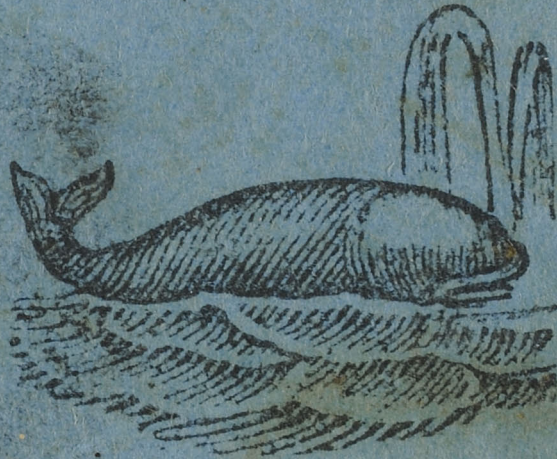


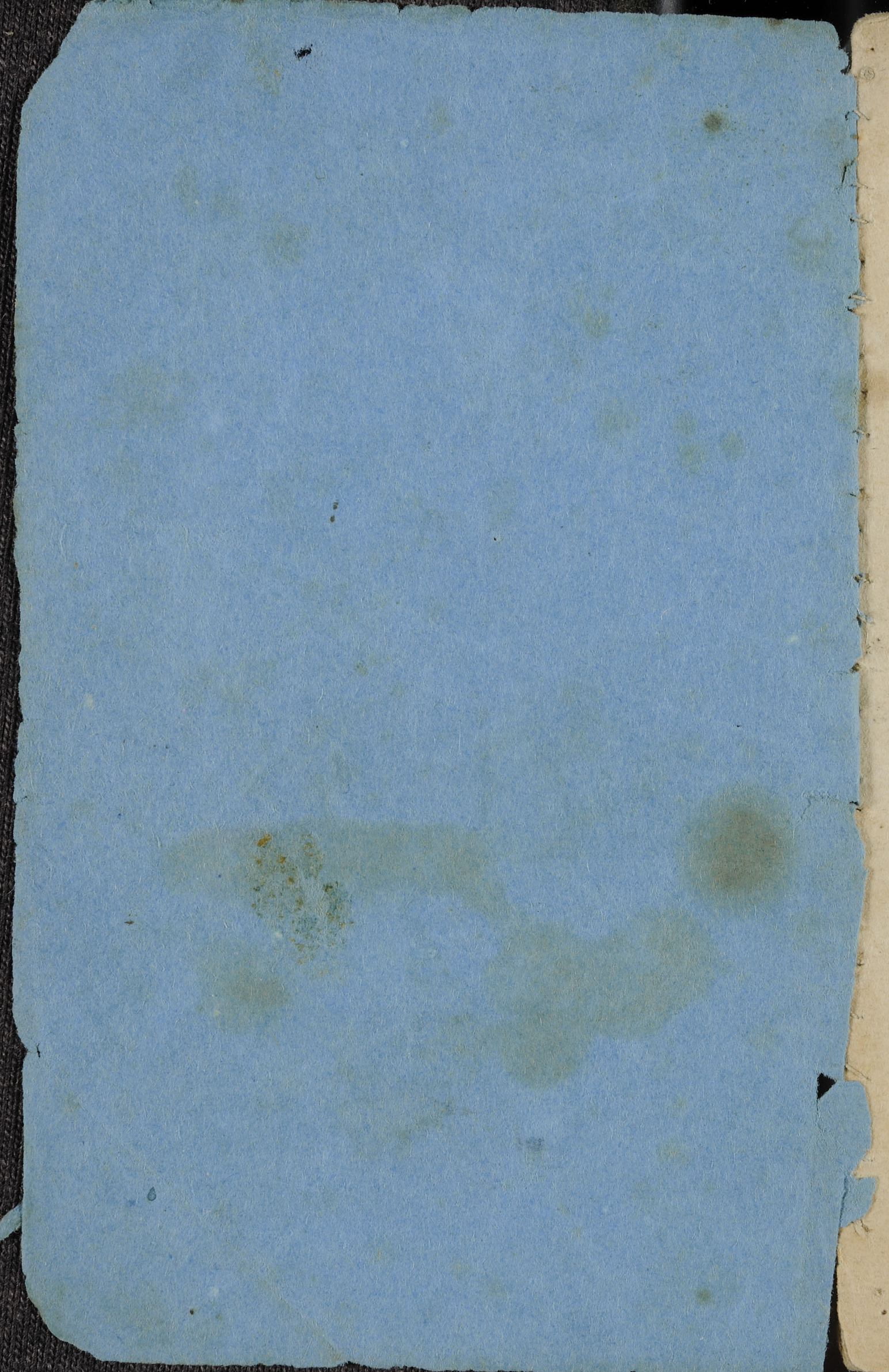
No. 10.

THE
CHILD'S BOOK
ABOUT
WHALES.

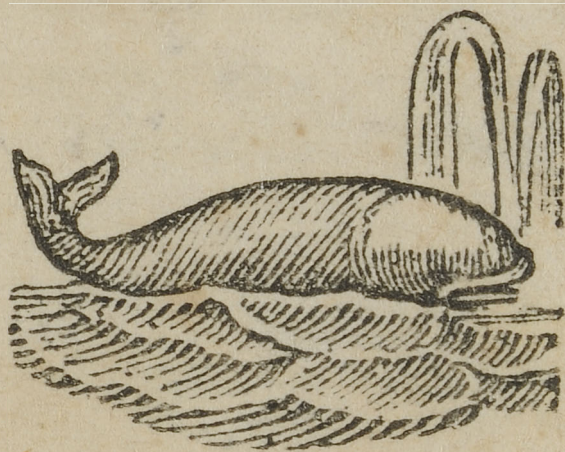


CONCORD, N. H.
RUFUS MERRILL & CO.

1843.



THE
CHILD'S BOOK
ABOUT
WHALES.



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The Alphabet.

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U

V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g

h i j k l m n

o p q r s t u

v w x y z

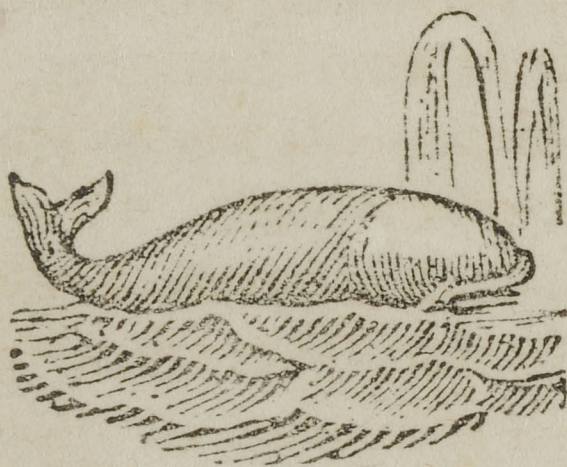
THE
W H A L E .



The whale is not only the largest fish, but he is the largest animal in the world. A large whale is twenty times as big as an elephant. One species, called by the Greenlanders the *razor-back*, has been known to measure one hundred and five feet in length. This is the largest of the whale tribe. It yields but little oil, and is more violent, restive, and muscular than the other species.

The head of the whale is about one third the length of the animal, and the open mouth displays a frightful chasm. The tongue is almost immovably fixed to the low-

er jaw, seeming one great lump of fat; and, in fact, it fills several hogsheads with blubber. The tail is twenty-four feet broad; and when the fish lies on its side, its blow is tremendous; with it he dashes the boats of the whalers, and disables or kills them. But the most curious feature of the whale is the blow holes, or nostrils, which appear like natural jets of



water. They emit a warm vapor; and when the breathing is vehement, water is thrown to the height of 20 or 30 feet in the air. The

sight of this spout, or the loud noise caused by its emission, is the first sign to the whaler of its approach.

The female nourishes its young from her own milk. The mother shows the greatest affection for her young. These delicate nurslings, only 14 or 15 feet in length, and weighing 2000 pounds, are often killed for the sole purpose of provoking an encounter with the parent, and then the contest is deadly and desperate.

The fidelity of these animals to each other exceeds whatever we are told of even the constancy of birds. Some fishers having struck one of two whales, a male and a female, that were in company together, the wounded fish made a long and terrible resistance: it struck down a boat with three men in it, with a single blow of the tail, by

which all went to the bottom. The other still attended its companion, and lent it every assistance; till, at last the fish that was struck sunk under the number of its wounds; while its faithful associate, disdain- ing to survive the loss, with great bellowing stretched itself upon the dead fish, and shared its fate.

This inoffensive and lethargic creature sometimes displays vivacity and playfulness. Putting himself in a vertical position, the head downwards, with a rapid motion of the tail he laves the sea in foam and froth. At other times, with a most ludicrous agility, he darts wholly from his element, and the mass, weighing perhaps seventy tons, is seen suspended in the air. If, as a certain philosopher would make us believe, this earth is only a thin upper-crust, it is happy that he

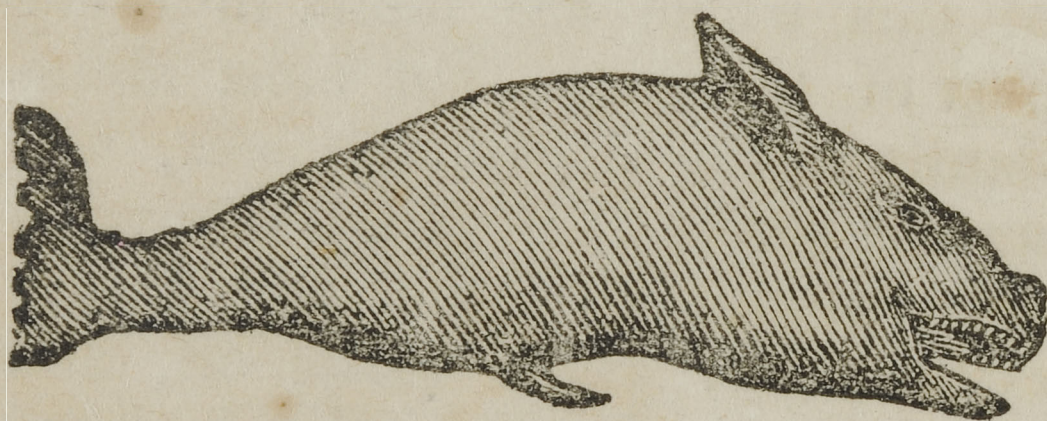
alights on so flexible and elastic a medium as water; for such ungainly pranks might fracture the surface, and give us, however unwillingly, an inspection of the far-famed "Symmes's Hole."

The common, or right whale, is the exclusive object of the Greenland fishery. The various species of this whale are found in every part of the ocean, but most abundantly in the Greenland seas, and on the banks of Brazil. The valuable products of this animal are common, or right whale oil, and whalebone. Of 322 individuals of this species, the longest was found to be 58 feet in length. The largest quantity of oil ever obtained from the right whale, is about 200 barrels.

The whale, when roused to desperation, makes an onset with his

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mouth only. Then he crushes a boat to atoms, and the men escape by jumping into the sea. A sperm whale destroyed two boats of a Nantucket ship, and then attacked the ship; but being obliged to turn over nearly on his back to use the under jaw, with which he does execution, the vessel escaped.



The manner of taking whales is thus described: When the whalemen see a whale lying on the water, several men get into a boat, and go close to him. One of the men takes a harpoon, which is a long, sharp piece of iron, with a

rope tied to it. The man throws the harpoon at the whale with all his might, and with such good aim that it goes deep into the flesh, and sticks there fast. The whale feels the wound, and with a dreadful plunge, he descends into the deep. He draws the rope after him. This is drawn over the side of the boat so swiftly, by the whale, that the men are obliged to keep constantly wetting the spot, to prevent its taking fire. Sometimes the whale sinks to such a depth, that, overcome by the superincumbent pressure of water, he comes up dead. As the warp flies, it sometimes throws its coils around the body of a man, and dragging him over in a moment, it carries him into the ocean depths, from which he never more emerges. Sometimes it only dislocates or breaks the legs and

arms of the unfortunate men who have become entangled in its folds. Pretty soon, the whale is obliged to come to the top to breathe, the sailors perceive that he now spouts forth blood mixed with water. Again he descends, and again he comes to the top, and again a fresh harpoon is launched into him. But he grows constantly weaker, and by and by he dies, and floats upon the sea. The fishermen then cut off the fat of the whale, and take it on board the vessel, and from this they get a great deal of oil. This oil is put in barrels, and brought home, and we burn it in lamps.

Among the accidents that have occurred in the prosecution of this business, the loss of the ship *Essex*, of Nantucket, is the most remarkable. The following is an abridgment of the narrative of the event,



published by the mate of the ship, Mr. Owen Chase.

“I observed a very large whale, as well as I could judge, 85 feet in length. He was lying quietly with his head towards the ship, about 20 rods from the bow. He spouted two or three times, and then disappeared. In less than three seconds he came up again, about the length of the ship off, and made directly for us. I ordered the boy at the helm to shift it, intending to sheer off and avoid him. The words were scarcely out of my mouth before he came down upon us at full speed, and struck the ship with his head on the bow. He gave us such an appalling and tremendous jar as nearly threw us all on our faces. The ship brought up as suddenly and violently as if she had struck a rock. We looked at each other

in perfect amazement, deprived almost of the power of speech. He passed under the ship, grazing her keel as he went along, came up alongside her to leeward, and lay on the top of the water, apparently stunned with the violence of the blow. Supposing he had stove a hole through the ship, I ordered the pumps to be set going; but they had not been in operation more than one minute, before I perceived the head of the ship gradually settling down in the water. I again discovered the whale apparently in convulsions on the top of the water, about 100 rods distant. He was enveloped in the foam that his continual and violent threshing about in the water created around him, and I could distinctly see him smite his jaws together, as if distracted with rage and fury. By

this time the ship had settled so deep in the water, that I gave her up as lost, and was preparing our boats to escape from the ship, when I was roused by the cry, 'Here he is,—he is making for us again.' I turned round, and saw him about 100 rods directly ahead of us, coming down with apparently twice his ordinary speed, and he appeared to me with tenfold fury and vengeance in his aspect. The surf flew in all directions, and his course towards us was marked by a white foam of a rod in width, which he made by a continual violent threshing of his tail. His head was about half out of water, and in that way he came upon and again struck the ship. I was in hopes, when I descried him making for us, that by putting the ship away immediately, I should be able to cross the line of his ap-

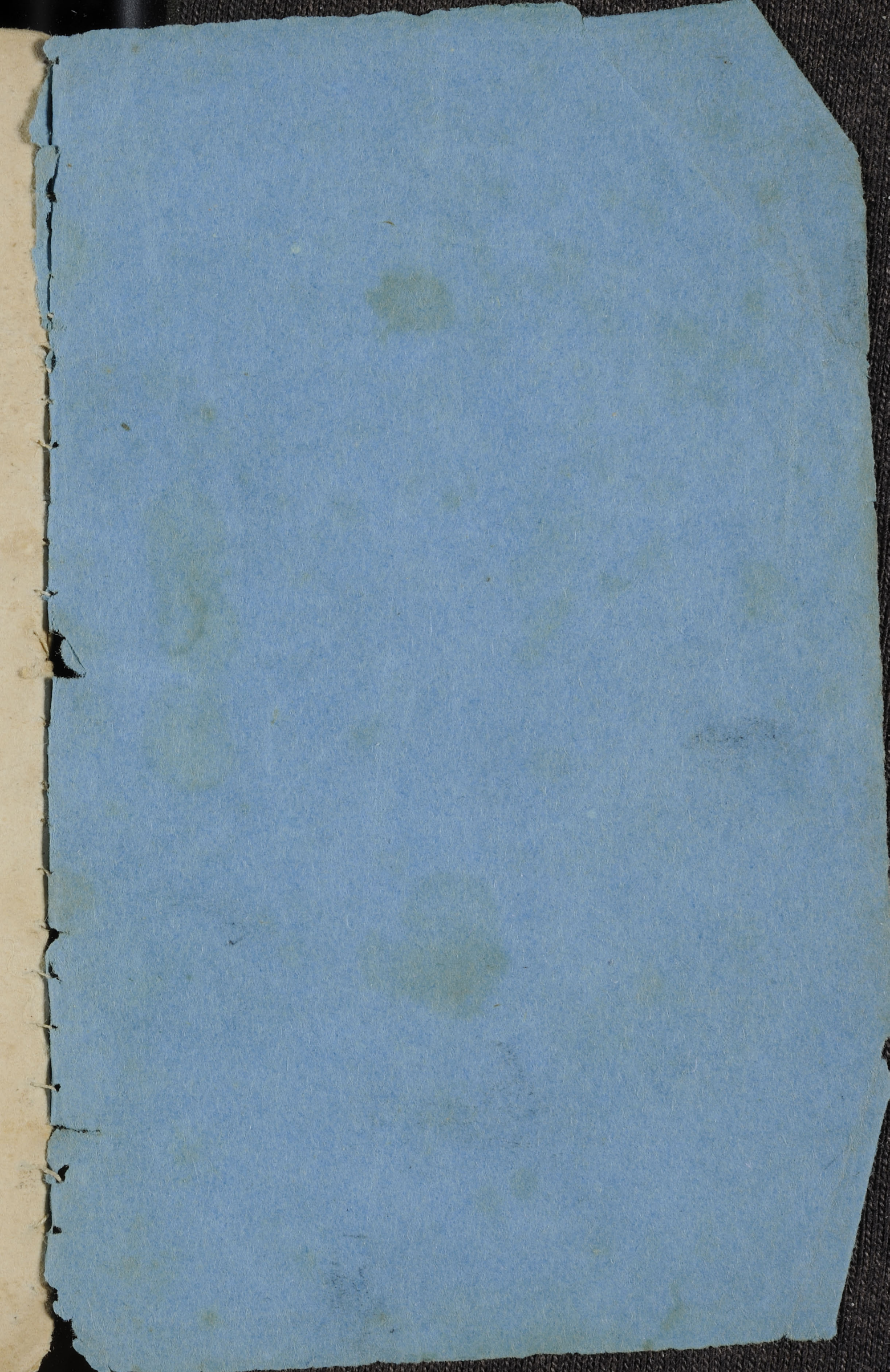
proach, before he could get up to us, and thus avoid what I knew, if he should strike us again, would be our inevitable destruction. I called out to the helmsman, 'Hard up!' but she had not fallen off more than a point, before we took the second shock. I should judge the speed of the ship, at this time, to have been about three miles an hour, and that of the whale about six. He struck her to windward, directly under the cat-head, and completely stove in her bows. He passed under the ship again, went off to leeward, and we saw no more of him."

This disastrous encounter occurred near the equator, at 1000 miles' distance from land. Provisioned and equipped with whatever they could save from the wreck, twenty men embarked in three slender

whale boats, one of which was afterwards crazy and leaky. One boat was never heard of afterwards. The crews of the others suffered every misery that can be conceived, from famine and exposure. In the captain's boat, they drew lots for the privilege of being shot, to satisfy the rabid hunger of the rest. After nearly three months, the captain's boat, with two survivors, and the mate's boat with three, were taken up at sea, 2000 miles from the scene of the disaster, by different ships.



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