It was a Saturday night, and such a Sabbath as followed! Ex officio professors of Sabbath breaking are all whalemens. The ivory Pequod was turned into what seemed a shamble; every sailor a butcher. You would have thought we were offering up ten thousand red oxen to the sea gods.

In the first place, the enormous cutting tackles, among other ponderous things comprising a cluster of blocks generally painted green, and which no single man can possibly lift- this vast bunch of grapes was swayed up to the main-top and firmly lashed to the lower mast-head, the strongest point anywhere above a ship’s deck. The end of the hawser-like rope winding through these intricacies, was then conducted to the windlass, and the huge lower block of the tackles was swung over the whale; to this block the great blubber hook, weighing some one hundred pounds, was attached. And now suspended in stages over the side, Starbuck and Stubb, the mates, armed with their long spades, began cutting a hole in the body for the insertion of the hook just above the nearest of the two side-fins. This done, a broad, semicircular line is cut round the hole, the hook is inserted, and the main body of the crew striking up a wild chorus, now commence heaving in one dense crowd at the windlass. When instantly, the entire ship careens over on her side; every bolt in her starts like the nailheads of an old house in frosty weather; she trembles, quivers, and nods her frightened mast-heads to the sky. More and more she leans over to the whale, while every gasping heave of the windlass is answered by a helping heave from the billows; till at last, a swift, startling snap is heard; with a great swash the ship rolls upwards and
backwards from the whale, and the triumphant tackle rises into sight
dragging after it the disengaged semicircular end of the first strip of
blubber. Now as the blubber envelopes the whale precisely as the rind
does an orange, so is it stripped off from the body precisely as an orange
is sometimes stripped by spiralizing it. For the strain constantly kept up
by the windlass continually keeps the whale rolling over and over in the
water, and as the blubber in one strip uniformly peels off along the line
called the “scarf,” simultaneously cut by the spades of Starbuck and
Stubb, the mates; and just as fast as it is thus peeled off, and indeed by
that very act itself, it is all the time being hoisted higher and higher aloft
till its upper end grazes the main-top; the men at the windlass then cease
heaving, for a moment or two the prodigious blood-dripping mass sways
to and fro as if let down from the sky, and every one present must take
good heed to dodge it when it swings, else it may box his ears and pitch
him headlong overboard.

One of the attending harpooneers now advances with a long, keen
weapon called a boarding-sword, and watching his chance he
dexterously slices out a considerable hole in the lower part of the
swaying mass. Into this hole, the end of the second alternating great
tackle is then hooked so as to retain a hold upon the blubber, in order to
prepare for what follows. Whereupon, this accomplished swordsman,
warning all hands to stand off, once more makes a scientific dash at the
mass, and with a few sidelong, desperate, lunging, slicings, severs it
completely in twain; so that while the short lower part is still fast, the
long upper strip, called a blanket-piece, swings clear, and is all ready for
lowering. The heavers forward now resume their song, and while the one
tackle is peeling and hoisting a second strip from the whale, the other is
slowly slackened away, and down goes the first strip through the main
hatchway right beneath, into an unfurnished parlor called the blubber-
room. Into this twilight apartment sundry nimble hands keep coiling
away the long blanket-piece as if it were a great live mass of plaited
serpents. And thus the work proceeds; the two tackles hoisting and
lowering simultaneously; both whale and windlass heaving, the heavers
singing, the blubber-room gentlemen coiling, the mates scarfing, the ship straining, and all hands swearing occasionally, by way of assuaging the general friction.