

[Original—Contributed.]

JONAH—A Sailor-Printer.

This is not a reminiscence of the whaleman, but of a sailor who, in an evil hour for our country printing office, turned printer. He was an extraordinary youth of eighteen who had already made several voyages, coasting or otherwise, which were attended with the worst possible luck, both to himself and the vessels he sailed in, being either unusually protracted or attended with shipwreck and disaster. Did any shipowner wish his vessel to go ashore before getting out of harbor, he had only to ship Jonah; was he anxious to be kept in a pleasant state of anxiety during the voyage, with a variety of sleepless nights, and a bill for fruitless telegrams, Jonah was his man. That ship immediately became a "flying Dutchman," that never got anywhere, but was always reported unknown and seen under difficult circumstances, on lee shores and in other doubtful situations. After interminable suspense to his friends, a letter was generally received from Jonah, to say that he had either just arrived in some distant port from a desert island, or had been taken off the wreck after fearful hardships, but that his health was unimpaired and that he was going to cut the sea, and was coming home to learn a trade. This threat he had made several times in regard to several trades, and as he was becoming an object of interest to the underwriters, it seemed necessary that he should keep a little more in-shore. He had already been a painter, a joiner, a blacksmith, a ship carpenter, and a tinsmith, and had an eye to the watchmaking business, but fortunately the only watchmaker the town contained died just in time to save himself and his business from destruction. All his irruptions into the arts and sciences had thus far been futile, when our country paper was started in the town. Jonah, being ashore from his last adventure, spent the best part of his time among the novelties of the new printing office, and became enthusiastic in regard to the business. His friends were delighted, for he was rather an awkward chap to have at a loose end, and they pointed out to him that now was his chance, and that he might become a country editor, or even a member of the Dominion Parliament, if he would only go in and win, and as labor was scarce and a good strong arm at the roller was not to be despised, Jonah was engaged and "went in." He was somewhat angular and under size, with a shock head of light hair cut pretty close, a

damp complexion and eyes of no particular color. To a stranger he might have seemed to have the air of an intelligent gorilla, that is, as if he meant to act rationally but never could get his mental apparatus to work up to time, so that it was a common opinion that Jonah was not all there: but the trouble was, he was everywhere else excepting where he ought to be. He would walk up to an imposing stone, and knock the head of a column into pie before you could get your eye on him, and he would be perfectly astonished at the result. His knowledge of the inhabitants of the country around and the affairs of the town was surprising, and his comments and theories respecting the same, had such a mixture of shrewdness and absurdity, that it was as impossible to avoid listening to him as it was to stop him talking. The office was kept in continual laughter, and it was only until the fear that the matter would never be up, that the ultimatum of a side-stick would secure silence for ten minutes. His local knowledge being in some sort often useful, and the side-stick having disappeared, Jonah would again insiduously lead off with some sober question relative to business and in five minutes more would have managed to branch out into the last or coming magistrate's case, or some scandal or entertaining gossip ten miles away, until the waning time and the slow creeping matter on the galleys would cause another sudden irruption of the side-stick, upon which Jonah would make a bolt for the street. One morning after some hours work, every one seemed suddenly conscious that there was a dead silence in the office. The clicking of the type going into the sticks suddenly ceased, and the compositors looked up amid an involuntary exclamation of "Where's Jonah?" Nobody had seen him, and the apron, which it was his especial pride to cover with ink, hung silent on the nail. There was no Jonah. It turned out, in fact, that he had got into the hands of the constable. Some lady admirer had brought a spiteful charge against him, which, on investigation, was retracted, and Jonah was once more restored from durance vile to the free air of the printing office, which vibrated for some days with denunciations of the fair sex. That week there was a delicate task for the editorial pen, for Jonah had to be whitewashed, and he was very sensitive on the subject, but, at last, submitted, on being convinced the immense lustre his moral character would receive from the operation. Jonah's *forte* was rolling, and he