

Atlantic, which is traversed by it for a distance of two thousand miles, as some large halls in winter are by hot air tubes. Its mean breadth being about two hundred leagues, it comprises an area larger than that of the whole Mediterranean, and may be deemed a sort of Mississippi of hot water flowing through the ocean; off the coast of Florida, running at the rate of one mile and a half an hour.

XXI. A WHALEMAN AND A MAN-OF-WAR'S-MAN

The sight of the whales mentioned in the preceding chapter was the bringing out of Larry, one of our crew, who hitherto had been quite silent and reserved, as if from some conscious inferiority, though he had shipped as an ordinary seaman, and, for aught I could see, performed his duty very well.

When the men fell into a dispute concerning what kind of whales they were which we saw, Larry stood by attentively, and after garnering in their ignorance, all at once broke out, and astonished every body by his intimate acquaintance with the monsters.

"They ar'n't sperm whales," said Larry, "their spouts ar'n't bushy enough; they ar'n't Sulphur-bottoms, or they wouldn't stay up so long;

they ar'n't Hump-backs, for they ar'n't got any humps; they ar'n't Fin-backs, for you won't catch a Finback so near a ship; they ar'n't Greenland whales, for we ar'n't off the coast of Greenland; and they ar'n't right whales, for it wouldn't be right to say so. I tell ye, men, them's Crinkum-crankum whales."

"And what are them?" said a sailor.

"Why, them is whales that can't be cotched."

Now, as it turned out that this Larry had been bred to the sea in a whaler, and had sailed out of Nantucket many times; no one but Jackson ventured to dispute his opinion; and even Jackson did not press him very hard. And ever after, Larry's judgment was relied upon concerning all strange fish that happened to float by us during the voyage; for whalemen are far more familiar with the wonders of the deep than any other class of seaman.

This was Larry's first voyage in the merchant service, and that was the reason why, hitherto, he had been so reserved; since he well knew that merchant seamen generally affect a certain superiority to "blubber-boilers," as they contemptuously style those who hunt the leviathan. But Larry turned out to be such an inoffensive fellow, and so well understood his business aboard ship, and was so ready to jump to an order, that he was exempted from the taunts which he might otherwise have encountered.

He was a somewhat singular man, who wore his hat slanting forward over the bridge of his nose, with his eyes cast down, and seemed always examining your boots, when speaking to you. I loved to hear him talk about the wild places in the Indian Ocean, and on the coast of Madagascar, where he had frequently touched during his whaling voyages. And this familiarity with the life of nature led by the people in that remote part of the world, had furnished Larry with a sentimental distaste for civilized society. When opportunity offered, he never omitted extolling the delights of the free and easy Indian Ocean.

"Why," said Larry, talking through his nose, as usual, "in Madagasky there, they don't wear any togs at all, nothing but a bowline round the midships; they don't have no dinners, but keeps a dinin' all day off fat pigs and dogs; they don't go to bed any where, but keeps a noddin' all the time; and they gets drunk, too, from some first rate arrack they make from cocoa-nuts; and smokes plenty of 'baccy, too, I tell ye. Fine country, that! Blast Ameriky, I say!"

To tell the truth, this Larry dealt in some illiberal insinuations against civilization.

"And what's the use of bein' snivelized!" said he to me one night during our watch on deck; "snivelized chaps only learns the way to take on 'bout life, and snivel. You don't see any Methodist chaps feelin' dreadful about their souls; you don't see any darned beggars and pesky

constables in Madagasky, I tell ye; and none o' them kings there gets their big toes pinched by the gout. Blast Ameriky, I say."

Indeed, this Larry was rather cutting in his innuendoes.

"Are you now, Buttons, any better off for bein' snivelized?" coming close up to me and eying the wreck of my gaff-topsail-boots very steadfastly. "No; you ar'n't a bit--but you're a good deal worse for it, Buttons. I tell ye, ye wouldn't have been to sea here, leadin' this dog's life, if you hadn't been snivelized--that's the cause why, now. Snivelization has been the ruin on ye; and it's spiled me complete; I might have been a great man in Madagasky; it's too darned bad! Blast Ameriky, I say." And in bitter grief at the social blight upon his whole past, present, and future, Larry turned away, pulling his hat still lower down over the bridge of his nose.

In strong contrast to Larry, was a young man-of-war's man we had, who went by the name of "Gun-Deck," from his always talking of sailor life in the navy. He was a little fellow with a small face and a prodigious mop of brown hair; who always dressed in man-of-war style, with a wide, braided collar to his frock, and Turkish trowsers. But he particularly prided himself upon his feet, which were quite small; and when we washed down decks of a morning, never mind how chilly it might be, he always took off his boots, and went paddling about like a duck, turning out his pretty toes to show his charming feet.

He had served in the armed steamers during the Seminole War in Florida, and had a good deal to say about sailing up the rivers there, through the everglades, and popping off Indians on the banks. I remember his telling a story about a party being discovered at quite a distance from them; but one of the savages was made very conspicuous by a pewter plate, which he wore round his neck, and which glittered in the sun. This plate proved his death; for, according to Gun-Deck, he himself shot it through the middle, and the ball entered the wearer's heart. It was a rat-killing war, he said.

Gun-Deck had touched at Cadiz: had been to Gibraltar; and ashore at Marseilles. He had sunned himself in the Bay of Naples: eaten figs and oranges in Messina; and cheerfully lost one of his hearts at Malta, among the ladies there. And about all these things, he talked like a romantic man-of-war's man, who had seen the civilized world, and loved it; found it good, and a comfortable place to live in. So he and Larry never could agree in their respective views of civilization, and of savagery, of the Mediterranean and Madagasky.

XXII. THE HIGHLANDER PASSES A WRECK

We were still on the Banks, when a terrific storm came down upon us, the