

Moby Dick

By

Herman Melville

Chapter 16: The Ship

In bed we concocted our plans for the morrow. But to my surprise and no small concern, Queequeg now gave me to understand, that he had been diligently consulting Yojo- the name of his black little god- and Yojo had told him two or three times over, and strongly insisted upon it everyway, that instead of our going together among the whaling-fleet in harbor, and in concert selecting our craft; instead of this, I say, Yojo earnestly enjoined that the selection of the ship should rest wholly with me, inasmuch as Yojo purposed befriending us; and, in order to do so, had already pitched upon a vessel, which, if left to myself, I, Ishmael, should infallibly light upon, for all the world as though it had turned out by chance; and in that vessel I must immediately ship myself, for the present irrespective of Queequeg.

I have forgotten to mention that, in many things, Queequeg placed great confidence in the excellence of Yojo's judgment and surprising forecast of things; and cherished Yojo with considerable esteem, as a rather good sort of god, who perhaps meant well enough upon the whole, but in all cases did not succeed in his benevolent designs.

Now, this plan of Queequeg's or rather Yojo's, touching the selection of our craft; I did not like that plan at all. I had not a little relied upon Queequeg's sagacity to point out the whaler best fitted to carry us and our fortunes securely. But as all my remonstrances produced no effect upon Queequeg, I was obliged to acquiesce; and accordingly prepared to set about this business with a determined rushing sort of energy and

vigor, that should quickly settle that trifling little affair. Next morning early, leaving Queequeg shut up with in our little bedroom- for it seemed that it was some sort of Lent or Ramadan, or day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer with Queequeg and Yojo that day; how it was I never could find out, for, though I applied myself to it several times, I never could master his liturgies and XXXIX Articles- leaving Queequeg, then, fasting on his tomahawk pipe, and Yojo warming himself at his sacrificial fire of shavings, I sallied out among the shipping. After much prolonged sauntering, and many random inquiries, I learnt that there were three ships up for three-years' voyages- The Devil-dam, the Tit-bit, and the Pequod. Devil-dam, I do not know the origin of; Tit-bit is obvious; Pequod you will no doubt remember, was the name of a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians; now extinct as the ancient Medes. I peered and pryed about the Devil-dam; from her, hopped over to the Tit-bit; and finally, going on board the Pequod, looked around her for a moment, and then decided that this was the very ship for us.

You may have seen many a quaint craft in your day, for aught I know;- square-toed luggers; mountainous Japanese junks; butter-box galliots, and what not; but take my word for it, you never saw such a rare old craft as this same rare old Pequod. She was a ship of the old school, rather small if anything; with an old-fashioned claw-footed look about her. Long seasoned and weather-stained in the typhoons and calms of all four oceans, her old hull's complexion was darkened like a French grenadier's, who has alike fought in Egypt and Siberia. Her venerable bows looked bearded. Her masts- cut somewhere on the coast of Japan, where her original ones were lost overboard in a gale- her masts stood stiffly up like the spines of the three old kings of Cologne. Her ancient decks were worn and wrinkled, like the pilgrim-worshipped flag-stone in Canterbury Cathedral where Becket bled. But to all these her old antiquities, were added new and marvellous features, pertaining to the wild business that for more than half a century she had followed. Old Captain Peleg, many years her chief-mate, before he commanded another vessel of his own, and now a retired seaman, and one of the

principal owners of the Pequod,- this old Peleg, during the term of his chief-mateship, had built upon her original grotesqueness, and inlaid it, all over, with a quaintness both of material and device, unmatched by anything except it be Thorkill-Hake's carved buckler or bedstead. She was apparelled like any barbaric Ethiopian emperor, his neck heavy with pendants of polished ivory. She was a thing of trophies. A cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies. All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to. Those thews ran not through base blocks of land wood, but deftly travelled over sheaves of sea-ivory. Scorning a turnstile wheel at her reverend helm, she sported there a tiller; and that tiller was in one mass, curiously carved from the long narrow lower jaw of her hereditary foe. The helmsman who steered that tiller in a tempest, felt like the Tartar, when he holds back his fiery steed by clutching its jaw. A noble craft, but somehow a most melancholy! All noble things are touched with that.

Now when I looked about the quarter-deck, for some one having authority, in order to propose myself as a candidate for the voyage, at first I saw nobody; but I could not well overlook a strange sort of tent, or rather wigwam, pitched a little behind the main-mast. It seemed only a temporary erection used in port. It was of a conical shape, some ten feet high; consisting of the long, huge slabs of limber black bone taken from the middle and highest part of the jaws of the right-whale. Planted with their broad ends on the deck, a circle of these slabs laced together, mutually sloped towards each other, and at the apex united in a tufted point, where the loose hairy fibres waved to and fro like the top-knot on some old Pottowottamie Sachem's head. A triangular opening faced towards the bows of the ship, so that the insider commanded a complete view forward.

And half concealed in this queer tenement, I at length found one who by his aspect seemed to have authority; and who, it being noon, and the

ship's work suspended, was now enjoying respite from the burden of command. He was seated on an old-fashioned oaken chair, wriggling all over with curious carving; and the bottom of which was formed of a stout interlacing of the same elastic stuff of which the wigwam was constructed.

There was nothing so very particular, perhaps, about the appearance of the elderly man I saw; he was brown and brawny, like most old seamen, and heavily rolled up in blue pilot-cloth, cut in the Quaker style; only there was a fine and almost microscopic net-work of the minutest wrinkles interlacing round eyes, which must have arisen from his continual sailings in many hard gales, and always looking to windward;- for this causes the muscles about the eyes to become pursed together. Such eye-wrinkles are very effectual in a scowl.

“Is this the Captain of the Pequod?” said I, advancing to the door of the tent.

“Supposing it be the captain of the Pequod, what dost thou want of him?” he demanded.

“I was thinking of shipping.”

“Thou wast, wast thou? I see thou art no Nantucketer- ever been in a stove boat?”

“No, Sir, I never have.”

“Dost know nothing at all about whaling, I dare say- eh?”

“Nothing, Sir; but I have no doubt I shall soon learn. I've been several voyages in the merchant service, and I think that-”

“Merchant service be damned. Talk not that lingo to me. Dost see that leg?- I’ll take that leg away from thy stern, if ever thou talkest of the merchant service to me again. Marchant service indeed! I suppose now ye feel considerable proud of having served in those marchant ships. But flukes! man, what makes thee want to go a whaling, eh?- it looks a little suspicious, don’t it, eh?- Hast not been a pirate, hast thou?- Didst not rob thy last Captain, didst thou?- Dost not think of murdering the officers when thou gettest to sea?”

I protested my innocence of these things. I saw that under the mask of these half humorous innuendoes, this old seaman, as an insulated Quakerish Nantucketer, was full of his insular prejudices, and rather distrustful of all aliens, unless they hailed from Cape Cod or the Vineyard.

“But what takes thee a-whaling? I want to know that before I think of shipping ye.”

“Well, sir, I want to see what whaling is. I want to see the world.”

“Want to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eye on Captain Ahab?”

“Who is Captain Ahab, sir?”

“Aye, aye, I thought so. Captain Ahab is the Captain of this ship.”

“I am mistaken then. I thought I was speaking to the Captain himself.”

“Thou art speaking to Captain Peleg- that’s who ye are speaking to, young man. It belongs to me and Captain Bildad to see the Pequod fitted out for the voyage, and supplied with all her needs, including crew. We are part owners and agents. But as I was going to say, if thou wantest to know what whaling is, as thou tellest ye do, I can put ye in a way of

finding it out before ye bind yourself to it, past backing out. Clap eye on Captain Ahab, young man, and thou wilt find that he has only one leg.”

“What do you mean, sir? Was the other one lost by a whale?”

“Lost by a whale! Young man, come nearer to me: it was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest parmacetty that ever chipped a boat!- ah, ah!”

I was a little alarmed by his energy, perhaps also a little touched at the hearty grief in his concluding exclamation, but said as calmly as I could, “What you say is no doubt true enough, sir; but how could I know there was any peculiar ferocity in that particular whale, though indeed I might have inferred as much from the simple fact of the accident.”

“Look ye now, young man, thy lungs are a sort of soft, d’ye see; thou dost not talk shark a bit. Sure, ye’ve been to sea before now; sure of that?”

“Sir,” said I, “I thought I told you that I had been four voyages in the merchant-”

“Hard down out of that! Mind what I said about the marchant service- don’t aggravate me- I won’t have it. But let us understand each other. I have given thee a hint about what whaling is! do ye yet feel inclined for it?”

“I do, sir.”

“Very good. Now, art thou the man to pitch a harpoon down a live whale’s throat, and then jump after it? Answer, quick!”

“I am, sir, if it should be positively indispensable to do so; not to be got rid of, that is; which I don’t take to be the fact.”

“Good again. Now then, thou not only wantest to go a-whaling, to find out by experience what whaling is, but ye also want to go in order to see the world? Was not that what ye said? I thought so. Well then, just step forward there, and take a peep over the weather bow, and then back to me and tell me what ye see there.”

For a moment I stood a little puzzled by this curious request, not knowing exactly how to take it, whether humorously or in earnest. But concentrating all his crew's feet into one scowl, Captain Peleg started me on the errand.

Going forward and glancing over the weather bow, I perceived that the ship swinging to her anchor with the flood-tide, was now obliquely pointing towards the open ocean. The prospect was unlimited, but exceedingly monotonous and forbidding; not the slightest variety that I could see.

“Well, what's the report?” said Peleg when I came back; “what did ye see?”

“Not much,” I replied- “nothing but water; considerable horizon though, and there's a squall coming up, I think.”

“Well, what does thou think then of seeing the world? Do ye wish to go round Cape Horn to see any more of it, eh? Can't ye see the world where you stand?”

I was a little staggered, but go a-whaling I must, and I would; and the Pequod was as good a ship as any- I thought the best- and all this I now repeated to Peleg. Seeing me so determined, he expressed his willingness to ship me.

“And thou mayest as well sign the papers right off,” he added- “come along with ye.” And so saying, he led the way below deck into the cabin.

Seated on the transom was what seemed to me a most uncommon and surprising figure. It turned out to be Captain Bildad who along with Captain Peleg was one of the largest owners of the vessel; the other shares, as is sometimes the case in these ports, being held by a crowd of old annuitants; widows, fatherless children, and chancery wards; each owning about the value of a timber head, or a foot of plank, or a nail or two in the ship. People in Nantucket invest their money in whaling vessels, the same way that you do yours in approved state stocks bringing in good interest.

Now, Bildad, like Peleg, and indeed many other Nantucketers, was a Quaker, the island having been originally settled by that sect; and to this day its inhabitants in general retain in an uncommon measure peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of these same Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whale-hunters. They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance.

So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names- a singularly common fashion on the island- and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman. And when these things unite in a man of greatly superior natural force, with a globular brain and a ponderous heart; who has also by the stillness and seclusion of many long night-watches in the remotest waters, and beneath constellations never seen here at the north, been led to think untraditionally and independently; receiving all nature’s sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin voluntary and confiding breast,

and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, to learn a bold and nervous lofty language- that man makes one in a whole nation's census- a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies. Nor will it at all detract from him, dramatically regarded, if either by birth or other circumstances, he have what seems a half wilful overruling morbidness at the bottom of his nature. For all men tragically great are made so through a certain morbidness. Be sure of this, O young ambition, all mortal greatness is but disease. But, as yet we have not to do with such an one, but with quite another; and still a man, who, if indeed peculiar, it only results again from another phase of the Quaker, modified by individual circumstances.

Like Captain Peleg, Captain Bildad was a well-to-do, retired whaler. But unlike Captain Peleg- who cared not a rush for what are called serious things, and indeed deemed those self-same serious things the veriest of all trifles- Captain Bildad had not only been originally educated according to the strictest sect of Nantucket Quakerism, but all his subsequent ocean life, and the sight of many unclad, lovely island creatures, round the Horn- all that had not moved this native born Quaker one single jot, had not so much as altered one angle of his vest. Still, for all this immutableness, was there some lack of common consistency about worthy Captain Peleg. Though refusing, from conscientious scruples, to bear arms against land invaders, yet himself had illimitably invaded the Atlantic and Pacific; and though a sworn foe to human bloodshed, yet had he in his straight-bodied coat, spilled tuns upon tuns of leviathan gore. How now in the contemplative evening of his days, the pious Bildad reconciled these things in the reminiscence, I do not know; but it did not seem to concern him much, and very probably he had long since come to the sage and sensible conclusion that a man's religion is one thing, and this practical world quite another. This world pays dividends. Rising from a little cabin boy in short clothes of the drabest drab, to a harpooner in a broad shad-bellied waistcoat; from that becoming boat-header, chief mate, and captain, and finally a shipowner; Bildad, as I hinted before, had concluded his adventurous

career by wholly retiring from active life at the goodly age of sixty, and dedicating his remaining days to the quiet receiving of his well-earned income.

Now, Bildad, I am sorry to say, had the reputation of being an incorrigible old hunk, and in his sea-going days, a bitter, hard task-master. They told me in Nantucket, though it certainly seems a curious story, that when he sailed the old *Categut* whaleman, his crew, upon arriving home, were mostly all carried ashore to the hospital, sore exhausted and worn out. For a pious man, especially for a Quaker, he was certainly rather hard-hearted, to say the least. He never used to swear, though, at his men, they said; but somehow he got an inordinate quantity of cruel, unmitigated hard work out of them. When Bildad was a chief-mate, to have his drab-colored eye intently looking at you, made you feel completely nervous, till you could clutch something- a hammer or a marrling-spike, and go to work like mad, at something or other, never mind what. Indolence and idleness perished before him. His own person was the exact embodiment of his utilitarian character. On his long, gaunt body, he carried no spare flesh, no superfluous beard, his chin having a soft, economical nap to it, like that worn nap of his broad-brimmed hat.

Such, then, was the person that I saw seated on the transom when I followed Captain Peleg down into the cabin. The space between the decks was small; and there, bolt upright, sat old Bildad, who always sat so, and never leaned, and this to save his coat-tails. His broad-brim was placed beside him; his legs were stiffly crossed; his drab vesture was buttoned up to his chin; and spectacles on nose, he seemed absorbed in reading from a ponderous volume.

“Bildad,” cried Captain Peleg, “at it again, Bildad, eh? Ye have been studying those Scriptures, now, for the last thirty years, to my certain knowledge. How far ye got, Bildad?”

As if long habituated to such profane talk from his old shipmate, Bildad, without noticing his present irreverence, quietly looked up, and seeing me, glanced again inquiringly towards Peleg.

“He says he’s our man, Bildad,” said Peleg, “he wants to ship.”

“Dost thee?” said Bildad, in a hollow tone, and turning round to me.

“I dost,” said I unconsciously, he was so intense a Quaker.

“What do ye think of him, Bildad?” said Peleg.

“He’ll do,” said Bildad, eyeing me, and then went on spelling away at his book in a mumbling tone quite audible.

I thought him the queerest old Quaker I ever saw, especially as Peleg, his friend and old shipmate, seemed such a blusterer. But I said nothing, only looking round me sharply. Peleg now threw open a chest, and drawing forth the ship’s articles, placed pen and ink before him, and seated himself at a little table. I began to think it was high time to settle with myself at what terms I would be willing to engage for the voyage. I was already aware that in the whaling business they paid no wages; but all hands, including the captain, received certain shares of the profits called lays, and that these lays were proportioned to the degree of importance pertaining to the respective duties of the ship’s company. I was also aware that being a green hand at whaling, my own lay would not be very large; but considering that I was used to the sea, could steer a ship, splice a rope, and all that, I made no doubt that from all I had heard I should be offered at least the 275th lay- that is, the 275th part of the clear net proceeds of the voyage, whatever that might eventually amount to. And though the 275th lay was what they call a rather long lay, yet it was better than nothing; and if we had a lucky voyage, might pretty nearly pay for the clothing I would wear out on it, not to speak of

my three years' beef and board, for which I would not have to pay one stiver.

It might be thought that this was a poor way to accumulate a princely fortune- and so it was, a very poor way indeed. But I am one of those who never take on about princely fortunes, and am quite content if the world is ready to board and lodge me, while I am putting up at this grim sign of the Thunder Cloud. Upon the whole, I thought the 275th lay would be about the fair thing, but would not have been surprised had I been offered the 200th, considering I was of a broad-shouldered make.

But one thing, nevertheless, that made me a little distrustful about receiving a generous share of the profits was this: Ashore, I had heard something of both Captain Peleg and his unaccountable old crony Bildad; how that they being the principal proprietors of the Pequod, therefore the other and more inconsiderable and scattered owners, left nearly the whole management of the ship's affairs to these two. And I did not know but what the stingy old Bildad might have a mighty deal to say about shipping hands, especially as I now found him on board the Pequod, quite at home there in the cabin, and reading his Bible as if at his own fireside. Now while Peleg was vainly trying to mend a pen with his jack-knife, old Bildad, to my no small surprise, considering that he was such an interested party in these proceedings; Bildad never heeded us, but went on mumbling to himself out of his book, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth-"

"Well, Captain Bildad," interrupted Peleg, "what d'ye say, what lay shall we give this young man?"

"Thou knowest best," was the sepulchral reply, "the seven hundred and seventy-seventh wouldn't be too much, would it?- 'where moth and rust do corrupt, but lay-'"

Lay, indeed, thought I, and such a lay! the seven hundred and seventy-seventh! Well, old Bildad, you are determined that I, for one, shall not lay up many lays here below, where moth and rust do corrupt. It was an exceedingly long lay that, indeed; and though from the magnitude of the figure it might at first deceive a landsman, yet the slightest consideration will show that though seven hundred and seventy-seven is a pretty large number, yet, when you come to make a tenth of it, you will then see, I say, that the seven hundred and seventy-seventh part of a forthing is a good deal less than seven hundred and seventy-seven gold doubloons; and so I thought at the time.

“Why, blast your eyes, Bildad,” cried Peleg, “thou dost not want to swindle this young man! he must have more than that.”

“Seven hundred and seventy-seventh,” again said Bildad, without lifting his eyes; and then went on mumbling- “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

“I am going to put him down for the three hundredth,” said Peleg, “do ye hear that, Bildad! The three hundredth lay, I say.”

Bildad laid down his book, and turning solemnly towards him said,

“Captain Peleg, thou hast a generous heart; but thou must consider the duty thou owest to the other owners of this ship- widows and orphans, many of them- and that if we too abundantly reward the labors of this young man, we may be taking the bread from those widows and those orphans. The seven hundred and seventy-seventh lay, Captain Peleg.”

“Thou Bildad!” roared Peleg, starting up and clattering about the cabin. “Blast ye, Captain Bildad, if I had followed thy advice in these matters, I would afore now had a conscience to lug about that would be heavy enough to founder the largest ship that ever sailed round Cape Horn.”

“Captain Peleg,” said Bildad steadily, “thy conscience may be drawing ten inches of water, or ten fathoms, I can’t tell; but as thou art still an impenitent man, Captain Peleg, I greatly fear lest thy conscience be but a leaky one; and will in the end sink thee foundering down to the fiery pit, Captain Peleg.”

“Fiery pit! fiery pit! ye insult me, man; past all natural bearing, ye insult me. It’s an all-fired outrage to tell any human creature that he’s bound to hell. Flukes and flames! Bildad, say that again to me, and start my soulbolts, but I’ll- I’ll- yes, I’ll swallow a live goat with all his hair and horns on. Out of the cabin, ye canting, drab-colored son of a wooden gun- a straight wake with ye!”

As he thundered out this he made a rush at Bildad, but with a marvellous oblique, sliding celerity, Bildad for that time eluded him.

Alarmed at this terrible outburst between the two principal and responsible owners of the ship, and feeling half a mind to give up all idea of sailing in a vessel so questionably owned and temporarily commanded, I stepped aside from the door to give egress to Bildad, who, I made no doubt, was all eagerness to vanish from before the awakened wrath of Peleg. But to my astonishment, he sat down again on the transom very quietly, and seemed to have not the slightest intention of withdrawing. He seemed quite used to impenitent Peleg and his ways. As for Peleg, after letting off his rage as he had, there seemed no more left in him, and he, too, sat down like a lamb, though he twitched a little as if still nervously agitated. “Whew!” he whistled at last- “the squall’s gone off to leeward, I think. Bildad, thou used to be good at sharpening a lance, mend that pen, will ye. My jack-knife here needs the grindstone. That’s he; thank ye, Bildad. Now then, my young man, Ishmael’s thy name, didn’t ye say? Well then, down ye go here, for the three hundredth lay.”

“Captain Peleg,” said I, “I have a friend with me who wants to ship too—shall I bring him down to-morrow?”

“To be sure,” said Peleg. “Fetch him along, and we’ll look at him.”

“What lay does he want?” groaned Bildad, glancing up from the Book in which he had again been burying himself.

“Oh! never thee mind about that, Bildad,” said Peleg. “Has he ever whaled it any?” turning to me.

“Killed more whales than I can count, Captain Peleg.”

“Well, bring him along then.”

And, after signing the papers, off I went; nothing doubting but that I had done a good morning’s work, and that the Pequod was the identical ship that Yojo had provided to carry Queequeg and me round the Cape.

But I had not proceeded far, when I began to bethink me that the Captain with whom I was to sail yet remained unseen by me; though, indeed, in many cases, a whale-ship will be completely fitted out, and receive all her crew on board, ere the captain makes himself visible by arriving to take command; for sometimes these voyages are so prolonged, and the shore intervals at home so exceedingly brief, that if the captain have family, or any absorbing concernment of that sort, he does not trouble himself much about his ship in port, but leaves her to the owners till all is ready for sea. However, it is always as well to have a look at him before irrevocably committing yourself into his hands. Turning back I accosted Captain Peleg, inquiring where Captain Ahab was to be found.

“And what dost thou want of Captain Ahab? It’s all right enough; thou art shipped.”

“Yes, but I should like to see him.”

“But I don’t think thou wilt be able to at present. I don’t know exactly what’s the matter with him; but he keeps close inside the house; a sort of sick, and yet he don’t look so. In fact, he ain’t sick; but no, he isn’t well either. Any how, young man, he won’t always see me, so I don’t suppose he will thee. He’s a queer man, Captain Ahab- so some think- but a good one. Oh, thou’lt like him well enough; no fear, no fear. He’s a grand, ungodly, god-like man, Captain Ahab; doesn’t speak much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Mark ye, be forewarned; Ahab’s above the common; Ahab’s been in colleges, as well as ‘mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales. His lance! aye, the keenest and surest that out of all our isle! Oh! he ain’t Captain Bildad; no, and he ain’t Captain Peleg; he’s Ahab, boy; and Ahab of old, thou knowest, was a crowned king!”

“And a very vile one. When that wicked king was slain, the dogs, did they not lick his blood?”

“Come hither to me- hither, hither,” said Peleg, with a significance in his eye that almost startled me. “Look ye, lad; never say that on board the Pequod. Never say it anywhere. Captain Ahab did not name himself .’Twas a foolish, ignorant whim of his crazy, widowed mother, who died when he was only a twelvemonth old. And yet the old squaw Tistig, at Gayhead, said that the name would somehow prove prophetic. And, perhaps, other fools like her may tell thee the same. I wish to warn thee. It’s a lie. I know Captain Ahab well; I’ve sailed with him as mate years ago; know what he is- a good man- not a pious, good man, like Bildad, but a swearing good man- something like me- only there’s a good deal more of him. Aye, aye, I know that he was never very jolly; and I know that on the passage home he was a little out of his mind for a spell; but it was the sharp shooting pains in his bleeding stump that brought that about, as any one might see. I know, too, that ever since he

lost his leg last voyage by that accursed whale, he's been a kind of moody- desperate moody, and savage sometimes; but that will all pass off. And once for all, let me tell thee and assure thee, young man, it's better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one. So good-bye to thee- and wrong not Captain Ahab, because he happens to have a wicked name. Besides, my boy, he has a wife- not three voyages wedded- a sweet, resigned girl. Think of that; by that sweet girl that old man had a child: hold ye then there can be any utter, hopeless harm in Ahab? No, no, my lad; stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his humanities!"

As I walked away, I was full of thoughtfulness; what had been incidentally revealed to me of Captain Ahab, filled me with a certain wild vagueness of painfulness concerning him. And somehow, at the time, I felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don't know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe of him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was not exactly awe; I do not know what it was. But I felt it; and it did not disincline me towards him; though I felt impatience at what seemed like mystery in him, so imperfectly as he was known to me then. However, my thoughts were at length carried in other directions, so that for the present dark Ahab slipped my mind.