

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!'

Starbuck alone attempts to withstand him.

'Vengeance on a dumb brute!' cried Starbuck, 'that simply smote thee from the 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 mar shall strike, strike through the mask!'

Then follows the wild ceremony of drinking round the capstan-head from the harpoon-sockets to confirm Ahab's curse. "Death to Moby Dick. God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby Dick to the death!" The intermezzo of the various sailors on the forecastle which follows until the squall strikes the ship is one of the most suggestive passages in all the literature of the sea. Under the influence of Ahab's can, the men are dancing on the forecastle. The old Manx sailor says:

"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."

Where every page, almost every paragraph, has its quaint or telling phrase, or thought, or suggested picture, it is hard to make a selection; and even the choicest morsels give you no idea of the richness of the feast. Melville's humour has been mentioned; it is a constant quantity. Perhaps the statement of his determination after the adventure of the first lowering is as good an example as any:

"Here, then, from three impartial witnesses, I had a deliberate statement of the case. Considering, therefore, that squalls and capsizeings in the water, and consequent bivouacks in the deep, were matters of common occurrence in this kind of life; considering that at the superlatively critical moment of going on to the whale I must resign my life into the hands of him who steered the boat—often-times a fellow who at that very moment is in his impetuosity upon the point of scuttling the craft with his own frantic stampings;