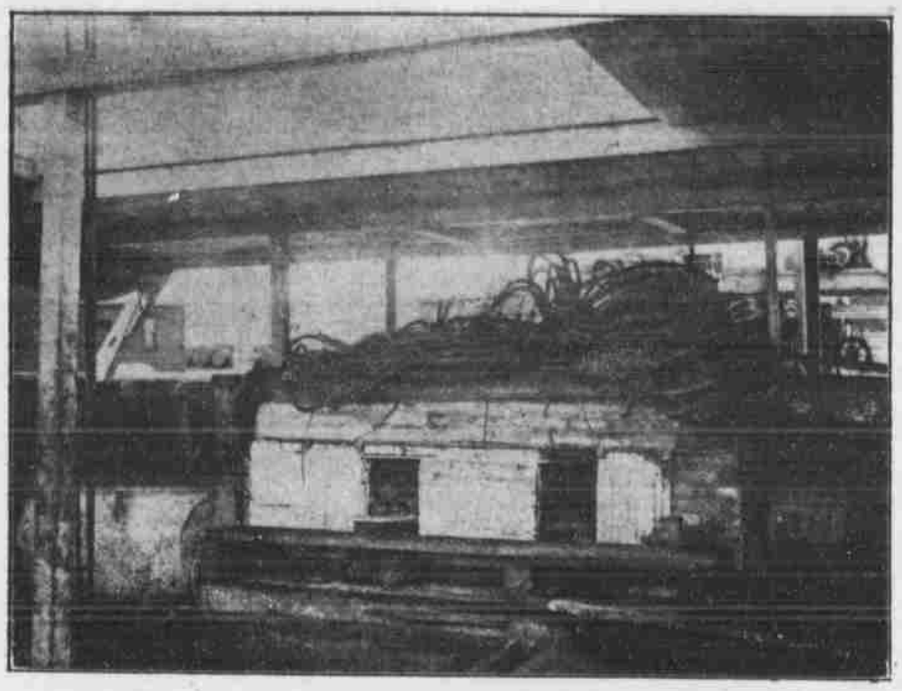
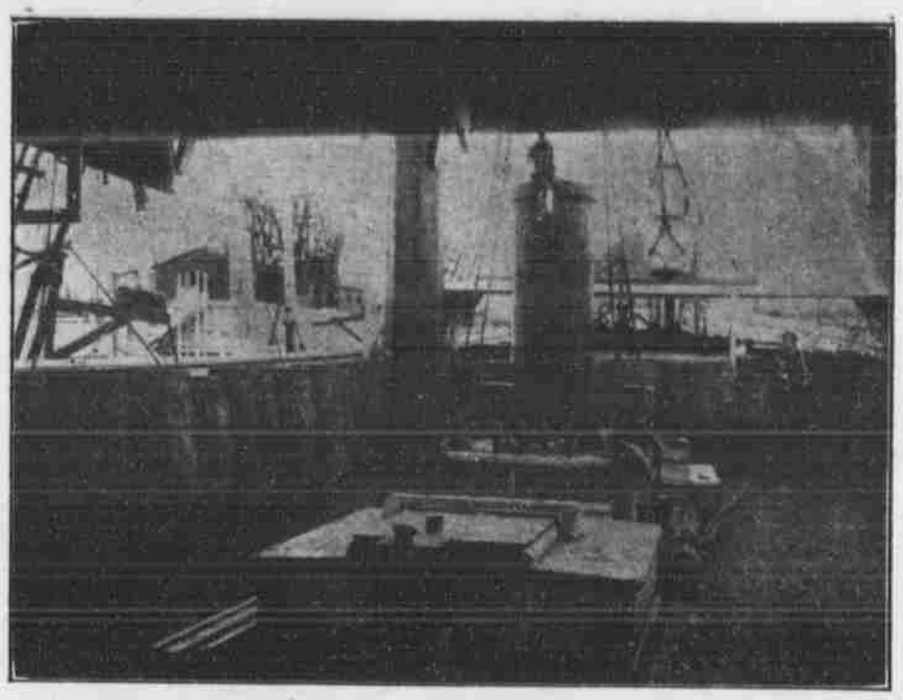
Life on Board a Whaling Ship



TRY WORKS ON A WHALING SHIP READY FOR BUSINESS.



SCENE ON DECK OF WHALING SHIP—OIL CASKS IN PLACE.

SO MANY American whalers are going to seek the big "fish" in the Baffin bay waters this season that the Canadian government has decided to charter a sealing steamer to cruise there to prevent the Yankee from "violating Canadian customs laws." It looks as if the "prostrated American industry" were about to awaken to something akin to vigor.

Years of more or less desultory whaling have given the sea-giants a chance to recuperate; and that they were not guilty of race suicide during their time of rest is proved by the fact that whales are plentiful in all the seas again.

For a rich American, eager to try real sport, there is a great chance now. Whaling, one of the oldest forms of big game hunting known, is the one field which has not been fittingly exploited by the amateur sportsman. In a time when lion and tiger shooting are mere routine sporting affairs to hundreds of wealthy men, the whale should appeal with great force.

To the man who has exhausted even the delight of the sixty-mile-an-hour automobile, there is an unlimited field. The chances are that if he once gets an opportunity to taste the unbridled and terrific pleasure of a "Nantucket sleigh ride," he will view his auto machine as a tame thing ever afterward.

The Nantucket sleigh ride is so common an experience with whalers that they are prone to speak of it in disappointingly matter-of-fact language. But, for all that, there isn't an old whaler of them all whose nostrils will not dilate with zest when he thinks upon it. And the landsman who ever has had the rare fortune to experience one is not likely to find anything else in all the rest of his life that will not seem tame compared with it.

Few landsmen ever have the opportunity. When a whaleboat lowers to fight a sixty-foot whale, the business is too important to encumber the craft with unskilled passengers. And not many landsmen would really care to go into the whaleboat even if they could, when they behold, wallowing in the sea the huge thing that is to be attacked.

The ride begins after the whale has been harpooned and when the boat header considers it time to draw up alongside and begin lancing. The first thing that is done is to haul in upon the harpoon line until the boat is brought as close to the running whale as is consistent with the extremely delicate margin that the whaler allows for safety. "Safety" to the whaler really means to remain just about an inch or two beyond the reach of the vast flukes with which the big beast is beating the sea.

Having hauled as far up on the whale as possible, the boat header reaches over the bows and lifts the line out of the chocks. Swiftly he brings it around outside of the boat and passes it to the bow oarsman, who has faced around on his thwart so that he looks forward.

He at once lays back on the line and holds fast with all his might. And immediately the boat, dragged like a railroad car by that mighty living locomotive, begins to run parallel with the side of the whale and just a few feet away from him, being prevented from running right on top of him by the oblique strain on the line.

Now, if the harpoon is well forward in the whale, the boat hangs in a precarious but sufficient arc of safety, for the swinging tail hammers the ocean behind it and the wildly sweeping jaw unavailingly searches the sea in front.

The boat header braces himself in the bows until he is based firmly as the stempost and begins to poise his long, keen, razor-edged killing lance, waiting for his opportunity to thrust it into the whale's life. Sometimes the opportunity comes within a minute after hauling up on the big "fish." Sometimes it does not come until the boat has been towed for many miles. It does not require very much time to tow a mile when a sixty-foot whale is doing the towing.

As long as the whale runs in a fairly straight course, the boat will hang to him like a terrier. He may champ and bite and hammer the ocean into acres of froth with head, flukes and tail and never shake it off. His only chance for retaliation is to run deep or to "mill." "Milling" is the act of turning suddenly and so bringing the boat within reach of flukes or jaws.

The position of the bow oarsman is no joy in a Nantucket sleighride. The chauffour in a racing automobile is in a paradise of ease and laxation compared with him.

He must keep the boat in position by his unaided strength. From the time he gets the line until the ride is ended he drives into a smothering sheet of flying spray. When the sea is high, every billow is hit by the boat with a smash that wrenches his arms. The strain on the wet line cuts and burns his hands. And if he lets a foot of it slip he is disgraced. Once he is in it he is in it for good, with no chance of help or relief till the wild advanture is done.

Often the boat is hauled so close on a harpooned whale that the harpooner leans over and steadies himself by resting one hand on the butt of the harpoon that is sticking in the great sea mammal, while with the other he drives the killing-lance. Again and again the long weapon is buried deep in the black sides, until suddenly thick, black-red clots of blood well from the wound, showing that the "life" has been reached.

Then it is "back," sometimes for dear life. A whale may take his death so quietly, so passively, that it is pitiable to see so mighty a swimmer killed thus easily by man. Or he may fight till the boat seems only a black atom in the sudden uproar that smites the ocean and sends tons of water rising till they seem high enough to wash the sky.

The danger from a fighting whale is not only in the whale himself. The boat is a perfect man-trap of keen, deadly tools. Lances and harpoons, cutting spades, hatchets, knives and boathooks, all sharpened to the finest edge the ship's grindstone can give them, fill the boat. If the whale gets at it and hurls it into the air, the men find themselves in murderous company when the weapons come raining down on them.

The harpoon line goes hissing out—a serpent of rope far more dangerous than any cobra, for let it but kink in the least and catch a man and he will fly overboard with it and out of sight as if he were a mere splinter of wood.

So there are enough sporting chances in the whale to excite and content the most exacting of sportsmen. And the size of the trophy if he "bags" a whale certainly leaves nothing to be desired.

Captain Davis, one of the most famous of the oldtime American whalers, gives these as the dimensions of a right whale yielding 250 barrels of oil.

"The blubber of such a whale," he says, "is half a yard thick, and if put together in a strip would be sixty-six feet long and twenty-seven feet wide. The upper jaw would make a room nine feet high and twenty feet long. The lips and throat of the brute, with the supporting jawbones, will weigh as much as twenty-five oxen of 1,000 pounds each. The tongue alone will often weigh as much as ten oxen.

"The spread of the lips is thirty feet. He can take in fifty barrels of water at each mouthful. When feeding, a whale as big as that sifts a track of sea a quarter of a mile long and fifteen feet wide in one run. Then he raises his head, forces his mighty tongue into the cavity of his whalebone sieve and drives the water out with immense force.

"The tail of a right whale is twenty-five feet broad and six feet deep, and the point of junction with the body is about four feet in diameter. In it lie tendons as big around as a man's leg.

"The greatest blood vessels are more than a foot in diameter. The blood that is forced through them by a heart as big as a hogshead runs in torrents, heated to 104 degrees.

"The respiratory canal is more than a foot in diameter. The rush of air through it is as noisy as the exhaust pipe of a thousand horse-power steam engine; and when the fatal wound is given, a cataract of clotted blood is spattered over the hunters, so hot and nauseating that the crew of a whaleboat often becomes helplessly sick."

Professions Open to Women in Europe

THE INDEPENDENCE of the American and English women, for a long time regarded as a scandal on the continent, in time came to be envied, and is now being emulated everywhere. All trades and professions are being opened to women in such conservative countries as Russia, Holland and Germany, reports the New York Evening Post. In Russia there are several business firms conducted wholly by women, and they recently rather startled the minister of finance, M. Witte, by sending him a petition requesting him to allow them to do business on their own account in the Stock exchange instead of employing brokers. The minister asked for time to consider the petition.

In Holland a certain Miss Cremer, who has just taken her degree of doctor of philosophy, applied to the general synod of the Reformed Dutch church, asking to be admitted to serve as a duly qualified pastor. Her petition was refused by a majority of one vote, but the discussion which was aroused by her radical request showed a liberal disposition on the part of many members of the synod, and a willingness to extend the field of work for Dutch women. Perseverance being an essential virtue of the pastoral office, Miss Cremer may yet win her permission to preach.

In Germany the women have been applying for admission to the universities in such numbers that the authorities are alarmed, and it is rumored that conditions for admission will be made more and more stringent in the future, in hopes of discouraging the attendance of women. In Prussia, which has never made any important concessions to the demands of women, the reaction is apparently stronger than elsewhere. So severe have the conditions for admittance been made at the University of Berlin that the enrolment decreased nearly one-half in a single semester. In this university women are not matriculated at all now, and can attend lectures only as "hearers," and that by special permission. The example of the leading institution in Berlin will, no doubt, be followed by others throughout the country.

Far from indicating the failure of the women students to show themselves worthy of the higher education, the attitude of the German authorities is plainly one of defense against an advance they little believed in at the outset. They frankly admit as much. Many Germans object to the presence of women in lecture rooms, while appreciating erudition in those who have acquired their knowledge elsewhere. A celebrated professor of Sanskrit of Berlin accepted the assistance of an American woman in certain of his works, but when she expressed a desire to listen to one of his lectures he replied that she might do so, and welcome—over the telephone. She declined.

English women have less liberty in the professions than their great political and social liberty would seem to warrant. They have been excluded from the bar up to the present time, but a London woman recently applied for admission, and her application is now under consideration. The decision was promised in April. The applicant, whose name is not divulged, seeks admission to Gray's Inn, one of the four inns of court, the others being Lincoln's Inn, the Middle Temple and the Inner Temple. These inns are governed by the benchers, who superintend the admission and education of students for the bar, the calling of barristers, and the regulation of the profession.

The benchers of Lincoln Inn have shown a liberal tendency in their attitude toward women lawyers. They have given the use of their books and library to Miss Cornelia Sorabji, a Hindu lawyer, who is now in London preparing herself for a notable work among her own people. Miss Sorabji took her degree from the Bombay university, and has practiced as an advocate in the Indian courts. Lately she propounded a plan for legal aid for property-owning women, widows and orphans in India, which has been much discussed both in India and England, and receives the indorsement of a number of eminent men.

The helplessness of the native women who live under the restrictions of the Purdah is hardly conceivable in our civilization. All of their business must be done through a man agent whom they are not allowed to see, or even to converse with, except behind a screen. If the agent is dishonest the Purdahnishin can invoke the aid of the law only through the swindling agent, certainly no very satisfactory medium. Miss Sorabji's plan is for a corps of women lawyers to be attached to the court of words department, to whom the widowed Purdahnishin could have free access, and thereby secure protection for her property rights. It is considered highly probable that women lawyers will be appointed to these positions within a short time. Naturally, they will be native women, as far as they are available. It is notable that the educated Hindu woman has, in a number of instances, shown a decided leaning toward the legal profession. Miss Sorabji's attainments, it is said, would be notable in any country.

Turkey is the last country where woman's intellectual emancipation might be expected, but there are a few energetic women and more than a few liberal men in the Ottoman empire who are bent on improving the lot of Turkish women. Among them are a trio who are now lecturing in European cities: Princess Hairie Ben-Aid, her husband, who although of Swedish birth, spent some years in the service of the sultan, and an ex-editor of a Turkish journal.

Taking it Out on Family

Mrs. Ferguson—George, what particular failing of yours did the preacher touch on in his sermon this morning?"

Mr. Ferguson—What do you ask me that question for?

Mrs. Ferguson—Because you have been as cross as a bear ever since you came home from church.—Chicago Tribune.