WILD ACHIEVEMENTS,
AND
ROMANTIC VOYAGES,
OF
CAPTAIN
JOHN FRANCIS KNAPP,
(ONE OF THE SALEM MURDERERS.)
WHILE COMMANDER OF THE SHIP GENERAL ENDICOTT.
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HIS SEEKING THE CELEBRATED MAGELLAN
CLOUDS; AND VISIT TO BUONAPARTE ON ST. HELENA.

BY HIS SUPERCARGO.

'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the mighty deep.'
Psalmist.

BOSTON,
PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR.
1830.
TO THE PUBLIC.

Having for more than nine years sailed as supercargo of the ship Endicott, in which young Knapp made three or four voyages to different quarters of the world, I am enabled to present my readers with a book, which I flatter myself will be found throughout, abounding with the most thrilling interest, and at the same time, strictly and impartially correct. I have not, as the reader will at once perceive, been accustomed to write for the public eye. I therefore entreat that this, my first attempt, may be looked upon in the spirit of charity and forbearance. The truth is, I have for the last twenty years been more accustomed to the marlinespike than the goose quill, and this is the apology I offer for whatever inaccuracies may be discovered in these pages. If the work is a good one, it will be read; if not, it deserves, and will no doubt soon be forgotten. I therefore fearlessly commit it to the hands of the public, asking of them only in candor to remember the disadvantages under which it has been written, and the short time given me (one week) to accomplish my task.

Salem, September 20, 1830.  

J. W. S.

VOYAGES, &c.

The first voyage made by John Francis Knapp was in the autumn of 1822. Having robbed his father of a considerable sum of money about this time, it was deemed advisable, in order to hush up the affair, to send him on a voyage to the East Indies. This pleased Frank much, as he had always expressed a desire to become a sailor, and the darling wish of his heart was now to be gratified. When quite young, he was excessively fond of the sea, and most of his leisure hours were employed in sailing little boats in a pond adjoining his father's dwelling. His ideas of the ocean, were at this time however indistinct and shadowy. He had never seen the angry elements while in commotion, and was therefore unable to form any opinion of the grandeur of such a scene. When about twelve years of age he once crossed Lynn beach with some members of his family on their way to Nahant. It was there he first had an unrestricted view of the great ocean. He has often said it did not altogether accord with the ideas he had formed of its tremendous magnificence; yet he could not but admit it was wonderful—most wonderful. Its appearance on this day was not tempestuous, but troubled. The blue waves rose and fell like the heaving of an unquiet bosom. They fretted themselves to foam as a fiery horse when driven against his will. But to our subject:

Every thing being ready, we started from Salem in the ship Endicott on the 14th of October, 1822. Nothing occurred for a fortnight worthy of note. At length one evening we were suddenly becalmed; not a breath of air could be felt and the vessel floated
silently upon the vast and stirless ocean. She seemed a huge, solitary thing upon a boundless plain, where silence ever brooded. I never saw so dead a calm, the sailors crowded and huddled together, and shook their heads, and said it boded no good. The moon was shining clear and bright, high in the vaulted heavens, and flooded the blue water with her beams, which reflected them like polished silver. I stood near the stern, and contemplated with inexpressible feelings, this novel scene. Young Knapp was beside me, and evidently much frightened. He asked me what this all meant, I replied I knew not, but feared a sea nymph was near the vessel. As I uttered this last word, a strain burst upon my ears, wilder than anything I had ever heard, accompanied as with windings of a thousand horns, and the clashing of cymbals. It swelled from softness to command, and thrilled through the ears of every one on board. Nothing was visible, nor could I exactly tell whether the sounds proceeded from the water or the air. Suddenly all was again silent. Knapp and myself were about to retire to the cabin, when a slight noise was heard, and the sea assumed an appearance that strangely contrasted with the slumbering quietude it had before exhibited. At the distance of a mile from where the vessel lay, there suddenly swelled a wave which towered up to the sky and seemed threatening defiance against the heavens; it rolled onwards like a giant in his pride, glorying in his immensity, and kissed, as it passed, the smiling face of the firmament. All on board were chilled to the very heart, for we doubted not that destruction was inevitable. How could it be avoided? There was no retreating; there was not wind enough to crisp the sea, much more to stir a sail. It advanced slowly and steadily on, and distant sounds of tumult and revelry were heard; but near us, all was calm and placid as before, like the treacherous desert wave, that smiles as it lures on to death. Each one stood irresolute, gazing on the mighty moving

thing, expectant of death, yet unable to avoid it, like the fair victim of the sea monster. I alone felt all the power and grandeur of the scene; my life was a straw to me; and I watched its approach with mixed emotions of awe and hope. The noise of strange music and song now waxed louder and louder as the vast billow advanced; it rolled on nearer and nearer; we could now perfectly see it; it was one immense sheet of water like an arch, stretching for miles, that cast its dark shadow over us. In it, forms, stranger and wilder than thought can conceive, or words describe, danced and played about. In the centre, upon a throne of purest crystal, sat an enormous figure, the like whereof was never seen. His head was that of a bull, in which one eye glared like a meteor, and his huge body, clothed in scales, that gleamed like burning gold. Upon his right hand, holding for a spear the spiral lance of the sea unicorn, frowned the dark and dreadful form of a water-spirit, apparently clad in armor of the most beautiful gems, each of them worth an empire; on his feet, another spirit, beautiful and terrible as sin, arrayed in a vest of green shells, with flashing eyes and golden hair. Both of the spirits were girded round as with the darkling embryo of storms, all ready to rush forth at their command. Behind and around them, in all directions, whirled a host of spirits, decked out in the most brilliant manner. Some appeared mounted on dolphins and sharks, others resting upon the continued fountain which sprung from the nostrils of the whale; others darted javelins, made of the tusks of the hippopotamus, in mock warfare, at each other; and eternal sounds were produced from conchs of the most singular form, terrible yet grand. Here rolled the immense floundering form of the leviathan, the shaggy sea lion, the tusked walrus, and the fleshy blubber fish. All the monsters of the great deep seemed called into action. It was now almost upon us, when Knapp, determined, as he has since declared, to see what it was made of, seized a small harpoon, and running to the end of the
vessel which fronted this tremendous host, threw it with all his might, at the form of the spirit. So true was his aim, that it pierced him exactly in the centre of his temples; the crew set up a wild shout of horror at the deed, but the consequence was astonishing; the vast wave sunk and subsided immediately, and one loud wail echoed from the sea to the sky. All became as black as midnight, and the air thick, choking, and almost palpable. Nothing could be seen for a yard before us; a general commotion took place, and in the darkness many fell overboard; it was indeed a night of terror; low bursts from the sea; the wretching of the waves; prayers, groans, and curses were heard everywhere. Could the heart of man bear long such an accumulation of horror!

The black overhanging canopy of clouds, that muffled up the beautiful sky were rent open at once, and a broad streak of dusky hued light spread from one extremity to the other; it was of a deep blood-red color and reflected everything like a mirror; in it we could see the ocean working and lashing itself, to foam like a boiling cauldron; and the ship like a lost thing, feebly encountering the world of waters. At length a breeze sprung up, and the vessel again made sail. Nothing occurred during the remainder of the voyage out of the usual course. The strange spirits we had encountered was the common topic of conversation, and the old weather-beaten tars who had sailed from the port of Salem for more than thirty years, declared they had never before seen anything which astonished them half so much. We arrived at the Indies after a passage of forty-one days, and having taken in our cargo, commenced our homeward bound passage, having been detained in port but three days and a half. When about seven days out and during a violent storm, we spoke the Flying Dutchman, so celebrated in sea annals.

Neither the tempestuous state of the atmosphere, nor the thunder had ceased, and soon a vivid flash of lightning shewed the waves tumbling around us, and in the distance the Flying Dutchman was seen scudding furiously before the wind, under a press of canvas. Frank Knapp spoke her, but owing to the violence of the gale we did not hear the answer of her commander, Captain Vnderdecken. One of our old Salem tars, stated that the Flying Dutchman was an Amsterdam vessel, and sailed from that port seventy years ago. The commander was a stanch seaman, and would have his own way in spite of the devil. For all that, never a sailor under him had reason to complain. In doubling the Cape once they were a long day trying to weather the Table Bay. However, the wind headed them, and went against them more and more, and Vnderdecken walked the deck, swearing at the wind. Just after sunset, a vessel spoke him asking if he did not mean to go into the Bay that night. Vnderdecken replied, "May I be eternally d—d if I do, tho' I should beat about here till the day of judgment!" And to be sure, Vnderdecken never did go into that bay; for it is believed that he continues to beat about in the seas, and will do so for centuries. Such was the singular history of this mysterious vessel. She did not trouble us much however, as we were soon out of her sight, and sailing under full canvas for home.

After an absence of seven months we arrived at Salem, having made a very profitable voyage for the owners. The ship was thoroughly repaired and a new crew shipped. Knapp went out as Captain, and I as Supercargo. We were bound to the coast of Africa on a trading voyage, and none but the most experienced seamen were shipped, as it was considered a dangerous voyage. All things being ready, we again set sail in August, 1823. We had been but a few days out, before we were overtaken by a tremendous storm. I had gone to bed and had fallen into a sound sleep, when I was awakened about midnight by the cries of "all hands on deck." I immediately sprang out of my birth, hurried on my clothes,
and made the best of my way up the companion-ladder, knowing there was something more than usual to do when the whole crew were called up at once. A good deal of bustle prevailed on deck. The waves ran mountains high, and the ship was continually sending her bows in over head and ears, and washing the forecastle at every pitch. Captain Knapp was standing abreast of the binnacle, and through a speaking trumpet was issuing his orders to take in canvass, and ease the vessel by the head. I walked up to his side and observed by the bright moon-light that his countenance was much agitated. A shrill, whistling sound through the rigging—the clattering of blocks and slackened ropes—the creaking at the doubling of the masts, and the yards at the slings—now warned us that a terrible storm was gathering. It came too soon. The violence of the ship’s motion increased fearfully. My heart beat with a convulsive fluttering, as if I was in the act of flying; each time the vessel, left by an exhausted wave, paused, rose straining and quivering on the ridge of the succeeding one, and again with the rapidity of an arrow, made a tremendous plunge into the hollow beneath. A flash of lightning, or rather a succession of flashes, like a sheet of fire, illumined the whole waste of waters around us. Morning came, and we espied a brig making towards us. It proved to be the Medina, of Baltimore. She was dismayed, and called for help. We were unable to render her any assistance, such was the violence of the storm. We saw the poor laboring and struggling thing tossed by foaming breakers; such a skirling and roaring there never was, and then the howling of the wind, and the pattering of the sleet and rain; but the greedy waves soon sucked their victim; they cast themselves up and gloried over, as she went down;—poor—fated souls. We heard their shrieks and cries, but could not help them. Once, indeed, the long boat was lowered and Knapp and five of the crew sprang in, and endeavored to reach her, but the waves dashed the boat against our ship and the effort
ed Knapp a beautiful gold snuff box, which he presented him as a token of the esteem he bore the American people, and desired him to deposit it in some public place in our country. This interview with Napoleon took place on the 3d of May, 1824; the following day a dreadful tempest arose. A beautiful willow, which had been the Exile's favorite, and under which he had often enjoyed the fresh breeze, was torn up by the hurricane, and almost all the trees on the island shared the same fate. The memorable 5th of May came amid wind and rain. With the close of this day, the mortal existence of this extraordinary man was to end forever. Napoleon's passing spirit was deliriously engaged in a strife more terrible than that of the elements around. The words "lese d'armee," the last which ever escaped his lips, intimated that his thoughts were watching the current of a heady fight. About six in the evening the spirit of the sainted Napoleon ascended to its God.

On the morning of the 8th we left the island of St. Helena, and steered for the southern coast of Africa, a distance of about nineteen hundred miles. After being out seven or eight days, we discovered that rats had got among our provisions and destroyed nearly the whole of them. What was to be done we knew not. The wind would not permit us to put back, and continuing on appeared sure destruction. Captain Knapp having put every man on allowance of three ounces of bread and a gill of water a day, determined to keep the ship under full sail, hoping shortly to meet some vessel that would supply our wants. In a few days, however, our scanty store of provisions were entirely exhausted, and hunger began to be felt by all on board. Many of the crew soon dropped down completely debilitated, and unable to work. For nearly three days not one morsel of food passed our lips, and I was able to read on the countenances of those around me, the dreadful ravages occasioned by despair, and total privation of food.

The day passed on quietly enough. Night at length came on; the heavens were overspread with black clouds, the winds unchained raised the sea mountains high, in the most dreadful manner. Cries and shrieks resounded from every side; rolled by the waves from fore to aft, and back again; sometimes plunged in the sea, suspended betwixt life and death, bewailing our misfortune, and though almost certain of death, still struggling with the merciless element ready to swallow us. Every moment we heard the doleful cries of our sailors, preparing themselves for death; they bid a last adieu, and implored the protection of Heaven. During this painful night, I had scarcely firmness enough to keep calm, amidst this confusion, and to remark the moral condition of our people. Knapp alone remained unmoved throughout this dreadful scene. The expressions of the crew, generally, were very incoherent; the strangest ideas followed the recollections of their families, most of whom, residing in Salem and the adjoining towns; some cried out land, others saw vessels coming to our relief, and those fallacious visions were announced with repeated cries. Two young cabin-boys, belonging to Marblehead, plunged into the ocean, after taking leave of their comrades. "We are off!" said they, and instantly disappeared. The day coming on, brought back a little calm among us; some unhappy persons, however, near me, were not come to their senses, but in general, mental disorganization was little perceptible. One of the oldest of the crew in despair threw himself into the sea, but I took him up myself; his answers were confused; I gave him every consolation in my power, and endeavored to persuade him to support courageously every privation we were suffering. But all my care was fruitless, I could never recall him to reason; he gave no sign of despair, and appeared insensible to the horror of our situation. I however got some few incoherent words out of him, but being forced to leave him, I recommended him to some of his brother sailors, for the poor fellow was entirely absorbed in dark reflections. In a few min-
utes he threw himself again into the sea, but by an
instinct of self-preservation he held to a piece of wood
that went beyond the raft, and he was taken up the
second time. The hope of still meeting some vessel
who would supply us with provisions, enabled a few
of us to support the torments of hunger; but when
night came on, the wind blew furiously and the sea
ran high. The last night had been frightful, this one
was still more horrible. We were covered every mo-
ment with mountains of water, that broke furiously
over us; extenuated with fatigue and hunger, we had
still to struggle with a furious sea. I held fast hold
of a rope, not to be carried off by the waves. A de-
vouring hunger tore my bowels. I earnestly asked
those who were about me, for something to calm my
sufferings. I felt a horrible pain in my stomach, as
though it were torn out with pincers. Sentiments of
fury rose in my breast. Captain Knapp, who had
address enough to keep a little biscuit, gave me a bit,
weighing I should think, about a quarter of an ounce.
I took it as a blessing, for it calmed the cruel pains I
was tormented with. The sailors had now become
almost frantic. Attacking a hoghead, in the center
of the raft, they pierced it, and each took a consider-
able quantity of wine. This stimulating liquid
soon troubled their minds, already deranged; and,
thus doubly excited, the furious wretches would have
their companions follow their example. However,
some of the people, desirous of preserving their ex-
istence, took part with those who wished to preserve
the wine, and pursued the rioters to desist.
At last my eyes closed in spite of me, and I felt a
general drowsiness. In this state the liveliest im-
ages soothed my imagination; I saw myself surround-
ed by a richly cultivated country, and in company
with agreeable people; I even made reflections on
my situation. I appreciated fully all its danger, and
I was well convinced that courage and some food
alone could snatch me from this state of annihila-
tion. In consequence of this, I begged Captain Knapp to
give me a little wine, which he did, and I soon felt
somewhat revived. Knapp himself, as he informed
me, felt the same sensation. The unfortunate crew,
many of whom had not strength to confront the first
attacks, fell into a state of imbecility, from which it
was impossible to rouse them; others dived into the
ocean, coolly bidding their comrades farewell; others
would say, “Never fear, I am going to bring you re-
lief, you shall soon see me again;” and others dived
into the sea, as it were to catch at something ap-
parently in view. Towards noon, Frank descried a
brig about a mile’s distance from us. We in-
stantly hoisted our flag of distress, and pushed all
sail to come up with her. She proved to be the Gen.
Jackson, of New York, on her homeward bound
voyage from Africa. The worthy commander sup-
plied us with provisions and water, and rendered us
every other aid we required, for which he refused to
accept a single cent, saying, “all I ask is, that you
should do the same to all brother tars whom you may
meet in distress.”

Having given small portions of the bread, and little
water to each of the crew, they soon began to re-
vive, and in a few hours most of them were completely
restored. We therefore continued our voyage and in
thirteen days reached our port of destination. Here
we disposed of our cargo, consisting of hides and
leather, and commenced reshipping our homeward
cargo, which took us little over a week. On the 17th
of January, we left the port of Vautileague, for Havre,
where, after a pleasant passage, we safely arrived.
Having been detained here more than three weeks by
contrary winds, we at length set sail; and in less than
one month, found ourselves snugly moored in Salem
harbor. During this disastrous voyage, we lost seven
men and two cabin-boys, all but one of whom were
Americans, and born in the county of Essex. Cap-
tain Knapp had been on shore but a few days, before
he was requested by the owners to again take com-
mand of the ship Endicott, which was to be ready for
sea in a fortnight. He accepted the situation, and commenced shipping a new crew. I was retained as Supercargo, and Dick Crounshingle appointed first mate. The crew consisted of thirteen in all, including cabin-boys. We set sail early in June of 1827, for London, where we arrived in thirty-six days, having had a most delightful passage across the Atlantic.

A few evenings after our arrival, Knapp and myself went to Drury Lane Theatre, and saw young Kean play Iago, to his father's Othello. Miss Fanny Kimball was the Desdemona of the evening. The Theatre was crowded almost to suffocation, with the beauty and aristocracy of the capital of the old world. After the tragedy, some one in the galleries bellowed out "play God save the King." Now, although Knapp and myself were perfectly willing God should save the King* when the proper time arrived, yet as we did not wish to be disturbed by the ceremony just then, we accordingly called for "Yankee Doodle," or "Hail Columbia," whichever best pleased the leader of the orchestra. Give us "Yankee Doodle," or no play, cried we, for we don't like the dull tune of God save the King. The greatest confusion reigned throughout the house for sometime. "Kick them Yankees out," bellowed the dirty-faced John Bulls in the galleries. "You can't do it," quoth we, and thus the dialogue went on. At length the peace officers interceded, and quelled the disturbance, not however, before five or six bull Englishmen that sat near us, and who had endeavored to jostle us out of our seats, had felt the power of our "sledgehammers."

Some nights after this occurrence, Knapp went with Dick Crounshingle, to the Opera House, to hear Madam Malibra sing. Having heard the King was to be present, they seated themselves in the pit immediately in front of the royal box. On the entrance of "His Majesty," Frank looking him full

* George the IV. has since "kicked the bucket," but whether God saved him or not, may well be questioned.

in the face, exclaimed, "What a King, why we have better looking handcartmen in Salem, than you are, my old boy." This was too great an insult for the Englishmen present to bear, and Frank and Dick were accordingly put out of the Theatre without much ceremony. Thus much for London.

Our cargo being all on board, and the necessary preparations made, we sailed about the middle of October for Salem, where we safely arrived after a boisterous passage of thirty seven days. I believe more than twelve thousand dollars was made for the owners during this voyage.

Frank Knapp now determined to quit the seas, until commerce once more assumed a brighter aspect. He accordingly declined the command of the Endicott, which had been offered him by the owners, and for a while, became a landsman. He had not, however, been home but a few weeks, before the brig Persia of Boston, loaded with a very valuable cargo, consisting chiefly of specie, was lost with her gallant crew off Marblehead rocks. An old schoolfellow of Knapp's went out in the Persia as second mate, and was lost among the crew. Frank and some companions had been at Marblehead for three or four days, on a fishing frolic; but on the 10th, (the day the Persia was lost,) he had refused to go out in the boat, as there was every indication of a severe storm. A large brig was seen by the inhabitants of Marblehead at a great distance off, evidently trying to beat into the harbor before the storm came on.

Towards evening the sea began to heave and swell its bosom, as if preparing for the coming gale, every wave rolling up a larger sheet of foam than the preceding, and the ocean changing its color from a verdant green to a dark brown hue. Besides the swiftness with which the Persia was, as it were, swept through the waters, she no longer kept her course in a straight line, but was carried up one side of a wave and down the other, with a rush and plunge, that to those who have felt them, are as if they would cause
the very life to leap out of their bosoms. Under the influence of the increasing gale, the brig scudded round Salisbury point in a westerly direction, towards Plumb Island, and nearly within speaking distance of the town. Knapp, myself, and indeed most of the citizens of Marblehead, ran to the shore, in order to render the vessel, if possible, some assistance. But all was in vain. The breakers ran too high for us to put off in a boat, and we could only line the beach, and watch the destruction of this fine brig. She was now drifted towards the vast rock, known as the “Man Slayer,” so called, in consequence of the great number who have been there shipwrecked. We could see every moment some part of the brig give way with a dreadful crash, and some more of her gallant ill-fated crew swept off into the deep. At length when the splitting timbers no longer bore any resemblance to a vessel, we saw several of the crew rush forward to the highest part of the masts; it was however, but for a moment—they looked steadily upon the shore and beckoned, then raised their arms and eyes upwards, the planks were soon washed from under them—and they disappeared from our sight. When the morning arrived, the whole population of Marblehead turned out to ascertain something further respecting the dreadful tragedy of the preceding night. Pieces of the wreck* were seen floating near the rocks, while others had drifted ashore on different parts of the beach.

Information of this melancholy shipwreck was immediately communicated to the owners in Boston, who came with great speed to Marblehead and caused measures to be put in train to recover as much of the lost treasures as possible. The Diving Bell was brought from Boston and preparations instantly made for a descent. No one, however, seemed willing to risk his life in this dangerous enterprise, and it was not until the owners came forward and offered one thousand dollars to whoever would descend, that any body could be found daring enough to make the attempt. At length Frank Knapp came forward, and offered to descend, on condition the money should be paid as soon as he had accomplished the feat. The preparations for the descent of the Diving Bell being completed, Frank entered and placed himself on the seat within its cone. He was clothed in a species of goat-skin armor, proper for his preservation, and searching about the bottom of the sea, for the lost treasures. The owner of the Diving Bell gave the word to those who held it by strong ropes, to lower it gently. What took place after this the reader shall have in Frank Knapp’s own words:

As he spake the word descend, says Knapp, I felt the machine in motion, and it was not without some degree of tremulous feeling that I found myself launched into air, which was soon to be exchanged for ocean deeps. While the men were employed in working the tackle to which the Diving Bell was attached, they chanted a sort of rude chorus to regulate their motions, which for a time I could distinctly hear, and which harmonized well with my situation and feelings. The strain, however, grew fainter and fainter, as the Bell descended through the green fluid which surrounded me; and I now began to experience that variety and intensity of feeling, which I have so often seen described by divers. The first sensation was a painful pressure upon my ears, as if a body of considerable power and magnitude had been endeavoring to enter my brain through those apertures. After a while, their cavities became expanded, and the pain was relieved; but as the Bell sank, it was frequently again renewed, and as often a change for ease. I had scarcely descended above three or four fathoms, when I felt the mighty weight of the ocean, pressing upon, and girding round my head, like an iron crown riveted fast to the skull—the force of which was so

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*A large piece of the stern of this ill-fated brig, may be seen in the East India Company’s Museum, in Salem.
very tremendous, that it was with difficulty my senses were preserved. This painful feeling was then exchanged for a spirit of restless agitation and excitement, which might not entirely be the effect of my peculiar situation and extraordinary voyage, but might partly arise from some recollection of the imminent danger in which I was placed.

Having been in the Diving Bell fifteen or twenty minutes, a kind of languor, which increased almost to fainting, overcame me; the blood left my face, and my limbs grew icy cold; and indeed, although I was well supplied with air, by a continual exchange of the barrels from above, life seemed upon the point of departing. In the course of my descent, I frequently looked out upon the waters, which of themselves presented nothing but a clear green fluid; but frequently there came rushing by the Bell, fishes of extraordinary forms and magnitude, some of the most beautiful colors and appearance, and others armed with dreadful teeth, stings and fangs, with scales and eyes of a fiery lustre. I felt a constant dread, which, perhaps, tended to keep off other fears, that some of them might attack me where opposition and escape would be equally vain. Occasionally I passed some marine production, between a fish and plant, which spread out into branches filled with innumerable mouths, and every part in quick and never-ceasing motion. Now and then methought I heard a noise like music in the deep, but the continual rushing, roaring, and washing of the current against the sides of the Bell, prevented anything like a distinct hearing. Sometimes the waters would seem deserted and vacant; and then again there would rush by such shoals of living beings, pursuing each other, in sport or anger, that their course was too rapid for the eye to discern their forms. Once or twice, indeed, I thought there appeared somewhat like a human figure, covered with scales of a silvery green, but the image was too quickly gone for me to judge with certainty; added to which, the optical illusion occasioned by the waters, might have deceived me.

At length, at the depth of more than ninety fathoms, my feet rested on the basin of the sea, and it may be imagined only what were my feelings at that moment. I was nearly six hundred feet below the ocean; in a frail machine of copper, depending upon a few ropes! in a world which seems to be the abode of the most terrific monsters. The bed of the deep is in itself a fair and beautiful sand, on which are placed rocks that seem to glow with a metallic lustre of various colors, on which is to be seen many a fair living tree of silvery whiteness, in constant motion, while shells of all kinds and hues are scattered over them. The view is indeed a landscape, the most wild and magical that can be imagined. When arrived at the bottom, the painful sensations which I had experienced in my descent had left me I could breathe freely, and upon viewing the beautiful objects around me, I began to think the ocean world was indeed as delightful as the poets and water spirits had described it to be. But after looking around me, I saw many a sight that filled me with terror. The rocks were interposed with half-devoured corpses of those lost in the late wreck, on which the fishes were still feeding, while whitening bones and skeletons lay scattered about in all directions. The packages, specie, anchors, and fragments of the wreck, which appeared strewed before me, were innumerable.

As I was about to give the signal to be hoisted up, I discovered a great Sea Monster, apparently two hundred feet long, and consisting of a huge misshaped mass of scaly flesh, somewhat resembling a snake, coming towards me with extraordinary velocity. It was, undoubtedly, the Sea Serpent, which has often been seen off Marblehead Light, within a few years past. I instantly caught up a large axe that lay near me, and with one blow laid the Marine Monster howling at the bottom of the Sea. I had ascended but thirty or forty feet, when I again saw the Serpent making towards me, with his huge jaws extended wide enough to have swal
lowed the Boston State House and the surrounding houses, without the least inconvenience. He had recovered from the blow given him, and returned and fixed his tusks on my right arm, with an iron grasp. I shrieked out in the agony of my soul for assistance, but no one heard my cries. Whether it were loss of blood from the deep wound given me by the Sea Serpent, or the effect of slow rising, I know not, but my senses seemed to be leaving me, and my head going away from my body. I soon became senseless, and recovered not until I found myself in the cottage of a neighboring fisherman. A long and dangerous illness, the effect of my wound, followed, and it was owing altogether to the skilful care of the venerable Dr. H——, that I ever recovered from my indisposition. When, however, I had recovered, the one thousand dollars was promptly paid me by those concerned in the ill-fated brig Persia. The marks of the Sea Serpent's teeth yet remain upon my arm, though the wound is healed, and like the strange impressions this wild adventure has made upon my memory—they will never be effaced.

Such is the interesting account of Frank Knapp's descent in the Diving Bell, as related in his own nervous language. It is perhaps due to the Marblehead Marines, to state, that it was mainly through their instrumentality, the valuable cargo of the brig Persia was recovered, after having been at the bottom of the ocean more than three days.

In consequence of the urgent solicitation of the owners of the Endicott, Knapp consented to make one more voyage in her as commander, previous to his altogether abandoning the seas. He accordingly again and for the last time, sailed from Salem on a trading voyage to the North West Coast, intending to be gone about a year and a half. Nothing occurred of importance during the period, until a week previous to our return in the winter of 1829. I had been ill for some months, when one evening I went on deck to see Captain Knapp. The ship was sailing upon the wind, at the rate of seven knots an hour, and there was a wild grandeur in the night. A violent snow storm blew, but steadily and without danger; and now and then, when the struggling moonlight overcame the sleety darkness, we saw for some distance around us, the agitated sea all trembling with foam. There were no shoals to fear, and the ship kept boldly on her course, close reefed, and mistress of the storm. Frank Knapp was leaning over the gunwale, when by some unaccountable accident, he lost his balance, and in an instant fell overboard into the sea. What were his feelings at this dreadful moment, may be best ascertained by perusing his own account of the story:

I remember, says he, a convulsive shuddering all over my body, and a hurried leaping of my heart, as I felt myself about to lose hold of the vessel, and afterwards a sensation of the most icy chillness from immersion into the waves—but nothing resembling a fall or precipitation. When below the water I think that a momentary belief rushed across my mind that the ship had suddenly sunk, and that I was but one of a perishing crew. I imagined that I felt a hand with long fingers clutching at my legs, and made violent efforts to escape, dragging after me as I thought, the body of some drowning wretch. On rising to the surface, I recollected in a moment what had befallen me, and uttered a cry of horror which is in my ears to this day, and often makes me shudder, as if it were the mad shriek of another person in the extremity of perils agony. Often have I dreamed over again that dire moment, and the cry uttered in my sleep is said to be something more horrible than human voice. No ship was to be seen. The waves dashed on me, and struck me on the face, and howled at me in mockery; the winds too, yelled, and the snow beat like drifting sand into my eyes, and the ship was gone, and there was I left to struggle, and buffet, and gasp, and sink, and perish, alone, unseen, and unpitied by man, and as I thought too, by the everlasting God. I tried to penetrate the surrounding darkness with my glaring eyes, that felt leaping from their sockets, and saw, as if by miraculous pow-
er, to a great distance through the night,—but no ship,—nothing but white-crested waves, and the dismal noise of thunder. I shouted, shrieked, and yelled, that I might be heard by the crew, till my voice was gone,—and that too when I knew that there was none to hear me. At last, I became utterly speechless, and when I tried to call aloud, there was nothing but a silent gasp and convulsion—while the waves came upon me like stunning blows, reiterated and reiterated, and drove me along like a log of wood. Once I muttered to myself, “this is a dream, and I shall soon awake from it.” I had often before dreamt of being drowned, and the idea of its being a dream so pressed upon me, and I vainly strove to shriek out, that the noise might awaken me. I felt my inmost soul throttled, strangled and stifled, by an insupportable fear of death. That death, which to my imagination had ever appeared the most hideous and of which I had often dreamt, till cold drops fell down my forehead like rain, had now in good truth, befallen me; but dreadful as my dreams had been, what were they all to this? I felt as if all human misery were concentrated in the speechless anguish of my own single heart.

After I had been in the water nearly two hours, I saw, or thought I saw something like the glimmering of a shroud come slowly upwards, from a vast depth, to the surface of the water. I stooped down to embrace it, and in a moment a ghastly blue-swollen face, defaced horribly, as if by gnawing teeth of sea monsters, dashed against mine; and as it sunk again, the elements seemed dreadfully convulsed. The excitement, and fatigue I had undergone while I had been in the water, had worn out my very soul. A corpse, rising out of a cold clammy grave, could not have been more woe-begone and bloodless. Every thing was seen in its absolute dreadful reality. It was broad daylight, and the storm had ceased; but dark and threatening clouds* lay round the broad horizon, and no land was to be seen. What dread-

* The Magellan clouds, near the Coast of Cumana. (See title page.)
connected with his sea-faring life are before you, and
the pledge, therefore, given in the preface, has been
redeemed.

Of what took place on the night of the fatal 6th of
April last, I shall say nothing. The journals of the
day have for months been filled with the subject, and
all minds have, long since, been made up as to his
guilt or innocence. Knapp has twice put himself
upon God and his country for trial, and twelve good
men, representing his country, have decided against
him. From this decision there is, and should be, no
appeal. His doom, therefore, is irrevocably fixed.
In a few days, him who was once an honor to his be-
reaved family, and connexions, will have gone to a
higher than an earthly tribunal, to answer for the
deeds done in the body. Let me not be considered
as his apologist. If Knapp was in any manner, either
as principal or accessory, concerned in the murder of
the late Capt. White, then he richly merits death.
Should there, however, remain one reasonable doubt
as to his guilt, he is entitled to the benefit of that
doubt, and ought not to perish ignominiously upon a
scaffold. For myself, I believe that whatever part
he took in this bloody business, was a fatal error of
expediency,—an error, or a crime of the head, and
not of the heart. Compulsion when resorted to, often
does wonders; may it not in this case, have compell-
ed Knapp, even against his better judgment, to
take the part it is represented he did. Surely it is
possible. Let then the ministers of the law look to
it, ere it is too late.

Here I drop the subject. Were even the united
host of angels, “trumpet-tongued,” to appear and
plead his innocence of the crime charged against him, it
would avail nothing. Public vengeance cries for its
victim, and it must be appeased. Let the unhappy
Frank be comforted, however, by the reflection, that
God is his final judge, and that when he shall appear
at his bar, he will receive that full measure of justice
which has been denied him on earth.

FINIS.