleton lay lounging--a gigantic idler!

Yet, as the ever-woven verdant warp and woof intermixed and hummed

around him, the mighty idler seemed the cunning weaver; himself all woven

over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure;

but himself a skeleton. Life folded Death; Death trellised Life;

the grim god wived with youthful Life, and begat him curly-headed glories.

Now, when with royal Tranquo I visited this wondrous whale,

and saw the skull an altar, and the artificial smoke ascending

from where the real jet had issued, I marvelled that the king

should regard a chapel as an object of vertu. He laughed.

But more I marvelled that the priests should swear that smoky jet

of his was genuine. To and fro I paced before this skeleton--

brushed the vines aside--broke through the ribs--and with a ball

of Arsacidean twine, wandered, eddied long amid its many winding,

shaded colonnades and arbors. But soon my line was out;

and following it back, I emerged from the opening where I entered.

I saw no living thing within; naught was there but bones.

Cutting me a green measuring-rod, I once more dived within

the skeleton. From their arrow-slit in the skull, the priests

perceived me taking the altitude of the final rib, "How now!"

they shouted; "Dar'st thou measure this our god! That's for us."

"Aye, priests--well, how long do ye make him, then?" But hereupon

a fierce contest rose among them, concerning feet and inches;

they cracked each other's sconces with their yard-sticks--

the great skull echoed--and seizing that lucky chance,

I quickly concluded my own admeasurements.

These admeasurements I now propose to set before you.

But first, be it recorded, that, in this matter, I am not free

to utter any fancied measurements I please. Because there are

skeleton authorities you can refer to, to test my accuracy.

There is a Leviathanic Museum, they tell me, in Hull, England,

one of the whaling ports of that country, where they have some

fine specimens of fin-backs and other whales. Likewise, I have

heard that in the museum of Manchester, in New Hampshire,

they have what the proprietors call "the only perfect specimen

of a Greenland or River Whale in the United States." Moreover, at a

place in Yorkshire, England, Burton Constable by name, a certain

Sir Clifford Constable has in his possession the skeleton of a

Sperm Whale, but of moderate size, by no means of the full-grown

magnitude of my friend King Tranquo's.

In both cases, the stranded whales to which these two skeletons belonged,

were originally claimed by their proprietors upon similar grounds.

King Tranquo seizing his because he wanted it; and Sir Clifford,

because he was lord of the seignories of those parts.

Sir Clifford's whale has been articulated throughout; so that,

like a great chest of drawers, you can open and shut him,

in all his bony cavities--spread out his ribs like a gigantic fan--

and swing all day upon his lower jaw. Locks are to be put

upon some of his trap-doors and shutters; and a footman will

show round future visitors with a bunch of keys at his side.

Sir Clifford thinks of charging twopence for a peep at the whispering

gallery in the spinal column; threepence to hear the echo

in the hollow of his cerebellum; and sixpence for the unrivalled

view from his forehead.

The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are

copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed;

as in my wild wanderings at that period, there was no

other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics.

But as I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my

body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing--

at least, what untattooed parts might remain--I did not trouble

myself with the odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all

enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale.

CHAPTER 103

Measurement of The Whale's Skeleton

In the first place, I wish to lay before you a particular,

plain statement, touching the living bulk of this leviathan,

whose skeleton we are briefly to exhibit. Such a statement

may prove useful here.

According to a careful calculation I have made, and which I

partly base upon Captain Scoresby's estimate, of seventy tons

for the largest sized Greenland whale of sixty feet in length;

according to my careful calculation, I say, a Sperm Whale of the

largest magnitude, between eighty-five and ninety feet in length,

and something less than forty feet in its fullest circumference,

such a whale will weigh at least ninety tons; so that,

reckoning thirteen men to a ton, he would considerably outweigh

the combined population of a whole village of one thousand

one hundred inhabitants.

Think you not then that brains, like yoked cattle, should be put to

this leviathan, to make him at all budge to any landsman's imagination?

Having already in various ways put before you his skull,

spout-hole, jaw, teeth, tail, forehead, fins, and divers other parts,

I shall now simply point out what is most interesting in the

general bulk of his unobstructed bones. But as the colossal

skull embraces so very large a proportion of the entire extent

of the skeleton; as it is by far the most complicated part;

and as nothing is to be repeated concerning it in this chapter,

you must not fail to carry it in your mind, or under your arm,

as we proceed, otherwise you will not gain a complete notion

of the general structure we are about to view.

In length, the Sperm Whale's skeleton at Tranque measured

seventy-two feet: so that when fully invested and extended in life,

he must have been ninety feet long; for in the whale, the skeleton

loses about one fifth in length compared with the living body.

Of this seventy-two feet, his skull and jaw comprised some

twenty feet, leaving some fifty feet of plain backbone.

Attached to this back-bone, for something less than a third

of its length, was the mighty circular basket of ribs which once

enclosed his vitals.

To me this vast ivory-ribbed chest, with the long, unrelieved spine,

extending far away from it in a straight line, not a little resembled

the hull of a great ship new-laid upon the stocks, when only some

twenty of her naked bow-ribs are inserted, and the keel is otherwise,

for the time, but a long, disconnected timber.

The ribs were ten on a side. The first, to begin from the neck,

was nearly six feet long; the second, third, and fourth were each

successively longer, till you came to the climax of the fifth,

or one of the middle ribs, which measured eight feet and

some inches. From that part, the remaining ribs diminished,

till the tenth and last only spanned five feet and some inches.

In general thickness, they all bore a seemly correspondence

to their length. The middle ribs were the most arched.

In some of the Arsacides they are used for beams whereon to lay

footpath bridges over small streams.

In considering these ribs, I could not but be struck anew with

the circumstance, so variously repeated in this book, that the skeleton

of the whale is by no means the mould of his invested form.

The largest of the Tranque ribs, one of the middle ones,

occupied that part of the fish which, in life, is greatest

in depth. Now, the greatest depth of the invested body of this

particular whale must have been at least sixteen feet; whereas,

the corresponding rib measured but little more than eight feet.

So that this rib only conveyed half of the true notion

of the living magnitude of that part. Besides, for some way,

where I now saw but a naked spine, all that had been once wrapped

round with tons of added bulk in flesh, muscle, blood, and bowels.

Still more, for the ample fins, I here saw but a few disordered joints;

and in place of the weighty and majestic, but boneless flukes,

an utter blank!

How vain and foolish, then, thought I, for timid untravelled man

to try to comprehend aright this wondrous whale, by merely poring

over his dead attenuated skeleton, stretched in this peaceful wood.

No. Only in the heart of quickest perils; only when within

the eddyings of his angry flukes; only on the profound unbounded sea,

can the fully invested whale be truly and livingly found out.

But the spine. For that, the best way we can consider it is,

with a crane, to pile its bones high up on end. No speedy enterprise.

But now it's done, it looks much like Pompey's Pillar.

There are forty and odd vertebrae in all, which in the skeleton

are not locked together. They mostly lie like the great knobbed

blocks on a Gothic spire, forming solid courses of heavy masonry.

The largest, a middle one, is in width something less than three feet,

and in depth more than four. The smallest, where the spine tapers

away into the tail, is only two inches in width, and looks something

like a white billiard-ball. I was told that there were still

smaller ones, but they had been lost by some little cannibal urchins,

the priest's children, who had stolen them to play marbles with.

Thus we see how that the spine of even the hugest of living things

tapers off at last into simple child's play.

CHAPTER 104

The Fossil Whale

From his mighty bulk the whale affords a most congenial theme

whereon to enlarge, amplify, and generally expatiate. Would you,

you could not compress him. By good rights he should only be

treated of in imperial folio. Not to tell over again his furlongs

from spiracle to tail, and the yards he measures about the waist;

only think of the gigantic involutions of his intestines,

where they lie in him like great cables and hawsers coiled away

in the subterranean orlop-deck of a line-of-battle-ship.

Since I have undertaken to manhandle this Leviathan, it behoves

me to approve myself omnisciently exhaustive in the enterprise;

not overlooking the minutest seminal germs of his blood,

and spinning him out to the uttermost coil of his bowels.

Having already described him in most of his present habitatory

and anatomical peculiarities, it now remains to magnify him in

an archaeological, fossiliferous, and antediluvian point of view.

Applied to any other creature than the Leviathan--to an ant or a flea--

such portly terms might justly be deemed unwarrantably grandiloquent.

But when Leviathan is the text, the case is altered. Fain am I to stagger

to this enterprise under the weightiest words of the dictionary.

And here be it said, that whenever it has been convenient to consult

one in the course of these dissertations, I have invariably used a huge

quarto edition of Johnson, expressly purchased for that purpose;

because that famous lexicographer's uncommon personal bulk more fitted

him to compile a lexicon to be used by a whale author like me.

One often hears of writers that rise and swell with their subject,

though it may seem but an ordinary one. How, then, with me,

writing of this Leviathan? Unconsciously my chirography

expands into placard capitals. Give me a condor's quill!

Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand! Friends, hold my arms!

For in the mere act of penning my thoughts of this Leviathan,

they weary me, and make me faint with their outreaching

comprehensiveness of sweep, as if to include the whole circle

of the sciences, and all the generations of whales, and men,

and mastodons, past, present, and to come, with all the revolving

panoramas of empire on earth, and throughout the whole universe,

not excluding its suburbs. Such, and so magnifying, is the

virtue of a large and liberal theme! We expand to its bulk.

To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme.

No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea,

though many there be who have tried it.

Ere entering upon the subject of Fossil Whales, I present my

credentials as a geologist, by stating that in my miscellaneous

time I have been a stone-mason, and also a great digger of ditches,

canals and wells, wine-vaults, cellars, and cisterns of all sorts.

Likewise, by way of preliminary, I desire to remind the reader,

that while in the earlier geological strata there are found the fossils

of monsters now almost completely extinct; the subsequent relics

discovered in what are called the Tertiary formations seem the connecting,

or at any rate intercepted links, between the antichronical creatures,

and those whose remote posterity are said to have entered the Ark;

all the Fossil Whales hitherto discovered belong to the Tertiary period,

which is the last preceding the superficial formations. And though

none of them precisely answer to any known species of the present time,

they are yet sufficiently akin to them in general respects, to justify

their taking ranks as Cetacean fossils.

Detached broken fossils of pre-adamite whales, fragments of their bones

and skeletons, have within thirty years past, at various intervals,

been found at the base of the Alps, in Lombardy, in France,

in England, in Scotland, and in the States of Louisiana, Mississippi,

and Alabama. Among the more curious of such remains is part of a skull,

which in the year 1779 was disinterred in the Rue Dauphine in Paris,

a short street opening almost directly upon the palace of the Tuileries;

and bones disinterred in excavating the great docks of Antwerp,

in Napoleon's time. Cuvier pronounced these fragments to have belonged

to some utterly unknown Leviathanic species.

But by far the most wonderful of all Cetacean relics was the almost

complete vast skeleton of an extinct monster, found in the year 1842,

on the plantation of Judge Creagh, in Alabama. The awe-stricken credulous

slaves in the vicinity took it for the bones of one of the fallen angels.

The Alabama doctors declared it a huge reptile, and bestowed upon it

the name of Basilosaurus. But some specimen bones of it being taken

across the sea to Owen, the English Anatomist, it turned out that this

alleged reptile was a whale, though of a departed species. A significant

illustration of the fact, again and again repeated in this book,

that the skeleton of the whale furnishes but little clue to the shape

of his fully invested body. So Owen rechristened the monster Zeuglodon;

and in his paper read before the London Geological Society, pronounced it,

in substance, one of the most extraordinary creatures which the mutations

of the globe have blotted out of existence.

When I stand among these mighty Leviathan skeletons,

skulls, tusks, jaws, ribs, and vertebrae, all characterized

by partial resemblances to the existing breeds of sea-monsters;

but at the same time bearing on the other hand similar affinities to

the annihilated antichronical Leviathans, their incalculable seniors;

I am, by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time

itself can be said to have begun; for time began with man.

Here Saturn's grey chaos rolls over me, and I obtain dim,

shuddering glimpses into those Polar eternities; when wedged

bastions of ice pressed hard upon what are now the Tropics;

and in all the 25,000 miles of this world's circumference,

not an inhabitable hand's breadth of land was visible.

Then the whole world was the whale's; and, king of creation,

he left his wake along the present lines of the Andes and

the Himmalehs. Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? Ahab's harpoon

had shed older blood than the Pharaoh's. Methuselah seems a schoolboy.

I look round to shake hands with Shem. I am horror-struck

at this antemosaic, unsourced existence of the unspeakable

terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time,

must needs exist after all humane ages are over.

But not alone has this Leviathan left his pre-adamite traces in the

stereotype plates of nature, and in limestone and marl bequeathed his

ancient bust; but upon Egyptian tablets, whose antiquity seems to claim

for them an almost fossiliferous character, we find the unmistakable print

of his fin. In an apartment of the great temple of Denderah, some fifty

years ago, there was discovered upon the granite ceiling a sculptured

and painted planisphere, abounding in centaurs, griffins, and dolphins,

similar to the grotesque figures on the celestial globe of the moderns.

Gliding among them, old Leviathan swam as of yore; was there swimming

in that planisphere, centuries before Solomon was cradled.

Nor must there be omitted another strange attestation of the antiquity

of the whale, in his own osseous postdiluvian reality, as set down

by the venerable John Leo, the old Barbary traveller.

"Not far from the Sea-side, they have a Temple, the Rafters

and Beams of which are made of Whale-Bones; for Whales of a

monstrous size are oftentimes cast up dead upon that shore.

The Common People imagine, that by a secret Power bestowed by God

upon the Temple, no Whale can pass it without immediate death.

But the truth of the Matter is, that on either side

of the Temple, there are Rocks that shoot two Miles into

the Sea, and wound the Whales when they light upon 'em.

They keep a Whale's Rib of an incredible length for a Miracle,

which lying upon the Ground with its convex part uppermost,

makes an Arch, the Head of which cannot be reached

by a Man upon a Camel's Back. This Rib (says John Leo)

is said to have layn there a hundred Years before I saw it.

Their Historians affirm, that a Prophet who prophesy'd of Mahomet,

came from this Temple, and some do not stand to assert,

that the Prophet Jonas was cast forth by the Whale at the Base

of the Temple."

In this Afric Temple of the Whale I leave you, reader, and if you

be a Nantucketer, and a whaleman, you will silently worship there.

CHAPTER 105

Does the Whale's Magnitude Diminish? - Will He Perish?

Inasmuch, then, as this Leviathan comes floundering down

upon us from the head-waters of the Eternities, it may be

fitly inquired, whether, in the long course of his generations,

he has not degenerated from the original bulk of his sires.

But upon investigation we find, that not only are the whales

of the present day superior in magnitude to those whose fossil

remains are found in the Tertiary system (embracing a distinct

geological period prior to man), but of the whales found in

that Tertiary system, those belonging to its latter formations

exceed in size those of its earlier ones.

Of all the pre-adamite whales yet exhumed, by far the largest

is the Alabama one mentioned in the last chapter, and that

was less than seventy feet in length in the skeleton.

Whereas, we have already seen, that the tape-measure gives

seventy-two feet for the skeleton of a large sized modern whale.

And I have heard, on whalemen's authority, that Sperm Whales have

been captured near a hundred feet long at the time of capture.

But may it not be, that while the whales of the present hour are an

advance in magnitude upon those of all previous geological periods;

may it not be, that since Adam's time they have degenerated?

Assuredly, we must conclude so, if we are to credit the accounts

of such gentlemen as Pliny, and the ancient naturalists generally.

For Pliny tells us of Whales that embraced acres of living bulk,

and Aldrovandus of others which measured eight hundred feet in length--

Rope Walks and Thames Tunnels of Whales! And even in the days

of Banks and Solander, Cooke's naturalists, we find a Danish member

of the Academy of Sciences setting down certain Iceland Whales

(reydan-siskur, or Wrinkled Bellies) at one hundred and twenty yards;

that is, three hundred and sixty feet. And Lacepede,

the French naturalist, in his elaborate history of whales,

in the very beginning of his work (page 3), sets down the Right Whale

at one hundred metres, three hundred and twenty-eight feet.

And this work was published so late as A.D. 1825.

But will any whaleman believe these stories? No. The whale

of to-day is as big as his ancestors in Pliny's time.

And if ever I go where Pliny is, I, a whaleman (more than he was),

will make bold to tell him so. Because I cannot understand

how it is, that while the Egyptian mummies that were buried

thousands of years before even Pliny was born, do not measure

so much in their coffins as a modern Kentuckian in his socks;

and while the cattle and other animals sculptured on the oldest

Egyptian and Nineveh tablets, by the relative proportions in

which they are drawn, just as plainly prove that the high-bred,

stall-fed, prize cattle of Smithfield, not only equal,

but far exceed in magnitude the fattest of Pharaoh's fat kine;

in the face of all this, I will not admit that of all animals

the whale alone should have degenerated.

But still another inquiry remains; one often agitated by the more

recondite Nantucketers. Whether owing to the almost omniscient

look-outs at the mast-heads of the whaleships, now penetrating

even through Behring's straits, and into the remotest secret drawers

and lockers of the world; and the thousand harpoons and lances darted

along all continental coasts; the moot point is, whether Leviathan

can long endure so wide a chase, and so remorseless a havoc;

whether he must not at last be exterminated from the waters,

and the last whale, like the last man, smoke his last pipe,

and then himself evaporate in the final puff.

Comparing the humped herds of whales with the humped herds of buffalo,

which, not forty years ago, overspread by tens of thousands the prairies

of Illinois and Missouri, and shook their iron manes and scowled with

their thunder-clotted brows upon the sites of populous river-capitals,

where now the polite broker sells you land at a dollar an inch;

in such a comparison an irresistible argument would seem furnished,

to show that the hunted whale cannot now escape speedy extinction.

But you must look at this matter in every light. Though so short

a period ago--not a good lifetime--the census of the buffalo in Illinois

exceeded the census of men now in London, and though at the present

day not one horn or hoof of them remains in all that region;

and though the cause of this wondrous extermination was the spear

of man; yet the far different nature of the whale-hunt peremptorily

forbids so inglorious an end to the Leviathan. Forty men in one

ship hunting the Sperm Whales for forty-eight months think they

have done extremely well, and thank God, if at last they carry home

the oil of forty fish. Whereas, in the days of the old Canadian

and Indian hunters and trappers of the West, when the far west

(in whose sunset suns still rise) was a wilderness and a virgin,

the same number of moccasined men, for the same number of months,

mounted on horse instead of sailing in ships, would have slain

not forty, but forty thousand and more buffaloes; a fact that,

if need were, could be statistically stated.

Nor, considered aright, does it seem any argument in favor

of the gradual extinction of the Sperm Whale, for example,

that in former years (the latter part of the last century, say)

these Leviathans, in small pods, were encountered much

oftener than at present, and, in consequence, the voyages

were not so prolonged, and were also much more remunerative.

Because, as has been elsewhere noticed, those whales, influenced by

some views to safety, now swim the seas in immense caravans,

so that to a large degree the scattered solitaries, yokes,

and pods, and schools of other days are now aggregated into

vast but widely separated, unfrequent armies. That is all.

And equally fallacious seems the conceit, that because the so-called

whale-bone whales no longer haunt many grounds in former years

abounding with them, hence that species also is declining.

For they are only being driven from promontory to cape; and if

one coast is no longer enlivened with their jets, then, be sure,

some other and remoter strand has been very recently startled

by the unfamiliar spectacle.

Furthermore: concerning these last mentioned Leviathans,

they have two firm fortresses, which, in all human probability,

will for ever remain impregnable. And as upon the invasion of

their valleys, the frosty Swiss have retreated to their mountains;

so, hunted from the savannas and glades of the middle seas,

the whale-bone whales can at last resort to their Polar citadels,

and diving under the ultimate glassy barriers and walls there,

come up among icy fields and floes! and in a charmed circle

of everlasting December, bid defiance to all pursuit from man.

But as perhaps fifty of these whale-bone whales are harpooned

for one cachalot, some philosophers of the forecastle have

concluded that this positive havoc has already very seriously

diminished their battalions. But though for some time past

a number of these whales, not less than 13,000, have been

annually slain on the nor'west coast by the Americans alone;

yet there are considerations which render even this circumstance

of little or no account as an opposing argument in this matter.

Natural as it is to be somewhat incredulous concerning the populousness

of the more enormous creatures of the globe, yet what shall we

say to Harto, the historian of Goa, when he tells us that at one

hunting the King of Siam took 4,000 elephants; that in those regions

elephants are numerous as droves of cattle in the temperate climes.

And there seems no reason to doubt that if these elephants,

which have now been hunted for thousands of years, by Semiramis,

by Porus, by Hannibal, and by all the successive monarchs of the East--

if they still survive there in great numbers, much more may

the great whale outlast all hunting, since he has a pasture

to expatiate in, which is precisely twice as large as all Asia,

both Americas, Europe and Africa, New Holland, and all the Isles

of the sea combined.

Moreover: we are to consider, that from the presumed great longevity

of whales, their probably attaining the age of a century and more,

therefore at any one period of time, several distinct adult

generations must be contemporary. And what this is, we may soon

gain some idea of, by imagining all the grave-yards, cemeteries,

and family vaults of creation yielding up the live bodies of all

the men, women, and children who were alive seventy-five years ago;

and adding this countless host to the present human population

of the globe.

Wherefore, for all these things, we account the whale immortal

in his species, however perishable in his individuality.

He swam the seas before the continents broke water; he once

swam over the site of the Tuileries, and Windsor Castle,

and the Kremlin. In Noah's flood he despised Noah's Ark;

and if ever the world is to be again flooded, like the Netherlands,

to kill off its rats, then the eternal whale will still survive,

and rearing upon the topmost crest of the equatorial flood,

spout his frothed defiance to the skies.

CHAPTER 106

Ahab's Leg

The precipitating manner in which Captain Ahab had quitted

the Samuel Enderby of London, had not been unattended with some small

violence to his own person. He had lighted with such energy upon a thwart

of his boat that his ivory leg had received a half-splintering shock.

And when after gaining his own deck, and his own pivot-hole there,

he so vehemently wheeled round with an urgent command to the steersman

(it was, as ever, something about his not steering inflexibly enough);

then, the already shaken ivory received such an additional twist

and wrench, that though it still remained entire, and to all

appearances lusty, yet Ahab did not deem it entirely trustworthy.

And, indeed, it seemed small matter for wonder, that for all

his pervading, mad recklessness, Ahab, did at times give careful

heed to the condition of that dead bone upon which he partly stood.

For it had not been very long prior to the Pequod's sailing

from Nantucket, that he had been found one night lying prone upon

the ground, and insensible; by some unknown, and seemingly inexplicable,

unimaginable casualty, his ivory limb having been so violently displaced,

that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but pierced his groin;

nor was it without extreme difficulty that the agonizing wound

was entirely cured.

Nor, at the time, had it failed to enter his monomaniac mind,

that all the anguish of that then present suffering was but the

direct issue of a former woe; and he too plainly seemed to see,

that as the most poisonous reptile of the marsh perpetuates

his kind as inevitably as the sweetest songster of the grove;

so, equally with every felicity, all miserable events do naturally

beget their like. Yea, more than equally, thought Ahab;

since both the ancestry and posterity of Grief go further than

the ancestry and posterity of Joy. For, not to hint of this:

that it is an inference from certain canonic teachings, that while

some natural enjoyments here shall have no children born to them

for the other world, but, on the contrary, shall be followed by

the joy-childlessness of all hell's despair; whereas, some guilty

mortal miseries shall still fertilely beget to themselves

an eternally progressive progeny of griefs beyond the grave;

not at all to hint of this, there still seems an inequality

in the deeper analysis of the thing. For, thought Ahab,

while even the highest earthly felicities ever have a certain

unsignifying pettiness lurking in them, but, at bottom, all heartwoes,

a mystic significance, and, in some men, an archangelic grandeur;

so do their diligent tracings-out not belie the obvious deduction.

To trail the genealogies of these high mortal miseries,

carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods;

so that, in the face of all the glad, hay-making suns,

and softcymballing, round harvest-moons, we must needs give

in to this: that the gods themselves are not for ever glad.

The ineffaceable, sad birth-mark in the brow of man, is but

the stamp of sorrow in the signers.

Unwittingly here a secret has been divulged, which perhaps

might more properly, in set way, have been disclosed before.

With many other particulars concerning Ahab, always had it remained

a mystery to some, why it was, that for a certain period, both before

and after the sailing of the Pequod, he had hidden himself away

with such Grand-Lama-like exclusiveness; and, for that one interval,

sought speechless refuge, as it were, among the marble senate

of the dead. Captain Peleg's bruited reason for this thing appeared

by no means adequate; though, indeed, as touching all Ahab's

deeper part, every revelation partook more of significant darkness

than of explanatory light. But, in the end, it all came out;

this one matter did, at least. That direful mishap was at the bottom

of his temporary recluseness. And not only this, but to that

ever-contracting, dropping circle ashore, who for any reason,

possessed the privilege of a less banned approach to him;

to that timid circle the above hinted casualty--remaining, as it did,

moodily unaccounted for by Ahab--invested itself with terrors,

not entirely underived from the land of spirits and of wails.

So that, through their zeal for him, they had all conspired, so far

as in them lay, to muffle up the knowledge of this thing from others;

and hence it was, that not till a considerable interval had elapsed,

did it transpire upon the Pequod's decks.

But be all this as it may; let the unseen, ambiguous synod

in the air, or the vindictive princes and potentates of fire,

have to do or not with earthly Ahab, yet, in this present

matter of his leg, he took plain practical procedures;--

he called the carpenter.

And when that functionary appeared before him, he bade him without

delay set about making a new leg, and directed the mates to see him

supplied with all the studs and joists of jaw-ivory (Sperm Whale)

which had thus far been accumulated on the voyage, in order that a careful

selection of the stoutest, clearest-grained stuff might be secured.

This done, the carpenter received orders to have the leg

completed that night; and to provide all the fittings for it,

independent of those pertaining to the distrusted one in use.

Moreover, the ship's forge was ordered to be hoisted out of its

temporary idleness in the hold; and, to accelerate the affair,

the blacksmith was commanded to proceed at once to the forging

of whatever iron contrivances might be needed.

CHAPTER 107

The Carpenter

Seat thyself sultanically among the moons of Saturn, and take

high abstracted man alone; and he seems a wonder, a grandeur,

and a woe. But from the same point, take mankind in mass,

and for the most part, they seem a mob of unnecessary duplicates,

both contemporary and hereditary. But most humble though he was,

and far from furnishing an example of the high, humane abstraction;

the Pequod's carpenter was no duplicate; hence, he now comes

in person on this stage.

Like all sea-going ship carpenters, and more especially those belonging

to whaling vessels, he was, to a certain off-hand, practical extent,

alike experienced in numerous trades and callings collateral to his own;

the carpenter's pursuit being the ancient and outbranching trunk

of all those numerous handicrafts which more or less have to do

with wood as an auxiliary material. But, besides the application

to him of the generic remark above, this carpenter of the Pequod

was singularly efficient in those thousand nameless mechanical

emergencies continually recurring in a large ship, upon a three

or four years' voyage, in uncivilized and far-distant seas.

For not to speak of his readiness in ordinary duties:--

repairing stove boats, sprung spars, reforming the shape of

clumsy-bladed oars, inserting bull's eyes in the deck, or new

tree-nails in the side planks, and other miscellaneous matters

more directly pertaining to his special business; he was moreover

unhesitatingly expert in all manner of conflicting aptitudes,

both useful and capricious.

The one grand stage where he enacted all his various parts so manifold,

was his vice-bench; a long rude ponderous table furnished with

several vices, of different sizes, and both of iron and of wood.

At all times except when whales were alongside, this bench was securely

lashed athwartships against the rear of the Try-works.

A belaying pin is found too large to be easily inserted into its hole:

the carpenter claps it into one of his ever ready vices,

and straightway files it smaller. A lost landbird of strange

plumage strays on board, and is made a captive: out of clean shaved

rods of right-whale bone, and cross-beams of sperm whale ivory,

the carpenter makes a pagoda-looking cage for it. An oarsman

sprains his wrist: the carpenter concocts a soothing lotion.

Stubb longed for vermillion stars to be painted upon the blade

of his every oar; screwing each oar in his big vice of wood,

the carpenter symmetrically supplies the constellation.

A sailor takes a fancy to wear shark-bone ear-rings:

the carpenter drills his ears. Another has the toothache:

the carpenter out pincers, and clapping one hand upon his bench

bids him be seated there; but the poor fellow unmanageably winces

under the unconcluded operation; whirling round the handle of his

wooden vice, the carpenter signs him to clap his jaw in that,

if he would have him draw the tooth.

Thus, this carpenter was prepared at all points, and alike indifferent

and without respect in all. Teeth he accounted bits of ivory;

heads he deemed but top-blocks; men themselves he lightly held

for capstans. But while now upon so wide a field thus variously

accomplished and with such liveliness of expertness in him, too;

all this would seem to argue some uncommon vivacity of intelligence.

But not precisely so. For nothing was this man more remarkable,

than for a certain impersonal stolidity as it were; impersonal, I say;

for it so shaded off into the surrounding infinite of things,

that it seemed one with the general stolidity discernible in the whole

visible world; which while pauselessly active in uncounted modes,

still eternally holds its peace, and ignores you, though you dig

foundations for cathedrals. Yet was this half-horrible stolidity

in him, involving, too, as it appeared, an all-ramifying heartlessness;--

yet was it oddly dashed at times, with an old, crutch-like, antediluvian,

wheezing humorousness, not unstreaked now and then with a certain

grizzled wittiness; such as might have served to pass the time

during the midnight watch on the bearded forecastle of Noah's ark.

Was it that this old carpenter had been a life-long wanderer,

whose much rolling, to and fro, not only had gathered no moss;

but what is more, had rubbed off whatever small outward clingings

might have originally pertained to him? He was a stript abstract;

an unfractioned integral; uncompromised as a new-born babe;

living without premeditated reference to this world or the next.

You might almost say, that this strange uncompromisedness in him involved

a sort of unintelligence; for in his numerous trades, he did not seem

to work so much by reason or by instinct, or simply because he had been

tutored to it, or by any intermixture of all these, even or uneven;

but merely by a kind of deaf and dumb, spontaneous literal process.

He was a pure manipulator; his brain, if he had ever had one,

must have early oozed along into the muscles of his fingers.

He was like one of those unreasoning but still highly useful,

multum in parvo, Sheffield contrivances, assuming the exterior--

though a little swelled--of a common pocket knife; but containing,

not only blades of various sizes, but also screw-drivers,

cork-screws, tweezers, awls, pens, rulers, nail-filers, countersinkers.

So, if his superiors wanted to use the carpenter for a screw-driver,

all they had to do was to open that part of him, and the screw was fast:

or if for tweezers, take him up by the legs, and there they were.

Yet, as previously hinted, this omnitooled, open-and-shut carpenter,

was, after all, no mere machine of an automaton. If he did not

have a common soul in him, he had a subtle something that somehow

anomalously did its duty. What that was, whether essence of quicksilver,

or a few drops of hartshorn, there is no telling. But there it was;

and there it had abided for now some sixty years or more.

And this it was, this same unaccountable, cunning life-principle in him;

this it was, that kept him a great part of the time soliloquizing;

but only like an unreasoning wheel, which also hummingly soliloquizes;

or rather, his body was a sentry-box and this soliloquizer on guard there,

and talking all the time to keep himself awake.

CHAPTER 108

Ahab and the Carpenter

The Deck - First Night Watch

(Carpenter standing before his vice-bench, and by the light

of two lanterns busily filing the ivory joist for the leg,

which joist is firmly fixed in the vice. Slabs of ivory,

leather straps, pads, screws, and various tools of all sorts lying

about the bench. Forward, the red flame of the forge is seen,

where the blacksmith is at work.)

Drat the file, and drat the bone! That is hard which should be soft,

and that is soft which should be hard. So we go, who file old jaws

and shin bones. Let's try another. Aye, now, this works better

(sneezes). Halloa, this bone dust is (sneezes)--why it's

(sneezes)--yes it's (sneezes)--bless my soul, it won't let me speak!

This is what an old fellow gets now for working in dead lumber.

Saw a live tree, and you don't get this dust; amputate a live bone,

and you don't get it (sneezes). Come, come, you old Smut, there,

bear a hand, and let's have that ferrule and buckle-screw; I'll be ready

for them presently. Lucky now (sneezes) there's no knee-joint to make;

that might puzzle a little; but a mere shin-bone--why it's easy

as making hop-poles; only I should like to put a good finish on.

Time, time; if I but only had the time, I could turn him out as

neat a leg now as ever (sneezes) scraped to a lady in a parlor.

Those buckskin legs and calves of legs I've seen in shop windows

wouldn't compare at all. They soak water, they do; and of course

get rheumatic, and have to be doctored (sneezes) with washes and lotions,

just like live legs. There; before I saw it off, now, I must call

his old Mogulship, and see whether the length will be all right;

too short, if anything, I guess. Ha! that's the heel; we are in luck;

here he comes, or it's somebody else, that's certain. AHAB (advancing)

(During the ensuing scene, the carpenter continues sneezing at times).

Well, manmaker!

Just in time, sir. If the captain pleases, I will now mark the length.

Let me measure, sir.

Measured for a leg! good. Well, it's not the first time.

About it! There; keep thy finger on it. This is a cogent

vice thou hast here, carpenter; let me feel its grip once.

So, so; it does pinch some.

Oh, sir, it will break bones--beware, beware!

No fear; I like a good grip; I like to feel something in this

slippery world that can hold, man. What's Prometheus about there?--

the blacksmith, I mean--what's he about?

He must be forging the buckle-screw, sir, now.

Right. It's a partnership; he supplies the muscle part.

He makes a fierce red flame there!

Aye, sir; he must have the white heat for this kind of fine work.

Um-m. So he must. I do deem it now a most meaning thing,

that that old Greek, Prometheus, who made men, they say, should have

been a blacksmith, and animated them with fire; for what's made

in fire must properly belong to fire; and so hell's probable.

How the soot flies! This must be the remainder the Greek made

the Africans of. Carpenter, when he's through with that buckle,

tell him to forge a pair of steel shoulder-blades; there's a pedlar

aboard with a crushing pack.

Sir?

Hold; while Prometheus is about it, I'll order a complete man

after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks;

then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel then, legs with roots

to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist;

no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre

of fine brains; and let me see--shall I order eyes to see outwards?

No, but put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards.

There, take the order, and away.

Now, what's he speaking about, and who's he speaking to,

I should like to know? Shall I keep standing here? (aside.)

'Tis but indifferent architecture to make a blind dome; here's one.

No, no, no; I must have a lantern.

Ho, ho! That's it, hey? Here are two, sir; one will serve my turn.

What art thou thrusting that thief-catcher into my face for, man?

Thrusted light is worse than presented pistols.

I thought, sir, that you spoke to carpenter.

Carpenter? why that's--but no;--a very tidy, and, I may say, an extremely

gentlemanlike sort of business thou art in here, carpenter;--or would'st

thou rather work in clay?

Sir?--Clay? clay, sir? That's mud; we leave clay to ditchers, sir.

The fellow's impious! What art thou sneezing about?

Bone is rather dusty, sir.

Take the hint, then; and when thou art dead, never bury thyself

under living people's noses.

Sir?--oh! ah!--I guess so; so;--yes, yes--oh dear!

Look ye, carpenter, I dare say thou callest thyself a right good

workmanlike workman, eh? Well, then, will it speak thoroughly well

for thy work, if, when I come to mount this leg thou makest, I shall

nevertheless feel another leg in the same identical place with it;

that is, carpenter, my old lost leg; the flesh and blood one, I mean.

Canst thou not drive that old Adam away?

Truly, sir, I begin to understand somewhat now.

Yes, I have heard something curious on that score, sir;

how that a dismasted man never entirely loses the feeling

of his old spar, but it will be still pricking him at times.

May I humbly ask if it be really so, sir?

It is, man. Look, put thy live leg here in the place where mine once was;

so, now, here is only one distinct leg to the eye, yet two to the soul.

Where thou feelest tingling life; there, exactly there, there to a hair,

do I. Is't a riddle?

I should humbly call it a poser, sir.

Hist, then. How dost thou know that some entire, living, thinking thing

may not be invisibly and uninterpenetratingly standing precisely

where thou now standest; aye, and standing there in thy spite?

In thy most solitary hours, then, dost thou not fear eavesdroppers?

Hold, don't speak! And if I still feel the smart of my crushed leg,

though it be now so long dissolved; then, why mayest not thou, carpenter,

feel the fiery pains of hell for ever, and without a body? Hah!

Good Lord! Truly, sir, if it comes to that, I must calculate over again;

I think I didn't carry a small figure, sir.

Look ye, pudding-heads should never grant premises.--How long

before this leg is done?

Perhaps an hour, sir.

Bungle away at it then, and bring it to me (turns to go).

Oh, Life. Here I am, proud as Greek god, and yet standing debtor

to this blockhead for a bone to stand on! Cursed be that mortal

inter-indebtedness which will not do away with ledgers.

I would be free as air; and I'm down in the whole world's books.

I am so rich, I could have given bid for bid with the wealthiest

Praetorians at the auction of the Roman empire (which was the world's);

and yet I owe for the flesh in the tongue I brag with. By heavens!

I'll get a crucible, and into it, and dissolve myself down to one small,

compendious vertebra. So.

Carpenter ( resuming his work).

Well, well, well! Stubb knows him best of all, and Stubb always says

he's queer; says nothing but that one sufficient little word queer;

he's queer, says Stubb; he's queer--queer, queer; and keeps dinning it

into Mr. Starbuck all the time--queer--sir--queer, queer, very queer.

And here's his leg. Yes, now that I think of it, here's his bed-fellow!

has a stick of whale's jaw-bone for a wife! And this is his leg;

he'll stand on this. What was that now about one leg standing

in three places, and all three places standing in one hell--

how was that? Oh! I don't wonder he looked so scornful at me!

I'm a sort of strange-thoughted sometimes, they say; but that's

only haphazard-like. Then, a short, little old body like me,

should never undertake to wade out into deep waters with tall,

heron-built captains; the water chucks you under the chin pretty quick,

and there's a great cry for life-boats. And here's the heron's leg!

long and slim, sure enough! Now, for most folks one pair of legs

lasts a lifetime, and that must be because they use them mercifully,

as a tender-hearted old lady uses her roly-poly old coach-horses.

But Ahab; oh he's a hard driver. Look, driven one leg to death,

and spavined the other for life, and now wears out bone legs by the cord.

Halloa, there, you Smut! bear a hand there with those screws,

and let's finish it before the resurrection fellow comes

a-calling with his horn for all legs, true or false, as brewery

men go round collecting old beer barrels, to fill 'em up again.

What a leg this is! It looks like a real live leg, filed down

to nothing but the core; he'll be standing on this to-morrow;

he'll be taking altitudes on it. Halloa! I almost forgot the little

oval slate, smoothed ivory, where he figures up the latitude.

So, so; chisel, file, and sand-paper, now!

CHAPTER 109

Ahab and Starbuck in the Cabin

According to usage they were pumping the ship next morning;

and lo! no inconsiderable oil came up with the water;

the casks below must have sprung a bad leak. Much concern

was shown; and Starbuck went down into the cabin to report

this unfavorable affair.\*

\*In Sperm-whalemen with any considerable quantity of oil on board,

it is a regular semiweekly duty to conduct a hose into the hold,

and drench the casks with sea-water; which afterwards,

at varying intervals, is removed by the ship's pumps.

Hereby the casks are sought to be kept damply tight; while by

the changed character of the withdrawn water, the mariners

readily detect any serious leakage in the precious cargo.

Now, from the South and West the Pequod was drawing nigh to Formosa

and the Bashee Isles, between which lies one of the tropical outlets

from the China waters into the Pacific. And so Starbuck found Ahab

with a general chart of the oriental archipelagoes spread before him;

and another separate one representing the long eastern coasts

of the Japanese islands--Niphon, Matsmai, and Sikoke. With his

snow-white new ivory leg braced against the screwed leg of his table,

and with a long pruning-hook of a jack-knife in his hand, the wondrous

old man, with his back to the gangway door, was wrinkling his brow,

and tracing his old courses again.

"Who's there?" hearing the footstep at the door, but not turning

round to it. "On deck! Begone!"

"Captain Ahab mistakes; it is I. The oil in the hold is leaking, sir.

We must up Burtons and break out."

"Up Burtons and break out? Now that we are nearing Japan;

heave-to here for a week to tinker a parcel of old hoops?"

"Either do that, sir, or waste in one day more oil than we

may make good in a year. What we come twenty thousand miles

to get is worth saving, sir."

"So it is, so it is; if we get it."

"I was speaking of the oil in the hold, sir."

"And I was not speaking or thinking of that at all.

Begone! Let it leak! I'm all aleak myself. Aye! leaks in leaks!

not only full of leaky casks, but those leaky casks are in a

leaky ship; and that's a far worse plight than the Pequod's, man.

Yet I don't stop to plug my leak; for who can find it in

the deep-loaded hull; or how hope to plug it, even if found,

in this life's howling gale? Starbuck! I'll not have

the Burtons hoisted."

"What will the owners say, sir?"

"Let the owners stand on Nantucket beach and outyell

the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art

always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners,

as if the owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real

owner of anything is its commander; and hark ye, my conscience

is in this ship's keel.--On deck!"

"Captain Ahab," said the reddening mate, moving further into the cabin,

with a daring so strangely respectful and cautious that it almost seemed

not only every way seeking to avoid the slightest outward manifestation

of itself, but within also seemed more than half distrustful of itself;

"A better man than I might well pass over in thee what he would quickly

enough resent in a younger man; aye, and in a happier, Captain Ahab."

"Devils! Dost thou then so much as dare to critically think

of me?--On deck!"

"Nay, sir, not yet; I do entreat. And I do dare, sir--to be forbearing!

Shall we not understand each other better than hitherto, Captain Ahab?"

Ahab seized a loaded musket from the rack (forming part of most

South-Sea-men's cabin furniture), and pointing it towards

Starbuck, exclaimed: "There is one God that is Lord over the earth,

and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod.--On deck!"

For an instant in the flashing eyes of the mate, and his fiery cheeks,

you would have almost thought that he had really received the blaze

of the levelled tube. But, mastering his emotion, he half calmly rose,

and as he quitted the cabin, paused for an instant and said:

"Thou hast outraged, not insulted me, Sir; but for that I ask thee not to

beware of Starbuck; thou wouldst but laugh; but let Ahab beware of Ahab;

beware of thyself, old man."

"He waxes brave, but nevertheless obeys; most careful

bravery that!" murmured Ahab, as Starbuck disappeared.

"What's that he said--Ahab beware of Ahab--there's something there!"

Then unconsciously using the musket for a staff, with an iron

brow he paced to and fro in the little cabin; but presently

the thick plaits of his forehead relaxed, and returning the gun

to the rack, he went to the deck.

"Thou art but too good a fellow, Starbuck," he said lowly to the mate;

then raising his voice to the crew: "Furl the t'gallant-sails,

and close-reef the top-sails, fore and aft; back the main-yard;

up Burtons, and break out in the main-hold."

It were perhaps vain to surmise exactly why it was, that as respecting

Starbuck, Ahab thus acted. It may have been a flash of honesty

in him; or mere prudential policy which, under the circumstance,

imperiously forbade the slightest symptom of open disaffection,

however transient, in the important chief officer of his ship.

However it was, his orders were executed; and the Burtons were hoisted.

CHAPTER 110

Queequeg in His Coffin

Upon searching, it was found that the casks last struck into the hold

were perfectly sound, and that the leak must be further off.

So, it being calm weather, they broke out deeper and deeper,

disturbing the slumbers of the huge ground-tier butts;

and from that black midnight sending those gigantic moles

into the daylight above. So deep did they go; and so ancient,

and corroded, and weedy the aspect of the lowermost puncheons,

that you almost looked next for some mouldy corner-stone cask

containing coins of Captain Noah, with copies of the posted placards,

vainly warning the infatuated old world from the flood.

Tierce after tierce, too, of water, and bread, and beef,

and shooks of staves, and iron bundles of hoops, were hoisted out,

till at last the piled decks were hard to get about; and the hollow

hull echoed under foot, as if you were treading over empty catacombs,

and reeled and rolled in the sea like an air-freighted demijohn.

Top-heavy was the ship as a dinnerless student with all Aristotle

in his head. Well was it that the Typhoons did not visit them then.

Now, at this time it was that my poor pagan companion,

and fast bosom-friend, Queequeg, was seized with a fever,

which brought him nigh to his endless end.

Be it said, that in this vocation of whaling, sinecures are unknown;

dignity and danger go hand in hand; till you get to be Captain,

the higher you rise the harder you toil. So with poor Queequeg,

who, as harpooneer, must not only face all the rage of the

living whale, but--as we have elsewhere seen--mount his dead back

in a rolling sea; and finally descend into the gloom of the hold,

and bitterly sweating all day in that subterraneous confinement,

resolutely manhandle the clumsiest casks and see to their stowage.

To be short, among whalemen, the harpooneers are the holders, so called.

Poor Queequeg! when the ship was about half disembowelled,

you should have stooped over the hatchway, and peered down

upon him there; where, stripped to his woollen drawers,

the tattooed savage was crawling about amid that dampness

and slime, like a green spotted lizard at the bottom of a well.

And a well, or an ice-house, it somehow proved to him, poor pagan;

where, strange to say, for all the heat of his sweatings,

he caught a terrible chill which lapsed into a fever;

and at last, after some days' suffering, laid him in his hammock,

close to the very sill of the door of death. How he wasted

and wasted away in those few long-lingering days, till there

seemed but little left of him but his frame and tattooing.

But as all else in him thinned, and his cheek-bones grew sharper,

his eyes, nevertheless, seemed growing fuller and fuller;

they became of a strange softness of lustre; and mildly but

deeply looked out at you there from his sickness, a wondrous

testimony to that immortal health in him which could not die,

or be weakened. And like circles on the water, which, as they

grow fainter, expand; so his eyes seemed rounding and rounding,

like the rings of Eternity. An awe that cannot be named would

steal over you as you sat by the side of this waning savage,

and saw as strange things in his face, as any beheld who were

bystanders when Zoroaster died. For whatever is truly wondrous

and fearful in man, never yet was put into words or books.

And the drawing near of Death, which alike levels all,

alike impresses all with a last revelation, which only an author

from the dead could adequately tell. So that--let us say it again--

no dying Chaldee or Greek had higher and holier thoughts

than those, whose mysterious shades you saw creeping over the face

of poor Queequeg, as he quietly lay in his swaying hammock,

and the rolling sea seemed gently rocking him to his final rest,

and the ocean's invisible flood-tide lifted him higher and higher

towards his destined heaven.

Not a man of the crew but gave him up; and, as for Queequeg himself,

what he thought of his case was forcibly shown by a curious

favor he asked. He called one to him in the grey morning watch,

when the day was just breaking, and taking his hand,

said that while in Nantucket he had chanced to see certain little

canoes of dark wood, like the rich war-wood of his native isle;

and upon inquiry, he had learned that all whalemen who died

in Nantucket, were laid in those same dark canoes, and that the fancy

of being so laid had much pleased him; for it was not unlike

the custom of his own race, who, after embalming a dead warrior,

stretched him out in his canoe, and so left him to be floated

away to the starry archipelagoes; for not only do they believe

that the stars are isles, but that far beyond all visible horizons,

their own mild, uncontinented seas, interflow with the blue heavens;

and so form the white breakers of the milky way. He added,

that he shuddered at the thought of being buried in his hammock,

according to the usual sea-custom, tossed like something vile

to the death-devouring sharks. No: he desired a canoe like those

of Nantucket, all the more congenial to him, being a whaleman,

that like a whale-boat these coffin-canoes were without a keel;

though that involved but uncertain steering, and much lee-way

adown the dim ages.

Now, when this strange circumstance was made known aft,

the carpenter was at once commanded to do Queequeg's bidding,

whatever it might include. There was some heathenish,

coffin-colored old lumber aboard, which, upon a long previous voyage,

had been cut from the aboriginal groves of the Lackaday islands,

and from these dark planks the coffin was recommended to be made.

No sooner was the carpenter apprised of the order, than taking

his rule, he forthwith with all the indifferent promptitude

of his character, proceeded into the forecastle and took

Queequeg's measure with great accuracy, regularly chalking

Queequeg's person as he shifted the rule.

"Ah! poor fellow! he'll have to die now," ejaculated the

Long Island sailor.

Going to his vice-bench, the carpenter for convenience sake

and general reference, now transferringly measured on it

the exact length the coffin was to be, and then made the transfer

permanent by cutting two notches at its extremities.

This done, he marshalled the planks and his tools, and to work.

When the last nail was driven, and the lid duly planed and fitted,

he lightly shouldered the coffin and went forward with it,

inquiring whether they were ready for it yet in that direction.

Overhearing the indignant but half-humorous cries with which

the people on deck began to drive the coffin away, Queequeg,

to every one's consternation, commanded that the thing should

be instantly brought to him, nor was there any denying him;

seeing that, of all mortals, some dying men are the most tyrannical;

and certainly, since they will shortly trouble us so little

for evermore, the poor fellows ought to be indulged.

Leaning over in his hammock, Queequeg long regarded the coffin

with an attentive eye. He then called for his harpoon,

had the wooden stock drawn from it, and then had the iron part

placed in the coffin along with one of the paddles of his boat.

All by his own request, also, biscuits were then ranged round

the sides within; a flask of fresh water was placed at the head,

and a small bag of woody earth scraped up in the hold at the foot;

and a piece of sail-cloth being rolled up for a pillow,

Queequeg now entreated to be lifted into his final bed,

that he might make trial of its comforts, if any it had.

He lay without moving a few minutes, then told one to go

to his bag and bring out his little god, Yojo. Then crossing

his arms on his breast with Yojo between, he called for

the coffin lid (hatch he called it) to be placed over him.

The head part turned over with a leather hinge, and there lay

Queequeg in his coffin with little but his composed countenance

in view. "Rarmai" (it will do; it is easy), he murmured at last,

and signed to be replaced in his hammock.

But ere this was done, Pip, who had been slily hovering near by all

the while, drew nigh to him where he lay, and with soft sobbings,

took him by the hand; in the other, holding his tambourine.

"Poor rover! will ye never have done with all this weary roving?

Where go ye now? But if the currents carry ye to those sweet Antilles

where the beaches are only beat with water-lilies, will ye do one

little errand for me? Seek out one Pip, who's now been missing long:

I think he's in those far Antilles. If ye find him, then comfort him;

for he must be very sad; for look! he's left his tambourine behind;--

I found it. Rig-a-dig, dig, dig! Now, Queequeg, die; and I'll beat

ye your dying march."

"I have heard," murmured Starbuck, gazing down the scuttle, "that in

violent fevers, men, all ignorance, have talked in ancient tongues;

and that when the mystery is probed, it turns out always

that in their wholly forgotten childhood those ancient tongues

had been really spoken in their hearing by some lofty scholars.

So, to my fond faith, poor Pip, in this strange sweetness of

his lunacy, brings heavenly vouchers of all our heavenly homes.

Where learned he that, but there?--Hark! he speaks again;

but more wildly now."

"Form two and two! Let's make a General of him! Ho, where's

his harpoon? Lay it across here.--Rig-a-dig, dig, dig! huzza!

Oh for a game cock now to sit upon his head and crow!

Queequeg dies game!--mind ye that; Queequeg dies game!--

take ye good heed of that; Queequeg dies game!

I say; game, game, game! but base little Pip, he died a coward;

died all a'shiver;--out upon Pip! Hark ye; if ye find Pip,

tell all the Antilles he's a runaway; a coward, a coward,

a coward! Tell them he jumped from a whale-boat! I'd never

beat my tambourine over base Pip, and hail him General,

if he were once more dying here. No, no! shame upon all cowards--

shame upon them! Let'em go drown like Pip, that jumped from

a whale-boat. Shame! shame!"

During all this, Queequeg lay with closed eyes, as if in a dream.

Pip was led away, and the sick man was replaced in his hammock.

But now that he had apparently made every preparation for death;

now that his coffin was proved a good fit, Queequeg suddenly rallied;

soon there seemed no need of the carpenter's box; and thereupon,

when some expressed their delighted surprise, he, in substance,

said, that the cause of his sudden convalescence was this;--

at a critical moment, he had just recalled a little duty ashore, which he

was leaving undone; and therefore had changed his mind about dying:

he could not die yet, he averred. They asked him, then, whether to

live or die was a matter of his own sovereign will and pleasure.

He answered, certainly. In a word, it was Queequeg's conceit,

that if a man made up his mind to live, mere sickness could not kill him:

nothing but a whale, or a gale, or some violent, ungovernable,

unintelligent destroyer of that sort.

Now, there is this noteworthy difference between savage and civilized;

that while a sick, civilized man may be six months convalescing,

generally speaking, a sick savage is almost half-well again

in a day. So, in good time my Queequeg gained strength;

and at length after sitting on the windlass for a few indolent days

(but eating with a vigorous appetite) he suddenly leaped to his feet,

threw out his arms and legs, gave himself a good stretching, yawned a

little bit, and then springing into the head of his hoisted boat,

and poising a harpoon, pronounced himself fit for a fight.

With a wild whimsiness, he now used his coffin for a sea-chest;

and emptying into it his canvas bag of clothes, set them in order there.

Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid with all manner of grotesque

figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving,

in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body.

And this tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer

of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written

out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth,

and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg

in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work

in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read,

though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries

were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living

parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.

And this thought it must have been which suggested to Ahab that wild

exclamation of his, when one morning turning away from surveying poor

Queequeg--"Oh, devilish tantalization of the gods!"

CHAPTER 111

The Pacific

When gliding by the Bashee isles we emerged at last upon the great

South Sea; were it not for other things I could have greeted my dear

Pacific with uncounted thanks, for now the long supplication of my youth

was answered; that serene ocean rolled eastwards from me a thousand

leagues of blue.

There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea,

whose gently awful stirrings seems to speak of some hidden soul beneath;

like those fabled undulations of the Ephesian sod over the buried

Evangelist St. John. And meet it is, that over these sea-pastures,

wide-rolling watery prairies and Potters' Fields of all four continents,

the waves should rise and fall, and ebb and flow unceasingly;

for here, millions of mixed shades and shadows, drowned dreams,

somnambulisms, reveries; all that we call lives and souls,

lie dreaming, dreaming, still; tossing like slumberers in their beds;

the ever-rolling waves but made so by their restlessness.

To any meditative Magian rover, this serene Pacific, once beheld,

must ever after be the sea of his adoption. It rolls the midmost

waters of the world, the Indian ocean and Atlantic being but its arms.

The same waves wash the moles of the new-built California towns,

but yesterday planted by the recentest race of men and lave the faded

but still gorgeous skirts of Asiatic lands, older than Abraham;

while all between float milky-ways of coral isles, and low-lying, endless,

unknown Archipelagoes, and impenetrable Japans. Thus this mysterious,

divine Pacific zones the world's whole bulk about; makes all

coasts one bay to it; seems the tide-beating heart of earth.

Lifted by those eternal swells, you needs must own the seductive god,

bowing your head to Pan.

But few thoughts of Pan stirred Ahab's brain, as standing, like an iron

statue at his accustomed place beside the mizen rigging, with one

nostril he unthinkingly snuffed the sugary musk from the Bashee isles

(in whose sweet woods mild lovers must be walking), and with

the other consciously inhaled the salt breath of the new found sea;

that sea in which the hated White Whale must even then be swimming.

Launched at length upon these almost final waters, and gliding

towards the Japanese cruising-ground, the old man's purpose

intensified itself. His firm lips met like the lips of a vice;

the Delta of his forehead's veins swelled like overladen brooks;

in his very sleep, his ringing cry ran through the vaulted hull,

"Stern all! the White Whale spouts thick blood!"

CHAPTER 112

The Blacksmith

Availing himself of the mild, summer-cool weather that now reigned

in these latitudes, and in preparation for the peculiarly active

pursuits shortly to be anticipated, Perth, the begrimed, blistered

old blacksmith, had not removed his portable forge to the hold again,

after concluding his contributory work for Ahab's leg, but still

retained it on deck, fast lashed to ringbolts by the foremast;

being now almost incessantly invoked by the headsmen, and harpooneers,

and bowsmen to do some little job for them; altering, or repairing,

or new shaping their various weapons and boat furniture.

Often he would be surrounded by an eager circle, all waiting

to be served; holding boat-spades, pikeheads, harpoons, and lances,

and jealously watching his every sooty movement, as he toiled.

Nevertheless, this old man's was a patient hammer wielded by a

patient arm. No murmur, no impatience, no petulance did come

from him. Silent, slow, and solemn; bowing over still further his

chronically broken back, he toiled away, as if toil were life itself,

and the heavy beating of his hammer the heavy beating of his heart.

And so it was.--Most miserable!

A peculiar walk in this old man, a certain slight but painful

appearing yawing in his gait, had at an early period of the voyage

excited the curiosity of the mariners. And to the importunity

of their persisted questionings he had finally given in;

and so it came to pass that every one now knew the shameful

story of his wretched fate.

Belated, and not innocently, one bitter winter's midnight,

on the road running between two country towns, the blacksmith

half-stupidly felt the deadly numbness stealing over him,

and sought refuge in a leaning, dilapidated barn.

The issue was, the loss of the extremities of both feet.

Out of this revelation, part by part, at last came out the four

acts of the gladness, and the one long, and as yet uncatastrophied

fifth act of the grief of his life's drama.

He was an old man, who, at the age of nearly sixty, had postponedly

encountered that thing in sorrow's technicals called ruin.

He had been an artisan of famed excellence, and with plenty

to do; owned a house and garden; embraced a youthful,

daughter-like, loving wife, and three blithe, ruddy children;

every Sunday went to a cheerful-looking church, planted in a grove.

But one night, under cover of darkness, and further concealed

in a most cunning disguisement, a desperate burglar slid

into his happy home, and robbed them all of everything.

And darker yet to tell, the blacksmith himself did

ignorantly conduct this burglar into his family's heart.

It was the Bottle Conjuror! Upon the opening of that fatal cork,

forth flew the fiend, and shrivelled up his home. Now, for prudent,

most wise, and economic reasons, the blacksmith's shop was in

the basement of his dwelling, but with a separate entrance to it;

so that always had the young and loving healthy wife listened

with no unhappy nervousness, but with vigorous pleasure,

to the stout ringing of her young-armed old husband's hammer;

whose reverberations, muffled by passing through the floors

and walls, came up to her, not unsweetly, in her nursery;

and so, to stout Labor's iron lullaby, the blacksmith's infants

were rocked to slumber.

Oh, woe on woe! Oh, Death, why canst thou not sometimes be timely?

Hadst thou taken this old blacksmith to thyself ere his full ruin

came upon him, then had the young widow had a delicious grief,

and her orphans a truly venerable, legendary sire to dream of in

their after years; and all of them a care-killing competency.

But Death plucked down some virtuous elder brother, on whose whistling

daily toil solely hung the responsibilities of some other family,

and left the worse than useless old man standing, till the hideous

rot of life should make him easier to harvest.

Why tell the whole? The blows of the basement hammer every day

grew more and more between; and each blow every day grew fainter

than the last; the wife sat frozen at the window, with tearless eyes,

glitteringly gazing into the weeping faces of her children;

the bellows fell; the forge choked up with cinders; the house

was sold; the mother dived down into the long church-yard grass;

her children twice followed her thither; and the houseless,

familyless old man staggered off a vagabond in crape; his every

woe unreverenced; his grey head a scorn to flaxen curls!

Death seems the only desirable sequel for a career like this;

but Death is only a launching into the region of the strange Untried;

it is but the first salutation to the possibilities

of the immense Remote, the Wild, the Watery, the Unshored;

therefore, to the death-longing eyes of such men, who still

have left in them some interior compunctions against suicide,

does the all-contributed and all-receptive ocean alluringly spread

forth his whole plain of unimaginable, taking terrors, and wonderful,

new-life adventures; and from the hearts of infinite Pacifics,

the thousand mermaids sing to them--"Come hither, broken-hearted;

here is another life without the guilt of intermediate death;

here are wonders supernatural, without dying for them.

Come hither! bury thyself in a life which, to your now equally

abhorred and abhorring, landed world, is more oblivious than death.

Come hither! put up thy grave-stone, too, within the churchyard,

and come hither, till we marry thee!"

Hearkening to these voices, East and West, by early sunrise,

and by fall of eve, the blacksmith's soul responded, Aye, I come!

And so Perth went a-whaling.

CHAPTER 113

The Forge

With matted beard, and swathed in a bristling shark-skin apron,

about mid-day, Perth was standing between his forge and anvil,

the latter placed upon an iron-wood log, with one hand holding a pike-head

in the coals, and with the other at his forge's lungs, when Captain Ahab

came along, carrying in his hand a small rusty-looking leathern bag.

While yet a little distance from the forge, moody Ahab paused;

till at last, Perth, withdrawing his iron from the fire, began hammering

it upon the anvil--the red mass sending off the sparks in thick

hovering flights, some of which flew close to Ahab.

"Are these thy Mother Carey's chickens, Perth? they are always flying

in thy wake; birds of good omen, too, but not to all;--look here,

they burn; but thou--thou liv'st among them without a scorch."

"Because I am scorched all over, Captain Ahab," answered Perth,

resting for a moment on his hammer; "I am past scorching-,

not easily can'st thou scorch a scar."

"Well, well; no more. Thy shrunk voice sounds too calmly, sanely woeful

to me. In no Paradise myself, I am impatient of all misery in others

that is not mad. Thou should'st go mad, blacksmith; say, why dost

thou not go mad? How can'st thou endure without being mad?

Do the heavens yet hate thee, that thou can'st not go mad?--

What wert thou making there?"

"Welding an old pike-head, sir; there were seams and dents in it."

"And can'st thou make it all smooth again, blacksmith, after such hard

usage as it had?"

"I think so, sir."

"And I suppose thou can'st smoothe almost any seams and dents;

never mind how hard the metal, blacksmith?"

"Aye, sir, I think I can; all seams and dents but one."

"Look ye here then," cried Ahab, passionately advancing, and leaning

with both hands on Perth's shoulders; "look ye here--here--can ye

smoothe out a seam like this, blacksmith," sweeping one hand across

his ribbed brow; "if thou could'st, blacksmith, glad enough would

I lay my head upon thy anvil, and feel thy heaviest hammer between

my eyes. Answer! Can'st thou smoothe this seam?"

"Oh! that is the one, sir! Said I not all seams and dents but one?"

"Aye, blacksmith, it is the one; aye, man, it is unsmoothable;

for though thou only see'st it here in my flesh, it has worked down

into the bone of my skull--that is all wrinkles! But, away with

child's play; no more gaffs and pikes to-day. Look ye here!"

jingling the leathern bag, as if it were full of gold coins.

"I, too, want a harpoon made; one that a thousand yoke of fiends could

not part, Perth; something that will stick in a whale like his own

fin-bone. There's the stuff," flinging the pouch upon the anvil.

"Look ye, blacksmith, these are the gathered nail-stubbs of the steel

shoes of racing horses."

"Horse-shoe stubbs, sir? Why, Captain Ahab, thou hast here, then,

the best and stubbornest stuff we blacksmiths ever work."

"I know it, old man; these stubbs will weld together like glue

from the melted bones of murderers. Quick! forge me the harpoon.

And forge me first, twelve rods for its shank; then wind, and twist,

and hammer these twelve together like the yarns and strands of a

tow-line. Quick! I'll blow the fire."

When at last the twelve rods were made, Ahab tried them, one by one,

by spiralling them, with his own hand, round a long, heavy iron bolt.

"A flaw!" rejecting the last one. "Work that over again, Perth."

This done, Perth was about to begin welding the twelve into one,

when Ahab stayed his hand, and said he would weld his own iron.

As, then, with regular, gasping hems, he hammered on the anvil,

Perth passing to him the glowing rods, one after the other,

and the hard pressed forge shooting up its intense straight flame,

the Parsee passed silently, and bowing over his head towards

the fire, seemed invoking some curse or some blessing on the toil.

But, as Ahab looked up, he slid aside.

"What's that bunch of lucifers dodging about there for?" muttered Stubb,

looking on from the forecastle. "That Parsee smells fire like a fusee;

and smells of it himself, like a hot musket's powder-pan."

At last the shank, in one complete rod, received its final heat;

and as Perth, to temper it, plunged it all hissing into the cask

of water near by, the scalding steam shot up into Ahab's bent face.

"Would'st thou brand me, Perth?" wincing for a moment with the pain;

"have I been but forging my own branding-iron, then?"

"Pray God, not that; yet I fear something, Captain Ahab. Is not this

harpoon for the White Whale?"

"For the white fiend! But now for the barbs; thou must make

them thyself, man. Here are my razors--the best of steel;

here, and make the barbs sharp as the needle-sleet of the Icy Sea."

For a moment, the old blacksmith eyed the razors as though he would

fain not use them.

"Take them, man, I have no need for them; for I now neither shave,

sup, nor pray till--but here--to work!"

Fashioned at last into an arrowy shape, and welded by Perth to the shank,

the steel soon pointed the end of the iron; and as the blacksmith

was about giving the barbs their final heat, prior to tempering them,

he cried to Ahab to place the water-cask near.

"No, no--no water for that; I want it of the true death-temper.

Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans! Will ye

give me as much blood as will cover this barb?" holding it high up.

A cluster of dark nods replied, Yes. Three punctures were made

in the heathen flesh, and the White Whale's barbs were then tempered.

"Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!"

deliriously howled Ahab, as the malignant iron scorchingly

devoured the baptismal blood.

Now, mustering the spare poles from below, and selecting one of hickory,

with the bark still investing it, Ahab fitted the end to the socket

of the iron. A coil of new tow-line was then unwound, and some fathoms

of it taken to the windlass, and stretched to a great tension.

Pressing his foot upon it, till the rope hummed like a harp-string,

then eagerly bending over it, and seeing no strandings, Ahab exclaimed,

"Good! and now for the seizings."

At one extremity the rope was unstranded, and the separate spread

yarns were all braided and woven round the socket of the harpoon;

the pole was then driven hard up into the socket; from the lower

end the rope was traced halfway along the pole's length,

and firmly secured so, with inter-twistings of twine.

This done, pole, iron, and rope--like the Three Fates--

remained inseparable, and Ahab moodily stalked away with the weapon;

the sound of his ivory leg, and the sound of the hickory pole,

both hollowly ringing along every plank. But ere he entered

his cabin, a light, unnatural, half-bantering, yet most piteous

sound was heard. Oh! Pip, thy wretched laugh, thy idle

but unresting eye; all thy strange mummeries not unmeaningly

blended with the black tragedy of the melancholy ship,

and mocked it!

CHAPTER 114

The Gilder

Penetrating further and further into the heart of the Japanese

cruising ground the Pequod was soon all astir in the fishery.

Often, in mild, pleasant weather, for twelve, fifteen, eighteen,

and twenty hours on the stretch, they were engaged in the boats,

steadily pulling, or sailing, or paddling after the whales,

or for an interlude of sixty or seventy minutes calmly awaiting

their uprising; though with but small success for their pains.

At such times, under an abated sun; afloat all day upon smooth,

slow heaving swells; seated in his boat, light as a birch canoe;

and so sociably mixing with the soft waves themselves,

that like hearth-stone cats they purr against the gunwale;

these are the times of dreamy quietude, when beholding the tranquil

beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger

heart that pants beneath it; and would not willingly remember,

that this velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang.

These are the times, when in his whale-boat the rover softly feels

a certain filial, confident, land-like feeling towards the sea; that he

regards it as so much flowery earth; and the distant ship revealing

only the tops of her masts, seems struggling forward, not through high

rolling waves, but through the tall grass of a rolling prairie:

as when the western emigrants' horses only show their erected ears,

while their hidden bodies widely wade through the amazing verdure.

The long-drawn virgin vales; the mild blue hill-sides;

as over these there steals the hush, the hum; you almost swear

that play-wearied children lie sleeping in these solitudes,

in some glad May-time, when the flowers of the woods are plucked.

And all this mixes with your most mystic mood; so that fact and fancy,

half-way meeting, interpenetrate, and form one seamless whole.

Nor did such soothing scenes, however temporary, fail of at least

as temporary an effect on Ahab. But if these secret golden

keys did seem to open in him his own secret golden treasuries,

yet did his breath upon them prove but tarnishing.

Oh, grassy glades! oh ever vernal endless landscapes in the soul;

in ye,--though long parched by the dead drought of the earthly life,--

in ye, men yet may roll, like young horses in new morning clover;

and for some few fleeting moments, feel the cool dew of the life

immortal on them. Would to God these blessed calms would last.

But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp

and woof: calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm.

There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not

advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause:--

through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless

faith, adolescence' doubt (the common doom), then scepticism,

then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose

of If. But once gone through, we trace the round again;

and are infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally.

Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more?

In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest

will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden?

Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die

in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave,

and we must there to learn it.

And that same day, too, gazing far down from his boat's side

into that same golden sea, Starbuck lowly murmured:--

"Loveliness unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride's eyes!--

Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal ways.

Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down

and do believe."

And Stubb, fish-like, with sparkling scales, leaped up in that

same golden light:--

"I am Stubb, and Stubb has his history; but here Stubb takes

oaths that he has always been jolly!"

CHAPTER 115

The Pequod Meets The Bachelor

And jolly enough were the sights and the sounds that came bearing down

before the wind, some few weeks after Ahab's harpoon had been welded.

It was a Nantucket ship, the Bachelor, which had just wedged

in her last cask of oil, and bolted down her bursting hatches;

and now, in glad holiday apparel, was joyously, though somewhat

vain-gloriously, sailing round among the widely-separated ships

on the ground, previous to pointing her prow for home.

The three men at her mast-head wore long streamers of narrow red

bunting at their hats; from the stern, a whale-boat was suspended,

bottom down; and hanging captive from the bowsprit was seen the long

lower jaw of the last whale they had slain. Signals, ensigns,

and jacks of all colors were flying from her rigging, on every side.

Sideways lashed in each of her three basketed tops were two barrels

of sperm; above which, in her top-mast cross-trees, you saw slender

breakers of the same precious fluid; and nailed to her main truck

was a brazen lamp.

As was afterwards learned, the Bachelor had met with

the most surprising success; all the more wonderful,

for that while cruising in the same seas numerous other vessels

had gone entire months without securing a single fish.

Not only had barrels of beef and bread been given away to make

room for the far more valuable sperm, but additional supplemental

casks had been bartered for, from the ships she had met; and these

were stowed along the deck, and in the captain's and officers'

state-rooms. Even the cabin table itself had been knocked

into kindling-wood; and the cabin mess dined off the broad head

of an oil-butt, lashed down to the floor for a centrepiece.

In the forecastle, the sailors had actually caulked and pitched

their chests, and filled them; it was humorously added, that the

cook had clapped a head on his largest boiler, and filled it;

that the steward had plugged his spare coffee-pot and filled it;

that the harpooneers had headed the sockets of their irons

and filled them; that indeed everything was filled with sperm,

except the captain's pantaloons pockets, and those he reserved

to thrust his hands into, in self-complacent testimony of

his entire satisfaction.

As this glad ship of good luck bore down upon the moody Pequod,

the barbarian sound of enormous drums came from her forecastle;

and drawing still nearer, a crowd of her men were seen standing

round her huge try-pots, which, covered with the parchment-like

poke or stomach skin of the black fish, gave forth a loud

roar to every stroke of the clenched hands of the crew.

On the quarter-deck, the mates and harpooneers were dancing with the

olive-hued girls who had eloped with them from the Polynesian Isles;

while suspended in an ornamented boat, firmly secured aloft between

the foremast and mainmast, three Long Island negroes, with glittering

fiddle-bows of whale ivory, were presiding over the hilarious jig.

Meanwhile, others of the ship's company were tumultuously busy at

the masonry of the try-works, from which the huge pots had been removed.

You would have almost thought they were pulling down the cursed Bastille,

such wild cries they raised, as the now useless brick and mortar

were being hurled into the sea.

Lord and master over all this scene, the captain stood erect

on the ship's elevated quarter-deck, so that the whole rejoicing

drama was full before him, and seemed merely contrived for his

own individual diversion.

And Ahab, he too was standing on his quarter-deck, shaggy and black,

with a stubborn gloom; and as the two ships crossed each other's wakes--

one all jubilations for things passed, the other all forebodings

as to things to come--their two captains in themselves impersonated

the whole striking contrast of the scene.

"Come aboard, come aboard!" cried the gay Bachelor's commander,

lifting a glass and a bottle in the air.

"Hast seen the White Whale?" gritted Ahab in reply.

"No; only heard of him; but don't believe in him at all,"

said the other good-humoredly. "Come aboard!"

"Thou art too damned jolly. Sail on. Hast lost any men?"

"Not enough to speak of--two islanders, that's all;--but come aboard,

old hearty, come along. I'll soon take that black from your brow.

Come along, will ye (merry's the play); a full ship and homeward-bound."

"How wondrous familiar is a fool!" muttered Ahab; then aloud, "Thou art

a full ship and homeward bound, thou sayest; well, then, call me

an empty ship, and outward-bound. So go thy ways, and I will mine.

Forward there! Set all sail, and keep her to the wind!"

And thus, while the one ship went cheerily before the breeze,

the other stubbornly fought against it; and so the two vessels parted;

the crew of the Pequod looking with grave, lingering glances

towards the receding Bachelor; but the Bachelor's men never heeding

their gaze for the lively revelry they were in. And as Ahab,

leaning over the taffrail, eyed the homewardbound craft, he took

from his pocket a small vial of sand, and then looking from the ship

to the vial, seemed thereby bringing two remote associations together,

for that vial was filled with Nantucket soundings.

CHAPTER 116

The Dying Whale

Not seldom in this life, when, on the right side, fortune's favorites

sail close by us, we, though all adroop before, catch somewhat

of the rushing breeze, and joyfully feel our bagging sails fill out.

So seemed it with the Pequod. For next day after encountering

the gay Bachelor, whales were seen and four were slain;

and one of them by Ahab.

It was far down the afternoon; and when all the spearings of the crimson

fight were done; and floating in the lovely sunset sea and sky,

sun and whale both stilly died together; then, such a sweetness and

such plaintiveness, such inwreathing orisons curled up in that rosy air,

that it almost seemed as if far over from the deep green convent valleys

of the Manilla isles, the Spanish land-breeze, wantonly turned sailor,

had gone to sea, freighted with these vesper hymns.

Soothed again, but only soothed to deeper gloom, Ahab, who had sterned

off from the whale, sat intently watching his final wanings from

the now tranquil boat. For that strange spectacle observable in all

sperm whales dying--the turning sunwards of the head, and so expiring--

that strange spectacle, beheld of such a placid evening, somehow to Ahab

conveyed a wondrousness unknown before.

"He turns and turns him to it,--how slowly, but how steadfastly,

his homage-rendering and invoking brow, with his last dying motions.

He too worships fire; most faithful, broad, baronial vassal of the sun!--

Oh that these too-favoring eyes should see these too-favoring sights.

Look! here, far water-locked; beyond all hum of human weal or woe;

in these most candid and impartial seas; where to traditions no rocks

furnish tablets; where for long Chinese ages, the billows have still

rolled on speechless and unspoken to, as stars that shine upon

the Niger's unknown source; here, too, life dies sunwards full of faith,

but see! no sooner dead, than death whirls round the corpse, and it

heads some other way.

"Oh, thou dark Hindoo half of nature, who of drowned bones hast builded

thy separate throne somewhere in the heart of these unverdured seas;

thou art an infidel, thou queen, and too truly speakest to me in the

wide-slaughtering Typhoon, and the hushed burial of its after calm.

Nor has this thy whale sunwards turned his dying head, and then gone

round again, without a lesson to me.

"Oh, trebly hooped and welded hip of power! Oh, high aspiring,

rainbowed jet!--that one strivest, this one jettest all in vain!

In vain, oh whale, dost thou seek intercedings with yon

all-quickening sun, that only calls forth life, but gives it not again.

Yet dost thou darker half, rock me with a prouder, if a darker faith.

All thy unnamable imminglings float beneath me here; I am buoyed

by breaths of once living things, exhaled as air, but water now.

"Then hail, for ever hail, O sea, in whose eternal tossings the wild

fowl finds his only rest. Born of earth, yet suckled by the sea;

though hill and valley mothered me, ye billows are my foster-brothers!"

CHAPTER 117

The Whale Watch

The four whales slain that evening had died wide apart;

one, far to windward; one less distant, to leeward; one ahead;

one astern. These last three were brought alongside ere nightfall;

but the windward one could not be reached till morning;

and the boat that had killed it lay by its side all night;

and that boat was Ahab's.

The waif-pole was thrust upright into the dead whale's spout-hole;

and the lantern hanging from its top, cast a troubled flickering glare

upon the black, glossy back, and far out upon the midnight waves,

which gently chafed the whale's broad flank, like soft surf upon a beach.

Ahab and all his boat's crew seemed asleep but the Parsee; who crouching

in the bow, sat watching the sharks, that spectrally played round

the whale, and tapped the light cedar planks with their tails.

A sound like the moaning in squadrons over Asphaltites of unforgiven

ghosts of Gomorrah, ran shuddering through the air.

Started from his slumbers, Ahab, face to face, saw the Parsee;

and hooped round by the gloom of the night they seemed the last men

in a flooded world. "I have dreamed it again," said he.

"Of the hearses? Have I not said, old man, that neither hearse

nor coffin can be thine?"

"And who are hearsed that die on the sea?"

"But I said, old man, that ere thou couldst die on this voyage,

two hearses must verily be seen by thee on the sea; the first not

made by mortal hands; and the visible wood of the last one must

be grown in America."

"Aye, aye! a strange sight that, Parsee!--a hearse and its plumes floating

over the ocean with the waves for the pall-bearers. Ha! Such a sight

we shall not soon see."

"Believe it or not, thou canst not die till it be seen, old man."

"And what was that saying about thyself?"

"Though it come to the last, I shall still go before thee thy pilot."

"And when thou art so gone before--if that ever befall--then ere

I can follow, thou must still appear to me, to pilot me still?--

Was it not so? Well, then, did I believe all ye say, oh my pilot!

I have here two pledges that I shall yet slay Moby Dick and survive it."

"Take another pledge, old man," said the Parsee, as his eyes lighted

up like fire-flies in the gloom--"Hemp only can kill thee."

"The gallows, ye mean.--I am immortal then, on land and on sea,"

cried Ahab, with a laugh of derision;--"Immortal on land and on sea!"

Both were silent again, as one man. The grey dawn came on,

and the slumbering crew arose from the boat's bottom, and ere

noon the dead whale was brought to the ship.

CHAPTER 118

The Quadrant

The season for the Line at length drew near; and every

day when Ahab, coming from his cabin cast his eyes aloft,

the vigilant helmsman would ostentatiously handle his spokes,

and the eager mariners quickly run to the braces, and would stand

there with all their eyes centrally fixed on the nailed doubloon;

impatient for the order to point the ship's prow for the equator.

In good time the order came. It was hard upon high noon;

and Ahab, seated in the bows of his high-hoisted boat,

was about taking his wonted daily observation of the sun

to determine his latitude.

Now, in that Japanese sea, the days in summer are as freshets

of effulgences. That unblinkingly vivid Japanese sun

seems the blazing focus of the glassy ocean's immeasurable

burning-glass. The sky looks lacquered; clouds there are none;

the horizon floats; and this nakedness of unrelieved

radiance is as the insufferable splendors of God's throne.

Well that Ahab's quadrant was furnished with colored glasses,

through which to take sight of that solar fire.

So, swinging his seated form to the roll of the ship,

and with his astrological-looking instrument placed to his eye,

he remained in that posture for some moments to catch the precise

instant when the sun should gain its precise meridian.

Meantime while his whole attention was absorbed, the Parsee

was kneeling beneath him on the ship's deck, and with face

thrown up like Ahab's, was eyeing the same sun with him;

only the lids of his eyes half hooded their orbs, and his

wild face was subdued to an earthly passionlessness.

At length the desired observation was taken; and with his pencil

upon his ivory leg, Ahab soon calculated what his latitude must

be at that precise instant. Then falling into a moment's revery,

he again looked up towards the sun and murmured to himself:

"Thou seamark! thou high and mighty Pilot! thou tellest me truly

where I am--but canst thou cast the least hint where I shall be?

Or canst thou tell where some other thing besides me is this

moment living? Where is Moby Dick? This instant thou must

be eyeing him. These eyes of mine look into the very eye

that is even now beholding him; aye, and into the eye that

is even now equally beholding the objects on the unknown,

thither side of thee, thou sun!"

Then gazing at his quadrant, and handling, one after the other,

its numerous cabalistical contrivances, he pondered again,

and muttered: "Foolish toy! babies' plaything of haughty Admirals,

and Commodores, and Captains; the world brags of thee,

of thy cunning and might; but what after all canst thou do,

but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest

to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee:

no! not one jot more! Thou canst not tell where one drop

of water or one grain of sand will be to-morrow noon; and yet

with thy impotence thou insultest the sun! Science! Curse thee,

thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes

aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him,

as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light, O sun!

Level by nature to this earth's horizon are the glances of man's eyes;

not shot from the crown of his head, as if God had meant

him to gaze on his firmament. Curse thee, thou quadrant!"

dashing it to the deck, "no longer will I guide my earthly way

by thee; the level ship's compass, and the level deadreckoning,

by log and by line; these shall conduct me, and show me my place

on the sea. Aye," lighting from the boat to the deck, "thus I

trample on thee, thou paltry thing that feebly pointest on high;

thus I split and destroy thee!"

As the frantic old man thus spoke and thus trampled with his live

and dead feet, a sneering triumph that seemed meant for Ahab,

and a fatalistic despair that seemed meant for himself--

these passed over the mute, motionless Parsee's face.

Unobserved he rose and glided away; while, awestruck by the aspect

of their commander, the seamen clustered together on the forecastle,

till Ahab, troubledly pacing the deck, shouted out--"To the braces!

Up helm!--square in!"

In an instant the yards swung round; and as the ship half-wheeled

upon her heel, her three firm-seated graceful masts erectly poised

upon her long, ribbed hull, seemed as the three Horatii pirouetting

on one sufficient steed.

Standing between the knight-heads, Starbuck watched the Pequod's

tumultuous way, and Ahab's also, as he went lurching along the deck.

"I have sat before the dense coal fire and watched it all aglow,

full of its tormented flaming life; and I have seen it wane

at last, down, down, to dumbest dust. Old man of oceans!

of all this fiery life of thine, what will at length remain

but one little heap of ashes!"

"Aye," cried Stubb, "but sea-coal ashes--mind ye that, Mr. Starbuck--

sea-coal, not your common charcoal. Well, well! I heard

Ahab mutter, 'Here some one thrusts these cards into these old

hands of mine; swears that I must play them, and no others.'

And damn me, Ahab, but thou actest right; live in the game,

and die in it!"

CHAPTER 119

The Candles

Warmest climes but nurse the cruellest fangs: the tiger

of Bengal crouches in spiced groves of ceaseless verdure.

Skies the most effulgent but basket the deadliest thunders:

gorgeous Cuba knows tornadoes that never swept tame

northern lands. So, too, it is, that in these resplendent

Japanese seas the mariner encounters the direst of all storms,

the Typhoon. It will sometimes burst from out that cloudless sky,

like an exploding bomb upon a dazed and sleepy town.

Towards evening of that day, the Pequod was torn of her canvas,

and bare-poled was left to fight a Typhoon which had struck

her directly ahead. When darkness came on, sky and sea roared

and split with the thunder, and blazed with the lightning,

that showed the disabled mast fluttering here and there

with the rags which the first fury of the tempest had left

for its after sport.

Holding by a shroud, Starbuck was standing on the quarter-deck;

at every flash of the lightning glancing aloft, to see

what additional disaster might have befallen the intricate

hamper there; while Stubb and Flask were directing the men

in the higher hoisting and firmer lashing of the boats.

But all their pains seemed naught. Though lifted to the very top

of the cranes, the windward quarter boat (Ahab's) did not escape.

A great rolling sea, dashing high up against the reeling ship's

high teetering side, stove in the boat's bottom at the stern,

and left it again, all dripping through like a sieve.

"Bad work, bad work! Mr. Starbuck," said Stubb, regarding the wreck,

"but the sea will have its way. Stubb, for one, can't fight it.

You see, Mr. Starbuck, a wave has such a great long start before it leaps,

all round the world it runs, and then comes the spring! But as for me,

all the start I have to meet it, is just across the deck here.

But never mind; it's all in fun: so the old song says;"--(sings.)

Oh! jolly is the gale,

And a joker is the whale,

A' flourishin' his tail,--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky

lad, is the Ocean, oh!

The scud all a flyin',

That's his flip only foamin';

When he stirs in the spicin',--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky

lad, is the Ocean, oh!

Thunder splits the ships,

But he only smacks his lips,

A tastin' of this flip,--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky

lad, is the Ocean, oh!

"Avast Stubb," cried Starbuck, "let the Typhoon sing, and strike

his harp here in our rigging; but if thou art a brave man thou

wilt hold thy peace."

"But I am not a brave man; never said I was a brave man;

I am a coward; and I sing to keep up my spirits.

And I tell you what it is, Mr. Starbuck, there's no way

to stop my singing in this world but to cut my throat.

And when that's done, ten to one I sing ye the doxology

for a wind-up."

"Madman! look through my eyes if thou hast none of thine own."

"What! how can you see better of a dark night than anybody else,

never mind how foolish?"

"Here!" cried Starbuck, seizing Stubb by the shoulder, and pointing

his hand towards the weather bow, "markest thou not that the gale

comes from the eastward, the very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick?

the very course he swung to this day noon? now mark his boat there;

where is that stove? In the stern-sheets, man; where he is wont to stand--

his stand-point is stove, man! Now jump overboard, and sing away,

if thou must!

"I don't half understand ye: what's in the wind?"

"Yes, yes, round the Cape of Good Hope is the shortest way to Nantucket,"

soliloquized Starbuck suddenly, heedless of Stubb's question.

"The gale that now hammers at us to stave us, we can turn it into a fair

wind that will drive us towards home. Yonder, to windward, all is

blackness of doom; but to leeward, homeward--I see it lightens up there;

but not with the lightning."

At that moment in one of the intervals of profound darkness,

following the flashes, a voice was heard at his side; and almost

at the same instant a volley of thunder peals rolled overhead.

"Who's there?"

"Old Thunder!" said Ahab, groping his way along the bulwarks

to his pivot-hole; but suddenly finding his path made plain

to him by elbowed lances of fire.

Now, as the lightning rod to a spire on shore is intended to carry off

the perilous fluid into the soil; so the kindred rod which at sea some

ships carry to each mast, is intended to conduct it into the water.

But as this conductor must descend to considerable depth,

that its end may avoid all contact with the hull; and as moreover,

if kept constantly towing there, it would be liable to many mishaps,

besides interfering not a little with some of the rigging, and more

or less impeding the vessel's way in the water; because of all this,

the lower parts of a ship's lightning-rods are not always overboard;

but are generally made in long slender links, so as to be the more

readily hauled up into the chains outside, or thrown down into the sea,

as occasion may require.

"The rods! the rods!" cried Starbuck to the crew, suddenly admonished

to vigilance by the vivid lightning that had just been darting flambeaux,

to light Ahab to his post. "Are they overboard? drop them over,

fore and aft. Quick!"

"Avast!" cried Ahab; "let's have fair play here, though we be

the weaker side. Yet I'll contribute to raise rods on the Himmalehs

and Andes, that all the world may be secured; but out on privileges!

Let them be, sir."

"Look aloft!" cried Starbuck. "The corpusants! the corpusants!

All the yard-arms were tipped with a pallid fire; and touched at

each tri-pointed lightning-rod-end with three tapering white flames,

each of the three tall masts was silently burning in that sulphurous air,

like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar.

"Blast the boat! let it go!" cried Stubb at this instant,

as a swashing sea heaved up under his own little craft so that its

gunwale violently jammed his hand, as he was passing a lashing.

"Blast it!"--but slipping backward on the deck, his uplifted eyes

caught the flames; and immediately shifting his tone he cried--"The

corpusants have mercy on us all!"

To sailors, oaths are household words; they will swear

in the trance of the calm, and in the teeth of the tempest;

they will imprecate curses from the topsail-yard-arms, when most

they teeter over to a seething sea; but in all my voyagings,

seldom have I heard a common oath when God's burning finger has

been laid on the ship; when His "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin"

has been woven into the shrouds and the cordage.

While this pallidness was burning aloft, few words were heard from

the enchanted crew; who in one thick cluster stood on the forecastle,

all their eyes gleaming in that pale phosphorescence, like a faraway

constellation of stars. Relieved against the ghostly light,

the gigantic jet negro, Daggoo, loomed up to thrice his real stature,

and seemed the black cloud from which the thunder had come.

The parted mouth of Tashtego revealed his shark-white teeth,

which strangely gleamed as if they too had been tipped by corpusants;

while lit up by the preternatural light, Queequeg's tattooing burned

like Satanic blue flames on his body.

The tableau all waned at last with the pallidness aloft; and once

more the Pequod and every soul on her decks were wrapped in a pall.

A moment or two passed, when Starbuck, going forward, pushed against

some one. It was Stubb. "What thinkest thou now, man; I heard thy cry;

it was not the same in the song."

"No, no, it wasn't; I said the corpusants have mercy on us all;

and I hope they will, still. But do they only have

mercy on long faces?--have they no bowels for a laugh?

And look ye, Mr. Starbuck--but it's too dark to look.

Hear me, then; I take that mast-head flame we saw for a sign

of good luck; for those masts are rooted in a hold that is

going to be chock a' block with sperm-oil, d'ye see; and so,

all that sperm will work up into the masts, like sap in a tree.

Yes, our three masts will yet be as three spermaceti candles--

that's the good promise we saw."

At that moment Starbuck caught sight of Stubb's face slowly

beginning to glimmer into sight. Glancing upwards, he cried:

"See! see!" and once more the high tapering flames were beheld

with what seemed redoubled supernaturalness in their pallor.

"The corpusants have mercy on us all," cried Stubb, again.

At the base of the main-mast, full beneath the doubloon and the flame,

the Parsee was kneeling in Ahab's front, but with his head bowed away

from him; while near by, from the arched and overhanging rigging,

where they had just been engaged securing a spar, a number of the seamen,

arrested by the glare, now cohered together, and hung pendulous,

like a knot of numbed wasps from a drooping, orchard twig.

In various enchanted attitudes like the standing, or stepping,

or running skeletons in Herculaneum, others remained rooted to the deck;

but all their eyes upcast.

"Aye, aye, men!" cried Ahab. "Look up at it; mark it well;

the white flame but lights the way to the White Whale! Hand me

those mainmast links there; I would fain feel this pulse,

and let mine beat against it; blood against fire! So."

Then turning--the last link held fast in his left hand, he put his foot

upon the Parsee; and with fixed upward eye, and high-flung right arm,

he stood erect before the lofty tri-pointed trinity of flames.

"Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as

Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act so burned

by thee, that to this hour I bear the scar; I now know thee,

thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship

is defiance. To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind;

and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed.

No fearless fool now fronts thee. I own thy speechless,

placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life

will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me.

In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here.

Though but a point at best; whenceso'er I came; whereso'er I go;

yet while I earthly live, the queenly personality lives in me,

and feels her royal rights. But war is pain, and hate is woe.

Come in thy lowest form of love, and I will kneel and kiss thee;

but at thy highest, come as mere supernal power; and though

thou launchest navies of full-freighted worlds, there's that in

here that still remains indifferent. Oh, thou clear spirit,

of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire,

I breathe it back to thee."

[Sudden, repeated flashes of lightning; the nine flames leap lengthwise

to thrice their previous height; Ahab, with the rest, closes his eyes,

his right hand pressed hard upon them.]

"I own thy speechless, placeless power; said I not so?

Nor was it wrung from me; nor do I now drop these links.

Thou canst blind; but I can then grope. Thou canst consume;

but I can then be ashes. Take the homage of these poor eyes,

and shutter-hands. I would not take it. The lightning

flashes through my skull; mine eyeballs ache and ache;

my whole beaten brain seems as beheaded, and rolling on some

stunning ground. Oh, oh! Yet blindfold, yet will I talk to thee.

Light though thou be, thou leapest out of darkness;

but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee!

The javelins cease; open eyes; see, or not? There burn the flames!

Oh, thou magnanimous! now do I do glory in my genealogy.

But thou art but my fiery father; my sweet mother, I know not.

Oh, cruel! what hast thou done with her? There lies my puzzle;

but thine is greater. Thou knowest not how came ye,

hence callest thyself unbegotten; certainly knowest not

thy beginning, hence callest thyself unbegun. I know that of me,

which thou knowest not of thyself, oh, thou omnipotent.

There is some unsuffusing thing beyond thee, thou clear spirit,

to whom all thy eternity is but time, all thy creativeness mechanical.

Through thee, thy flaming self, my scorched eyes do dimly see it.

Oh, thou foundling fire, thou hermit immemorial, thou too

hast thy incommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief.

Here again with haughty agony, I read my sire. Leap! leap up,

and lick the sky! I leap with thee; I burn with thee;

would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee!"

"The boat! the boat!" cried Starbuck, "look at thy boat, old man!"

Ahab's harpoon, the one forged at Perth's fire, remained firmly

lashed in its conspicuous crotch, so that it projected beyond

his whale-boat's bow; but the sea that had stove its bottom had

caused the loose leather sheath to drop off; and from the keen

steel barb there now came a levelled flame of pale, forked fire.

As the silent harpoon burned there like a serpent's tongue,

Starbuck grasped Ahab by the arm--"God, God is against thee,

old man; forbear! 't is an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued;

let me square the yards, while we may, old man, and make a fair

wind of it homewards, to go on a better voyage than this."

Overhearing Starbuck, the panic-stricken crew instantly

ran to the braces--though not a sail was left aloft.

For the moment all the aghast mate's thoughts seemed theirs;

they raised a half mutinous cry. But dashing the rattling

lightning links to the deck, and snatching the burning harpoon,

Ahab waved it like a torch among them; swearing to transfix

with it the first sailor that but cast loose a rope's end.

Petrified by his aspect, and still more shrinking from

the fiery dart that he held, the men fell back in dismay,

and Ahab again spoke:--

"All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as mine;

and heart, soul, and body, lungs and life, old Ahab is bound.

And that ye may know to what tune this heart beats: look ye here;

thus I blow out the last fear!" And with one blast of his breath

he extinguished the flame.

As in the hurricane that sweeps the plain, men fly the neighborhood

of some lone, gigantic elm, whose very height and strength but render it

so much the more unsafe, because so much the more a mark for thunderbolts;

so at those last words of Ahab's many of the mariners did run from him

in a terror of dismay.

CHAPTER 120

The Deck Toward the End of the First Night Watch

Ahab standing by the helm. Starbuck approaching him.

We must send down the main-top-sail yard, sir. The band is working

loose and the lee lift is half-stranded. Shall I strike it, sir?"

"Strike nothing; lash it. If I had sky-sail poles, I'd sway

them up now."

"Sir!--in God's name!--sir?"

"Well."

"The anchors are working, sir. Shall I get them inboard?"

"Strike nothing, and stir nothing but lash everything. The wind rises,

but it has not got up to my table-lands yet. Quick, and see to it.--

By masts and keels! he takes me for the hunchbacked skipper of some

coasting smack. Send down my main-top-sail yard! Ho, gluepots!

Loftiest trucks were made for wildest winds, and this brain-truck

of mine now sails amid the cloud-scud. Shall I strike that?

Oh, none but cowards send down their brain-trucks in tempest time.

What a hooroosh aloft there! I would e'en take it for sublime,

did I not know that the colic is a noisy malady. Oh, take medicine,

take medicine!"

CHAPTER 121

Midnight - The Forecastle Bulwarks

Stubb and Flask mounted on them, and passing additional lashings

over the anchors there hanging.

No, Stubb; you may pound that knot there as much as you please,

but you will never pound into me what you were just now saying.

And how long ago is it since you said the very contrary?

Didn't you once say that whatever ship Ahab sails in,

that ship should pay something extra on its insurance policy,

just as though it were loaded with powder barrels aft and boxes

of lucifers forward? Stop, now; didn't you say so?"

"Well, suppose I did? What then! I've part changed my flesh

since that time, why not my mind? Besides, supposing we

are loaded with powder barrels aft and lucifers forward;

how the devil could the lucifers get afire in this drenching

spray here? Why, my little man, you have pretty red hair,

but you couldn't get afire now. Shake yourself; you're Aquarius,

or the water-bearer, Flask; might fill pitchers at your

coat collar. Don't you see, then, that for these extra

risks the Marine Insurance companies have extra guarantees?

Here are hydrants, Flask. But hark, again, and I'll answer

ye the other thing. First take your leg off from the crown

of the anchor here, though, so I can pass the rope; now listen.

What's the mighty difference between holding a mast's

lightning-rod in the storm, and standing close by a mast

that hasn't got any lightning-rod at all in a storm?

Don't you see, you timber-head, that no harm can come

to the holder of the rod, unless the mast is first struck?

What are you talking about, then? Not one ship in a hundred

carries rods, and Ahab,--aye, man, and all of us,--were in no

more danger then, in my poor opinion, than all the crews in ten

thousand ships now sailing the seas. Why, you King-Post, you,

I suppose you would have every man in the world go about with a small

lightning-rod running up the corner of his hat, like a militia

officer's skewered feather, and trailing behind like his sash.

Why don't ye be sensible, Flask? it's easy to be sensible;

why don't ye, then? any man with half an eye can be sensible."

"I don't know that, Stubb. You sometimes find it rather hard."

"Yes, when a fellow's soaked through, it's hard to be sensible,

that's a fact. And I am about drenched with this spray. Never mind;

catch the turn there, and pass it. Seems to me we are lashing down

these anchors now as if they were never going to be used again.

Tying these two anchors here, Flask, seems like tying a man's hands

behind him. And what big generous hands they are, to be sure.

These are your iron fists, hey? What a hold they have, too!

I wonder, Flask, whether the world is anchored anywhere;

if she is, she swings with an uncommon long cable, though.

There, hammer that knot down, and we've done. So; next to

touching land, lighting on deck is the most satisfactory.

I say, just wring out my jacket skirts, will ye? Thank ye.

They laugh at long-togs so, Flask; but seems to me,

a long-tailed coat ought always to be worn in all storms afloat.

The tails tapering down that way, serve to carry off the water,

d'ye see. Same with cocked hats; the cocks form gable-end

eave-troughs, Flask. No more monkey-jackets and tarpaulins for me;

I must mount a swallow-tail, and drive down a beaver; so.

Halloa! whew! there goes my tarpaulin overboard; Lord, Lord,

that the winds that come from heaven should be so unmannerly!

This is a nasty night, lad."

CHAPTER 122

Midnight Aloft.--Thunder and Lightning

The Main-top-sail yard - Tashtego passing new lashings around it.

"Um, um, um. Stop that thunder! Plenty too much thunder up here.

What's the use of thunder? Um, um, um. We don't want thunder;

we want rum; give us a glass of rum. Um, um, um!"

CHAPTER 123

The Musket

During the most violent shocks of the Typhoon, the man at the Pequod's

jaw-bone tiller had several times been reelingly hurled to the deck by its

spasmodic motions even though preventer tackles had been attached to it--

for they were slack--because some play to the tiller was indispensable.

In a severe gale like this, while the ship is but a tossed

shuttlecock to the blast, it is by no means uncommon to see

the needles in the compasses, at intervals, go round and round.

It was thus with the Pequod's; at almost every shock the helmsman

had not failed to notice the whirling velocity with which they

revolved upon the cards; it is a sight that hardly anyone can

behold without some sort of unwonted emotion.

Some hours after midnight, the Typhoon abated so much,

that through the strenuous exertions of Starbuck and Stubb--

one engaged forward and the other aft--the shivered remnants of

the jib and fore and main-top-sails were cut adrift from the spars,

and went eddying away to leeward, like the feathers of an albatross,

which sometimes are cast to the winds when that storm-tossed bird

is on the wing.

The three corresponding new sails were now bent and reefed,

and a storm-trysail was set further aft; so that the ship soon

went through the water with some precision again; and the course--

for the present, East-south-east--which he was to steer, if practicable,

was once more given to the helmsman. For during the violence

of the gale, he had only steered according to its vicissitudes.

But as he was now bringing the ship as near her course as possible,

watching the compass meanwhile, lo! a good sign! the wind seemed

coming round astern; aye, the foul breeze became fair!

Instantly the yards were squared, to the lively song of "Ho!

the fair wind! oh-ye-ho cheerly, men!" the crew singing for joy,

that so promising an event should so soon have falsified the evil

portents preceding it.

In compliance with the standing order of his commander--

to report immediately, and at any one of the twenty-four hours,

any decided change in the affairs of the deck,--Starbuck had

no sooner trimmed the yards to the breeze--however reluctantly

and gloomily,--than he mechanically went below to apprise

Captain Ahab of the circumstance.

Ere knocking at his state-room, he involuntarily paused before it

a moment. The cabin lamp--taking long swings this way and that--

was burning fitfully, and casting fitful shadows upon the old

man's bolted door,--a thin one, with fixed blinds inserted,

in place of upper panels. The isolated subterraneousness

of the cabin made a certain humming silence to reign there,

though it was hooped round by all the roar of the elements.

The loaded muskets in the rack were shiningly revealed,

as they stood upright against the forward bulkhead.

Starbuck was an honest, upright man; but out of Starbuck's heart,

at that instant when he saw the muskets, there strangely

evolved an evil thought; but so blent with its neutral or good

accompaniments that for the instant he hardly knew it for itself.

"He would have shot me once," he murmured, "yes, there's the very

musket that he pointed at me;--that one with the studded stock;

let me touch it--lift it. Strange, that I, who have

handled so many deadly lances, strange, that I should shake

so now. Loaded? I must see. Aye, aye; and powder in the pan;--

that's not good. Best spill it?--wait. I'll cure myself of this.

I'll hold the musket boldly while I think.--I come to report

a fair wind to him. But how fair? Fair for death and doom,--

that's fair for Moby Dick. It's a fair wind that's only fair for

that accursed fish.--The very tube he pointed at me!--the very one;

this one--I hold it here; he would have killed me with the very

thing I handle now.--Aye and he would fain kill all his crew.

Does he not say he will not strike his spars to any gale?

Has he not dashed his heavenly quadrant? and in these same

perilous seas, gropes he not his way by mere dead reckoning

of the error-abounding log? and in this very Typhoon, did he not

swear that he would have no lightning-rods? But shall this crazed

old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down

to doom with him?--Yes, it would make him the wilful murderer

of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm;

and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will,

if Ahab have his way. If, then, he were this instant--

put aside, that crime would not be his. Ha! is he muttering

in his sleep? Yes, just there,--in there, he's sleeping.

Sleeping? aye, but still alive, and soon awake again.

I can't withstand thee, then, old man. Not reasoning;

not remonstrance; not entreaty wilt thou hearken to;

all this thou scornest. Flat obedience to thy own flat commands,

this is all thou breathest. Aye, and say'st the men have vow'd

thy vow; say'st all of us are Ahabs. Great God forbid!--

But is there no other way? no lawful way?--Make him a prisoner

to be taken home? What! hope to wrest this old man's living

power from his own living hands? Only a fool would try it.

Say he were pinioned even; knotted all over with ropes

and hawsers; chained down to ring-bolts on this cabin floor;

he would be more hideous than a caged tiger, then. I could

not endure the sight; could not possibly fly his howlings;

all comfort, sleep itself, inestimable reason would leave me

on the long intolerable voyage. What, then, remains? The land

is hundreds of leagues away, and locked Japan the nearest.

I stand alone here upon an open sea, with two oceans and a

whole continent between me and law.--Aye, aye, 'tis so.--

Is heaven a murderer when its lightning strikes a would-be

murderer in his bed, tindering sheets and skin together?--

And would I be a murderer, then, if"--and slowly, stealthily,

and half sideways looking, he placed the loaded musket's end

against the door.

"On this level, Ahab's hammock swings within; his head this way.

A touch, and Starbuck may survive to hug his wife and child again.--

Oh Mary! Mary!--boy! boy! boy!--But if I wake thee not to death,

old man, who can tell to what unsounded deeps Starbuck's body this day

week may sink, with all the crew! Great God, where art Thou? Shall I?

shall I?--The wind has gone down and shifted, sir; the fore and main

topsails are reefed and set! she heads her course."

"Stern all! Oh Moby Dick, I clutch thy heart at last!"

Such were the sounds that now came hurtling from out the old man's

tormented sleep, as if Starbuck's voice had caused the long dumb

dream to speak.

The yet levelled musket shook like a drunkard's arm against the panel;

Starbuck seemed wrestling with an angel, but turning from the door,

he placed the death-tube in its rack, and left the place.

"He's too sound asleep, Mr. Stubb; go thou down, and wake him,

and tell him. I must see to the deck here. Thou know'st

what to say."

CHAPTER 124

The Needle

Next morning the not-yet-subsided sea rolled in long slow

billows of mighty bulk, and striving in the Pequod's

gurgling track, pushed her on like giants' palms outspread.

The strong unstaggering breeze abounded so, that sky and air

seemed vast outbellying sails; the whole world boomed before

the wind. Muffled in the full morning light, the invisible

sun was only known by the spread intensity of his place;

where his bayonet rays moved on in stacks. Emblazonings, as of

crowned Babylonian kings and queens, reigned over everything.

The sea was as a crucible of molten gold, that bubblingly leaps

with light and heat.

Long maintaining an enchanted silence, Ahab stood apart; and every

time the teetering ship loweringly pitched down her bowsprit,

he turned to eye the bright sun's rays produced ahead;

and when she profoundly settled by the stern, he turned behind,

and saw the sun's rearward place, and how the same yellow rays

were blending with his undeviating wake.

"Ha, ha, my ship! thou mightest well be taken now for the sea-chariot of

the sun. Ho, ho! all ye nations before my prow, I bring the sun to ye!

Yoke on the further billows; hallo! a tandem, I drive the sea!"

But suddenly reined back by some counter thought, he hurried towards

the helm, huskily demanding how the ship was heading.

"East-sou-east, sir," said the frightened steersman.

"Thou liest!" smiting him with his clenched fist.

"Heading East at this hour in the morning, and the sun astern?"

Upon this every soul was confounded; for the phenomenon just

then observed by Ahab had unaccountably escaped every one else;

but its very blinding palpableness must have been the cause.

Thrusting his head half-way into the binnacle, Ahab caught

one glimpse of the compasses; his uplifted arm slowly fell;

for a moment he almost seemed to stagger. Standing behind

him Starbuck looked, and lo! the two compasses pointed East,

and the Pequod was as infallibly going West.

But ere the first wild alarm could get out abroad among the crew, the old

man with a rigid laugh exclaimed, "I have it! It has happened before.

Mr. Starbuck, last night's thunder turned our compasses--that's all.

Thou hast before now heard of such a thing, I take it."

"Aye; but never before has it happened to me, sir," said the

pale mate, gloomily.

Here, it must needs be said, that accidents like this have

in more than one case occurred to ships in violent storms.

The magnetic energy, as developed in the mariner's needle, is,

as all know, essentially one with the electricity beheld in heaven;

hence it is not to be much marvelled at, that such things should be.

In instances where the lightning has actually struck the vessel,

so as to smite down some of the spars and rigging, the effect upon

the needle has at times been still more fatal; all its loadstone

virtue being annihilated, so that the before magnetic steel was of no

more use than an old wife's knitting needle. But in either case,

the needle never again, of itself, recovers the original virtue

thus marred or lost; and if the binnacle compasses be affected,

the same fate reaches all the others that may be in the ship;

even were the lowermost one inserted into the kelson.

Deliberately standing before the binnacle, and eyeing

the transpointed compasses, the old man, with the sharp

of his extended hand, now took the precise bearing of the sun,

and satisfied that the needles were exactly inverted, shouted out

his orders for the ship's course to be changed accordingly.

The yards were hard up; and once more the Pequod thrust her

undaunted bows into the opposing wind, for the supposed fair

one had only been juggling her.

Meanwhile, whatever were his own secret thoughts, Starbuck

said nothing, but quietly he issued all requisite orders;

while Stubb and Flask--who in some small degree seemed then

to be sharing his feelings--likewise unmurmuringly acquiesced.

As for the men, though some of them lowly rumbled, their fear

of Ahab was greater than their fear of Fate. But as ever before,

the pagan harpooneers remained almost wholly unimpressed;

or if impressed, it was only with a certain magnetism shot

into their congenial hearts from inflexible Ahab's.

For a space the old man walked the deck in rolling reveries.

But chancing to slip with his ivory heel, he saw the crushed

copper sight-tubes of the quadrant he had the day before dashed

to the deck.

"Thou poor, proud heaven-gazer and sun's pilot! yesterday I

wrecked thee, and to-day the compasses would fain have wrecked me.

So, so. But Ahab is lord over the level loadstone yet.

Mr. Starbuck--a lance without the pole; a top-maul, and the smallest

of the sail-maker's needles. Quick!"

Accessory, perhaps, to the impulse dictating the thing he was now about

to do, were certain prudential motives, whose object might have been

to revive the spirits of his crew by a stroke of his subtile skill,

in a matter so wondrous as that of the inverted compasses.

Besides, the old man well knew that to steer by transpointed needles,

though clumsily practicable, was not a thing to be passed over by

superstitious sailors, without some shudderings and evil portents.

"Men," said he, steadily turning upon the crew, as the mate

handed him the things he had demanded, "my men, the thunder

turned old Ahab's needles; but out of this bit of steel Ahab

can make one of his own, that will point as true as any."

Abashed glances of servile wonder were exchanged by the sailors,

as this was said; and with fascinated eyes they awaited whatever

magic might follow. But Starbuck looked away.

With a blow from the top-maul Ahab knocked off the steel head of

the lance, and then handing to the mate the long iron rod remaining,

bade him hold it upright, without its touching the deck.

Then, with the maul, after repeatedly smiting the upper end of this

iron rod, he placed the blunted needle endwise on the top of it,

and less strongly hammered that, several times, the mate still holding

the rod as before. Then going through some small strange motions

with it--whether indispensable to the magnetizing of the steel,

or merely intended to augment the awe of the crew, is uncertain--

he called for linen thread; and moving to the binnacle, slipped out

the two reversed needles there, and horizontally suspended the

sail-needle by its middle, over one of the compass cards. At first,

the steel went round and round, quivering and vibrating at either end;

but at last it settled to its place, when Ahab, who had been intently

watching for this result, stepped frankly back from the binnacle,

and pointing his stretched arm towards it, exclaimed,--"Look ye,

for yourselves, if Ahab be not the lord of the level loadstone!

The sun is East, and that compass swears it!"

One after another they peered in, for nothing but their own eyes

could persuade such ignorance as theirs, and one after another

they slunk away.

In his fiery eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab

in all his fatal pride.

CHAPTER 125

The Log and Line

While now the fated Pequod had been so long afloat this voyage,

the log and line had but very seldom been in use.

Owing to a confident reliance upon other means of determining

the vessel's place, some merchantmen, and many whalemen,

especially when cruising, wholly neglect to heave the log;

though at the same time, and frequently more for form's sake

than anything else, regularly putting down upon the customary

slate the course steered by the ship, as well as the presumed

average rate of progression every hour. It had been thus

with the Pequod. The wooden reel and angular log attached hung,

long untouched, just beneath the railing of the after bulwarks.

Rains and spray had damped it; the sun and wind had warped it;

all the elements had combined to rot a thing that hung so idly.

But heedless of all this, his mood seized Ahab, as he happened

to glance upon the reel, not many hours after the magnet scene,

and he remembered how his quadrant was no more, and recalled

his frantic oath about the level log and line. The ship was

sailing plungingly; astern the billows rolled in riots.

"Forward, there! Heave the log!"

Two seamen came. The golden-hued Tahitian and the grizzly Manxman.

"Take the reel, one of ye, I'll heave."

They went towards the extreme stern, on the ship's lee side,

where the deck, with the oblique energy of the wind, was now

almost dipping into the creamy, sidelong-rushing sea.

The Manxman took the reel, and holding it high up, by the projecting

handle-ends of the spindle, round which the spool of line revolved,

so stood with the angular log hanging downwards, till Ahab

advanced to him.

Ahab stood before him, and was lightly unwinding some thirty

or forty turns to form a preliminary hand-coil to toss overboard,

when the old Manxman, who was intently eyeing both him and the line,

made bold to speak.

"Sir, I mistrust it; this line looks far gone, long heat and wet

have spoiled it."

"'Twill hold, old gentleman. Long heat and wet, have they spoiled thee?

Thou seem'st to hold. Or, truer perhaps, life holds thee; not thou it."

"I hold the spool, sir. But just as my captain says.

With these grey hairs of mine 'tis not worth while disputing,

'specially with a superior, who'll ne'er confess."

"What's that? There now's a patched professor in Queen Nature's

granite-founded College; but methinks he's too subservient.

Where wert thou born?"

"In the little rocky Isle of Man, sir."

"Excellent! Thou'st hit the world by that."

"I know not, sir, but I was born there."

"In the Isle of Man, hey? Well, the other way, it's good.

Here's a man from Man; a man born in once independent Man, and now

unmanned of Man; which is sucked in--by what? Up with the reel!

The dead, blind wall butts all inquiring heads at last.

Up with it! So."

The log was heaved. The loose coils rapidly straightened out in a long

dragging line astern, and then, instantly, the reel began to whirl.

In turn, jerkingly raised and lowered by the rolling billows, the towing

resistance of the log caused the old reelman to stagger strangely.

"Hold hard!"

Snap! the overstrained line sagged down in one long festoon;

the tugging log was gone.

"I crush the quadrant, the thunder turns the needles,

and now the mad sea parts the log-line. But Ahab can mend all.

Haul in here, Tahitian; reel up, Manxman. And look ye,

let the carpenter make another log, and mend thou the line.

See to it."

"There he goes now; to him nothing's happened; but to me,

the skewer seems loosening out of the middle of the world.

Haul in, haul in, Tahitian! These lines run whole, and whirling out:

come in broken, and dragging slow. Ha, Pip? come to help; eh, Pip?"

"Pip? whom call ye Pip? Pip jumped from the whaleboat.

Pip's missing. Let's see now if ye haven't fished him

up here, fisherman. It drags hard; I guess he's holding on.

Jerk him, Tahiti! Jerk him off we haul in no cowards here.

Ho! there's his arm just breaking water. A hatchet! a hatchet!

cut it off--we haul in no cowards here. Captain Ahab! sir,

sir! here's Pip, trying to get on board again."

"Peace, thou crazy loon," cried the Manxman, seizing him by the arm.

"Away from the quarter-deck!"

"The greater idiot ever scolds the lesser," muttered Ahab, advancing.

"Hands off from that holiness! Where sayest thou Pip was, boy?

"Astern there, sir, astern! Lo! lo!"

"And who art thou, boy? I see not my reflection in the vacant pupils

of thy eyes. Oh God! that man should be a thing for immortal souls

to sieve through! Who art thou, boy?"

"Bell-boy, sir; ship's-crier; ding, dong, ding! Pip! Pip! Pip! One

hundred pounds of clay reward for Pip; five feet high--looks cowardly--

quickest known by that! Ding, dong, ding! Who's seen Pip the coward?"

"There can be no hearts above the snow-line. Oh, ye frozen

heavens! look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child,

and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines. Here, boy;

Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives.

Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords

woven of my heart-strings. Come, let's down."

"What's this? here's velvet shark-skin," intently gazing at Ahab's hand,

and feeling it. "Ah, now, had poor Pip but felt so kind a thing as this,

perhaps he had ne'er been lost! This seems to me, sir, as a man-rope;

something that weak souls may hold by. Oh, sir, let old Perth now come

and rivet these two hands together; the black one with the white,

for I will not let this go."

"Oh, boy, nor will I thee, unless I should thereby drag thee

to worse horrors than are here. Come, then, to my cabin.

Lo! ye believers in gods all goodness, and in man all ill,

lo you! see the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man;

and man, though idiotic, and knowing not what he does, yet full

of the sweet things of love and gratitude. Come! I feel prouder

leading thee by thy black hand, than though I grasped an Emperor's!"

"There go two daft ones now," muttered the old Manxman.

"One daft with strength, the other daft with weakness.

But here's the end of the rotten line--all dripping, too.

Mend it, eh? I think we had best have a new line altogether.

I'll see Mr. Stubb about it."

CHAPTER 126

The Life-Buoy

Steering now south-eastward by Ahab's levelled steel,

and her progress solely determined by Ahab's level log and line;

the Pequod held on her path towards the Equator. Making so long

a passage through such unfrequented waters, descrying no ships,

and ere long, sideways impelled by unvarying trade winds,

over waves monotonously mild; all these seemed the strange calm

things preluding some riotous and desperate scene.

At last, when the ship drew near to the outskirts, as it were,

of the Equatorial fishing-ground, and in the deep darkness that

goes before the dawn, was sailing by a cluster of rocky islets;

the watch--then headed by Flask--was startled by a cry so plaintively

wild and unearthly--like half-articulated wailings of the ghosts

of all Herod's murdered Innocents--that one and all, they started

from their reveries, and for the space of some moments stood,

or sat, or leaned all transfixed by listening, like the carved

Roman slave, while that wild cry remained within hearing.

The Christian or civilized part of the crew said it was mermaids,

and shuddered; but the pagan harpooneers remained unappalled.

Yet the grey Manxman--the oldest mariner of all--declared that

the wild thrilling sounds that were heard, were the voices of newly

drowned men in the sea.

Below in his hammock, Ahab did not hear of this till grey dawn,

when he came to the deck; it was then recounted to him by Flask,

not unaccompanied with hinted dark meanings. He hollowly laughed,

and thus explained the wonder.

Those rocky islands the ship had passed were the resort of great numbers

of seals, and some young seals that had lost their dams, or some dams

that had lost their cubs, must have risen nigh the ship and kept

company with her, crying and sobbing with their human sort of wail.

But this only the more affected some of them, because most mariners

cherish a very superstitious feeling about seals, arising not only from

their peculiar tones when in distress, but also from the human look

of their round heads and semi-intelligent faces, seen peeringly uprising

from the water alongside. In the sea, under certain circumstances,

seals have more than once been mistaken for men.

But the bodings of the crew were destined to receive a most plausible

confirmation in the fate of one of their number that morning.

At sun-rise this man went from his hammock to his mast-head at the fore;

and whether it was that he was not yet half waked from his sleep

(for sailors sometimes go aloft in a transition state), whether it

was thus with the man, there is now no telling; but, be that as it may,

he had not been long at his perch, when a cry was heard--a cry

and a rushing--and looking up, they saw a falling phantom in the air;

and looking down, a little tossed heap of white bubbles in the blue

of the sea.

The life-buoy--a long slender cask--was dropped from the stern, where it

always hung obedient to a cunning spring; but no hand rose to seize it,

and the sun having long beat upon this cask it had shrunken, so that it

slowly filled, and the parched wood also filled at its every pore;

and the studded iron-bound cask followed the sailor to the bottom,

as if to yield him his pillow, though in sooth but a hard one.

And thus the first man of the Pequod that mounted the mast

to look out for the White Whale, on the White Whale's own

peculiar ground; that man was swallowed up in the deep.

But few, perhaps, thought of that at the time. Indeed, in some sort,

they were not grieved at this event, at least as a portent;

for they regarded it, not as a fore-shadowing of evil in

the future, but as the fulfilment of an evil already presaged.

They declared that now they knew the reason of those wild

shrieks they had heard the night before. But again the old

Manxman said nay.

The lost life-buoy was now to be replaced; Starbuck was directed

to see to it; but as no cask of sufficient lightness could be found,

and as in the feverish eagerness of what seemed the approaching crisis

of the voyage, all hands were impatient of any toil but what was

directly connected with its final end, whatever that might prove

to be; therefore, they were going to leave the ship's stern unprovided

with a buoy, when by certain strange signs and inuendoes Queequeg

hinted a hint concerning his coffin.

"A life-buoy of a coffin!" cried Starbuck, starting.

"Rather queer, that, I should say," said Stubb.

"It will make a good enough one," said Flask, "the carpenter here can

arrange it easily."

"Bring it up; there's nothing else for it," said Starbuck,

after a melancholy pause. "Rig it, carpenter; do not look at me so--

the coffin, I mean. Dost thou hear me? Rig it."

"And shall I nail down the lid, sir?" moving his hand as with a hammer.

"Aye."

"And shall I caulk the seams, sir?" moving his hand as

with a caulking-iron.

"Aye."

"And shall I then pay over the same with pitch, sir?" moving his hand

as with a pitch-pot.

Away! What possesses thee to this? Make a life-buoy of the coffin,

and no more.--Mr. Stubb, Mr. Flask, come forward with me."

"He goes off in a huff. The whole he can endure; at the parts

he baulks. Now I don't like this. I make a leg for Captain Ahab,

and he wears it like a gentleman; but I make a bandbox for Queequeg,

and he won't put his head into it. Are all my pains to go for nothing

with that coffin? And now I'm ordered to make a life-buoy of it.

It's like turning an old coat; going to bring the flesh on

the other side now. I don't like this cobbling sort of business--

I don't like it at all; it's undignified; it's not my place.

Let tinkers' brats do tinkerings; we are their betters. I like to take

in hand none but clean, virgin, fair-and-square mathematical jobs,

something that regularly begins at the beginning, and is at the middle

when midway, and comes to an end at the conclusion; not a cobbler's job,

that's at an end in the middle, and at the beginning at the end.

It's the old woman's tricks to be giving cobbling jobs.

Lord! what an affection all old women have for tinkers. I know an old

woman of sixty-five who ran away with a bald-headed young tinker once.

And that's the reason I never would work for lonely widow old

women ashore when I kept my job-shop in the Vineyard; they might

have taken it into their lonely old heads to run off with me.

But heigh-ho! there are no caps at sea but snow-caps. Let me see.

Nail down the lid; caulk the seams; pay over the same with pitch;

batten them down tight, and hang it with the snap-spring over

the ship's stern. Were ever such things done before with a coffin?

Some superstitious old carpenters, now, would be tied up in the rigging,

ere they would do the job. But I'm made of knotty Aroostook hemlock;

I don't budge. Cruppered with a coffin! Sailing about with

a grave-yard tray! But never mind. We workers in woods make

bridal bedsteads and card-tables, as well as coffins and hearses.

We work by the month, or by the job, or by the profit; not for us to ask

the why and wherefore of our work, unless it be too confounded cobbling,

and then we stash it if we can. Hem! I'll do the job, now, tenderly.

I'll have me--let's see--how many in the ship's company, all told?

But I've forgotten. Any way, I'll have me thirty separate, Turk's-headed

life-lines, each three feet long hanging all round to the coffin.

Then, if the hull go down, there'll be thirty lively fellows all

fighting for one coffin, a sight not seen very often beneath the sun!

Come hammer, caulking-iron, pitch-pot, and marling-spike! Let's to it."

CHAPTER 127

The Deck

The coffin laid upon two line-tubs, between the vice-bench

and the open hatchway; the Carpenter caulking its seams;

the string of twisted oakum slowly unwinding from a large roll

of it placed in the bosom of his frock.--Ahab comes slowly

from the cabin-gangway, and hears Pip following him.

Back lad; I will be with ye again presently. He goes!

Not this hand complies with my humor more genially than that boy.--

Middle aisle of a church! What's here?"

"Life-buoy, sir. Mr. Starbuck's orders. Oh, look, sir!

Beware the hatchway!"

"Thank ye, man. Thy coffin lies handy to the vault."

"Sir? The hatchway? oh! So it does, sir, so it does."

"Art not thou the leg-maker? Look, did not this stump come

from thy shop?"

"I believe it did, sir; does the ferrule stand, sir?"

"Well enough. But art thou not also the undertaker?"

"Aye, sir; I patched up this thing here as a coffin for Queequeg;

but they've set me now to turning it into something else."

"Then tell me; art thou not an arrant, all-grasping, intermeddling,

monopolizing, heathenish old scamp, to be one day making legs,

and the next day coffins to clap them in, and yet again life-buoys

out of those same coffins? Thou art as unprincipled as the gods,

and as much of a jack-of-all-trades."

"But I do not mean anything, sir. I do as I do."

"The gods again. Hark ye, dost thou not ever sing working about

a coffin? The Titans, they say, hummed snatches when chipping out

the craters for volcanoes; and the grave-digger in the play sings,

spade in hand. Dost thou never?"

"Sing, sir? Do I sing? Oh, I'm indifferent enough, sir, for that;

but the reason why the grave-digger made music must have been because

there was none in his spade, sir. But the caulking mallet is full of it.

Hark to it."

"Aye, and that's because the lid there's a sounding-board;

and what in all things makes the sounding-board is this--

there's naught beneath. And yet, a coffin with a body in it rings

pretty much the same, Carpenter. Hast thou ever helped carry a bier,

and heard the coffin knock against the churchyard gate, going in?

"Faith, sir, I've-"

"Faith? What's that?"

"Why, faith, sir, it's only a sort of exclamation-like--

that's all, sir."

"Um, um; go on."

"I was about to say, sir, that-"

"Art thou a silk-worm? Dost thou spin thy own shroud out of thyself?

Look at thy bosom! Despatch! and get these traps out of sight."

"He goes aft. That was sudden, now; but squalls come sudden

in hot latitudes. I've heard that the Isle of Albermarle,

one of the Gallipagos, is cut by the Equator right in the middle.

Seems to me some sort of Equator cuts yon old man, too, right in

his middle. He's always under the Line--fiery hot, I tell ye!

He's looking this way--come, oakum; quick. Here we go again.

This wooden mallet is the cork, and I'm the professor of

musical glasses--tap, tap!"

(Ahab to himself)

"There's a sight! There's a sound! The greyheaded wood-pecker

tapping the hollow tree! Blind and dumb might well be envied now.

See! that thing rests on two line-tubs, full of tow-lines.

A most malicious wag, that fellow. Rat-tat! So man's

seconds tick! Oh! how immaterial are all materials!

What things real are there, but imponderable thoughts?

Here now's the very dreaded symbol of grim death, by a mere hap,

made the expressive sign of the help and hope of most

endangered life. A life-buoy of a coffin! Does it go further?

Can it be that in some spiritual sense the coffin is, after all,

but an immortality-preserver! I'll think of that. But no.

So far gone am I in the dark side of earth, that its other side,

the theoretic bright one, seems but uncertain twilight to me.

Will ye never have done, Carpenter, with that accursed sound?

I go below; let me not see that thing here when I return again.

Now, then, Pip, we'll talk this over; I do suck most wondrous

philosophies from thee! Some unknown conduits from the unknown

worlds must empty into thee!"

CHAPTER 128

The Pequod Meets The Rachel

Next day, a large ship, the Rachel, was descried, bearing directly

down upon the Pequod, all her spars thickly clustering with men.

At the time the Pequod was making good speed through the water;

but as the broad-winged windward stranger shot nigh to her,

the boastful sails all fell together as blank bladders that are burst,

and all life fled from the smitten hull.

"Bad news; she brings bad news," muttered the old Manxman. But ere

her commander, who, with trumpet to mouth, stood up in his boat;

ere he could hopefully hail, Ahab's voice was heard.

"Hast seen the White Whale?"

"Aye, yesterday. Have ye seen a whale-boat adrift?"

Throttling his joy, Ahab negatively answered this unexpected question;

and would then have fain boarded the stranger, when the stranger

captain himself, having stopped his vessel's way, was seen

descending her side. A few keen pulls, and his boat-hook soon

clinched the Pequod's main-chains, and he sprang to the deck.

Immediately he was recognized by Ahab for a Nantucketer he knew.

But no formal salutation was exchanged.

"Where was he?--not killed!--not killed!" cried Ahab, closely advancing.

"How was it?"

It seemed that somewhat late on the afternoon of the day previous,

while three of the stranger's boats were engaged with a shoal

of whales, which had led them some four or five miles from the ship;

and while they were yet in swift chase to windward, the white hump

and head of Moby Dick had suddenly loomed up out of the blue water,

not very far to leeward; whereupon, the fourth rigged boat--

a reserved one--had been instantly lowered in chase.

After a keen sail before the wind, this fourth boat--the swiftest

keeled of all--seemed to have succeeded in fastening--at least,

as well as the man at the mast-head could tell anything about it.

In the distance he saw the diminished dotted boat; and then a swift

gleam of bubbling white water; and after that nothing more;

whence it was concluded that the stricken whale must have

indefinitely run away with his pursuers, as often happens.

There was some apprehension, but no positive alarm, as yet.

The recall signals were placed in the rigging; darkness came on;

and forced to pick up her three far to windward boats--ere going

in quest of the fourth one in the precisely opposite direction--

the ship had not only been necessitated to leave that boat

to its fate till near midnight, but, for the time, to increase

her distance from it. But the rest of her crew being at last

safe aboard, she crowded all sail--stunsail on stunsail--

after the missing boat; kindling a fire in her try-pots for a beacon;

and every other man aloft on the look-out. But though when she

had thus sailed a sufficient distance to gain the presumed place

of the absent ones when last seen; though she then paused to lower

her spare boats to pull all around her; and not finding anything,

had again dashed on; again paused, and lowered her boats;

and though she had thus continued doing till daylight;

yet not the least glimpse of the missing keel had been seen.

The story told, the stranger Captain immediately went on to reveal

his object in boarding the Pequod. He desired that ship to unite

with his own in the search; by sailing over the sea some four or five

miles apart, on parallel lines, and so sweeping a double horizon,

as it were.

"I will wager something now," whispered Stubb to Flask, "that some one

in that missing boat wore off that Captain's best coat; mayhap, his watch--

he's so cursed anxious to get it back. Who ever heard of two pious

whale-ships cruising after one missing whale-boat in the height

of the whaling season? See, Flask, only see how pale he looks--

pale in the very buttons of his eyes--look--it wasn't the coat--

it must have been the-"

"My boy, my own boy is among them. For God's sake--I beg, I conjure"--

here exclaimed the stranger Captain to Ahab, who thus far had but

icily received his petition. "For eight-and-forty hours let me

charter your ship--I will gladly pay for it, and roundly pay for it--

if there be no other way--for eight-and-forty hours only--only that--

you must, oh, you must, and you shall do this thing."

"His son!" cried Stubb, "oh, it's his son he's lost!

I take back the coat and watch--what says Ahab? We must

save that boy."

"He's drowned with the rest on 'em, last night," said the old Manx

sailor standing behind them; "I heard; all of ye heard their spirits."

Now, as it shortly turned out, what made this incident of the Rachel's

the more melancholy, was the circumstance, that not only was one

of the Captain's sons among the number of the missing boat's crew;

but among the number of the other boats' crews, at the same time,

but on the other hand, separated from the ship during the dark

vicissitudes of the chase, there had been still another son;

as that for a time, the wretched father was plunged to the bottom

of the cruellest perplexity; which was only solved for him

by his chief mate's instinctively adopting the ordinary procedure

of a whaleship in such emergencies, that is, when placed between

jeopardized but divided boats, always to pick up the majority first.

But the captain, for some unknown constitutional reason,

had refrained from mentioning all this, and not till forced to it

by Ahab's iciness did he allude to his one yet missing boy;

a little lad, but twelve years old, whose father with the earnest

but unmisgiving hardihood of a Nantucketer's paternal love,

had thus early sought to initiate him in the perils and wonders

of a vocation almost immemorially the destiny of all his race.

Nor does it unfrequently occur, that Nantucket captains will

send a son of such tender age away from them, for a protracted

three or four years' voyage in some other ship than their own;

so that their first knowledge of a whaleman's career shall

be unenervated by any chance display of a father's natural

but untimely partiality, or undue apprehensiveness and concern.

Meantime, now the stranger was still beseeching his poor boon of Ahab;

and Ahab still stood like an anvil, receiving every shock, but without

the least quivering of his own.

"I will not go," said the stranger, "till you say aye to me.

Do to me as you would have me do to you in the like case.

For you too have a boy, Captain Ahab--though but a child,

and nestling safely at home now--a child of your old age too--

Yes, yes, you relent; I see it--run, run, men, now, and stand

by to square in the yards."

"Avast," cried Ahab--"touch not a rope-yarn"; then in a voice that

prolongingly moulded every word--"Captain Gardiner, I will not do it.

Even now I lose time, Good-bye, good-bye. God bless ye, man, and may I

forgive myself, but I must go. Mr. Starbuck, look at the binnacle watch,

and in three minutes from this present instant warn off all strangers;

then brace forward again, and let the ship sail as before."

Hurriedly turning, with averted face, he descended into

his cabin, leaving the strange captain transfixed at this

unconditional and utter rejection of his so earnest suit.

But starting from his enchantment, Gardiner silently hurried

to the side; more fell than stepped into his boat, and returned

to his ship.

Soon the two ships diverged their wakes; and long as the strange

vessel was in view, she was seen to yaw hither and thither at every

dark spot, however small, on the sea. This way and that her yards

were swung around; starboard and larboard, she continued to tack;

now she beat against a head sea; and again it pushed her before it;

while all the while, her masts and yards were thickly clustered

with men, as three tall cherry trees, when the boys are cherrying

among the boughs.

But by her still halting course and winding, woeful way, you plainly saw

that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort.

She was Rachel, weeping for her children, because they were not.

CHAPTER 129

The Cabin

(Ahab moving to go on deck; Pip catches him by the hand to follow.)

Lad, lad, I tell thee thou must not follow Ahab now.

The hour is coming when Ahab would not scare thee from him,

yet would not have thee by him. There is that in thee, poor lad,

which I feel too curing to my malady. Like cures like;

and for this hunt, my malady becomes my most desired health.

Do thou abide below here, where they shall serve thee,

as if thou wert the captain. Aye, lad, thou shalt sit here

in my own screwed chair; another screw to it, thou must be."

"No, no, no! ye have not a whole body, sir; do ye but use poor me

for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more,

so I remain a part of ye."

"Oh! spite of million villains, this makes me a bigot in the fadeless

fidelity of man!--and a black! and crazy!--but methinks like-cures-like

applies to him too; he grows so sane again."

"They tell me, sir, that Stubb did once desert poor little Pip,

whose drowned bones now show white, for all the blackness of his

living skin. But I will never desert ye, sir, as Stubb did him.

Sir, I must go with ye."

"If thou speakest thus to me much more, Ahab's purpose keels up in him.

I tell thee no; it cannot be."

"Oh good master, master, master!

"Weep so, and I will murder thee! have a care, for Ahab too is mad.

Listen, and thou wilt often hear my ivory foot upon the deck,

and still know that I am there. And now I quit thee.

Thy hand!--Met! True art thou, lad, as the circumference to

its centre. So: God for ever bless thee; and if it come to that,--

God for ever save thee, let what will befall."

(Ahab goes; Pip steps one step forward.)

"Here he this instant stood, I stand in his air,--but I'm alone.

Now were even poor Pip here I could endure it, but he's missing.

Pip! Pip! Ding, dong, ding! Who's seen Pip? He must be up here;

let's try the door. What? neither lock, nor bolt, nor bar;

and yet there's no opening it. It must be the spell; he told me

to stay here: Aye, and told me this screwed chair was mine.

Here, then, I'll seat me, against the transom, in the ship's

full middle, all her keel and her three masts before me. Here, our old

sailors say, in their black seventy-fours great admirals sometimes

sit at table, and lord it over rows of captains and lieutenants.

Ha! what's this? epaulets! epaulets! the epaulets all come crowding.

Pass round the decanters; glad to see ye; fill up, monsieurs!

What an odd feeling, now, when a black boy's host to white men

with gold lace upon their coats!--Monsieurs, have ye seen one Pip?--

a little negro lad, five feet high, hang-dog look, and cowardly!

Jumped from a whale-boat once;--seen him? No! Well then,

fill up again, captains, and let's drink shame upon all cowards!

I name no names. Shame upon them! Put one foot upon the table.

Shame upon all cowards.--Hist! above there, I hear ivory--

Oh, master! master! I am indeed down-hearted when you walk over me.

But here I'll stay, though this stern strikes rocks; and they

bulge through; and oysters come to join me."

CHAPTER 130

The Hat

And now that at the proper time and place, after so long and wide

a preliminary cruise, Ahab,--all other whaling waters swept--

seemed to have chased his foe into an oceanfold, to slay him

the more securely there; now, that he found himself hard

by the very latitude and longitude where his tormenting wound

had been inflicted; now that a vessel had been spoken which on

the very day preceding had actually encountered Moby Dick;--

and now that all his successive meetings with various ships

contrastingly concurred to show the demoniac indifference with which

the white whale tore his hunters, whether sinning or sinned against;

now it was that there lurked a something in the old man's eyes,

which it was hardly sufferable for feeble souls to see.

As the unsetting polar star, which through the livelong, arctic,

six months' night sustains its piercing, steady, central gaze;

so Ahab's purpose now fixedly gleamed down upon the constant

midnight of the gloomy crew. It domineered above them so,

that all their bodings, doubts, misgivings, fears, were fain

to hide beneath their souls, and not sprout forth a single

spear or leaf.

In this foreshadowing interval, too, all humor, forced

or natural, vanished. Stubb no more strove to raise a smile;

Starbuck no more strove to check one. Alike, joy and sorrow,

hope and fear, seemed ground to finest dust, and powdered,

for the time, in the clamped mortar of Ahab's iron soul.

Like machines, they dumbly moved about the deck, ever conscious

that the old man's despot eye was on them.

But did you deeply scan him in his more secret confidential

hours when he thought no glance but one was on him;

then you would have seen that even as Ahab's eyes so awed

the crew's, the inscrutable Parsee's glance awed his;

or somehow, at least, in some wild way, at times affected it.

Such an added, gliding strangeness began to invest the thin

Fedallah now; such ceaseless shudderings shook him;

that the men looked dubious at him; half uncertain,

as it seemed, whether indeed he were a mortal substance,

or else a tremulous shadow cast upon the deck by some unseen

being's body. And that shadow was always hovering there.

For not by night, even, had Fedallah ever certainly been known

to slumber, or go below. He would stand still for hours:

but never sat or leaned; his wan but wondrous eyes did plainly say--

We two watchmen never rest.

Nor, at any time, by night or day could the mariners

now step upon the deck, unless Ahab was before them;

either standing in his pivot-hole, or exactly pacing the planks

between two undeviating limits,--the main-mast and the mizen;

or else they saw him standing in the cabin-scuttle,--his living

foot advanced upon the deck, as if to step; his hat slouched

heavily over his eyes; so that however motionless he stood,

however the days and nights were added on, that he had not

swung in his hammock; yet hidden beneath that slouching hat,

they could never tell unerringly whether, for all this, his eyes

were really closed at times; or whether he was still intently

scanning them; no matter, though he stood so in the scuttle

for a whole hour on the stretch, and the unheeded night-damp

gathered in beads of dew upon that stone-carved coat and hat.

The clothes that the night had wet, the next day's sunshine

dried upon him; and so, day after day, and night after night;

he went no more beneath the planks; whatever he wanted from

the cabin that thing he sent for.

He ate in the same open air; that is, his two only meals,--

breakfast and dinner: supper he never touched; nor reaped

his beard; which darkly grew all gnarled, as unearthed roots

of trees blown over, which still grow idly on at naked base,

though perished in the upper verdure. But though his whole

life was now become one watch on deck; and though the Parsee's

mystic watch was without intermission as his own; yet these two

never seemed to speak--one man to the other--unless at long

intervals some passing unmomentous matter made it necessary.

Though such a potent spell seemed secretly to join the twain;

openly, and to the awe-struck crew, they seemed pole-like asunder.

If by day they chanced to speak one word; by night, dumb men

were both, so far as concerned the slightest verbal interchange.

At times, for longest hours, without a single hail, they stood

far parted in the starlight; Ahab in his scuttle, the Parsee

by the main-mast; but still fixedly gazing upon each other;

as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow, in Ahab

the Parsee his abandoned substance.

And yet, somehow, did Ahab--in his own proper self, as daily, hourly,

and every instant, commandingly revealed to his subordinates,--

Ahab seemed an independent lord; the Parsee but his slave.

Still again both seemed yoked together, and an unseen

tyrant driving them; the lean shade siding the solid rib.

For be this Parsee what he may, all rib and keel was solid Ahab.

At the first faintest glimmering of the dawn, his iron voice was

heard from aft,--"Man the mast-heads!"--and all through the day,

till after sunset and after twilight, the same voice every hour,

at the striking of the helmsman's bell, was heard--"What d'ye see?--

sharp! sharp! sharp!"

But when three or four days had slided by, after meeting

the children-seeking Rachel; and no spout had yet been seen;

the monomaniac old man seemed distrustful of his crew's fidelity;

at least, of nearly all except the Pagan harpooneers; he seemed

to doubt, even, whether Stubb and Flask might not willingly overlook

the sight he sought. But if these suspicions were really his,

he sagaciously refrained from verbally expressing them,

however his actions might seem to hint them.

"I will have the first sight of the whale myself,"--

he said. "Aye! Ahab must have the doubloon! and with

his own hands he rigged a nest of basketed bowlines;

and sending a hand aloft, with a single sheaved block,

to secure to the mainmast head, he received the two ends of

the downwardreeved rope; and attaching one to his basket prepared

a pin for the other end, in order to fasten it at the rail.

This done, with that end yet in his hand and standing beside the pin,

he looked round upon his crew, sweeping from one to the other;

pausing his glance long upon Daggoo, Queequeg, Tashtego;

but shunning Fedallah; and then settling his firm relying eye

upon the chief mate, said,--"Take the rope, sir--I give it into

thy hands, Starbuck." Then arranging his person in the basket,

he gave the word for them to hoist him to his perch, Starbuck being

the one who secured the rope at last; and afterwards stood near it.

And thus, with one hand clinging round the royal mast,

Ahab gazed abroad upon the sea for miles and miles,--ahead astern,

this side, and that,--within the wide expanded circle commanded

at so great a height.

When in working with his hands at some lofty almost isolated place

in the rigging, which chances to afford no foothold, the sailor

at sea is hoisted up to that spot, and sustained there by the rope;

under these circumstances, its fastened end on deck is always given

in strict charge to some one man who has the special watch of it.

Because in such a wilderness of running rigging, whose various

different relations aloft cannot always be infallibly discerned

by what is seen of them at the deck; and when the deck-ends of these

ropes are being every few minutes cast down from the fastenings,

it would be but a natural fatality, if, unprovided with a

constant watchman, the hoisted sailor should by some carelessness

of the crew be cast adrift and fall all swooping to the sea.

So Ahab's proceedings in this matter were not unusual;

the only strange thing about them seemed to be, that Starbuck,

almost the one only man who had ever ventured to oppose him

with anything in the slightest degree approaching to decision--

one of those too, whose faithfulness on the look-out he had seemed

to doubt somewhat; it was strange, that this was the very man

he should select for his watchman; freely giving his whole life

into such an otherwise distrusted person's hands.

Now, the first time Ahab was perched aloft; ere he had been there

ten minutes; one of those red-billed savage sea-hawks which so often

fly incommodiously close round the manned mast-heads of whalemen

in these latitudes; one of these birds came wheeling and screaming

round his head in a maze of untrackably swift circlings.

Then it darted a thousand feet straight up into the air;

then spiralized downwards, and went eddying again round his head.

But with his gaze fixed upon the dim and distant horizon,

Ahab seemed not to mark this wild bird; nor, indeed, would any

one else have marked it much, it being no uncommon circumstance;

only now almost the least heedful eye seemed to see some sort

of cunning meaning in almost every sight.

"Your hat, your hat, sir!" suddenly cried the Sicilian seaman,

who being posted at the mizen-mast-head, stood directly behind Ahab,

though somewhat lower than his level, and with a deep gulf

of air dividing them.

But already the sable wing was before the old man's eyes;

the long hooked bill at his head: with a scream, the black

hawk darted away with his prize.

An eagle flew thrice round Tarquin's head, removing his cap to

replace it, and thereupon Tanaquil, his wife, declared that Tarquin

would be king of Rome. But only by the replacing of the cap

was that omen accounted good. Ahab's hat was never restored;

the wild hawk flew on and on with it; far in advance of the prow:

and at last disappeared; while from the point of that disappearance,

a minute black spot was dimly discerned, falling from that vast

height into the sea.

CHAPTER 131

The Pequod Meets The Delight

The intense Pequod sailed on; the rolling waves and days went by;

the life-buoy-coffin still lightly swung; and another ship,

most miserably misnamed the Delight, was descried.

As she drew nigh, all eyes were fixed upon her broad beams,

called shears, which, in some whaling-ships, cross the quarter-deck

at the height of eight or nine feet; serving to carry the spare,

unrigged, or disabled boats.

Upon the stranger's shears were beheld the shattered, white ribs,

and some few splintered planks, of what had once been a whale-boat;

but you now saw through this wreck, as plainly as you see through

the peeled, half-unhinged, and bleaching skeleton of a horse.

"Hast seen the White Whale?"

"Look!" replied the hollow-cheeked captain from his taffrail;

and with his trumpet he pointed to the wreck.

"Hast killed him?"

"The harpoon is not yet forged that will ever will do that,"

answered the other, sadly glancing upon a rounded hammock on

the deck, whose gathered sides some noiseless sailors were busy

in sewing together.

"Not forged!" and snatching Perth's levelled iron from the crotch,

Ahab held it out, exclaiming--"Look ye, Nantucketer; here in this

hand I hold his death! Tempered in blood, and tempered by lightning

are these barbs; and I swear to temper them triply in that hot place

behind the fin, where the White Whale most feels his accursed life!"

"Then God keep thee, old man--see'st thou that"--

pointing to the hammock--"I bury but one of five stout men,

who were alive only yesterday; but were dead ere night.

Only that one I bury; the rest were buried before they died;

you sail upon their tomb." Then turning to his crew--"Are

ye ready there? place the plank then on the rail, and lift

the body; so, then--Oh! God"--advancing towards the hammock

with uplifted hands--"may the resurrection and the life-"

"Brace forward! Up helm!" cried Ahab like lightning to his men.

But the suddenly started Pequod was not quick enough to escape

the sound of the splash that the corpse soon made as it struck the sea;

not so quick, indeed, but that some of the flying bubbles might have

sprinkled her hull with their ghostly baptism.

As Ahab now glided from the dejected Delight, the strange life-buoy

hanging at the Pequod's stern came into conspicuous relief.

"Ha! yonder! look yonder, men!" cried a foreboding voice in her wake.

"In vain, oh, ye strangers, ye fly our sad burial; ye but turn us

your taffrail to show us your coffin!"

CHAPTER 132

The Symphony

It was a clear steel-blue day. The firmaments of air and sea were

hardly separable in that all-pervading azure; only, the pensive air

was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust

and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells,

as Samson's chest in his sleep.

Hither, and thither, on high, glided the snow-white wings of small,

unspeckled birds; these were the gentle thoughts of the feminine air;

but to and fro in the deeps, far down in the bottomless blue,

rushed mighty leviathans, sword-fish, and sharks; and these were

the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea.

But though thus contrasting within, the contrast was only in shades

and shadows without; those two seemed one; it was only the sex,

as it were, that distinguished them.

Aloft, like a royal czar and king, the sun seemed giving this

gentle air to this bold and rolling sea; even as bride to groom.

And at the girdling line of the horizon, a soft and tremulous motion--

most seen here at the Equator--denoted the fond, throbbing trust,

the loving alarms, with which the poor bride gave her bosom away.

Tied up and twisted; gnarled and knotted with wrinkles;

haggardly firm and unyielding; his eyes glowing like coals,

that still glow in the ashes of ruin; untottering Ahab stood

forth in the clearness of the morn; lifting his splintered

helmet of a brow to the fair girl's forehead of heaven.

Oh, immortal infancy, and innocency of the azure!

Invisible winged creatures that frolic all round us!

Sweet childhood of air and sky! how oblivious were ye of old Ahab's

close-coiled woe! But so have I seen little Miriam and Martha,

laughing-eyed elves, heedlessly gambol around their old sire;

sporting with the circle of singed locks which grew on the marge

of that burnt-out crater of his brain.

Slowly crossing the deck from the scuttle, Ahab leaned over the side

and watched how his shadow in the water sank and sank to his gaze,

the more and the more that he strove to pierce the profundity.

But the lovely aromas in that enchanted air did at last seem to dispel,

for a moment, the cankerous thing in his soul. That glad,

happy air, that winsome sky, did at last stroke and caress him;

the step-mother world, so long cruel--forbidding--now threw

affectionate arms round his stubborn neck, and did seem to joyously

sob over him, as if over one, that however wilful and erring,

she could yet find it in her heart to save and to bless.

From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea;

nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop.

Starbuck saw the old man; saw him, how he heavily leaned over the side;

and he seemed to hear in his own true heart the measureless

sobbing that stole out of the centre of the serenity around.

Careful not to touch him, or be noticed by him, he yet drew near

to him, and stood there.

Ahab turned.

"Starbuck!"

"Sir."

"Oh, Starbuck! it is a mild, mild wind, and a mild looking sky.

On such a day--very much such a sweetness as this--I struck

my first whale--a boy-harpooneer of eighteen! Forty--forty--

forty years ago!--ago! Forty years of continual whaling! forty

years of privation, and peril, and storm-time! forty years on

the pitiless sea! for forty years has Ahab forsaken the peaceful land,

for forty years to make war on the horrors of the deep!

Aye and yes, Starbuck, out of those forty years I have not

spent three ashore. When I think of this life I have led;

the desolation of solitude it has been; the masoned, walled-town of

a Captain's exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any

sympathy from the green country without--oh, weariness! heaviness!

Guinea-coast slavery of solitary command!--when I think of all this;

only half-suspected, not so keenly known to me before--

and how for forty years I have fed upon dry salted fare--

fit emblem of the dry nourishment of my soul!--when the poorest

landsman has had fresh fruit to his daily hand, and broken

the world's fresh bread to my mouldy crusts--away, whole oceans away,

from that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for

Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow--

wife? wife?--rather a widow with her husband alive? Aye, I widowed

that poor girl when I married her, Starbuck; and then,

the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood and the smoking brow,

with which, for a thousand lowerings old Ahab has furiously,

foamingly chased his prey--more a demon than a man!--aye, aye! what

a forty years' fool--fool--old fool, has old Ahab been!

Why this strife of the chase? why weary, and palsy the arm

at the oar, and the iron, and the lance? how the richer

or better is Ahab now? Behold. Oh, Starbuck! is it not hard,

that with this weary load I bear, one poor leg should have been

snatched from under me? Here, brush this old hair aside;

it blinds me, that I seem to weep. Locks so grey did never grow

but from out some ashes! But do I look very old, so very,

very old, Starbuck? I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped,

as though I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries

since Paradise. God! God! God!--crack my heart!--stave my brain!--

mockery! mockery! bitter, biting mockery of grey hairs, have I lived

enough joy to wear ye; and seem and feel thus intolerably old?

Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye;

it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze

upon God. By the green land; by the bright hearthstone! this

is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and my child in thine eye.

No, no; stay on board, on board!--lower not when I do; when branded

Ahab gives chase to Moby Dick. That hazard shall not be thine.

No, no! not with the far away home I see in that eye!"

"Oh, my Captain! my Captain! noble soul! grand old heart,

after all! why should any one give chase to that hated fish!

Away with me! let us fly these deadly waters! let us home!

Wife and child, too, are Starbuck's--wife and child of

his brotherly, sisterly, play-fellow youth; even as thine, sir,

are the wife and child of thy loving, longing, paternal old age!

Away! let us away!--this instant let me alter the course!

How cheerily, how hilariously, O my Captain, would we bowl

on our way to see old Nantucket again! I think, sir, they have

some such mild blue days, even as this, in Nantucket."

"They have, they have. I have seen them--some summer days

in the morning. About this time--yes, it is his noon nap now--

the boy vivaciously wakes; sits up in bed; and his mother tells

him of me, of cannibal old me; how I am abroad upon the deep,

but will yet come back to dance him again."

"'Tis my Mary, my Mary herself! She promised that my boy,

every morning, should be carried to the hill to catch the first

glimpse of his father's sail! Yes, yes! no more! it is done!

we head for Nantucket! Come, my Captain, study out the course,

and let us away! See, see! the boy's face from the window!

the boy's hand on the hill!"

But Ahab's glance was averted; like a blighted fruit tree he shook,

and cast his last, cindered apple to the soil.

"What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it;

what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor

commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings,

I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time;

recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart,

I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who,

that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself;

but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve,

but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat;

this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating,

does that thinking, does that living, and not I. By heaven, man,

we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass,

and Fate is the handspike. And all the time, lo! that smiling sky,

and this unsounded sea! Look! see yon Albicore! who put it into him

to chase and fang that flying-fish? Where do murderers go, man!

Who's to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar?

But it is a mild, mild wind, and a mild looking sky; and the airs

smells now, as if it blew from a far-away meadow; they have been making

hay somewhere under the slopes of the Andes, Starbuck, and the mowers

are sleeping among the new-mown hay. Sleeping? Aye, toil we how

we may, we all sleep at last on the field. Sleep? Aye, and rust

amid greenness; as last year's scythes flung down, and left

in the half-cut swarths--Starbuck!"

But blanched to a corpse's hue with despair, the Mate had stolen away.

Ahab crossed the deck to gaze over on the other side;

but started at two reflected, fixed eyes in the water there,

Fedallah was motionlessly leaning over the same rail.

CHAPTER 133

The Chase - First Day

That night, in the mid-watch when the old man--as his wont

at intervals--stepped forth from the scuttle in which he leaned,

and went to his pivot-hole, he suddenly thrust out his face fiercely,

snuffing up the sea air as a sagacious ship's dog will, in drawing

nigh to some barbarous isle. He declared that a whale must be near.

Soon that peculiar odor, sometimes to a great distance given

forth by the living sperm whale, was palpable to all the watch;

nor was any mariner surprised when, after inspecting the compass,

and then the dog-vane, and then ascertaining the precise bearing

of the odor as nearly as possible, Ahab rapidly ordered the ship's

course to be slightly altered, and the sail to be shortened.

The acute policy dictating these movements was sufficiently

vindicated at daybreak, by the sight of a long sleek

on the sea directly and lengthwise ahead, smooth as oil,

and resembling in the pleated watery wrinkles bordering it,

the polished metallic-like marks of some swift tide-rip, at

the mouth of a deep, rapid stream.

"Man the mast-heads! Call all hands!"

Thundering with the butts of three clubbed handspikes on

the forecastle deck, Daggoo roused the sleepers with such

judgment claps that they seemed to exhale from the scuttle,

so instantaneously did they appear with their clothes

in their hands.

"What d'ye see?" cried Ahab, flattening his face to the sky.

"Nothing, nothing sir!" was the sound hailing down in reply.

"T'gallant sails!--stunsails! alow and aloft, and on both sides!"

All sail being set, he now cast loose the life-line, reserved

for swaying him to the main royal-mast head; and in a few moments

they were hoisting him thither, when, while but two thirds

of the way aloft, and while peering ahead through the horizontal

vacancy between the main-top-sail and top-gallant-sail, he raised

a gull-like cry in the air. "There she blows!--there she blows!

A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!"

Fired by the cry which seemed simultaneously taken up by the three

look-outs, the men on deck rushed to the rigging to behold the famous

whale they had so long been pursuing. Ahab had now gained

his final perch, some feet above the other look-outs, Tashtego

standing just beneath him on the cap of the top-gallant-mast,

so that the Indian's head was almost on a level with Ahab's heel.

From this height the whale was now seen some mile or so ahead,

at every roll of the sea revealing his high sparkling hump,

and regularly jetting his silent spout into the air.

To the credulous mariners it seemed the same silent spout they

had so long ago beheld in the moonlit Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

"And did none of ye see it before?" cried Ahab, hailing the perched

men all around him.

"I saw him almost that same instant, sir, that Captain Ahab did,

and I cried out," said Tashtego.

"Not the same instant; not the same--no, the doubloon is mine,

Fate reserved the doubloon for me. I only; none of ye could have

raised the White Whale first. There she blows! there she blows!--

there she blows!--there she blows! There again!--there again!"

he cried, in long-drawn, lingering, methodic tones, attuned to the gradual

prolongings of the whale's visible jets. "He's going to sound!

In stunsails! Down top-gallant-sails! Stand by three boats.

Mr. Starbuck, remember, stay on board, and keep the ship. Helm there!

Luff, luff a point! So; steady, man, steady! There go flukes! No, no;

only black water! All ready the boats there? Stand by, stand by!

Lower me, Mr. Starbuck; lower, lower,--quick, quicker!" and he slid

through the air to the deck.

"He is heading straight to leeward, sir," cried Stubb, "right away

from us; cannot have seen the ship yet."

"Be dumb, man! Stand by the braces! Hard down the helm!--brace up!

Shiver her!--shiver her!--So; well that! Boats, boats!"

Soon all the boats but Starbuck's were dropped; all the boat-sails set--

all the paddles plying; with rippling swiftness, shooting to leeward;

and Ahab heading the onset. A pale, death-glimmer lit up Fedallah's

sunken eyes; a hideous motion gnawed his mouth.

Like noiseless nautilus shells, their light prows sped through the sea;

but only slowly they neared the foe. As they neared him, the ocean grew

still more smooth; seemed drawing a carpet over its waves; seemed a

noon-meadow, so serenely it spread. At length the breathless hunter came

so nigh his seemingly unsuspecting prey, that his entire dazzling hump

was distinctly visible, sliding along the sea as if an isolated thing,

and continually set in a revolving ring of finest, fleecy, greenish foam.

He saw the vast, involved wrinkles of the slightly projecting

head beyond. Before it, far out on the soft Turkish-rugged waters,

went the glistening white shadow from his broad, milky forehead, a musical

rippling playfully accompanying the shade; and behind, the blue waters

interchangeably flowed over into the moving valley of his steady wake;

and on either hand bright bubbles arose and danced by his side.

But these were broken again by the light toes of hundreds of gay

fowls softly feathering the sea, alternate with their fitful flight;

and like to some flag-staff rising from the painted hull of an argosy,

the tall but shattered pole of a recent lance projected from the white

whale's back; and at intervals one of the cloud of soft-toed

fowls hovering, and to and fro skimming like a canopy over the fish,

silently perched and rocked on this pole, the long tail feathers

streaming like pennons.

A gentle joyousness--a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness,

invested the gliding whale. Not the white bull Jupiter swimming

away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns;

his lovely, leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid;

with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nuptial

bower in Crete; not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme! did

surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam.

On each soft side--coincident with the parted swell,

that but once leaving him then flowed so wide away--on each

bright side, the whale shed off enticings. No wonder there

had been some among the hunters who namelessly transported

and allured by all this serenity, had ventured to assail it;

but had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes.

Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale! thou glidest on, to all

who for the first time eye thee, no matter how many in that same

way thou mayst have bejuggled and destroyed before.

And thus, through the serene tranquillities of the tropical sea,

among waves whose hand-clappings were suspended by exceeding rapture,

Moby Dick moved on, still withholding from sight the full terrors of his

submerged trunk, entirely hiding the wrenched hideousness of his jaw.

But soon the fore part of him slowly rose from the water;

for an instant his whole marbleized body formed a high arch,

like Virginia's Natural Bridge, and warningly waving his bannered

flukes in the air, the grand god revealed himself, sounded and went

out of sight. Hoveringly halting, and dipping on the wing,

the white sea-fowls longingly lingered over the agitated pool

that he left.

With oars apeak, and paddles down, the sheets of their sails adrift,

the three boats now stilly floated, awaiting Moby Dick's reappearance.

"An hour," said Ahab, standing rooted in his boat's stern; and he gazed

beyond the whale's place, towards the dim blue spaces and wide wooing

vacancies to leeward. It was only an instant; for again his eyes

seemed whirling round in his head as he swept the watery circle.

The breeze now freshened; the sea began to swell.

"The birds!--the birds!" cried Tashtego.

In long Indian file, as when herons take wing, the white birds

were now all flying towards Ahab's boat; and when within a few

yards began fluttering over the water there, wheeling round

and round, with joyous, expectant cries. Their vision was

keener than man's; Ahab could discover no sign in the sea.

But suddenly as he peered down and down into its depths, he profoundly

saw a white living spot no bigger than a white weasel, with wonderful

celerity uprising, and magnifying as it rose, till it turned,

and then there were plainly revealed two long crooked rows of white,

glistening teeth, floating up from the undiscoverable bottom.

It was Moby Dick's open mouth and scrolled jaw; his vast,

shadowed bulk still half blending with the blue of the sea.

The glittering mouth yawned beneath the boat like an open-doored

marble tomb; and giving one sidelong sweep with his steering oar,

Ahab whirled the craft aside from this tremendous apparition.

Then, calling upon Fedallah to change places with him, went forward

to the bows, and seizing Perth's harpoon, commanded his crew

to grasp their oars and stand by to stern.

Now, by reason of this timely spinning round the boat upon its axis,

its bow, by anticipation, was made to face the whale's head

while yet under water. But as if perceiving this stratagem,

Moby Dick, with that malicious intelligence ascribed to him,

sidelingly transplanted himself, as it were, in an instant,

shooting his pleated head lengthwise beneath the boat.

Through and through; through every plank and each rib,

it thrilled for an instant, the whale obliquely lying on his back,

in the manner of a biting shark slowly and feelingly taking

its bows full within his mouth, so that the long, narrow,

scrolled lower jaw curled high up into the open air, and one

of the teeth caught in a row-lock. The bluish pearl-white

of the inside of the jaw was within six inches of Ahab's head,

and reached higher than that. In this attitude the White Whale

now shook the slight cedar as a mildly cruel cat her mouse.

With unastonished eyes Fedallah gazed, and crossed his arms;

but the tiger-yellow crew were tumbling over each other's heads

to gain the uttermost stern.

And now, while both elastic gunwales were springing in and out,

as the whale dallied with the doomed craft in this devilish way;

and from his body being submerged beneath the boat, he could not be

darted at from the bows, for the bows were almost inside of him,

as it were; and while the other boats involuntarily paused,

as before a quick crisis impossible to withstand, then it was that

monomaniac Ahab, furious with this tantalizing vicinity of his foe,

which placed him all alive and helpless in the very jaws he hated;

frenzied with all this, he seized the long bone with his

naked hands, and wildly strove to wrench it from its gripe.

As now he thus vainly strove, the jaw slipped from him;

the frail gunwales bent in, collapsed, and snapped,

as both jaws, like an enormous shears, sliding further aft,

bit the craft completely in twain, and locked themselves fast

again in the sea, midway between the two floating wrecks.

These floated aside, the broken ends drooping, the crew at

the stern-wreck clinging to the gunwales, and striving to hold

fast to the oars to lash them across.

At that preluding moment, ere the boat was yet snapped, Ahab, the first

to perceive the whale's intent, by the crafty upraising of his head,

a movement that loosed his hold for the time; at that moment his

hand had made one final effort to push the boat out of the bite.

But only slipping further into the whale's mouth, and tilting over

sideways as it slipped, the boat had shaken off his hold on the jaw;

spilled him out of it, as he leaned to the push; and so he fell

flat-faced upon the sea.

Ripplingly withdrawing from his prey, Moby Dick now lay at a

little distance, vertically thrusting his oblong white head up

and down in the billows; and at the same time slowly revolving his

whole spindled body; so that when his vast wrinkled forehead rose--

some twenty or more feet out of the water--the now rising swells,

with all their confluent waves, dazzlingly broke against it;

vindictively tossing their shivered spray still higher into

the air.\* So, in a gale, the but half baffled Channel billows only

recoil from the base of the Eddystone, triumphantly to overleap

its summit with their scud.

\*This motion is peculiar to the sperm whale. It receives its designation

(pitchpoling) from its being likened to that preliminary up-and-down

poise of the whale-lance, in the exercise called pitchpoling,

previously described. By this motion the whale must best and most

comprehensively view whatever objects may be encircling him.

But soon resuming his horizontal attitude, Moby Dick swam swiftly

round and round the wrecked crew; sideways churning the water in his

vengeful wake, as if lashing himself up to still another and more

deadly assault. The sight of the splintered boat seemed to madden him,

as the blood of grapes and mulberries cast before Antiochus's

elephants in the book of Maccabees. Meanwhile Ahab half smothered

in the foam of the whale's insolent tail, and too much of a cripple

to swim,--though he could still keep afloat, even in the heart

of such a whirlpool as that; helpless Ahab's head was seen,

like a tossed bubble which the least chance shock might burst.

From the boat's fragmentary stern, Fedallah incuriously and mildly

eyed him; the clinging crew, at the other drifting end, could not

succor him; more than enough was it for them to look to themselves.

For so revolvingly appalling was the White Whale's aspect,

and so planetarily swift the ever-contracting circles

he made, that he seemed horizontally swooping upon them.

And though the other boats, unharmed, still hovered hard by;

still they dared not pull into the eddy to strike, lest that should be

the signal for the instant destruction of the jeopardized castaways,

Ahab and all; nor in that case could they themselves hope to escape.

With straining eyes, then, they remained on the outer edge of

the direful zone, whose centre had now become the old man's head.

Meantime, from the beginning all this had been descried from the ship's

mast heads; and squaring her yards, she had borne down upon the scene;

and was now so nigh, that Ahab in the water hailed her!--"Sail on the"--

but that moment a breaking sea dashed on him from Moby Dick, and whelmed

him for the time. But struggling out of it again, and chancing to rise

on a towering crest, he shouted,--"Sail on the whale!--Drive him off!"

The Pequod's prows were pointed-, and breaking up the charmed circle,

she effectually parted the white whale from his victim.

As he sullenly swam off, the boats flew to the rescue.

Dragged into Stubb's boat with blood-shot, blinded eyes,

the white brine caking in his wrinkles; the long tension

of Ahab's bodily strength did crack, and helplessly he yielded

to his body's doom for a time, lying all crushed in the bottom

of Stubb's boat, like one trodden under foot of herds of elephants.

Far inland, nameless wails came from him, as desolate sounds

from out ravines.

But this intensity of his physical prostration did but so much

the more abbreviate it. In an instant's compass, great hearts

sometimes condense to one deep pang, the sum total of those

shallow pains kindly diffused through feebler men's whole lives.

And so, such hearts, though summary in each one suffering;

still, if the gods decree it, in their life-time aggregate

a whole age of woe, wholly made up of instantaneous intensities;

for even in their pointless centres, those noble natures contain

the entire circumferences of inferior souls.

"The harpoon," said Ahab, half way rising, and draggingly leaning

on one bended arm--"is it safe?"

"Aye, sir, for it was not darted; this is it," said Stubb, showing it.

"Lay it before me;--any missing men?"

"One, two, three, four, five;--there were five oars, sir, and here

are five men."

"That's good.--Help me, man; I wish to stand. So, so, I see him!

there! there! going to leeward still; what a leaping spout!--

Hands off from me! The eternal sap runs up in Ahab's bones again!

Set the sail; out oars; the helm!"

It is often the case that when a boat is stove, its crew,

being picked up by another boat, help to work that second boat;

and the chase is thus continued with what is called double-banked oars.

It was thus now. But the added power of the boat did not equal

the added power of the whale, for he seemed to have treble-banked

his every fin; swimming with a velocity which plainly showed,

that if now, under these circumstances, pushed on, the chase

would prove an indefinitely prolonged, if not a hopeless one;

nor could any crew endure for so long a period, such an unintermitted,

intense straining at the oar; a thing barely tolerable only in some one

brief vicissitude. The ship itself, then, as it sometimes happens,

offered the most promising intermediate means of overtaking the chase.

Accordingly, the boats now made for her, and were soon swayed up

to their cranes--the two parts of the wrecked boat having been

previously secured by her--and then hoisting everything to her side,

and stacking her canvas high up, and sideways outstretching it

with stunsails, like the double-jointed wings of an albatross;

the Pequod bore down in the leeward wake of Moby Dick. At the well known,

methodic intervals, the whale's glittering spout was regularly

announced from the manned mast-heads; and when he would be reported

as just gone down, Ahab would take the time, and then pacing the deck,

binnacle-watch in hand, so soon as the last second of the allotted

hour expired, his voice was heard.--"Whose is the doubloon now?

D'ye see him?" and if the reply was No, sir! straightway he commanded

them to lift him to his perch. In this way the day wore on;

Ahab, now aloft and motionless; anon, unrestingly pacing the planks.

As he was thus walking, uttering no sound, except to hail the men aloft,

or to bid them hoist a sail still higher, or to spread one to a still

greater breadth--thus to and fro pacing, beneath his slouched hat,

at every turn he passed his own wrecked boat, which had been dropped upon

the quarter-deck, and lay there reversed; broken bow to shattered stern.

At last he paused before it; and as in an already over-clouded sky fresh

troops of clouds will sometimes sail across, so over the old man's face

there now stole some such added gloom as this.

Stubb saw him pause; and perhaps intending, not vainly, though,

to evince his own unabated fortitude, and thus keep up a valiant place

in his Captain's mind, he advanced, and eyeing the wreck exclaimed--

"The thistle the ass refused; it pricked his mouth too keenly, sir;

ha! ha! ha!"

"What soulless thing is this that laughs before a wreck?

Man, man! did I not know thee brave as fearless fire

(and as mechanical) I could swear thou wert a poltroon.

Groan nor laugh should be heard before a wreck."

"Aye, sir," said Starbuck drawing near, "'tis a solemn sight;

an omen, and an ill one."

"Omen? omen?--the dictionary! If the gods think to speak outright

to man, they will honorably speak outright; not shake their heads,

and give an old wives' darkling hint.--Begone! Ye two are

the opposite poles of one thing; Starbuck is Stubb reversed,

and Stubb is Starbuck; and ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands

alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men

his neighbors! Cold, cold--I shiver!--How now? Aloft there!

D'ye see him? Sing out for every spout, though he spout ten

times a second!"

The day was nearly done; only the hem of his golden robe was rustling.

Soon it was almost dark, but the look-out men still remained unset.

"Can't see the spout now, sir;--too dark"--cried a voice from the air.

"How heading when last seen?"

"As before, sir,--straight to leeward."

"Good! he will travel slower now 'tis night. Down royals and

top-gallant stunsails, Mr. Starbuck. We must not run over him

before morning; he's making a passage now, and may heave-to a while.

Helm there! keep her full before the wind!--Aloft! come down!--

Mr. Stubb, send a fresh hand to the fore-mast head, and see

it manned till morning."--Then advancing towards the doubloon

in the main-mast--"Men, this gold is mine, for I earned it;

but I shall let it abide here till the White Whale is dead;

and then, whosoever of ye first raises him, upon the day he shall

be killed, this gold is that man's; and if on that day I shall again

raise him, then, ten times its sum shall be divided among all of ye!

Away now! the deck is thine, sir!"

And so saying, he placed himself half way within the scuttle,

and slouching his hat, stood there till dawn, except when at

intervals rousing himself to see how the night wore on.

CHAPTER 134

The Chase - Second Day

At day-break, the three mast-heads were punctually manned afresh.

"D'ye see him?" cried Ahab after allowing a little space

for the light to spread.

"See nothing, sir."

"Turn up all hands and make sail! he travels faster than I thought for;--

the top-gallant sails!--aye, they should have been kept on her all night.

But no matter--'tis but resting for the rush."

Here be it said, that this pertinacious pursuit of one particular whale,

continued through day into night, and through night into day,

is a thing by no means unprecedented in the South sea fishery.

For such is the wonderful skill, prescience of experience,

and invincible confidence acquired by some great natural geniuses among

the Nantucket commanders; that from the simple observation of a whale

when last descried, they will, under certain given circumstances,

pretty accurately foretell both the direction in which he will continue

to swim for a time, while out of sight, as well as his probable

rate of progression during that period. And, in these cases,

somewhat as a pilot, when about losing sight of a coast, whose general

trending he well knows, and which he desires shortly to return to again,

but at some further point; like as this pilot stands by his compass,

and takes the precise bearing of the cape at present visible,

in order the more certainly to hit aright the remote, unseen headland,

eventually to be visited: so does the fisherman, at his compass,

with the whale; for after being chased, and diligently marked,

through several hours of daylight, then, when night obscures

the fish, the creature's future wake through the darkness is almost

as established to the sagacious mind of the hunter, as the pilot's

coast is to him. So that to this hunter's wondrous skill,

the proverbial evanescence of a thing writ in water, a wake,

is to all desired purposes well nigh as reliable as the steadfast land.

And as the mighty iron Leviathan of the modern railway is so familiarly

known in its every pace, that, with watches in their hands, men time

his rate as doctors that of a baby's pulse; and lightly say of it,

the up train or the down train will reach such or such a spot,

at such or such an hour; even so, almost, there are occasions

when these Nantucketers time that other Leviathan of the deep,

according to the observed humor of his speed; and say to themselves,

so many hours hence this whale will have gone two hundred miles,

will have about reached this or that degree of latitude or longitude.

But to render this acuteness at all successful in the end, the wind

and the sea must be the whaleman's allies; for of what present avail

to the becalmed or wind-bound mariner is the skill that assures him

he is exactly ninety-three leagues and a quarter from his port?

Inferable from these statements, are many collateral subtile matters

touching the chase of whales.

The ship tore on; leaving such a furrow in the sea as when

a cannonball, missent, becomes a plough-share and turns up

the level field.

"By salt and hemp!" cried Stubb, "but this swift motion of the deck

creeps up one's legs and tingles at the heart. This ship and I

are two brave fellows!--Ha, ha! Some one take me up, and launch me,

spine-wise, on the sea,--for by live-oaks! my spine's a keel.

Ha, ha! we go the gait that leaves no dust behind!"

"There she blows--she blows!--she blows!--right ahead!"

was now the mast-head cry.

"Aye, aye!" cried Stubb, "I knew it--ye can't escape--blow on and split

your spout, O whale! the mad fiend himself is after ye! blow your trump--

blister your lungs!--Ahab will dam off your blood, as a miller shuts

his watergate upon the stream!"

And Stubb did but speak out for well nigh all that crew.

The frenzies of the chase had by this time worked them

bubblingly up, like old wine worked anew. Whatever pale

fears and forebodings some of them might have felt before;

these were not only now kept out of sight through the growing

awe of Ahab, but they were broken up, and on all sides routed,

as timid prairie hares that scatter before the bounding bison.

The hand of Fate had snatched all their souls; and by the stirring

perils of the previous day; the rack of the past night's suspense;

the fixed, unfearing, blind, reckless way in which their wild

craft went plunging towards its flying mark; by all these things,

their hearts were bowled along. The wind that made great bellies

of their sails, and rushed the vessel on by arms invisible

as irresistible; this seemed the symbol of that unseen agency

which so enslaved them to the race.

They were one man, not thirty. For as the one ship that held them all;

though it was put together of all contrasting things--oak, and maple,

and pine wood; iron, and pitch, and hemp--yet all these ran

into each other in the one concrete hull, which shot on its way,

both balanced and directed by the long central keel; even so,

all the individualities of the crew, this man's valor, that man's fear;

guilt and guiltiness, all varieties were welded into oneness,

and were all directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their one lord

and keel did point to.

The rigging lived. The mast-heads, like the tops of

tall palms, were outspreadingly tufted with arms and legs.

Clinging to a spar with one hand, some reached forth the other

with impatient wavings; others, shading their eyes from the

vivid sunlight, sat far out on the rocking yards; all the spars

in full bearing of mortals, ready and ripe for their fate.

Ah! how they still strove through that infinite blueness to seek

out the thing that might destroy them!

"Why sing ye not out for him, if ye see him?" cried Ahab, when, after the

lapse of some minutes since the first cry, no more had been heard.

"Sway me up, men; ye have been deceived; not Moby Dick casts one odd

jet that way, and then disappears."

It was even so; in their headlong eagerness, the men had mistaken

some other thing for the whale-spout, as the event itself soon proved;

for hardly had Ahab reached his perch; hardly was the rope belayed

to its pin on deck, when he struck the key-note to an orchestra,

that made the air vibrate as with the combined discharge of rifles.

The triumphant halloo of thirty buckskin lungs was heard, as--

much nearer to the ship than the place of the imaginary jet,

less than a mile ahead--Moby Dick bodily burst into view!

For not by any calm and indolent spoutings; not by the peaceable gush

of that mystic fountain in his head, did the White Whale now reveal

his vicinity; but by the far more wondrous phenomenon of breaching.

Rising with his utmost velocity from the furthest depths,

the Sperm Whale thus booms his entire bulk into the pure

element of air, and piling up a mountain of dazzling foam,

shows his place to the distance of seven miles and more.

In those moments, the torn, enraged waves he shakes off, seem his mane;

in some cases, this breaching is his act of defiance.

"There she breaches! there she breaches!" was the cry, as in his

immeasurable bravadoes the White Whale tossed himself salmon-like

to Heaven. So suddenly seen in the blue plain of the sea, and relieved

against the still bluer margin of the sky, the spray that he raised,

for the moment, intolerably glittered and glared like a glacier;

and stood there gradually fading and fading away from its first

sparkling intensity, to the dim mistiness of an advancing shower

in a vale.

"Aye, breach your last to the sun, Moby Dick!" cried Ahab, "thy hour and

thy harpoon are at hand!--Down! down all of ye, but one man at the fore.

The boats!--stand by!"

Unmindful of the tedious rope-ladders of the shrouds, the men,

like shooting stars, slid to the deck, by the isolated backstays

and halyards; while Ahab, less dartingly, but still rapidly

was dropped from his perch.

"Lower away," he cried, so soon as he had reached his boat--a spare one,

rigged the afternoon previous. "Mr. Starbuck, the ship is thine--

keep away from the boats, but keep near them. Lower, all!"

As if to strike a quick terror into them, by this time being

the first assailant himself, Moby Dick had turned, and was now

coming for the three crews. Ahab's boat was central; and cheering

his men, he told them he would take the whale head-and-head,--

that is, pull straight up to his forehead,--a not uncommon thing;

for when within a certain limit, such a course excludes

the coming onset from the whale's sidelong vision.

But ere that close limit was gained, and while yet all

three boats were plain as the ship's three masts to his eye;

the White Whale churning himself into furious speed, almost in

an instant as it were, rushing among the boats with open jaws,

and a lashing tail, offered appalling battle on every side;

and heedless of the irons darted at him from every boat,

seemed only intent on annihilating each separate plank

of which those boats were made. But skilfully manoeuvred,

incessantly wheeling like trained chargers in the field;

the boats for a while eluded him; though, at times, but by a

plank's breadth; while all the time, Ahab's unearthly slogan

tore every other cry but his to shreds.

But at last in his untraceable evolutions, the White Whale so

crossed and recrossed, and in a thousand ways entangled the slack

of the three lines now fast to him, that they foreshortened,

and, of themselves, warped the devoted boats towards the planted

irons in him; though now for a moment the whale drew aside

a little, as if to rally for a more tremendous charge.

Seizing that opportunity, Ahab first paid out more line;

and then was rapidly hauling and jerking in upon it again--

hoping that way to disencumber it of some snarls--when lo!--

a sight more savage than the embattled teeth of sharks!

Caught and twisted--corkscrewed in the mazes of the line,

loose harpoons and lances, with all their bristling barbs and points,

came flashing and dripping up to the chocks in the bows of Ahab's boat.

Only one thing could be done. Seizing the boat-knife, he critically

reached within--through--and then, without--the rays of steel;

dragged in the line beyond, passed it, inboard, to the bowsman,

and then, twice sundering the rope near the chocks--dropped the

intercepted fagot of steel into the sea; and was all fast again.

That instant, the White Whale made a sudden rush among the remaining

tangles of the other lines; by so doing, irresistibly dragged

the more involved boats of Stubb and Flask towards his flukes;

dashed them together like two rolling husks on a surf-beaten beach,

and then, diving down into the sea, disappeared in a boiling maelstrom,

in which, for a space, the odorous cedar chips of the wrecks danced

round and round, like the grated nutmeg in a swiftly stirred

bowl of punch.

While the two crews were yet circling in the waters, reaching out

after the revolving line-tubs, oars, and other floating furniture,

while aslope little Flask bobbed up and down like an empty vial,

twitching his legs upwards to escape the dreaded jaws of sharks;

and Stubb was lustily singing out for some one to ladle him up;

and while the old man's line--now parting--admitted of his

pulling into the creamy pool to rescue whom he could;--

in that wild simultaneousness of a thousand concreted perils,--

Ahab's yet unstricken boat seemed drawn up towards Heaven by

invisible wires,--as, arrow-like, shooting perpendicularly from the sea,

the White Whale dashed his broad forehead against its bottom,

and sent it turning over and over, into the air; till it fell again--

gunwale downwards--and Ahab and his men struggled out from under it,

like seals from a sea-side cave.

The first uprising momentum of the whale--modifying its direction

as he struck the surface--involuntarily launched him along it,

to a little distance from the centre of the destruction he had made;

and with his back to it, he now lay for a moment slowly feeling

with his flukes from side to side; and whenever a stray oar,

bit of plank, the least chip or crumb of the boats touched his skin,

his tail swiftly drew back, and came sideways smiting the sea.

But soon, as if satisfied that his work for that time was done,

he pushed his pleated forehead through the ocean, and trailing

after him the intertangled lines, continued his leeward way

at a traveller's methodic pace.

As before, the attentive ship having descried the whole fight,

again came bearing down to the rescue, and dropping a boat,

picked up the floating mariners, tubs, oars, and whatever else

could be caught at, and safely landed them on her decks.

Some sprained shoulders, wrists, and ankles; livid contusions;

wrenched harpoons and lances; inextricable intricacies of rope;

shattered oars and planks; all these were there; but no

fatal or even serious ill seemed to have befallen any one.

As with Fedallah the day before, so Ahab was now found grimly clinging

to his boat's broken half, which afforded a comparatively easy float;

nor did it so exhaust him as the previous day's mishap.

But when he was helped to the deck, all eyes were fastened upon him;

as instead of standing by himself he still half-hung upon the shoulder

of Starbuck, who had thus far been the foremost to assist him.

His ivory leg had been snapped off, leaving but one short sharp splinter.

"Aye, aye, Starbuck, 'tis sweet to lean sometimes, be the leaner

who he will; and would old Ahab had leaned oftener than he has."

"The ferrule has not stood, sir," said the carpenter, now coming up;

I put good work into that leg."

"But no bones broken, sir, I hope," said Stubb with true concern.

"Aye! and all splintered to pieces, Stubb!--d'ye see it.--

But even with a broken bone, old Ahab is untouched; and I account

no living bone of mine one jot more me, than this dead one

that's lost. Nor white whale, nor man, nor fiend, can so much

as graze old Ahab in his own proper and inaccessible being.

Can any lead touch yonder floor, any mast scrape yonder roof?--

Aloft there! which way?"

"Dead to leeward, sir."

"Up helm, then; pile on the sail again, ship keepers! down

the rest of the spare boats and rig them--Mr. Starbuck away,

and muster the boat's crews."

"Let me first help thee towards the bulwarks, sir."

"Oh, oh, oh! how this splinter gores me now! Accursed fate!

that the unconquerable captain in the soul should have such

a craven mate!"

"Sir?"

"My body, man, not thee. Give me something for a cane--there, that

shivered lance will do. Muster the men. Surely I have not seen him yet.

By heaven it cannot be!--missing?--quick! call them all."

The old man's hinted thought was true. Upon mustering the company,

the Parsee was not there.

"The Parsee!" cried Stubb--"he must have been caught in-"

"The black vomit wrench thee!--run all of ye above,

alow, cabin, forecastle--find him--not gone--not gone!"

But quickly they returned to him with the tidings that the Parsee

was nowhere to be found.

"Aye, sir," said Stubb--"caught among the tangles of your line--

I thought I saw him dragging under."

"My line! my line? Gone?--gone? What means that little word?--

What death-knell rings in it, that old Ahab shakes as if he were

the belfry. The harpoon, too!--toss over the litter there,--

d'ye see it?--the forged iron, men, the white whale's--no, no, no,--

blistered fool; this hand did dart it!--'tis in the fish!--Aloft there!

Keep him nailed-Quick!--all hands to the rigging of the boats--

collect the oars--harpooneers! the irons, the irons!--hoist the

royals higher--a pull on all the sheets!--helm there! steady,

steady for your life! I'll ten times girdle the unmeasured globe;

yea and dive straight through it, but I'll slay him yet!

"Great God! but for one single instant show thyself,"

cried Starbuck; "never, never wilt thou capture him, old man--

In Jesus' name no more of this, that's worse than devil's madness.

Two days chased; twice stove to splinters; thy very leg once

more snatched from under thee; thy evil shadow gone--all good

angels mobbing thee with warnings:--what more wouldst thou have?--

Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man?

Shall we be dragged by him to the bottom of the sea?

Shall we be towed by him to the infernal world? Oh, oh,--

Impiety and blasphemy to hunt him more!"

"Starbuck, of late I've felt strangely moved to thee; ever since

that hour we both saw--thou know'st what, in one another's eyes.

But in this matter of the whale, be the front of thy face

to me as the palm of this hand--a lipless, unfeatured blank.

Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed.

'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this

ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fates' lieutenant; I act under orders.

Look thou, underling! that thou obeyest mine.--Stand round men, men.

Ye see an old man cut down to the stump; leaning on a shivered lance;

propped up on a lonely foot. 'Tis Ahab--his body's part;

but Ahab's soul's a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs.

I feel strained, half-stranded, as ropes that tow dismasted frigates

in a gale; and I may look so. But ere I break, yell hear me crack;

and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet.

Believe ye, men, in the things called omens? Then laugh aloud,

and cry encore! For ere they drown, drowning things will twice

rise to the surface; then rise again, to sink for evermore.

So with Moby Dick--two days he's floated--to-morrow will be the third.

Aye, men, he'll rise once more,--but only to spout his last!

D'ye feel brave men, brave?"

"As fearless fire," cried Stubb.

"And as mechanical," muttered Ahab. Then as the men went forward,

he muttered on: "The things called omens! And yesterday I talked

the same to Starbuck there, concerning my broken boat. Oh! how valiantly

I seek to drive out of others' hearts what's clinched so fast in mine!--

The Parsee--the Parsee!--gone, gone? and he was to go before:--

but still was to be seen again ere I could perish--How's that?--

There's a riddle now might baffle all the lawyers backed by the ghosts

of the whole line of judges:--like a hawk's beak it pecks my brain.

I'll, I'll solve it, though!"

When dusk descended, the whale was still in sight to leeward.

So once more the sail was shortened, and everything passed

nearly as on the previous night; only, the sound of hammers,

and the hum of the grindstone was heard till nearly daylight,

as the men toiled by lanterns in the complete and careful

rigging of the spare boats and sharpening their fresh weapons

for the morrow. Meantime, of the broken keel of Ahab's wrecked

craft the carpenter made him another leg; while still as on

the night before, slouched Ahab stood fixed within his scuttle;

his hid, heliotrope glance anticipatingly gone backward on its dial;

sat due eastward for the earliest sun.

CHAPTER 135

The Chase - Third Day

The morning of the third day dawned fair and fresh, and once

more the solitary night-man at the fore-mast-head was relieved

by crowds of the daylight look-outs, who dotted every mast

and almost every spar.

"D'ye see him?" cried Ahab; but the whale was not yet in sight.

"In his infallible wake, though; but follow that wake, that's all.

Helm there; steady, as thou goest, and hast been going.

What a lovely day again! were it a new-made world, and made for

a summer-house to the angels, and this morning the first of its

throwing open to them, a fairer day could not dawn upon that world.

Here's food for thought, had Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks;

he only feels, feels, feels; that's tingling enough for mortal

man! to think's audacity. God only has that right and privilege.

Thinking is, or ought to be, a coolness and a calmness; and our

poor hearts throb, and our poor brains beat too much for that.

And yet, I've sometimes thought my brain was very calm--

frozen calm, this old skull cracks so, like a glass in which

the contents turned to ice, and shiver it. And still this hair

is growing now; this moment growing, and heat must breed it;

but no, it's like that sort of common grass that will grow anywhere,

between the earthy clefts of Greenland ice or in Vesuvius lava.

How the wild winds blow it; they whip it about me as the torn

shreds of split sails lash the tossed ship they cling to.

A vile wind that has no doubt blown ere this through prison corridors

and cells, and wards of hospitals, and ventilated them, and now comes

blowing hither as innocent as fleeces. Out upon it!--it's tainted.

Were I the wind, I'd blow no more on such a wicked, miserable world.

I'd crawl somewhere to a cave, and slink there. And yet,

'tis a noble and heroic thing, the wind! who ever conquered it?

In every fight it has the last and bitterest blow. Run tilting

at it, and you but run through it. Ha! a coward wind that strikes

stark naked men, but will not stand to receive a single blow.

Even Ahab is a braver thing--a nobler thing than that.

Would now the wind but had a body; but all the things that most

exasperate and outrage mortal man, all these things are bodiless,

but only bodiless as objects, not as agents. There's a

most special, a most cunning, oh, a most malicious difference!

And yet, I say again, and swear it now, that there's something

all glorious and gracious in the wind. These warm Trade Winds,

at least, that in the clear heavens blow straight on, in strong

and steadfast, vigorous mildness; and veer not from their mark,

however the baser currents of the sea may turn and tack,

and mightiest Mississippies of the land swift and swerve about,

uncertain where to go at last. And by the eternal Poles!

these same Trades that so directly blow my good ship on;

these Trades, or something like them--something so unchangeable,

and full as strong, blow my keeled soul along! To it! Aloft there!

What d'ye see?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Nothing! and noon at hand! The doubloon goes a-begging! See

the sun! Aye, aye, it must be so. I've over-sailed him.

How, got the start? Aye, he's chasing me now; not I, him--

that's bad; I might have known it, too. Fool! the lines--

the harpoons he's towing. Aye, aye, I have run him by last night.

About! about! Come down, all of ye, but the regular look outs!

Man the braces!"

Steering as she had done, the wind had been somewhat on the

Pequod's quarter, so that now being pointed in the reverse direction,

the braced ship sailed hard upon the breeze as she rechurned

the cream in her own white wake.

"Against the wind he now steers for the open jaw," murmured Starbuck

to himself, as he coiled the new-hauled main-brace upon the rail.

"God keep us, but already my bones feel damp within me, and from

the inside wet my flesh. I misdoubt me that I disobey my God

in obeying him!"

"Stand by to sway me up!" cried Ahab, advancing to the hempen basket.

"We should meet him soon."

"Aye, aye, sir," and straightway Starbuck did Ahab's bidding,

and once more Ahab swung on high.

A whole hour now passed; gold-beaten out to ages.

Time itself now held long breaths with keen suspense.

But at last, some three points off the weather bow, Ahab descried

the spout again, and instantly from the three mast-heads

three shrieks went up as if the tongues of fire had voiced it.

"Forehead to forehead I meet thee, this third time, Moby Dick!

On deck there!--brace sharper up; crowd her into the wind's eye.

He's too far off to lower yet, Mr. Starbuck. The sails shake!

Stand over that helmsman with a top-maul! So, so; he travels fast,

and I must down. But let me have one more good round look aloft

here at the sea; there's time for that. An old, old sight, and yet

somehow so young; aye, and not changed a wink since I first saw it,

a boy, from the sand-hills of Nantucket! The same--the same!--

the same to Noah as to me. There's a soft shower to leeward.

Such lovely leewardings! They must lead somewhere--

to something else than common land, more palmy than the palms.

Leeward! the white whale goes that way; look to windward, then;

the better if the bitterer quarter. But good bye, good bye,

old mast-head! What's this?--green? aye, tiny mosses in these

warped cracks. No such green weather stains on Ahab's head!

There's the difference now between man's old age and matter's.

But aye, old mast, we both grow old together; sound in our hulls,

though are we not, my ship? Aye, minus a leg, that's all.

By heaven this dead wood has the better of my live flesh every way.

I can't compare with it; and I've known some ships made of dead trees

outlast the lives of men made of the most vital stuff of vital fathers.

What's that he said? he should still go before me, my pilot;

and yet to be seen again? But where? Will I have eyes at

the bottom of the sea, supposing I descend those endless stairs?

and all night I've been sailing from him, wherever he did sink to.

Aye, aye, like many more thou told'st direful truth as

touching thyself, O Parsee; but, Ahab, there thy shot fell short.

Good bye, mast-head--keep a good eye upon the whale, the while I'm gone.

We'll talk to-morrow, nay, to-night, when the white whale lies

down there, tied by head and tail."

He gave the word; and still gazing round him, was steadily lowered

through the cloven blue air to the deck.

In due time the boats were lowered; but as standing in his

shallop's stern, Ahab just hovered upon the point of the descent,

he waved to the mate,--who held one of the tackle--ropes on deck--

and bade him pause.

"Starbuck!"

"Sir?"

"For the third time my soul's ship starts upon this voyage, Starbuck."

"Aye, sir, thou wilt have it so."

"Some ships sail from their ports, and ever afterwards

are missing, Starbuck!"

"Truth, sir: saddest truth."

"Some men die at ebb tide; some at low water; some at the full

of the flood;--and I feel now like a billow that's all one

crested comb, Starbuck. I am old;--shake hands with me, man."

Their hands met; their eyes fastened; Starbuck's tears the glue.

"Oh, my captain, my captain!--noble heart--go not--go not!--see, it's a

brave man that weeps; how great the agony of the persuasion then!"

"Lower away!"-cried Ahab, tossing the mate's arm from him.

"Stand by for the crew!"

In an instant the boat was pulling round close under the stern.

"The sharks! the sharks!" cried a voice from the low cabin-window there;

"O master, my master, come back!"

But Ahab heard nothing; for his own voice was high-lifted then;

and the boat leaped on.

Yet the voice spake true; for scarce had he pushed from the ship,

when numbers of sharks, seemingly rising from out the dark waters

beneath the hull, maliciously snapped at the blades of the oars,

every time they dipped in the water; and in this way accompanied

the boat with their bites. It is a thing not uncommonly happening

to the whale-boats in those swarming seas; the sharks at times

apparently following them in the same prescient way that vultures

hover over the banners of marching regiments in the east.

But these were the first sharks that had been observed by the Pequod

since the White Whale had been first descried; and whether it

was that Ahab's crew were all such tiger-yellow barbarians,

and therefore their flesh more musky to the senses of the sharks--

a matter sometimes well known to affect them,--however it was,

they seemed to follow that one boat without molesting the others.

"Heart of wrought steel!" murmured Starbuck gazing over the side,

and following with his eyes the receding boat--"canst thou

yet ring boldly to that sight?--lowering thy keel among

ravening sharks, and followed by them, open-mouthed to the chase;

and this the critical third day?--For when three days

flow together in one continuous intense pursuit; be sure

the first is the morning, the second the noon, and the third

the evening and the end of that thing--be that end what it may.

Oh! my God! what is this that shoots through me, and leaves me

so deadly calm, yet expectant,--fixed at the top of a shudder!

Future things swim before me, as in empty outlines and skeletons;

all the past is somehow grown dim. Mary, girl; thou fadest

in pale glories behind me; boy! I seem to see but thy eyes

grown wondrous blue. Strangest problems of life seem clearing;

but clouds sweep between--Is my journey's end coming?

My legs feel faint; like his who has footed it all day.

Feel thy heart,--beats it yet? Stir thyself, Starbuck!--

stave it off--move, move! speak aloud!--Mast-head there!

See ye my boy's hand on the hill?--Crazed; aloft there!--

keep thy keenest eye upon the boats:--mark well the whale!--

Ho! again!--drive off that hawk! see! he pecks--he tears the vane"--

pointing to the red flag flying at the main-truck--"Ha, he soars

away with it!--Where's the old man now? see'st thou that sight,

oh Ahab!--shudder, shudder!"

The boats had not gone very far, when by a signal from the mast-heads--

a downward pointed arm, Ahab knew that the whale had sounded;

but intending to be near him at the next rising, he held on his way

a little sideways from the vessel; the becharmed crew maintaining

the profoundest silence, as the head-bent waves hammered and hammered

against the opposing bow.

"Drive, drive in your nails, oh ye waves! to their uttermost

heads drive them in! ye but strike a thing without a lid;

and no coffin and no hearse can be mine:--and hemp only can

kill me! Ha! ha!"

Suddenly the waters around them slowly swelled in broad circles;

then quickly upheaved, as if sideways sliding from a submerged

berg of ice, swiftly rising to the surface. A low rumbling sound

was heard; a subterraneous hum; and then all held their breaths;

as bedraggled with trailing ropes, and harpoons, and lances,

a vast form shot lengthwise, but obliquely from the sea.

Shrouded in a thin drooping veil of mist, it hovered for a moment

in the rainbowed air; and then fell swamping back into the deep.

Crushed thirty feet upwards, the waters flashed for an instant

like heaps of fountains, then brokenly sank in a shower of flakes,

leaving the circling surface creamed like new milk round the marble

trunk of the whale.

"Give way!" cried Ahab to the oarsmen, and the boats darted forward to

the attack; but maddened by yesterday's fresh irons that corroded in him,

Moby Dick seemed combinedly possessed by all the angels that fell

from heaven. The wide tiers of welded tendons overspreading his broad

white forehead, beneath the transparent skin, looked knitted together;

as head on, he came churning his tail among the boats; and once more

flailed them apart; spilling out the irons and lances from the two mates'

boats, and dashing in one side of the upper part of their bows,

but leaving Ahab's almost without a scar.

While Daggoo and Queequeg were stopping the strained planks;

and as the whale swimming out from them, turned, and showed

one entire flank as he shot by them again; at that moment

a quick cry went up. Lashed round and round to the fish's back;

pinioned in the turns upon turns in which, during the past night,

the whale had reeled the involutions of the lines around him,

the half torn body of the Parsee was seen; his sable raiment

frayed to shreds; his distended eyes turned full upon old Ahab.

The harpoon dropped from his hand.

"Befooled, befooled!"--drawing in a long lean breath--"Aye, Parsee! I see

thee again.--Aye, and thou goest before; and this, this then is the hearse

that thou didst promise. But I hold thee to the last letter of thy word.

Where is the second hearse? Away, mates, to the ship! those boats

are useless now; repair them if ye can in time, and return to me;

if not, Ahab is enough to die--Down, men! the first thing that but

offers to jump from this boat I stand in, that thing I harpoon.

Ye are not other men, but my arms and my legs; and so obey me.--

Where's the whale? gone down again?"

But he looked too nigh the boat; for as if bent upon escaping

with the corpse he bore, and as if the particular place of the last

encounter had been but a stage in his leeward voyage, Moby Dick

was now again steadily swimming forward; and had almost passed

the ship,--which thus far had been sailing in the contrary direction

to him, though for the present her headway had been stopped.

He seemed swimming with his utmost velocity, and now only intent

upon pursuing his own straight path in the sea.

"Oh! Ahab," cried Starbuck, "not too late is it, even now,

the third day, to desist. See! Moby Dick seeks thee not.

It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!"

Setting sail to the rising wind, the lonely boat was

swiftly impelled to leeward, by both oars and canvas.

And at last when Ahab was sliding by the vessel, so near

as plainly to distinguish Starbuck's face as he leaned

over the rail, he hailed him to turn the vessel about,

and follow him, not too swiftly, at a judicious interval.

Glancing upwards he saw Tashtego, Queequeg, and Daggoo,

eagerly mounting to the three mast-heads; while the oarsmen

were rocking in the two staved boats which had but just been

hoisted to the side, and were busily at work in repairing them.

One after the other, through the port-holes, as he sped,

he also caught flying glimpses of Stubb and Flask,

busying themselves on deck among bundles of new irons and lances.

As he saw all this; as he heard the hammers in the broken boats;

far other hammers seemed driving a nail into his heart.

But he rallied. And now marking that the vane or flag

was gone from the main-mast-head, he shouted to Tashtego,

who had just gained that perch, to descend again for another flag,

and a hammer and nails, and so nail it to the mast.

Whether fagged by the three days' running chase, and the

resistance to his swimming in the knotted hamper he bore;

or whether it was some latent deceitfulness and malice in him:

whichever was true, the White Whale's way now began to abate,

as it seemed, from the boat so rapidly nearing him once more;

though indeed the whale's last start had not been so long a one

as before. And still as Ahab glided over the waves the unpitying

sharks accompanied him; and so pertinaciously stuck to the boat;

and so continually bit at the plying oars, that the blades

became jagged and crunched, and left small splinters in the sea,

at almost every dip.

"Heed them not! those teeth but give new rowlocks to your oars.

Pull on! 'tis the better rest, the sharks' jaw than the yielding water."

"But at every bite, sir, the thin blades grow smaller and smaller!"

"They will last long enough! pull on!--But who can tell"--

he muttered--"whether these sharks swim to feast on the whale

or on Ahab?--But pull on! Aye, all alive, now--we near him.

The helm! take the helm! let me pass,"--and so saying two of the

oarsmen helped him forward to the bows of the still flying boat.

At length as the craft was cast to one side, and ran ranging

along with the White Whale's flank, he seemed strangely

oblivious of its advance--as the whale sometimes will--and Ahab

was fairly within the smoky mountain mist, which, thrown off

from the whale's spout, curled round his great Monadnock hump;

he was even thus close to him; when, with body arched back,

and both arms lengthwise high-lifted to the poise, he darted

his fierce iron, and his far fiercer curse into the hated whale.

As both steel and curse sank to the socket, as if sucked into

a morass, Moby Dick sideways writhed; spasmodically rolled

his nigh flank against the bow, and, without staving a hole

in it, so suddenly canted the boat over, that had it not been

for the elevated part of the gunwale to which he then clung,

Ahab would once more have been tossed into the sea.

As it was, three of the oarsmen--who foreknew not the precise

instant of the dart, and were therefore unprepared for its effects--

these were flung out; but so fell, that, in an instant two

of them clutched the gunwale again, and rising to its level on

a combing wave, hurled themselves bodily inboard again; the third

man helplessly dropping astern, but still afloat and swimming.

Almost simultaneously, with a mighty volition of ungraduated,

instantaneous swiftness, the White Whale darted through the

weltering sea. But when Ahab cried out to the steersman to take

new turns with the line, and hold it so; and commanded the crew

to turn round on their seats, and tow the boat up to the mark;

the moment the treacherous line felt that double strain and tug,

it snapped in the empty air!

"What breaks in me? Some sinew cracks!--'tis whole again; oars! oars!

Burst in upon him!"

Hearing the tremendous rush of the sea-crashing boat, the whale

wheeled round to present his blank forehead at bay; but in

that evolution, catching sight of the nearing black hull of the ship;

seemingly seeing in it the source of all his persecutions;

bethinking it--it may be--a larger and nobler foe; of a sudden,

he bore down upon its advancing prow, smiting his jaws amid fiery

showers of foam.

Ahab staggered; his hand smote his forehead. "I grow blind;

hands! stretch out before me that I may yet grope my way.

Is't night?"

"The whale! The ship!" cried the cringing oarsmen.

"Oars! oars! Slope downwards to thy depths, O sea that ere

it be for ever too late, Ahab may slide this last, last time

upon his mark! I see: the ship! the ship! Dash on, my men!

Will ye not save my ship?"

But as the oarsmen violently forced their boat through

the sledge-hammering seas, the before whale-smitten bow-ends

of two planks burst through, and in an instant almost,

the temporarily disabled boat lay nearly level with the waves;

its half-wading, splashing crew, trying hard to stop the gap

and bale out the pouring water.

Meantime, for that one beholding instant, Tashtego's mast-head

hammer remained suspended in his hand; and the red flag,

half-wrapping him as with a plaid, then streamed itself

straight out from him, as his own forward-flowing heart;

while Starbuck and Stubb, standing upon the bowsprit beneath,

caught sight of the down-coming monster just as soon as he.

"The whale, the whale! Up helm, up helm! Oh, all ye sweet powers

of air, now hug me close! Let not Starbuck die, if die he must,

in a woman's fainting fit. Up helm, I say--ye fools, the jaw! the jaw!

Is this the end of all my bursting prayers? all my life-long fidelities?

Oh, Ahab, Ahab, lo, thy work. Steady! helmsman, steady. Nay, nay!

Up helm again! He turns to meet us! Oh, his unappeasable brow

drives on towards one, whose duty tells him he cannot depart.

My God, stand by me now!"

"Stand not by me, but stand under me, whoever you are that will

now help Stubb; for Stubb, too, sticks here. I grin at thee,

thou grinning whale! Who ever helped Stubb, or kept Stubb awake,

but Stubb's own unwinking eye? And now poor Stubb goes to bed upon

a mattrass that is all too soft; would it were stuffed with brushwood!

I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Look ye, sun, moon, and stars!

I call ye assassins of as good a fellow as ever spouted up his ghost.

For all that, I would yet ring glasses with ye, would ye but hand

the cup! Oh, oh! oh, oh! thou grinning whale, but there'll be

plenty of gulping soon! Why fly ye not, O Ahab! For me, off shoes

and jacket to it; let Stubb die in his drawers! A most mouldy

and over salted death, though;--cherries! cherries! cherries!

Oh, Flask, for one red cherry ere we die!"

"Cherries? I only wish that we were where they grow.

Oh, Stubb, I hope my poor mother's drawn my part-pay ere this;

if not, few coppers will now come to her, for the voyage is up."

From the ship's bows, nearly all the seamen now hung inactive;

hammers, bits of plank, lances, and harpoons, mechanically retained

in their hands, just as they had darted from their various employments;

all their enchanted eyes intent upon the whale, which from side

to side strangely vibrating his predestinating head, sent a broad

band of overspreading semicircular foam before him as he rushed.

Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect,

and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his

forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reeled.

Some fell flat upon their faces. Like dislodged trucks,

the heads of the harpooneers aloft shook on their bull-like necks.

Through the breach, they heard the waters pour, as mountain torrents

down a flume.

"The ship! The hearse!--the second hearse!" cried Ahab from the boat;

"its wood could only be American!"

Diving beneath the settling ship, the whale ran quivering along its keel;

but turning under water, swiftly shot to the surface again, far off

the other bow, but within a few yards of Ahab's boat, where, for a time,

he lay quiescent.

"I turn my body from the sun. What ho, Tashtego! Let me

hear thy hammer. Oh! ye three unsurrendered spires of mine;

thou uncracked keel; and only god-bullied hull; thou firm deck,

and haughty helm, and Pole-pointed prow,--death--glorious ship! must

ye then perish, and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride

of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life!

Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief.

Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows

of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death!

Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale;

to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee;

for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins

and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine,

let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied

to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!"

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward;

with igniting velocity the line ran through the grooves;--ran foul.

Ahab stooped to clear it; he did clear it; but the flying turn caught him

round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim,

he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone.

Next instant, the heavy eye-splice in the rope's final end flew out

of the stark-empty tub, knocked down an oarsman, and smiting the sea,

disappeared in its depths.

For an instant, the tranced boat's crew stood still; then turned.

"The ship? Great God, where is the ship?" Soon they through dim,

bewildering mediums saw her sidelong fading phantom, as in the gaseous

Fata Morgana; only the uppermost masts out of water; while fixed

by infatuation, or fidelity, or fate, to their once lofty perches,

the pagan harpooneers still maintained their sinking look-outs on

the sea. And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself,

and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lancepole,

and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex,

carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight.

But as the last whelmings intermixingly poured themselves over

the sunken head of the Indian at the mainmast, leaving a few inches

of the erect spar yet visible, together with long streaming yards

of the flag, which calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings,

over the destroying billows they almost touched;--at that instant, a red

arm and a hammer hovered backwardly uplifted in the open air, in the act

of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar.

A sky-hawk that tauntingly had followed the main-truck downwards

from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag,

and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept

its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood;

and simultaneously feeling that etherial thrill, the submerged

savage beneath, in his death-gasp, kept his hammer frozen there;

and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial

beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag

of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink

to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her,

and helmeted herself with it.

Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf;

a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed,

and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five

thousand years ago.

Epilogue

"AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE"

Job.

The drama's done. Why then here does any one step forth?--

Because one did survive the wreck.

It so chanced, that after the Parsee's disappearance, I was

he whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman,

when that bowsman assumed the vacant post; the same, who, when on

the last day the three men were tossed from out of the rocking boat,

was dropped astern. So, floating on the margin of the ensuing scene,

and in full sight of it, when the halfspent suction of the sunk ship

reached me, I was then, but slowly, drawn towards the closing vortex.

When I reached it, it had subsided to a creamy pool.

Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like

black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle,

like another Ixion I did revolve. Till, gaining that vital centre,

the black bubble upward burst; and now, liberated by reason of its

cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force,

the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over,

and floated by my side. Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost

one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirgelike main.

The unharming sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on

their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks.

On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last.

It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search

after her missing children, only found another orphan.

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.

PEKEE-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 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!

"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 OCTHER'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 frequendy 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 color, 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.