Cedarville University
DigitalCommons@Cedarville

Pamphlet Collection

Centennial Library Special Collections

1840

The Whale, and the Perils of the Whale-Fishery

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/pamphlet_collection

Recommended Citation
"The Whale, and the Perils of the Whale-Fishery" (1840). *Pamphlet Collection*. 47.
https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/pamphlet_collection/47

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pamphlet Collection by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

THE WHALE, AND THE DANGERS OF THE WHALE-FISHERY.

NEW HAVEN.
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY S. BABCOCK.

1840.

THE

WHALE,

AND

THE PERILS

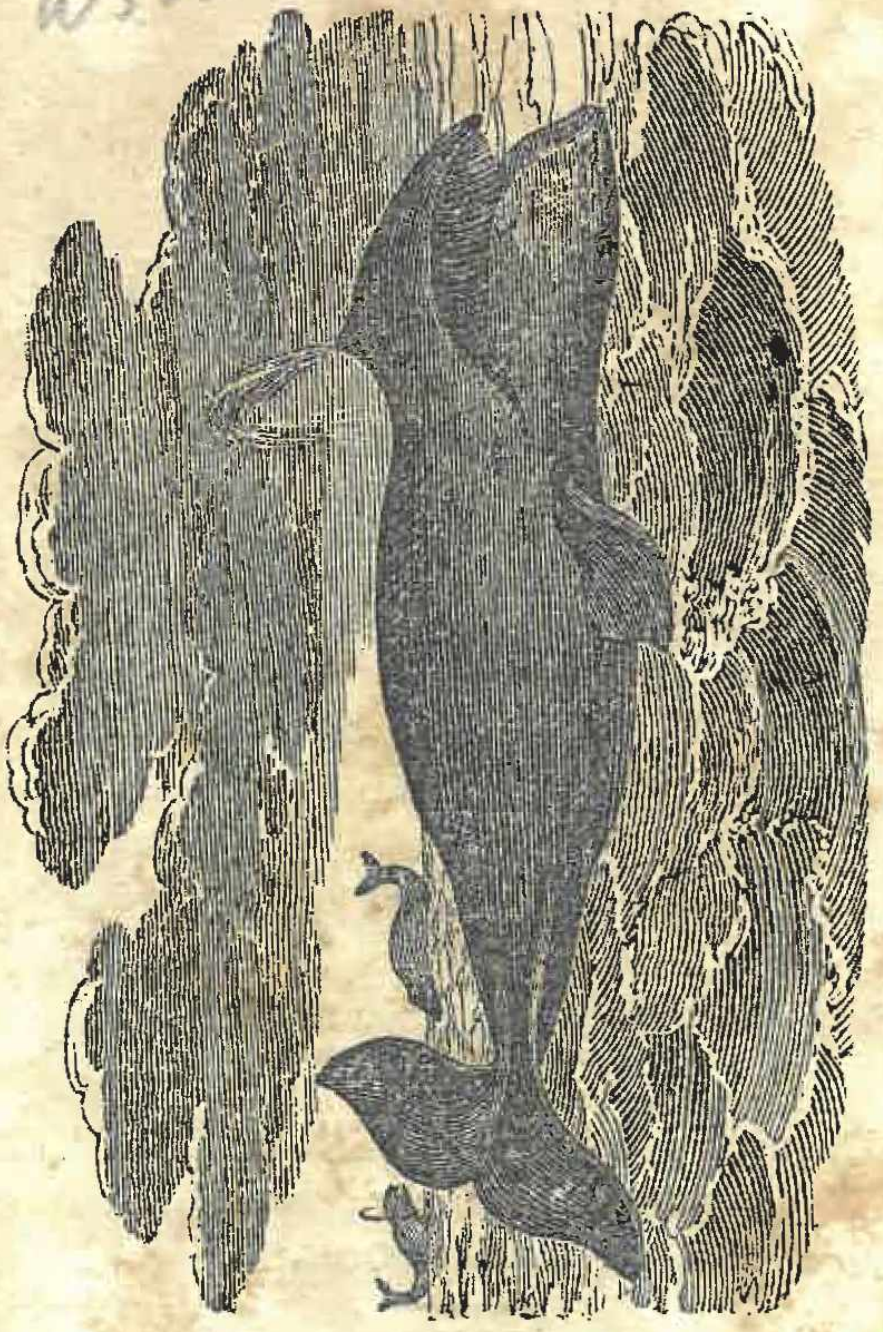
OF

THE WHALE-FISHERY.

NEW HAVEN.
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY S. BABCOCK.

1840.

A
639.28
W552



76-72216

THE WHALE,

AND THE

PERILS OF THE WHALE-FISHERY

The Whale is the largest and most powerful animal in the world. No creature that lives on the earth is one half as large. The Elephant, which is the largest of all living land animals, is seldom more than ten feet long, and weighs not more than eight or nine thousand pounds. How large, then, must an animal be, which is sometimes one hundred feet long, from thirty to forty feet round, and weighing one hundred tons, or two hundred thousand pounds!

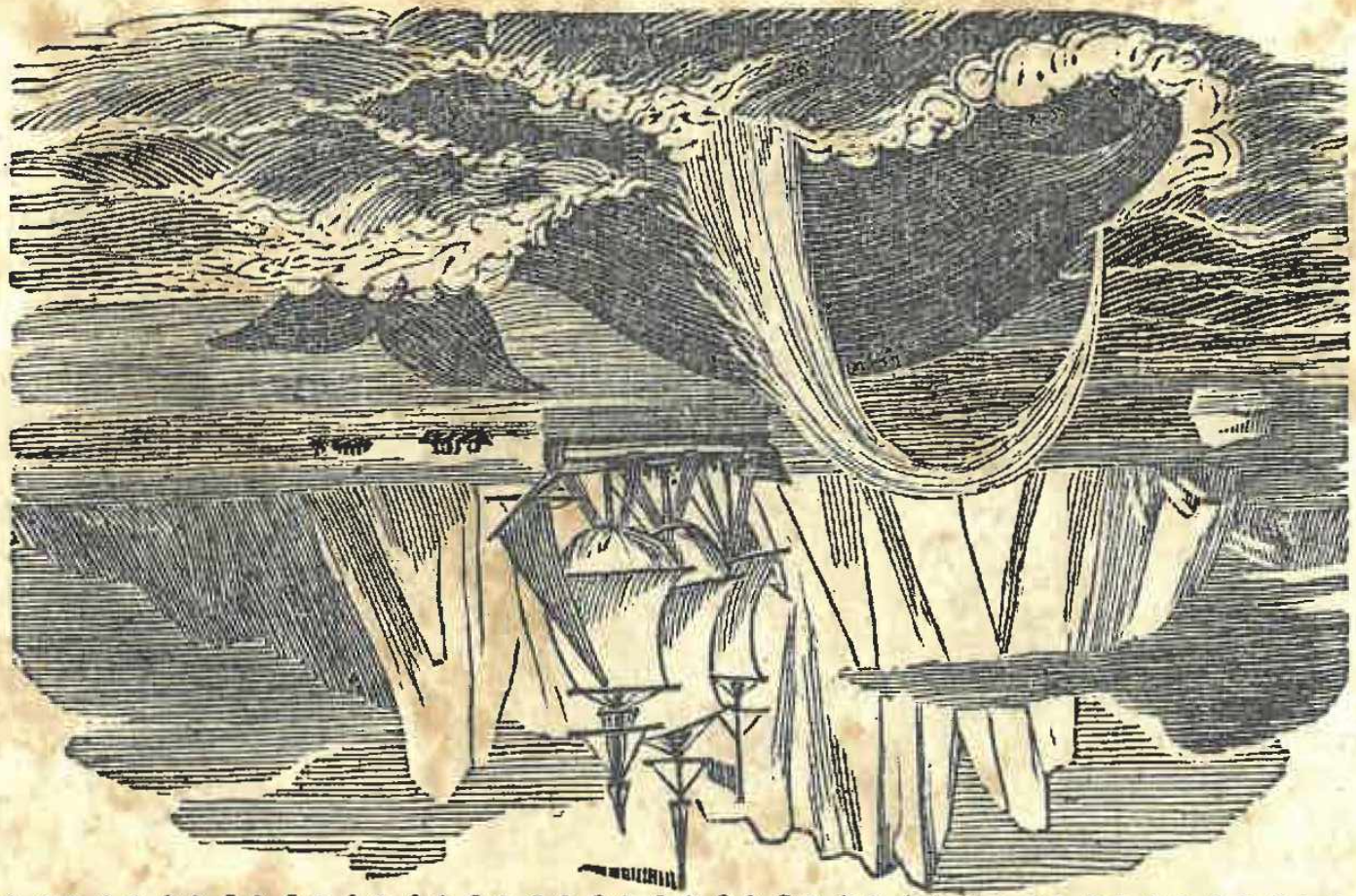
There are a great many varieties of the Whale, one of which, called the *Razor-Back*, is the largest, being often of the size just mentioned; but it is not as valuable as the *Common Whale*, (which you see on the opposite page,)

because it yields less oil, and that of an inferior quality. The *Common Whale* is not often more than sixty feet long, but it yields double the quantity of oil that the *Razor-Back* does, and is therefore more sought after by whalemen.

Whales are found in great numbers in the polar seas, where they are seen sporting around the icebergs, or mountains of ice, with which those seas abound. These mountains of ice form on the coast, and being at length broken off, float away into the ocean, in huge masses three or four thousand feet in height.

Dangerous as the whale-fishery is known to be, yet great numbers of ships are sent out every year on this business; and, indeed, if they were not, where should we procure oil for our lamps, and whale-bone for umbrellas, and for many other purposes?

The mouth of the Whale is very large; the throat small; and the eyes,



which have lids to them, not larger than those of an ox. On the top of the head are blow-holes, which are supposed to be his nostrils; through these he spouts the water to a great height, and with a noise like that of a cannon. His tail is very broad, and a most powerful weapon; when in pain or rage, he lashes the sea with it till the water is in a foam all around. One blow from his tail will dash a stout boat in pieces. The head of this kind of Whale is generally about one third of its length. The mouth is large enough to hold a good sized boat.

Immediately under the skin lies the fat, which is called blubber; this is from ten to twelve and sometimes, on some parts of the body, twenty inches thick. The color of the blubber is generally yellowish white, or yellow; but sometimes it is red. In the young ones it is always yellowish white. The color of the Whale is velvet black, or gray, and sometimes white.

When a whale-ship arrives in the seas where the Whales are found, the crews are every moment on the watch to discover the object of their voyage. As soon as one is seen, seven men, six of whom are rowers, leap into one of the boats, which is kept all ready for the purpose, and row towards the Whale in the deepest silence. Although this huge animal does not hear quick, yet when the sea is calm, a slight splashing alarms him.

Besides the men, the boat contains a large quantity of rope, all coiled up, to one end of which is fastened the harpoon, an instrument of iron about

three feet in length, so shaped as to pierce the Whale and remain in his body, thereby preventing his escape. The harpoon has a pole, or handle, of wood, about six feet long, attached to it.

Another instrument, called the lance,

which is a spear about six feet long, with the blade made very thin and sharp, is used to plunge into his vital parts and occasion his death.

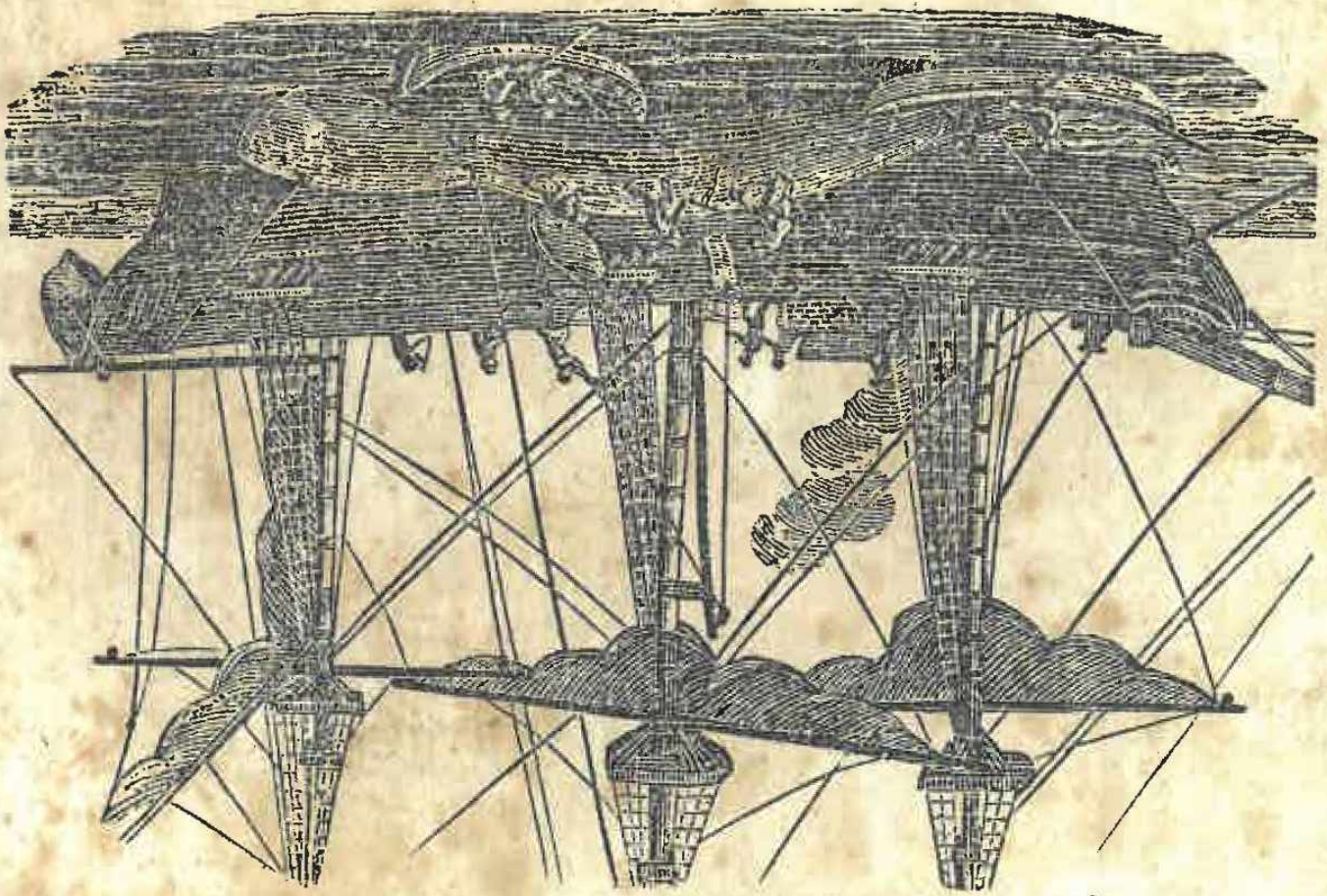
When the boat is as near the Whale as is consistent with safety, the harpooner darts his weapon into the back of the monster. This is a dangerous moment; for when the Whale feels the blow, he often lashes the sea with his tail with the greatest violence. But more commonly he darts down into the sea, to a great depth, dragging after him many hundred feet of the rope to which the harpoon is fastened, and drawing the boat through the water with great velocity.

During this time, several other boats put off from the ship, and by spreading themselves about, some one of

them is usually near where the Whale comes up to breathe. As soon as he rises he is attacked with the lances, which are struck as deep as possible, in order to reach a vital part. Blood, mixed with oil, then streams from his wounds, and becoming exhausted with his violent struggles, and with pain, he turns upon his side and expires.

The crews now give shouts of victory; they then make holes in the tail of their victim, through which ropes are passed, and being fastened to the boats, they tow the carcass to the ship with shouts of joy.

The body is now fastened to the sides of the vessel, where the whalebone is taken out, and the blubber cut off in large pieces and hoisted on board; there it is put into casks and kept till the vessel arrives home; ther put into large copper boilers, and the oil extracted in the same way that tallow is tried. If a *Spermaceti Whale* is taken, the oil is extracted on board,



by means of two large boilers, with which whale-ships are furnished. The fire is made with the scraps of blubber that has been tried, which produces a great heat.

Whaling is not only a toilsome, but a very dangerous business. Few men follow it many years without either suffering, or seeing other suffer, great calamities. The dangers are many, and some of them so sudden as to render escape almost impossible.

Sometimes the Whale, after he is struck, in his violent struggles dashes the boat in pieces. The rope, too, to which the harpoon is fastened, may get entangled while the Whale is drawing it out of the boat with great rapidity. In this case, if the line is not instantly cut by the man who stands ready for the purpose, the boat is immediately drawn under water.

Mr. Scoresby saw a boat thrown several yards into the air, from which it fell on its side, plunging its crew into

the sea. They were all soon taken up, when only one was found to have sustained severe injury.

In 1802, a whale-ship had one of its boats thrown fifteen feet into the air, and it fell down bottom upwards. The crew were all saved except one.

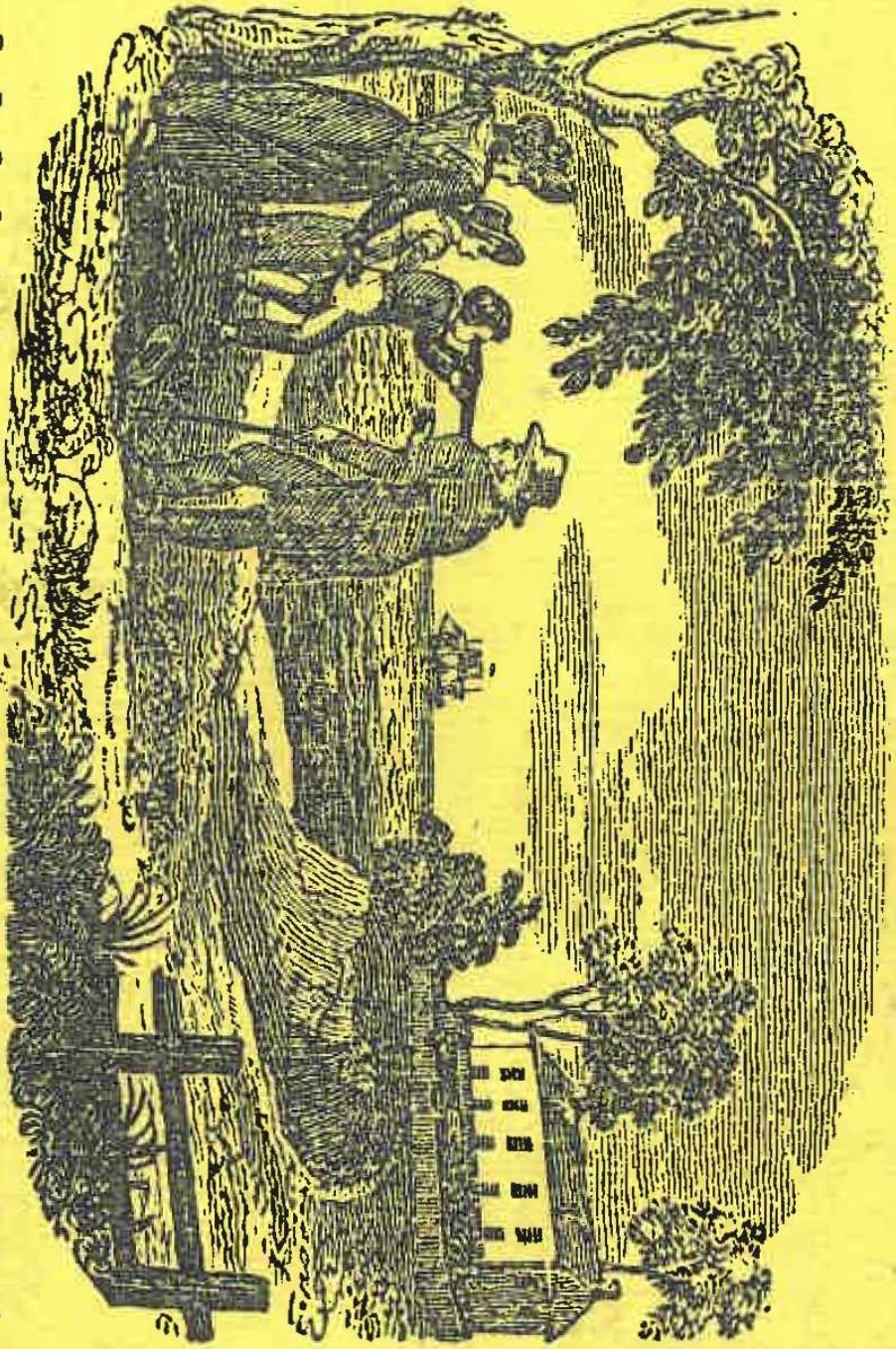
Whalers are often in great danger by reason of the monster they are pursuing becoming greatly enraged, and turning suddenly upon them. The Dutch writers mention a man who, after a fish had been struck, was hastening with a second boat to the support of the first. The Whale, however, rose, and with his head struck the boat so furiously, that it was shattered in pieces, and the man was thrown with the fragments on the back of the huge animal. Even then this bold mariner darted a second harpoon into the back of his victim; but, unfortunately, he got entangled in the line and could not extricate himself, nor could the others get near enough to save him. At last,

76-12216

however, the harpoon was disengaged, and he swam to the boat.

Entanglement in the line, while the retreating fish is drawing it off rapidly, is often fatal. A sailor, in 1818, happening to step into a coil of running rope, had a foot cut entirely off, before he could be extricated. A harpooner, also, had carelessly thrown some part of the line under his feet, when a sudden dart of the fish made it twist round his body. He had just time to cry out, "Clear away the line! O dear!" when he was cut almost asunder, dragged overboard, and never seen afterwards.

But these are only a small portion of the dangers experienced in these perilous pursuits. To numberless others in which the poor mariners are placed by the Whale, we may add the dangers of *shipwreck*, which, in these regions, among fields and mountains of ice, are very great, and often occasion the most dreadful sufferings.



BABCOCK'S

MORAL, INSTRUCTIVE, AND ENTERTAINING

TOY BOOKS,

BEAUTIFULLY

EMBELLISHED

WITH

SUPERIOR

ENGRAVINGS,

FOR

THE MIND AND THE EYE.

NEW EDITIONS,

OF ALL THE

DIFFERENT SIZES,

JUST PUBLISHED.