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## Literature.

### MOCHA DICK OF THE PACIFIC.

This renowned monster, who had come off victorious in a hundred fights with his pursuers, was an old bull whale, of prodigious size and strength. From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature, as exhibited in the case of the Ethiopian Albino, a singular consequence had resulted—*he was white as wool!* Instead of projecting his spout obliquely forward, and puffing with a short convulsive effort, accompanied by a snoring noise as is usual with his species, he flung the water from his nose in a lofty, perpendicular, expanded volume, at regular and somewhat distant intervals; its expulsion produced a continuous roar, like that of vapor struggling from the safety valve of a powerful steam engine. Viewed from a distance, the practised eye of the sailor only could decide, that the moving mass, which constituted this enormous animal, was not a white cloud sailing along the horizon. On the spermaceti whale, barnacles are rarely discovered; but upon the head of this *lusus naturæ*, they had clustered, until it became absolutely rugged with the shells. In short, regard him as you would, he was a most extraordinary fish; or, in the vernacular of Nantucket, "a genuine old sog," of the first water.

Opinions differ as to the time of his discovery. It is settled, however, that previous to the year 1810, he had been seen and attacked near the Island of Mocha. Numerous boats are known to have been shattered by his immense flukes, or ground to pieces in the crush of his powerful jaws; and on one occasion, it is said that he came off victorious from a conflict with the crews of three English whalers, striking fiercely at the last of the retreating boats, at the moment it was rising from the water, in its hoist up to the ship's davits. It must not be supposed, howbeit, that through all this desperate warfare, our leviathan passed scathless. A back serried with weapons, and from fifty to a hundred yards of line trailing in his wake, sufficiently attested, that though unconquered, he had not proved invulnerable. From the period of Dick's first appearance, his celebrity continued to increase, until his name seemed naturally to mingle with the salutations which whalemen were in the habit of exchanging, in their encounters upon the broad Pacific; the customary interrogatories almost always closing with, "Any news from Mocha Dick?" Indeed, every whaling captain who rounded Cape Horn, if he possessed any professional ambition, or valued himself on his skill in subduing the monarch of the seas, would lay his vessel along the coast, in the hope of having an opportunity to try the muscle of this doughty champion, who was never known to shun his assailants. It was remarked, nevertheless, that the old fellow seemed particularly careful as to the portion of his body which he exposed to the approach of the boat-steerer; generally presenting, by some well-timed manœuvre, his back to the harpooner; and dexterously evading every attempt to plant an iron under his fin, or a spade on his "small." Though naturally fierce, it was not customary with Dick, while unmolested, to betray a malicious disposition. On the contrary he would sometimes pass quietly round a vessel, and occasionally swim lazily and harmlessly among the boats, when armed with full craft for the destruction of his race. But this forbearance gained him little credit, for if no other cause of accusation remained to them, his foes would swear they saw a lurking deviltry in the long careless sweep of his flukes. Be this as it may, nothing is more certain, than that all indifference vanished with the first prick of the harpoon; while cutting the line, and a hasty retreat to their vessel, were frequently the only means of escape from destruction left to his discomfited assaulters.

"We were now standing in upon the coast of Chili," said the mate of the whale ship who told me the story, 'before a gentle breeze from the south, which bore us along almost imperceptibly. It was a quiet and beautiful evening, and the sea glanced and glistened in the level rays of the descending sun, with a surface of waving gold. The western sky was flooded with amber light, in the midst of which, like so many Islands, floated immense clouds, of every conceivable brilliant dye; while far to the north-east, looming darkly against a paler heaven, rose the conical peak of Mocha. The men were busily employed in sharpening their harpoons, spades, and lances for the expected fight. The look-out at the mast head, with cheek on his shoulder, was dreaming of the "dangers he had passed," instead of keeping watch for those which were to come; while the captain paced the quarter deck with long and hasty strides, scanning the ocean in every direction, with a keen, expectant eye. All at once, he stopped, fixed his gaze intently, for an instant, on some object to leeward, that seemed to attract it, and then in no very conciliating tone, hailed mast-head:

"'Both ports shut?' he exclaimed, looking aloft, and pointing backward, where a long, white, bushy spout was rising, about a mile off the larboard bow, against the glowing horizon. 'Both ports shut? I say, you leaden-eyed lubber! Nice lazy son of a sea-cook, *you* be for a look-out! Come down, sir!'

"'There she blows?—sperm whale—old sog, sir;' said the man, in a deprecatory tone, as he descended from his nest in the air. It was at once seen that the creature was companionless; but as a lone whale is generally an old bull, and of unusual strength and ferocity, more than ordinary sport was anticipated, while unquestionably more than ordinary honor was to be won from its successful issue.

The second mate and I were ordered to make ready for pursuit; and now commenced a scene of emulation and excitement, of which the most vivid description would convey but an imperfect outline, unless you have been a spectator or an actor on a similar occasion. Line-tubs, water-kegs, and wafe-poles were thrown hurriedly into the boats; the irons were placed in the racks, and the necessary evolutions of the ship gone through, with a quickness almost magical; and this too, amidst what to a landsman would have seemed inextricable confusion, with perfect regularity and precision; the commands of the officers being all but forestalled by the enthusiastic eagerness of the men. In a short time, we were as near the object of our chase as it was considered prudent to approach.

'Back the main-tops'? shouted the captain. 'There she blows!—there she blows!—there she blows!' cried the look out, who had taken the place of his sleepy shipmate, raising the pitch of his voice at each announcement, until it amounted to a downright yell. 'Right ahead, sir!—spout as long an's thick as the main-yard!'

'Stand by to lower!' exclaimed the captain, 'all hands; cook, steward, cooper—every mother's son of ye, stand by to lower!'

An instantaneous rush from all quarters of the vessel, and every man was at his station, almost before the last word had passed the lips of the skipper.

'Lower away!' and in a moment the keels splashed in the water. 'Follow down the crews; jump in, my boys; ship the crotch; line your oars; now pull, as if the d—l was in your wake!' were the successive orders, as the men slipped down the ship's side, took their places in the boats, and began to give way.

The second mate had a little the advantage of me in starting. The stern of his boat grated against the bows of mine, at the instant I grasped my steering oar, and gave the word to shove off. One sweep of my arm, and we sprang foaming in his track. Now came the tug of war. To become a first-rate oarsman, you must understand, requires a natural gift. My crew were not wanting in the proper qualifications; every mother's son of them pulled as if he had been born with an oar in his hand; and as they stretched every sinew for the glory of darting the first iron, it did my heart good to see the boys spring. At every stroke, the tough blades bent like willow wands, and quivered like tempered steel in the warm sunlight, as they sprang forward from the tension of the retreating wave. At the distance of half a mile, and directly before us, lay the object of our emulation and ambition, heaving his huge bulk in unwieldy gambols, as though totally unconscious of our approach.

'There she blows! An old bull, by Jupiter! Eighty barrels, boys, waiting to be towed alongside! Long and quick—shoot ahead! Now she feels it; waist-boat never could beat us; now she feels the touch!—now she walks through it! Again—*now!*' Such were the broken exclamations and adjurations with which I cheered my rowers to their toil, as, with renewed vigor, I plied my long steering-oar. In another moment we were alongside our competitor. The shivering blades flashed forward and backward, like sparks of light. The waters boiled under our prow, and the trenched waves closed, hissing and whirling in our wake, as we swept, I might almost say, were *lifted* onward in our arrowy course. We were coming down upon our fish, and could hear the roar of his spouting above the rush of the sea, when my boat began to take the lead.

"'Now my fellows,' I exclaimed in triumph. Now we'll show them our stern—only spring? Stand ready, harpooner, but don't dart till I give the word.'

'Carry me on, and his name's *Dennis!* * cried the boat-steerer, in a confident tone. We were perhaps a hundred feet in advance of the waist-boat, and within fifty of the whale, about an inch of whose hump only was to be seen above the water, when, heaving slowly into view a pair of flukes, some eighteen feet in width he went down. The men lay on their oars. 'There he blows again!' cried the tub-oarman, as a lofty perpendicular spout sprang into the air, a few furlongs away on the larboard side. Presuming from his previous movement, that the old fellow had been 'gallied' by other boats, and might probably be jealous of our purpose, I was about ordering the men to pull away as softly and silently as possible, when we received fearful intimation that he had no intention of balking our inclination, or even yielding us the honor of the first attack. Lashing the sea with its enormous tail, until he threw about him a cloud of surf and spray, he came down at full speed, 'jaws on,' with the determination, apparently, of doing battle in earnest. As he drew near, with his long, curved back looming occasionally above the surface of the billows, we perceived that it was *white as the surf around him;* and the men stared aghast at each other, as they uttered in a suppressed tone, the terrible name of 'Mocha Dick!'

'Mocha Dick or the d—l,' said I, this boat never sheers off from anything that wears the shape of a whale. Pull easy; just give her way enough to steer.' As the creature approached he somewhat abated his frenzied speed, and, at the distance of a cable's length, changed his course to a sharp angle with our own.

'Here he comes!' I exclaimed. 'Stand up, harpooner! Don't be hasty—don't be flurried. Hold your iron higher—firmer. Now!' I shouted, as I brought our bows within a boat's length of the immense mass which was wallowing heavily by. '*Now—give it to him solid!*'

But the leviathan plunged on, unharmed. The young harpooner, though ordinarily as fearless as a lion, had imbibed a sort of superstitious dread of Mocha Dick, from the exaggerated stories of that prodigy, which he had heard from his comrades. He regarded him as he had heard him described in many a tough yarn during the middle watch, rather as some ferocious fiend of the deep, than a regular built, legitimate whale! Judge, then, of his trepidation, on beholding a creature, answering the wildest dreams of his fancy, and sufficiently formidable without any superadded terrors, bearing down on him with thrashing flukes and distended jaws! He stood erect, it cannot be denied. He planted his foot—he grasped the coil—he poised his weapon. But his knee shook, and his sinewy arm wavered. The shaft was hurled, but with unsteady aim. It just grazed the back of the monster, glanced off and darted into the sea beyond. A second, still more abortive, fell short of the mark. The giant animal swept on for a few rods, and then, as if in contempt of our fruitless and childish attempt to injure him, flapped a storm of spray in our faces with his broad tail, and dashed far down into the depths of the ocean, leaving our little skiff among the waters where he sank to spin and duck in the whirlpool.

Night being now at hand, the captain's signal was set for our return to the vessel; and we were soon assembled on her deck, discussing the mischances of the day, and speculating on the prospect of better luck on the morrow.

We were at breakfast next morning, when the watch at the fore-topgallant mast-head sang out merrily, 'There she breaches!' In an instant every one was on his feet. 'Where away?' cried the skipper, rushing from the cabin and upsetting in his course the steward, who was returning from the caboose with a replenished biggin of hot coffee. 'Not loud but deep' were the grumblings and groans of that worthy functionary, as he rubbed his scalded shins, and danced about in agony, but had they been far louder, they would have been drowned in the tumult of vociferation which answered the announcement from the mast-head.

"Where away?' repeated the captain, as he gained the deck.

"Three points off the lee bow.'

"How far?'

"About a league, sir; heads the same as we do. There she blows! added the man, as he came slowly down the shrouds with his eyes fixed intently upon the spouting herd.

"Keep her off two points! Steady!—steady, as she goes!'

"Steady it is, sir,' answered the helmsman.

"Weather braces, a small pull. Loose to'-gallants'ls! Bear a hand my boys. Who knows but we may tickle their ribs at this rising?'

The captain had gone aloft, and was giving these orders from the main-to'-gallant cross-trees. 'There she top-tails—there she blows!' added he, as, after taking a long look at the sporting shoal he glided down the backstay. 'Sperm whale, and a thundering big school of 'em!' was his reply to the rapid and eager inquiries of the men. 'See the lines in the boats,' he continued; 'get in the craft; swing the cranes!'

"By this time the fish had gone down, and every eye was strained to catch the first intimation of their reappearance.

'There she *spouts!*' screamed a young green-horn in the main chains, 'close by; a mighty big whale, sir!'

'We'll know that better at the trying out, my son,' said the third mate, drily.

'Lower away all hands!' And in a twinkling, and together, the starboard, larboard and waist boats struck the water. Each officer leaped into his own; the crews arranged themselves at their respective stations: the boat-steerer began to adjust their 'craft,' and we left the ship's side in company; the captain, in laconic phrase, bidding us to 'get up and get fast' as quick as possible.

"Away we dashed in the direction of our prey, who were frolicking, if such a term can be applied to their unwilling motions, on the surface of the waves. Occasionally, a huge, shapeless body would flounce out of its proper element and fall back with a heavy splash; the effort forming about as ludicrous a caricature of agility, as would the attempt of some overfed alderman to execute the Highland fling.

We were within a hundred feet of the herd, when, as if from a common impulse, or upon some preconcerted signal, they all suddenly disappeared. 'Follow me!' I shouted, waving my hand to the men in the other boats; 'I see their track under water; they swim fast, but we'll be among them when they rise. Lay back,' I continued, addressing myself to my own crew, 'back to the thwarts! Spring *hard!* We'll be in the thick of 'em when they come up, only *pull!*'

And they did pull manfully. After rowing for about a mile, I ordered them to 'lie.' The oars were peaked, and we rose to look out for the first 'noddle head' that should break water. It was at this time a dead calm. Not a single cloud was passing over the deep blue of the heavens, to vary their boundless transparency, or shadow for a moment the gleaming ocean which they spanned. Within a short distance lay our noble ship, with her idle canvass hanging in drooping festoons from her yards; while she seemed resting on her inverted image, which, distinct and beautiful as its original, was glassed in the smooth expanse beneath. No sound disturbed the general silence, save our own heavy breathings, the low gurgle of the water against the side of the boat, or the noise of flapping wings, as the albatross wheeled sleepily along through the stagnant atmosphere.

We had remained quiet about five minutes; when some dark object was descried ahead, moving on the surface of the sea. It proved to be a small 'calf,' playing in the sunshine.

'Pull up and strike it, said I to the third mate; 'it may bring back the old one—perhaps the whole school.'

And so it did, with a vengeance! The sucker was transpierced after a short pursuit; but hardly had it made its first agonized plunge, when an enormous cow whale rose close beside her offspring. Her first endeavour was to take it under her fin, in order to bear it away; and nothing could be more striking than the maternal tenderness she manifested in her exertions to accomplish this object. But the poor thing was dying, and while she vainly tried to induce it to accompany her, it rolled over, and floated dead at her side. Perceivng it to be beyond the reach of her caresses, she turned to wreak her vengeance on its slayers, and made directly for the boat, crashing her vast jaws the while, in a paroxysm of rage. Ordering his boat-steerer aft, the mate sprang forward, cut the line loose from the calf, and then snatched from the crotch the remaining iron, which he plunged with his gathered strength into the body of the mother, as the boat sheered off to avoid her onset. I saw that the work was well done, but had not time to mark the issue; for at that instant, a whale 'breached' at the distance of about a mile from us, on the starboard-quarter. The glimpse I caught of the animal in his descent, convinced me that I once more beheld my old accquaintance, Mocha Dick. That falling massw as white as a snow drift!

One might have supposed the recognition mutual, for no sooner was his vast square head lifted from the sea, than he charged down upon us, scattering the billows into spray as he advanced, and leaving a wake of foam a rod in width, from the violent lashing of his flukes.

"He's making for the bloody water,' cried the men, as he cleft his way toward the very spot where the calf had been killed. 'Here, harpooner, steer the boat and let me dart!' I exclaimed, as I leaped into the bows. May the 'Goneys' eat me, if he dodges us this time, though he were Beelzebub himself. Pull for the red water!'

As I spoke the fury of the animal seemed suddenly to die away. He paused in his career, and lay passive on the waves with his arching back thrown up like a ridge of mountain. 'The old sog's lying to!' I cried, exultingly. —'Spring, boys! spring *now*, and we shall have him! All my clothes, tobacco, every thing I've got, shall be yours, only lay me 'longside that whale before another boat comes up! My *grimky!* what a hump! Only look at the irons in his back! No! don't *look*—PULL! Now, boys, if you care about seeing your sweethearts and wives in old Nantuck!—if you love Yankee-land—if you love *me*—pull ahead, *won't* ye? Now, then, to the thwarts! Lay back, my boys? I feel ye, my hearties! Give her the touch!—only five seas off! One minute—half a minute more! Softly with your oars! That will do——'

And as the words were uttered, I raised the harpoon above my head, took a rapid but no less certain aim, and sent it, hissing, deep into his thick white side!

'Stern all! for your lives!' I shouted; for at the instant the steel quivered in his body, the wounded leviathan plunged his head beneath the surface, and whirling around with great velocity, smote the sea violently with fin and fluke, in a convulson of rage and pain.

Our little boat flew dancing back from the seething vortex around him, just in season to escape being overwhelmed or crushed. He now started to run. For a short time, the line rasped, smoking, through the chocks. A few turns round the loggerhead now secured it;—and, with oars a-peak, and bows tilted to the sea, we went leaping onward in the wake of the tethered monster. Vain were all his struggles to break our hold. The strands were too strong, the barbed iron too deeply fleshed, to give way. So that whether he essayed to dive or breach, or dash madly forward, the frantic creature still felt that he was held in check. At one moment, in impotent rage, he reared his immense blunt head, covered with barnacles, high above the surge; while his jaws fell together with a crash that almost made me shiver; then the upper outline of his vast form — many seen, gliding amidst showers of sparkling spray; while streaks of crimson on the white surf that boiled in his track, told that the shaft had been driven home.

By this time, the whole 'school' was about us; and spouts from a hundred spiracles, with a roar that almost deafened us, were raining on every side; while in the midst of a vast surface of chafing sea, might be seen the black shapes of the rampant herd, tossing and plunging, like a legion of maddened demons. The second and third mates were in the very centre of this appalling commotion.

At length Dick began to lessen his impetuous speed. 'Now my boys,' cried I, 'haul me on; wet the line, you second oarsman, as it comes in. Haul away, shipmates! —Leeward side—*leeward!*—I tell you! Don't you know how to approach a whale?'

The boat brought fairly upon her broadside as I spoke, and I gave him the lance just under the shoulder blade. At this moment, just as the boat's head was laid off, and I was straightening for a second lunge, my lance, which I had "boned" in the first, a piercing cry from the boat-steerer drew my attention quickly aft, and I saw the waist boat, or more properly a fragment of it, falling through the air, and underneath the dusky forms of the struggling crew, grasping at the oars, or clinging to portions of the wreck; while a pair of flukes, descending in the midst of the confusion accounted for the the catastrophe. The boat had been struck and shattered by a whale!

'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, with impatience, and in a tone which I feared showed me rather mortified at the interruption, than touched with proper feeling for the sufferers, 'good heavens! hadn't they sense enough to keep out of the red water! And I must lose this glorious prize, through this infernal stupidity!' This was the first outbreak of my selfishness.

'But we must not see them drown, boys,' I added upon the instant; 'cut the line!' The order had barely passed my lips, when I caught sight of the captain, who had seen the accident from the quarter deck, bearing down with oar and sail to the rescue.

'Hold on! I thundered, just as the knife's edge touched the line; 'for the glory of old Nantuck, hold on! The captain will pick them up, and Mocha Dick will be ours, after all!'

"This affair occurred in half the interval I have occupied in the revelation. In the mean time, with the exception of a slight shudder, which once or twice shook his ponderous frame, Dick lay perfectly quiet in the water. But suddenly, as though goaded into exertion by some fiercer pang, he started from his lethargy with apparently augmented power. Making a leap toward the boat, he darted perpendicularly downward, hurling the after oarsman, who was helmsman at the time, ten feet over the quarter, as he struck the long steering oar in his descent. The unfortunate seaman fell, with his head forward, just above the flukes of the whale, as he vanished, and was drawn down by suction of the closing waters, as if he had been a feather. After being carried to a great depth, as we inferred from the time he remained below the surface, he came up, panting and exhausted, and was dragged on board, amidst the hearty congratulations of his comrades.

By this time two hundred fathoms of line had been carried spinning through the chocks, with an impetus that gave back in steam the water cast upon it. Still the gigantic creature bored his way downward, with undiminished speed. Coil after coil went over, and was

* A whale's name is "Dennis" when he spouts blood.