

CHAPTER 38. Dusk.

BY THE MAINMAST; STARBUCK LEANING AGAINST IT.

My soul is more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman!
Insufferable sting, that sanity should ground arms on such a field! But
he drilled deep down, and blasted all my reason out of me! I think I see
his impious end; but feel that I must help him to it. Will I, nill I,
the ineffable thing has tied me to him; tows me with a cable I have no
knife to cut. Horrible old man! Who's over him, he cries;--aye, he would
be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below! Oh! I
plainly see my miserable office,--to obey, rebelling; and worse yet,
to hate with touch of pity! For in his eyes I read some lurid woe would
shrivel me up, had I it. Yet is there hope. Time and tide flow wide.
The hated whale has the round watery world to swim in, as the small
gold-fish has its glassy globe. His heaven-insulting purpose, God may
wedge aside. I would up heart, were it not like lead. But my whole
clock's run down; my heart the all-controlling weight, I have no key to
lift again.

[A BURST OF REVELRY FROM THE FORECASTLE.]

Oh, God! to sail with such a heathen crew that have small touch of human mothers in them! Whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea. The white whale is their demigorgon. Hark! the infernal orgies! that revelry is forward! mark the unfaltering silence aft! Methinks it pictures life. Foremost through the sparkling sea shoots on the gay, embattled, bantering bow, but only to drag dark Ahab after it, where he broods within his sternward cabin, builded over the dead water of the wake, and further on, hunted by its wolfish gurglings. The long howl thrills me through! Peace! ye revellers, and set the watch! Oh, life! 'tis in an hour like this, with soul beat down and held to knowledge,--as wild, untutored things are forced to feed--Oh, life! 'tis now that I do feel the latent horror in thee! but 'tis not me! that horror's out of me! and with the soft feeling of the human in me, yet will I try to fight ye, ye grim, phantom futures! Stand by me, hold me, bind me, O ye blessed influences!