OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND

A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Ancient Buildings, Household Furnishings, Domestic Arts, Manners and Customs, and Minor Antiquities of the New England People

BULLETIN OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES

Volume XLVIII, No. 2 *October-December*, 1957 Serial No. 170

The Infant Mariner

Reminiscences written about 1910 by Anna T. (Stott) King, 1843-1931, the Captain's daughter, being an account of a whaling voyage out of Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

FAIRHAVEN, which had between three and four thousand inhabitants, was essentially a "whaling" town, all the industries being connected with that business. There were shipbuilding yards with ships always on the "ways," most of the men had been or were sailors, while the crop of captains was large. Nearly all the ships were built for the New Bedford trade, only a few being owned in Fairhaven. . . . At the cooper's shops the barrels for the oil were made, they were then knocked apart, bundled up into "shooks," these shooks being remade into barrels on board ship as required. The shipyards were always busy; the interest of the inhabitants was in ships, in captains and men, in their voyages, where they were, how much oil they were likely to either send home or bring back when they returned after the long four years' absence. Everyone owned shares in some whaler or other, much money was made in what today would seem a small way, but Fairhaven was a thriving, industrious, busy little place. . . .

New Bedford, which is just "over the river" from Fairhaven, was at that time the headquarters for the enormous whaling fleet that sailed over the world in search of oil. Edward Mott Robinson, father of Mrs. Hetty Green, was one of the largest ship owners, but a good man to "sail for" my father always said. Even then New Bedford was a city of about 12,000 inhabitants; it was connected with Fairhaven by a crooked wooden bridge across the Acushnet River, which was about half a mile wide for the most part. Unlike Fairhaven, New Bedford is hilly, the hills rising towards the west, the front of the city to the east with its many wharfs on the river. This situation of the city is unfortunate in some ways, the hill or higher land keeping off the summer breezes, so that New Bedford is much hotter than its little neighbor. As in Fairhaven, the streets for the most part run straight north and south, east

and west, Purchase Street, the principal retail business street, extending to the north until it goes around the "Head of the river," although I believe the name of it has been changed to some kind of avenue in recent years. The ship chandlers and other merchants connected with the whaling and shipping industries were on Front and Water streets, with a sprinkling of banks, oil warehouses and other allied industries in every direction.

While the "trades" of Fairhaven were mainly for the needs of "whalers," those of New Bedford, where everyone owned a ship or a share in one, were on a larger scale. If Fairhaven had a cooper's shop, New Bedford had many, the modest ropewalk of Fairhaven became cordage factories over the river. There were many ship chandlers for the fitting out of the ships which were built in the New Bedford shipyards. There was always a ship on the "ways," the frequent launchings being events to which everyone flocked, owners, parents, friends, children, relations, all having a personal interest in the new vessels. There is a fascination in watching a ship glide into the water after the blocks that hold her back are knocked out of the way; she seems to rush eagerly down after the first surprise of being free is over; then comes the plunge and the ship is afloat, a mere shell of a ship without masts, an empty hull floating aimlessly about until towed to a wharf for further building. It used to be a great event in a boy's life if he were allowed to be on board when the ship was launched; crowds of them would run from side to side of the vessel to make her roll violently.

These ships were built to hold the largest possible number of oil barrels, not for speed or beauty; they were very square both fore and aft, broad in the bows which gave a roomy forecastle, with a heavy overhanging stern also square but a little broader than the forward end. The shape of these vessels gave rise to the legend that they were built by the mile and cut off in lengths to suit. But they were splendidly built, strong and staunch in spite of their small tonnage; so were the boats they carried, and the term "whaleboat" to this day stands for something safe, strong and seaworthy. . . .

My father (who had recently returned from a voyage to San Francisco) . . . had many offers of ships, for he was one of the captains much sought after by shipowners. However, he accepted none of them until Edmund Allen offered to build a ship for him if he would take command and go on a whaling voyage. . . . At last my father consented and the ship was ordered built, my father to superintend the building, which was done in Mattapoisett, for my feeling about it is that it was towed around to Fairhaven for finishing.

Previous to this time whaling ships had been built with no regard to either looks or speed, but my father apparently thought it possible to have a whaler that could sail a bit and also be a handsome vessel to look at. So this ship, or rather bark, was "clipper" built with sharp bows and a rounded stern, her "lines" making her an object of comment and attention wherever she was seen. It was just at this time that the economy of sailing a bark as compared with a full-rigged ship began to be talked about, so it was decided that the *Northern Light,* for so the vessel was named, should be a bark of a little over 500 tons, 513 to be quite exact, if my memory serves. . . .

The inside of the ship was divided off into holds but of these I have no impres-

sions as I was never down in the hold of the *Northern Light*, although I have looked down the main hatchway into the "blubber" room when it was in use. the boats at the same time, while the cook, carpenter, cooper, blacksmith all live in the forecastle. The steward had a berth aft somewhere and perhaps the

WALNUT STREET WHARF WITH WHALESHIPS, NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
From an early stereograph.

Above the deck I remember everything about the ship. The forecastle was below the main deck in the bows forward of the foremast. This forecastle was reached by a steep flight of ladder-like stairs; there were berths in tiers arranged in rows on each side of the forecastle, with room for sea chests and dunnage. In all there must have been thirty or more "bunks," for a whaler carries enough men to man all boat steerers, if so it must have been called the steerage. In the center of the forecastle a lantern is swung but it must have been a dark place at best. . . .

I am not sure whether the foremast came up through the forecastle but it probably did which only added to the crowded condition. The mainmast was in about the center of the ship, the largest mast of all. . . . Just forward of the main-

mast were the "try works," two huge iron pots set in bricks, the fire made underneath when they were in use. When not in use the "try pots" were kept covered. The first time the try pots were used, when the covers came off, there were round balls like marbles in them from the dirt which with the dampness of the sea and the rolling of the ship had become round and hard. They were presented to me, much to my delight. Just forward of the mainmast with its back against the try works, was the carpenter's bench; on the left hand or port side was the cook's galley close to the bulwarks. This faced forward as did the hatchway to enter the forecastle; on the other side, to make a sort of balance, was the water butt.

The capstan which was either just forward or just aft of the main hatch, was a very pretentious affair of handsome wood and brass, the wood highly varnished, the brass always bright and shining, while the handspikes used in it were of a superior quality to those forward for the windlass and were kept alongside the bulwarks, just under the top rail. Excepting for the capstan the space between the carpenter's bench and the mizzenmast was quite clear. The entrance to the steerage was somewhere near the cook's galley.

Just aft of the mizzenmast came the cabin which was partly on deck, the roof forming another deck, or perhaps the quarter-deck made the roof would be more correct, if they call anything a roof on board a ship. The door to enter the cabin was on the right, a flight of six or more stairs, the "companionway," leading down into a hall that ran across the ship. This, of course, was not called a hall, but a "passage way," and there was a door exactly in the middle that led into our cabin or sitting room, which was a large square room beautifully lighted from a skylight on the quarter-deck. At the after end of the cabin were two "lockers" where the chronometers were kept, also the sextants, quadrants, maps and all other implements connected with the navigation of a ship. These lockers were not very spacious, as the round stern took away much space from that end of the ship. Under the lockers a sofa was built in, with a red velvet cushion and plenty of sofa pillows; it was most comfortable to sit or lie on. At the head of the sofa was a round table fastened securely to the floor, and there was another in the middle of the cabin with a red cloth on it, rather larger than the one at the sofa. The chairs, of which there were quite a number, were not fastened down so could be moved about wherever we wished to sit.

Our stateroom opened out of the cabin on the right hand or starboard side which is the captain's side of the ship. It was a large room longer than it was wide, with a porthole up at one end and a window at the forward end looking out on the deck. In one corner was the washing stand and there was a large double bedstead built in with a berth for me further aft. I had to go up four or five steps to get to the level of my bunk, the rounding end of the ship making it narrower at the head than the foot, but it was like having a room to myself being upstairs. There was a locker at the head for my books, dolls and toys.

The first mate's stateroom was on the other side of the ship and was entered from the passageway. Usually the mate's room is opposite the captain's, opening out from the cabin, but as the ship was built for my father and he was to take my mother and me with him, the cabin

plans were made to give us as much privacy as possible. The second mate probably occupied part of the mate's room, but I am not sure of that.

From this same passageway we went down a few steps to the dining room, and it was in that part of the ship that the other officers had their staterooms. The steward's pantry was down here forward of the dining room, the food being brought down the steerageway probably. . . .

The dining table was built around the mizzenmast which came up through the table. It was highly polished and varnished with two or three shelves running around it just above the table, for glasses. Seats with backs ran along each side while armchairs at either end were for the captain and first officer, all seats and chairs being securely fastened down. It was comfortable and, as whaling ships went, luxurious.

Our food was salt beef, salt pork, onions and potatoes. There was a regular sea dish of which I was fond, called "lobscouse," which varied the monotony. This would probably be called stew on land for it was composed of the salt beef cooked up with the potatoes and onions. I have an idea that the bill of fare varied little, first salt beef with the vegetables, next day salt pork with the same kind of vegetables, then lobscouse day, after which the salt beef again appeared. Thursday and Sunday were "duff" days, when we had a stiff flour and water pudding boiled in a bag. Ours had raisins in it, so was called "plum duff." It was said that on some ships the raisins were all put in one end of the duff, so when the steward passed it he was careful to hold the raisin end towards the captain who was served first; then the officers would try to turn the dish so they could get some of the plums, but the steward held on so tight that they seldom accomplished their purpose. Our duff had raisins, plenty of them all the way through so no one had to go without. The sailors had about the same diet that we did, just the same kind of beef and pork, but their duff did not have any raisins in it, though they were allowed molasses to eat with it.

All the woodwork in our sitting room was painted white, with what was then a new kind of paint that could be kept clean by wiping it with a damp cloth, like the enamel paint of today, and I think it was then called enamel. The ornamental part at the top of the panels near the cabin ceiling was picked out in gold.

From the deck, each side of the mizzenmast, there were steep stairs like ladders with ropes at the side instead of banisters. These stairs led to the quarterdeck. The skylight that lighted the cabin came well above this deck and was of glass, sides, top and ends. Inside the skylight was a telltale compass that my father could see when down in the cabin, so he knew whether the man at the wheel was keeping the course and what direction he was steering. The wheelhouse was aft, the house being open only at the front so the man was well protected, the wheel coming just inside. After we had been at sea for a short time a large covered box or bin for potatoes was built on this deck, a particularly pleasing event for me as I was allowed to help paint it, and got myself, the deck and the potato bin in a great mess.

* * * *

While the *Northern Light* was at the wharf being finished inside and out, the agents and my father were not idle, for

they were looking out for officers and men, getting provisions and all the stores necessary. I know my father was very particular about the salt beef, salt pork and pilot bread. . . . The beef and pork, packed in barrels, were stowed away in the hold where they could be easily "broken out." Everything not in actual use is stowed in the hold and has to be packed so that nothing will "fetch loose" no matter how hard the ship rolls. . . .

Potatoes and onions are the only vegetables that will keep on a long voyage, and there must be a large stock of them, but they did not go on board until just before the ship left the wharf. Water also was taken in abundance and must have been one of the last things stowed. This water is only used for cooking and drinking, all the water for any other purpose is drawn from the ocean. A bucket with rope attached is thrown overboard, filled, then drawn up to the deck, a good part of it spilling on the way, and a large tub is kept full.

As soon as the ship was loaded and ready for sea, our heavy luggage was sent on board and the vessel was towed out into the bay where she anchored. . . . I know she was a pretty sight then for I saw her at anchor later in Honolulu; her lines were graceful, the pointed bow and rounded stern with masts well raked aft showed what a good sailer she afterwards proved herself to be. She was painted black on the outside with a white "bilge streak." Almost all whalers were painted with portholes to imitate ships of war.

I cannot remember going off to the ship, but we must have done so some time in the morning in the boat with my father, he going on shore again to get the chronometers which were regulated in New Bedford. The captain and the chronometers go off together and when they are on board the ship is at last ready to sail. The agents went down the harbor with us to give us a good send-off, returning with the pilot and then we were off. It was early in November when we sailed, about a month after I was nine years old.

We started with a fair wind and at the end of three days were off Cape Hatteras in a gale of wind. I recall nothing of these three days, excepting that I was very seasick and had to stay in my bunk. My mother was also seasick and we were two very unhappy mortals.

By the end of the third day the gale was getting worse and worse every moment, until in that well-known rough weather zone we were getting into trouble and danger. My father was anxious for he was on deck day and night. The ship and rigging were so new there had been no opportunity for things to settle down "taut and shipshape." In the height of the storm there came a great crash and we heard the men running on the deck over our heads, all sorts of noises going on that we did not understand and my mother felt sure something more than usual was taking place. As soon as the wreckage was cleared away, my father came down to reassure her and to tell us that the mizzen topmast had been carried away. The ship must have been hove to, certainly while the wreckage was being cleared away, even if not previously. When my father came down to the stateroom he had a cigar in the corner of his mouth and while telling what had happened, absent mindedly picked up another which he started to light. This seemed to me a great joke, but when I was older I realized the danger we had been in. I know my father said it was the newness of the rigging that caused the disaster.

My seasickness ended after the third

day, so that on the fourth day out it may be said that at last I was on my way to Honolulu by the way of Cape Horn, for my mother and I were to be left there while my father went either to the Okhotsk Sea or the Arctic Ocean as all the rest of the northern seas were called. These were then the great whaling grounds for the "right" whale.

The first thing that I did after this was to investigate the gifts that had been sent me, but that my mother did not let me see before we sailed. My little dog Frolic, which the Huttlestons gave me, was on the ship when we went on board and had been in my bunk more or less of the time doing her best to comfort me, but nothing mattered during those three days of seasickness so I really had to make her acquaintance after I got up. She was nothing but a little yellow dog, of no breed ever heard of, had a diamond-shaped white patch on the back of her neck and to my eyes was perfectly beautiful. She was my constant companion; we ran races on the deck and she was not happy if I were lying down unless she could lie by my side. . . .

All my presents were in the locker at the head of my berth and here I found such treasures as appeal to the heart of a child, books, toys, a little newspaper printed for children and a fine rag doll with painted face and hair. . . . My own doll from Christmas with her pink dress and all her clothes washed clean for the voyage, was also with me and many happy hours I passed playing with them, not only on the ship but after we were in Honolulu. I made clothes for them, in that way learning a little how to sew. They had nighties and were regularly undressed and put to bed. . . . I also had a transparent slate, a square wooden frame holding a piece of glass behind which were half a dozen or more crude black and white pictures held in place by a wooden back. The pictures could be traced on the glass. . . . My mother taught me, not very seriously, spelling, reading, writing and gave me little sums to do on my slate—just enough to keep me from falling too far back in my lessons.

* * * *

As soon as I was allowed to go up on deck, which was not until the new topmast was put up, I began to be interested in everything about the ship. All sailing ships carry spare spars so that in case of such an accident as we had, the lost mast can be replaced, but it is a bit of a job getting it fitted and held in place properly.

It only took me a short time to learn the names of the masts and sails on the ship. I say ship for that is the general term, but the *Northern Light* was a bark, that is she had three masts just like a ship, but only two of them were square rigged. The fore- and mainmasts are the square-rigged ones and the sails take the names from the masts, the foresail, the fore-topsail and fore-topgallant sail, with the mainsail, etc. on the mainmast. But on the mizzenmast the spanker, which is also on a ship, is the lowest sail, then above that comes a gaff-topsail, shaped like a jib, both of these being fore-and-aft sails. Besides these sails there a number of jibs, one of them called the "flying" jib, but the studding sails did not come until we were in the Pacific.

The ropes took longer, there were so many of them. All the "greenhorns" had to be taught the names of all the ropes and it was a job. The ropes came down to the deck and were fastened to belaying pins at the bulwarks and also to the iron

bands around the masts. An old sailor would take the greenhorn in tow; he would lay his hand on a rope, tell its name, then go on to the next one. As many of these ropes were in the after part of the ship I could hear what was said, and "knew the ropes" long before the slow-witted sailor did. . . .

Whenever the men were hauling a big rope and singing some "chanty" I was sure to be on deck where I could hear them. The words and tunes I have never forgotten of the one they frequently sung:

Haul the bowline, the great star bowline
Haul the bowline, the bowline haul.

They varied the first line by ending it "for Katie," or Nellie, or Susie or some other favorite, "is my darlin." All I remember of another chanty is "For a soldier's pay was a dollar a day, a hundred years ago." Then came a long drawn out "Oh-h-h."

The sails for the *Northern Light* were made in Fairhaven at a sail loft, but some had to be made on the ship, perhaps to replace those lost during the gale. Captains are as particular about the set of the sails as a woman is about her dress, and there were many and anxious consultations between my father and the sailmaker about the pattern. As soon as this was decided upon, it was chalked out on the deck and again carefully considered before a knife was put in the canvas. All these preparations interested me so much that I was probably very much in the way, for I always wanted to "help." After the canvas was spread out on the pattern I remember that I sat right down in the middle of it and watched the sailmaker and three or four sailors "sew." The sail needle is three cornered at the point and about half way up when it becomes round with an eye, a big eye to hold the heavy twine with which the canvas is sewed. The "palm needle" which is really the thimble is a piece of leather held in place by a buckle. On the inside of the hand, near the thumb, is a piece of steel like a thimble top. The needle is pushed through the canvas by the palm of the hand, the head of the needle of course on the thimble. They used a very long thread, well waxed, so as to have as few joinings as possible. Needless to say I had to have a piece of canvas and a needle, also a palm needle, but I did not get along very well with that. The canvas is lapped over to the blue line that runs down the sides about an inch from the selvage and when one side is sewed down, the sail is turned over and the other side done in the same way. Ropes are sewed in the top and bottom to make the sail strong, with dead eyes at each lower corner to haul the sail taut. There are also reef points fastened in across the sail, two or more rows of them, so making a sail is a very particular piece of work. The *Northern Light* only carried topgallant sails, but the ship we returned in had royals and there are such things as "sky scrapers."

When I saw the sailors running up the shrouds, the ratlines making them like a ladder, it looked so easy that I felt ambitious to try it. So one day when it was not rough, I started to climb the bulwarks, in fact got as far as that, but just as I was about to swing myself out over the side of the ship to get on the ladder-like ropes, one of the sailors, or one of the mates . . . grabbed me and set me down on the deck with a good shake, for he was frightened. My father was told of this escapade, for he gave me a great scolding and drew such a dreadful picture of my narrow escape from drowning, that my mother and I were in tears.

After that I had to turn my energies in other directions, but always regretted I could not go up to the top, even if I had to crawl through the "booby hole."

Each morning the decks were washed down, very early. First they were holystoned—holystones are large pieces of sandstone. The men get down on their hands and knees, dip the stone in water and scrub the deck violently, for it must be kept clean and white. After the holystoning was finished, the sailors used "squilgees" which have a long wooden handle at one end of which is a narrow piece of wood, with a thick piece of leather on the lower side. The men push the squilgees ahead of them, which "squeegees" the water off the deck down to the scuppers, through which it runs into the sea. Scuppers are holes in the side of the ship level with the deck, put there for the purpose of carrying off water. After the squilgees had dried the deck as much as possible the men took "swabs" for the finishing up process. Swabs are bundles of spun yarn tied together at one end. With a rhythmical motion the men throw the swabs from side to side until the deck is quite free from water. After all, swabs are not very tidy for pieces of the loose ends fly off. Later in the day the deck is swept, in fact it is swept several times a day. We used to wonder where the dust and dirt came from with only the ocean around us, for there seemed to be just as much necessity for sweeping, dusting and cleaning as on shore. . . .

* * * *

We must have had pleasant weather for some time after the Cape Hatteras storm, with favoring winds, and we settled down to the regular life on shipboard. I played with my dolls in the cabin, read my books, did some lessons and amused myself generally. Whenever there was anything on deck at all out of the usual I was sure to be there to see it. Every trifling circumstance was of interest. If a school of porpoises were in sight, I watched them until they disappeared, which they do very suddenly: one moment their black backs are above the water, the next they are gone and do not reappear. When we were near enough to them, one or two men would go over the bows with harpoons and try to spear one, as sailors find them eatable. . . .

Then there were the large sea birds, the albatross with its immense wings spread, following in the wake of the ship watching for bits of food. They were caught from the stern of the vessel. Pieces of pork were tied on the end of a strong line and thrown overboard, the albatross would swoop down on it as soon as it touched the water, swallow the pork and then could be drawn on board. The poor things were very seasick as soon as they were on deck. The long bone of the wing if often made into knitting needles; I had a pair that one of the sailors made for me on the *Northern Light*. . . .

Another bird was the "booby," a stupid bird that swallowed the bits of red flannel on the end of the line as eagerly as if they had been food. The sailors would sometimes tie half a dozen short lines on the end of the long one, baiting each piece with red flannel. All the boobies would rush for these pieces which they swallowed. Then would begin a sort of tug of war, each bird trying to get away with its bit. . . .

One of my great amusements was to sit up on one end of the carpenter's bench and watch him work. I would sit there for an hour or more perfectly quiet. There was a vise at one end of the bench, and he always seemed to have a board in

it which he was planing. . . . He was called Chips. Of course I felt I was helping when the potato bin was being built for I watched the sawing and planing of the boards, which were also tongued and grooved, then passed nails while it was being put together, and as previously said handled a paint brush on the outside. . . .

* * * *

My father had decided that when we were around the Horn and in the Pacific Ocean he would cruise for whales off Talcahuano and Valparaiso, on the coast of Chile. It is the "sperm" whales that are caught in the Pacific Ocean, and "right" whales in the Arctic. The sperm oil is the most valuable. Sperm whales have teeth while the right whale's mouth is supplied with rows of fringed bones from which commercial whalebone is made. When a ship reports her catch, the quantity of sperm oil is mentioned, but if it is only oil from the right whale it is just called oil, so many barrels of oil, so many pounds of bone.

When on the whaling grounds a sharp lookout is kept by the man in the top, who has a spyglass to aid him. Of course there is always a lookout kept during the voyage, the lookout man being in the top for a certain number of hours, but when the whaling ground is reached he is constantly on the alert. All the time that we were cruising, that is keeping in about the same latitude off the coast, everyone was listening for the magic words "there she blows."

For days before this the sailors were kept busy making preparations for the great event: the whale boats were overhauled and made ready as far as possible; a blacksmith's forge was set up where any necessary repairs of irons could be done, the boat steerers sharpened their harpoons and lances to the finest possible edge, the working parts were well oiled, the tubs of coiled ropes looked over, oars brought up, every smallest detail looked to and arranged. It was now that the "shooks" were brought on deck and made up in barrels. This was a process I was never tired of watching. The head of the barrel was laid on the deck, the shooks one by one placed in position, the barrel head being slipped into the grooves in the shooks; then a hoop was slipped over to hold them in place, loosely at first, but when the other head of the barrel was put in, other hoops were slipped on and driven down to draw the shooks together and make the barrel water or oil tight. The cooper had an "iron" with a grooved edge that fitted on the hoop; he walked around the barrel holding this "iron" on the hoop and driving it down with a hammer or perhaps a wooden mallet.

One day they induced one of the "greenies" to get inside the barrel to hold up the head and then fastened the hoops on with the man inside, a trick always played if a victim can be found. The barrels had to be made ready in anticipation of catching a whale, for there would be no time then.

At last one morning came the welcome sound "there she blows," and at once the whole ship was alive with interest. The officer of the deck called "Where away." "Two points on the weather bow," answered the lookout. As I knew the points of the compass I knew what two points on the weather bow meant and looked in that direction. I could see the spouting of the whale as it came to the surface to breathe. At once all hands were called on deck, and the ship's head turned in the direction of the spouting whale, for

it is necessary to save the men as much as possible the fatigue of rowing, although the ship must not get too near the whale, for when angry it is rather a dangerous creature to encounter at close quarters.

The day was not very pleasant, the sea just a little rough, but soon our three boats were lowered, the men being in their places. As soon as the boat touches the water the oars are out and the "falls" at the ends of the boat loosened; then they are off and away. Three of our boats from the portside went this time; the captain's boat on the starboard side was not lowered, but was held in readiness to go to their assistance if needed.

It took some time for the boats to get near the whale for they keep close together, but as soon as they were within striking distance the boat steerer, who was standing in the bow of the boat, gave the orders to the men. Slowly forward they went, then at the critical moment the harpoon was thrown at the whale, while the mate called out "stern all." The harpoon is fastened to the coil of rope in the tub and two turns of this rope are taken around the loggerhead, a stout post of wood placed in the bow of the boat for this purpose. As soon as the whale is struck, water is poured on the rope and loggerhead or the friction would set them on fire. As soon as the whale feels the harpoon, it immediately dives dragging the rope and the boat along, towing the boat and men as if they were a bit of shaving on the water. But as the whale can only stay under the water a certain length of time and has to come to the surface to breathe, close watch is kept on the line and the moment it begins to slacken as the whale comes up, it is hauled in. The whale is, in a way, "played" almost like a trout, its struggles becoming gradually weaker and weaker. All the time as the whale rises, the boat steerer tries to throw another harpoon, until at the last when the boat can get near enough, a lance is thrown into some vital part, the whale spouts blood, and finally floats on the surface of the water, dead. All the boats are then fastened in line to tow the whale to the ship, which is sailing down to meet them. All this is watched anxiously from the ship and the man in the top calls out as soon as the first harpoon is thrown "they're fast." In fact he sings out everything that is taking place as well as he can see and judge from the top where the spyglass is constantly at his eye. On deck my father was watching with a spyglass which he occasionally allowed me to look through and we were all in a great state of excitement.

The whale has to be towed around to the starboard side of the ship, which was of course made the leeward side and the ship was hove to awaiting the prize. The head of the whale was towards the stern of the ship, its tail far forward for it seems as if it were half or two thirds as long as the *Northern Light*. Getting the whale alongside is tedious; heavy chains are put around the head and flukes, which is a dangerous piece of work, in fact everything connected with the catching of the great cachalot is dangerous. Slipping a chain around and under a whale is a task and boats have to take part in it. Not until the chains are adjusted and the whale securely fastened to the ship does the real work of "cutting in" begin. This goes on day and night for the work must be done quickly. A storm may arise and sad tales are told of ships being obliged to cast the whale loose in a gale. All hands are at the work. Tackles are rigged to hoist in the blubber and lower it into the blubber room where it lies until the trying out commences. The utensil used for

the cutting is a "spade," a triangular piece of steel with a long wooden handle, and made very sharp. The men stand on the back of the whale, and cut down into the blubber, cutting loose great squares as ice is cut in a pond. The sister blocks are lowered from the yardarm, caught through the blubber, which is then hoisted on board and stowed away down the main hatch into the blubber room. After one side of the whale is stripped it is turned over on the other side, the same troublesome work with chains being gone through again, and the remainder of the blubber is taken off. . . .

The jawbones are cut out and brought on deck where later the teeth are sawed out, then cleaned of the flesh. But before the whale is turned over, the "case" is taken out, that is of a sperm whale, for the right whale does not have this valuable adjunct. The case contains pure oil and great care has to be taken that it is not broken in getting it on board; only the most skilled and efficient of the officers and men participate in this work.

As soon as the whale is alongside and before any blubber is landed on the deck, the scuppers are all stopped so that not a drop of the precious oil is wasted, for the blubber drips oil and grease all over everything. When a whaling ship is reported "clean" it means that she has not taken any whales. . . .

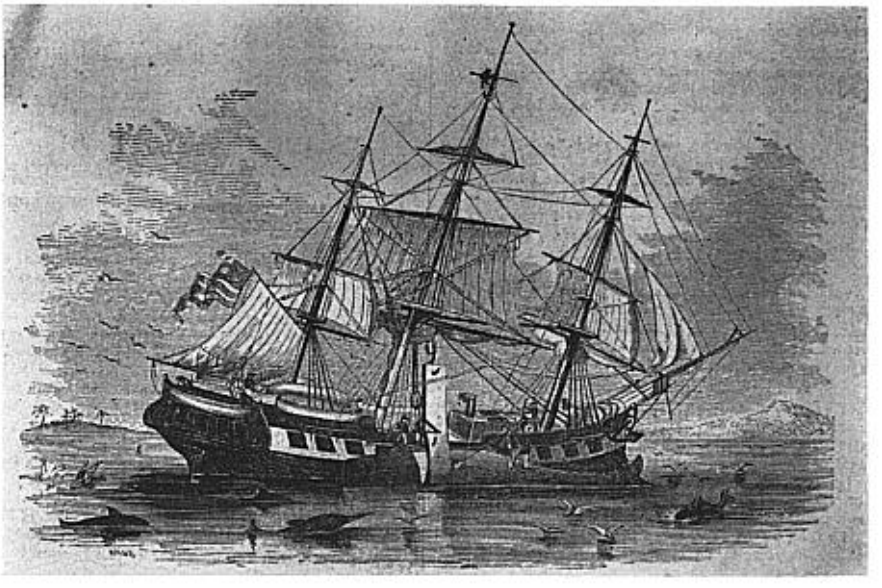
After the case is taken out and all the blubber removed, the skeleton of the whale is set adrift and the sharks, assisted by the birds, soon make an end of it. There was always a man stationed in a boat to drive away the sharks which had arrived on the scene at an early stage, piloted by their two scouts swimming just ahead of the shark's nose.

Now it was that the try works came into use. The covers were taken off, the pots thoroughly cleaned out, fires built underneath, and the blubber brought up from the blubber room and put on to cook. Whatever the fuel used, which I think is coal, or whether it is from the blubber, there is always a great smoke when a ship is trying out. . . . As soon as the oil is all boiled out of the blubber, it is ladeled into barrels, the blubber being put into something to drain every drop of oil out of it. This goes on until the entire catch is tried out and stowed away in barrels down in the hold. This takes several days, all hands being on duty until it is finished. Then the sailors are given some of the oil with enough flour and molasses to make doughnuts which they fry in the oil and have quite a celebration. I believe they also eat the tried out blubber, cutting it up in small pieces and having it fried brown in the try pots. . . . This whale was only of a medium size and made 120 barrels of oil.

The whale's teeth are a perquisite of the captain if he wants them and the best are selected for him. There are always sailors on board who know how to "scrimshaw," and the teeth are ornamented with all sorts of sea scenes, ships, whales, etc. It is done in India ink. I had some of the teeth, and also something called a "jagging wheel" made from part of a tooth. This was quite a work of art; it is a fluted wheel used for cutting out pie crust and then to make a pretty pattern around the edge of the pie before it goes into the oven. This wheel had a handle shaped something like a graceful whale.

About a week after our whale was safely stowed away in the hold, we again sighted whales, quite early in the morning. There was a great bustle or preparation and the three boats started away. The whale was in the same general di-

rection as the other one, off the weather bow. This was a grey, drizzly day but it was not long before the man in the top sang out "they're fast." The whale spouted blood immediately; this is considered a bad omen and proved so in this case. The whale was bad tempered and strong, it dove to great depths dragging the boats about in every direction. Gradually the whole of the line in the first boat was run out, then a second boat's line joined on; again the third line was fastened to that, but still the whale kept diving deep and running. When the lines of the three boats were fast, some signal must have been made to the ship, or they saw from the ship that the boats were in trouble, for the fourth boat was sent to help, and their line was added to the others. Nothing seemed to tire the energetic whale; all day long he dragged the boats back and forth, up and down, but at no time could they get near enough to throw the lance. The great length of line enabled the whale to get far away from the boats, and by the time they rowed up a little nearer, he was off again with tireless energy. The men worked all day, rowing and struggling to get their prize, but at last night came on and signals were sent from the ship to cut loose and return. Poor men, they were worn out with the day's work, disappointed and disheartened. I am afraid my father was much annoyed and said unpleasant things to everyone concerned, but it was no one's fault. . . .



"CUTTING IN"
From a print in *Ballou's Pictorial*, 1855.

* * * *

After cruising about for a fortnight, we started up the Pacific on the last stretch for Honolulu. Our course was

about northwest from Juan Fernandez and with all sail set "alow and aloft," the studding sails out, we caught the trade wind and sailed along at a "clipper" gait day after day. . . .

Occasionally we spoke a ship. If the vessel were sailing in the same direction that we were, we usually "overhauled" her, for the *Northern Light* could outsail any of the old whalers. It was thrilling to hear the lookout man sing out "Sail ho." All eyes would be turned in the direction he indicated, but sometimes he could see the upper masts of a ship long before we could do so on deck. Details as to which way the vessel was headed, whether bark or ship, or, if a whaler, as could be told by the boats, and if she were to windward whether she had seen us and was changing her course to speak us, were called down from the top. I think the yards were hauled back if we were to speak and then both captains stood on their respective quarter-decks with speaking trumpets. First the questions were of the most formal character, the whole conversation very nautical. The name of the ships, where from, how long out, where bound, how much oil taken, names of the captains, where the ships hailed from with other information was conveyed; then as my mother was on board, came a very ceremonious invitation to come on board. This invitation was usually accepted with great alacrity but once my father went "gamming" to the other ship. They were, for some sanitary reason or other, "smoking out" the ship and the captain's best clothes were down in the cabin so he could not get at them. He would not come in his everyday sailing clothes, so my father went to see him. . . .

As we went north and drew nearer our destination, all sorts of preparations were made. Everything that could be painted received at least one coat of paint, all the brass was polished to the brightest degree, new ropes put in the stairs leading to the quarter-deck, with specially grand knots at the lower end, "Turk's Head" or some other favorite. These knots are really an art to make and ours were as handsome as any I ever saw. These knots are round, worked up with stitches made by twisting the twine through and through, the result being a hard round "knot" as big as a peach. There is a ring in the top of the stanchion through which the hand rope is passed, the knot holding the rope from slipping. . . .

At last one day we came to Honolulu, just 120 days out from Fairhaven. This was a great event, our making such a quick passage, especially as we had lingered two weeks on the way, which would have made 106 sailing days, a quite unheard of record for a whaler, many of them taking six months on the voyage. But we were the "clipper" bark *Northern Light*, and were so announced in the newspapers.

We did not come around Diamond Head, but sailed "up from leeward," so were in full sight of the island and town long before we were near enough for boats to come off to us. The harbor of Honolulu is large and sheltered, the opening in the reef a small one; we were towed in by boats through this passage and given a place among the other ships in port. When the anchor was let go the whole ship shook and throbbed with the paying out of the chain, which makes a great noise, but is a welcome sound after a long time at sea.