

Captureing a Bull Whale

It was on October 22, 1901, that we sailed from New Bedford, Mass., on the good ship Kathleen. She was a bark of 195 tons, by the way. Although she was fifty-eight years old and perhaps a little bit tender in the bends we regarded her with affection and reverence. Little did I guess the sudden end that she was coming to, nor would anybody else, either, for it was the most wonderful thing that I ever heard of or saw of my mates.

Captain Thomas Jenkins was in command, and a fine captain he is, as all of us will agree. He had his pretty young wife along with him, and she had with her a gray African parrot, aged eight, who spoke various languages—English, profane and several others. We observed that that bird had a sinful eye, but seeing that he belonged to Mrs. Jenkins we were all very respectful to him.

We were fishing for the cachalot, or sperm whale, which, as you know, is caught in tropical waters, while the right whale and several other kinds are found in the Arctic seas. Fishing for the cachalot is a nice, clean, gentlemanly business, and much more profitable for those who are skillful enough to carry it on than the other kind.

The first thing we did was to run into a fierce southwest gale. For days our hatches were battened down. It was twenty days before we found ourselves in the latitude of the Gulf of Mexico. After that we made for the Cape Verde islands, where we shipped a dozen Portuguese, making the ship's company forty in all, most of them being Portuguese to start with. Ten days out from Cape Verde we met another Bedford whaler and "gammed" her, which is what we call visiting between whalers. The other ship had ninety barrels of oil, while we had none, which riled us some.

Then we set sail for the whaling grounds off the Rio de la Plata, South America.

We had had luck there—only took one small whale. The second mate died and we buried him February 2.

Then we started north in the southeast trades. We had had weather till we got across the line.

We were getting near the Windward islands, when Captain Jenkins says to me one fine evening, "Smells like sperm whale hereabouts. I bet a plug of tobacco we raise sperm whale tomorrow." I didn't take his bet, because I knew the captain could smell sperm whale two hundred miles away.

Sure enough, the Cap was right. On the 17th of March we were in latitude thirteen degrees north—thirteen, mind you, and had luck again, sure enough.

I had finished my forenoon watch on deck and gone down below to take a nap.

Pretty soon there came the cry from the man on the lookout:

"There goes white water!" meaning he saw a whale splashing foam with his tail.

"Where away?" bawled the captain.

"Two points on yer weather bow, sir."

"There she bl-o-o-o-ows!"

"Ah, hands on deck; tumble up lively; sperm whale!" bellowed the captain, and the sailors came tumbling out of the forecastle hatch, and I jumped up the cabin companionway two steps at a time.

"There she breeches," came the lookout's cry again as another whale came into sight, and I could see it kicking up. Then whales came in sight everywhere.

The captain goes up aloft and takes a look and says, quietlike: "Seems like a powerful sight of whale, high onto three hundred, I reckon."

Before we had taken another look those whales were spouting from one end of the sky line to the other. We had run into one of the biggest schools of sperm whale that I or any other of us ever seen.

Maybe we didn't feel excited. If you have never sighted sperm whale you have missed the greatest joy in life. After doing nothing for nigh on to four months, here we were in the midst of the biggest school that ever was.

To make the most of his luck, the captain ordered out every whaleboat. We jumped for the boats and lowered away all that we swung, four of 'em.

Perhaps my readers would like to have some particulars about these here whaleboats. The whale line to catch the whale is the manila rope, 1 1/2 inches thick. It is stretched and coiled with the greatest care into tubs, some holding two hundred fathoms and others a hundred fathoms. The harpoons are fixed to poles of rough, heavy wood, every care being taken to make them as strong as possible. The harpoon is made like

an arrow, but with only one barb, which turns on a steel pivot. The point of the harpoon is ground as sharp as a razor on one side and is blunt on the other. The shaft is about thirty inches long and made of the best soft iron, so that it is practically impossible to break it. Three harpoons, or "irons," as we call them, are usually placed in each boat, fitted one above the other in the starboard bow. The first to be thrown at a whale is always one that has never been used before.

On the port bow are fitted three lances, which are actually used to kill the whale. The harpoons only serve to make the boat fast to the whale, being useless for killing a big animal. The lances are slender spears, about four feet long, with broad points, sharpened at both edges like a razor. They have wooden handles about four feet long, to which light lines are attached, so that the lances can be recovered if necessary. When thrown by skillful hands the lance sinks right into some vital part of the whale. Two and sometimes three lances may be thrown to kill off a very powerful whale.

A whaleboat has five oars, of lengths varying from 16 to 9 feet, and one big steering oar of 19 feet, a mast and two sails, about 1,800 feet of whale line, a bucket and "pig-gin" for baling, a small spade, a flag or "whet," a shoulder bomb gun and ammunition, knives and axes.

The Kathleen was hove to while the boats started out for whale. The captain, Mrs. Jenkins, the cook, the cabin boy and the parrot were the only persons left on board. The captain had his work cut out, for some one on board has to signal the men in the boats where to go when they get out of sight of a whale, because from the rigging a man can see miles further than from the boats.

I had charge of the bow boat.

The mate's larboard boat got to a whale first and De Viaria got his harpoon into him. The mate gave him all the line he wanted, so he would sound, come up and draw the rest of the school around him.

I had luffed to take down sail when I heard the captain's call:

"There's the school down to leeward; Reynolds, keep going and you'll get into them."

We sailed away for an hour before we got them. I singled out a forty-barrel bull whale and got my harpoon into him.

I went to lancing my whale. The blood spurted out, and the old fellow lashed the sea into pink foam.

He sounded, and buzz went the line after him. We took a turn three or four times around the loggerhead and tried to hold him. The boat careened and nearly spilled us out.

"I'll kill this whale if it takes us to the coast of Brazil!" I yelled to my men. We were going there fast enough, too. But I got my lance into him again when he came up. He spouted and we got him dead by sundown.

De Viaria, the first mate, had got hold of a very big cow whale. Every harpooner was fast to a whale.

De Viaria was the first man to bring his catch back to the ship. The cow was towed round to the port side of the Kathleen, and the tackle from the foremast head was passed round her head, so as to have the whale in position to be stripped of its blubber and tried out.

Just then the captain sighted an enormous old bull on our starboard quarter. He was gray and wrinkled with age and had lumps all over his head, where he had been in fights with whaling men before. A bull whale becomes a terrible fighter after a few encounters with the boats and he lies around looking for trouble, and even hunting for it. This fellow was 110 feet long and weighed 100 tons, at the lowest estimate. I have very little doubt that he weighed more, but we men of the sea always like to be conservative and moderate. That weight is twenty-five times as large as the biggest elephant ever known, and so I suppose it is large enough. As soon as the captain sighted the old bull he yelled to De Viaria:

"Hey, there, mate, get after that bull! We'll take care of the cow!"

The mate and his men bent to their oars and were alongside of the bull in a minute. He met them half way.

The mate, standing in the bow, plunged his harpoon into his back till it disappeared from sight. The whale "sounded" at once—that is, went down. The men paid out the line as fast as they could, expecting him to give them a fight in the usual way. He rose directly ahead of them and began to throw out two or three Niagaras of water. Then they started to take in the slack. But he didn't go for the boat; he went straight for the ship. He went so

last that you could hardly see the harpoon line. He made the whole Atlantic ocean boil. The friction of the line set the bow in flames twice, and the men only kept the fire down by dousing it with buckets of water. The old whale pulled them along at about the speed of the Empire State express. The whale was nearly onto the ship before the mate realized that something very unusual was going to happen.

The trouble with that old whale was that he wanted revenge. He was very likely one hundred years old, and he had seen his wife, the mother of his kids, to whom he had been attached for Lord knows how many years, killed right under his eyes. There was her dead body, floating the sea with red blood, right alongside of the monster that had killed her. The whale, you know, is a warm-blooded mammal, like ourselves and very much attached to his wife and children.

The man got out his hatchet and cut the harpoon line. That saved his boat. The bull went on just as straight and as fast as an express train. With his great big square head he struck the old Kathleen fairly amidships on the starboard beam, and just under the water line. He smashed in her four-inch planking, and her stout oak timbers just as if they were paper. She was very light in the water, having taken no oil before this, and the shock of the whale lifted her and almost turned her over. Then she righted herself for a moment and began to sink without a moment's delay. The old whale knew that he had had his revenge, for he dived out of sight, and we never saw him again. Perhaps he is swimming about over the wreck of the old Kathleen at the bottom of the ocean occasionally "biffing" a piece out of her with his big head.

You see, it hadn't hurt the whale at all, striking the ship. A sperm whale's head is like a hard rubber ball. It hurts a small boy more to bump his nose than sinking that ship affected that whale.

Mate De Viaria hurried alongside, to be ready to rescue the captain and the others left on board. The captain managed to fetch up eighty pounds of biscuit and eighteen gallons of water before the Kathleen filled.

Then up bobbed the captain's wife from the cabin hatch.

"Oh, good Lord, save Mingo," she cried. "Somebody get some corn for him," and down she went again for her pet parrot.

The men swore, of course. To think that a woman should bother about a bird at a time like that. But in a minute up she comes with the parrot under her arm, and what that parrot said set every man jack of them to laughing.

The ship was sinking fast, the water was already coming up over the bow, but that parrot was so funny they could not help laughing. And, as I said before, he knew more than most of them Portuguese sailors.

Well, they all got into the boat, with the parrot safe, and made off just in time to clear the whirlpool that sucked the Kathleen down.

They had only just got clear of the old ship when she went down to the bottom—she just sounded head first; like she had seen thousands of whales do, and went down with the dead cow tied to her port side. Most of us saw what had happened, and gave up our catch, cursing our luck. Fourth-Mate Nichols was still having a tussle with his big bull, and was too much absorbed in the fight to see what had happened to any one else.

"Are you fast?" shouts Captain Jenkins, who always likes his joke, to Nichols. "Aye, aye, sir!" says Nichols. "Then cut loose, by Jee!" says the Captain. "The Kathleen's sunk."

Nichols wouldn't believe it at first but when he came to look for the Kathleen he seen nothing afloat where she had ought to be. By the time it was dark we managed to divide the men equally among the four boats and to distribute our small stocks of provisions. There was twenty pounds of biscuit and four gallons and a half of water on each boat.

We made out that we were about 1,000 miles to the east of Barbadoes, and the best we could do was to make for there.

I had lost everything, of course, money and clothes. I had on only my undershirt and overalls and hat and was in my bare feet. We were living on two crackers a day and a gill of water.

But the thing that bothered me most was the loss of my tobacco. I had two fifteen-pound boxes of it aboard ship.

"Begorry, boys," I said, "I don't mind anything like the loss of that tobacco."

I won't trouble you with all the details of our tiresome trip in getting home again. We made an agreement to spread out during the day, looking for any sail that might happen along, and to keep together

at night. On the third day the captain's boat was sighted by the steamship Borderer of Baltimore, Captain Dalton, bound for Chili. The Borderer first picked up the captain and myself, and then, after cruising around for an hour he found Second Mate Murray's boat. After looking around for De Viaria until it was quite dark the Borderer was obliged to give up and continue on her way south. She landed at Pernambuco, in Brazil, and from there we came to Philadelphia on the steamship Fyda.

De Viaria and his nine men made their way to Barbadoes and a rough time they had. Six of them came up on the steamship Madiana to New York, and were very nicely cared for by the Seamen's Friend Society while they were there. De Viaria steered his way for nearly 1,000 miles to Barbadoes with a pocket compass. He calculated that the supplies would allow each man two tablespoonfuls of water a day and half a ship's biscuit. He measured the water out with a little tin bottle top. Luckily, a shower helped them out somewhat with fresh water, and they caught a few flying fish which they ate raw.—By the Mate, in Examiner.

Emitted No Lava.

Port de France, May 22.—A torrential downpour of rain in the morning washed off the ashes from the vegetation on the mountain.

The United States ship Potomac made her usual trip to St. Pierre today with another party of scientists. She found the conditions there unchanged from yesterday. The top of the mountain was clearly visible for a considerable time.

Captain McLeod of the cruiser Cincinnati, who has carefully observed Mont Pelee, agrees with other experts in reporting that a new crater has been formed below the other one. In the new crater there is a great cinder cone, more than a hundred feet high, from which steam and volcanic matter is constantly pouring.

It is now the unanimous opinion of the scientists that this is an explosive volcano, no real lava or Moya rock material having been emitted, only mud, steam, gas and fragments of the old crater beds. The scientists compare the mountain's outflow to the steam of a boiler in which the pressure rises to the bursting point, and they think it possible that a more violent outbreak may occur. They remark that the explosions have occurred at progressively longer intervals and that they have also been progressively more violent.

There have been three light eruptions of ashes. On May 5 there was an overflow of mud which caused the destruction of the Usine Guerin; on May 8 there was the outburst which destroyed St. Pierre and on May 20, or after an interval of twelve days, the last tremendous outburst occurred. A new period of rest is now on and one of two things may happen. The pressure may lie confined for a still longer period and then explode with still greater violence, spreading destruction over a vast area, or the mountain may remain on the quiescent for another half century.

The Deadly Hand Cart

Another unpublished city bylaw which the residents of Dawson know not of until hauled into police court on the charge of violating it came to light yesterday morning when two King street business men were up on the charge of having pushed hand carts on the sidewalk.

They both pleaded ignorance of the existence of such a bylaw, and well they might for the very good reason that it has never been published. A custom of years is suddenly made illegal by an unpublished act and business men are humiliated by having to enter the prisoner's box at police court for violating a law they have no means of knowing exists.

The cases yesterday were both dismissed but that was poor balm for having to occupy the criminal's box in open court.

The police court officials are in no way responsible for this miserable condition of affairs. They are given the law to enforce and will do their duty.

The fact remains, however, that when old customs are made illegal by legislation, such legislation should be made public.

Away Back in Maine

Although a long time in coming, the following from the Maine Courier-Gazette, which only reached Dawson recently, shows what Dawson papers are thought of abroad:

Theodore Snow, a Rockland young man who has been in the Yukon gold region for several years, sends The Courier-Gazette copies of the Semi-Weekly Nugget, and the Dawson Weekly News, containing accounts of the assassination of President McKinley. We are in the habit of thinking that Dawson is out of the civilized world, but the papers above quoted had the important news

promptly and presented it in a manner that would put many of the metropolitan dailies to shame. The Nugget costs 25 cents a copy but the residents of Dawson and vicinity get their money's worth. Mr. Snow also sends us a special number of the Yukon Sun and Klondike Pioneer, which is a handsomely printed magazine, illustrated with half-tone cuts descriptive of Dawson, its industries, officials, etc. The City of Gold has electric lights, a water system, streets, schools, churches and societies, and its railroad and steamboat communication with the outside world is daily improving. The Courier-Gazette hopes soon to publish more of Mr. Snow's interesting letters.

No Bloodshed

Special to the Daily Nugget. Spokane, June 3.—"The" sooner troubles on the Spokane Indian re-

servation are a good deal more serious than has been generally supposed," said Indian Agent Anderson. "The strain between Indians and 'sooners' came near the breaking point several times, and it kept busy to prevent bloodshed. The capture is not yet over, although it is much easier than ten days ago."

Sill Fighting

Special to the Daily Nugget. City of Mexico, June 3.—Mexican and Yaquis are fighting at Los Angeles river. The Yaquis retreated toward Masatlan. Troubles arose over the murder of three timekeepers at El Carner ranch by Yaquis and the rallying of the tribe to protect the murderer.

Report Confirmed

Special to the Daily Nugget. Seattle, June 3.—Passengers Cook's Inlet confirm the report of eruption of Redoubt volcano.

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