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## A VISIT TO THE MAELSTROM.

If you take a map and turn to the western coast of Norway, in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude, you will find traced thereon the name of the largest and most terrible whirlpool in the known world. This Maelstrom, sometimes called Mokesstrom, is about a mile and a half in diameter, and its vortex has an inclination of forty-five degrees, or about that of water in a large funnel when half run out. It is so powerfully destructive, that the largest vessel ever constructed, if once fairly caught in its whirl, would be no more than a mere feather. Everything that enters it is crushed and torn to pieces, and mighty timbers are sent out all broken and covered with splinters like feathers. Nothing has ever been known to enter it and return with life. The largest whale, when caught within its furious, foaming waters, goes down with the most awful roarings and howlings, only to be thrown out again an unrecognizable mass.

The cause of this immense whirlpool has been variously stated—but it is only guess-work and theory after all. Some have thought there is a subterranean passage, and that the waters come out at a great distance, one writer even giving the gulf of Botnia for their terminus. Others again, and with more plausibility, argue that the whirl is solely the effect of the waters of the tide, during its ebb and flow, being pent up by ledges of rocks, over which they fall with the velocity of a cataract, and assume the gyratory movements in their efforts to escape or reach a level—From the fact that the great whirlpool is only six hours in motion at one time, with a perfect lull of fifteen minutes at the turn of the tide, I am inclined to the latter hypothesis.

But be the cause what it may, the Maelstrom itself is terrible beyond the power of description—the thundering roar of its waters can be heard for miles, and on one occasion, it is stated, "it raged with such noise and impetuosity, that on the island of Moskoe the very stones of the houses fell to the ground."

Well do I remember the wonder and awe excited in my youthful breast by a description of this fearful phenomenon and the pictures of the whirlpool are yet fresh in my recollections of some homeward bound vessels, freight with happy souls, being caught within the great circle of these whirling waters, and hurled downward to destruction, amidst the wildest shrieks of terror and the most fervent prayers for salvation. Little did I then think that I should ever behold the dreadful whirlpool myself, and least of all, that I should ever have the temerity to voluntarily venture upon its awful brink, and gaze down into its hissing, foaming, roaring, horrible depths.

Business of a commercial nature led me to visit some of the ports of Norway and the Loffden Islands, and being within easy reach of this wonder of the world, I became possessed with a great desire to see it for myself. In connection with an old Norwegian fisherman, I learned, to my great surprise, that he had more than once ventured across it, with a strong breeze, during its regular lull at the turn of the tide.

"And how did you feel at such times?" inquired I, with a great deal of curious interest.

"Well, I don't know as it made any particular difference in my feelings," replied the man, in a matter-of-fact way. "We fishermen get so used to dangers of all kinds, that one or two, more or less, hardly seems to be worth speaking about. We always carry our lives in our hands, and naturally expect to leave our bodies in the sea sometimes, and for what I can understand, a man may as well go down in a whirlpool as in a tempest. It's only death at last, and death must come to all, at one time or another, whether afloat or ashore. For my part, I think it's quicker and easier work to be drowned than to linger along with

some painful disease and die at last."

"I doubt not your philosophy is the best for one engaged in your perilous profession," returned I. "But for all that, I am not prepared to say that I could meet a sudden death with your resignation."

"That I suppose is because it don't all the time stare you in the face, as it does us," rejoined the old fisherman. "When you leave your friend—your wife and children, if you've got any—you probably calculate the chances to be in your favor of returning to them again; but I always bid mine good-bye with a hope based upon great uncertainty; and though I've lived, as you see, to be pretty well in years, it has always been with a sort of expectation that every cruise would be my last. I think it's best to be prepared for the worst, and then, if the worst don't come, we're always the happier for it, you know."

"But to return to the dangers of this Maelstrom, which I have an almost irresistible desire to visit," said I, "do you think I might venture near it without any unusual risk? I will admit, to begin with, that there is danger in the attempt—and so for that matter, there was in my coming here, and will be in my sailing from here for my native land—but what I wish to know is, if I may venture near the whirlpool—near enough to behold it in all its terrific sublimity—without laying myself open to the censure of fool-hardiness?"

"Yes, I think you may," replied the old fisherman, thoughtfully. "provided you have a good, easily managed schooner, a favorable breeze and a careful, experienced pilot."

"Where then can I find and charter such a craft?"

"Why, if your honor wishes it," said the old seaman, doffing his hat and quietly smoothing his silver locks. "I think I might furnish you something to your liking, and offer myself as pilot, providing we can agree upon terms, which shall not be at all exorbitant."

I looked steadily for a few moments at his calm, weather-beaten face and clear eye, and felt that he was the man for my purpose.

"I will listen to your terms," said I.

"After a little reflection, he named them, and considering them too reasonable for objection, I accepted them at once. This matter being settled, preparations were immediately hastened for setting forth on the curious and to me fearful adventure; and the next day saw me wading the deck of a snug, well-rigged schooner, on my way to a sublime scene of peril, that for many a long year had often come up in my fancy, with a strange kind of fascination. I need not describe my voyage down to the Maelstrom, for that is of no moment in this connection. It had its excitement and even peril, as all things must along that rugged and dangerous coast—steering sharply among rocks, through a foaming, hissing sea—but all thought of minor dangers was swept from my mind, when for the first time I came within hearing of a sad, heavy roar, that my Norwegian friend informed me proceeded from the awful vortex we were on our way to visit. A sudden tremor seized me at this announcement—which, though the visible effect of excessive awe, seemed rather that of terror to the simple-minded fisherman, who at once declared his willingness to return if I feared to go forward.

"No!" said I, regarding my woe-begone companion, and becoming more emphatic through a sense of shame at my physical perturbation—"let us forward to the very brink of destruction—as far as the boldest ever dared!"

"Well, there is no danger, after all, on such a day as this and with such a breeze," he replied in a reassuring tone; "and though the novel idea of sailing within the suction of such a roaring, deafening whirl of waters, may make you honor a trifle timid and nervous, yet you only keep about faith in the cautious and skill of Harold Saugar, and you'll live to tell your

friends a tale of wonders."

From the moment I first heard the distant roar of the Maelstrom, we sailed directly toward it for more than an hour, the sound gradually increasing in volume as we neared it, until it became so loud that it was with difficulty I could distinguish the different and sometimes rapid orders of the daring fisherman. I was excited by strange emotions even while only the sense of hearing was reached, but when at length sight was also brought to bear upon the whirling gulf, and I beheld the lanky waters revolving around what seemed a mighty pit or cavern, and then rolling, tumbling and dashing their swift passage downward to a white bed of foam at the bottom of the great deep, I became thrilled with a sublimity that carried my humble and awe-stricken soul beyond the consciousness of time into the very presence of great, almighty, and incomprehensible power.

I can never describe the awful Maelstrom as I saw it, heard it, and felt it, in and through my whole being, till I became absorbed into it, and a part of it, and lost to all other existence—became the soul sublimed and exalted beyond the dominion of its mortal form into the ideal world of ideas, there is no sublimer language of sufficient reach and grasp to portray its impressions.

But something is due to the seeker of knowledge, and something I can and will give.

Imagine then, an area of a mile and a half in diameter. To do this fully and comprehensively you shall fix your eye or your mind upon some object a mile and a half from where you are. Then fancy this broad space to be all water, moving round in a circle, slowly on the outer edge, but gradually increasing in velocity towards the centre, with a downward inclination forty-five degrees, so that it looks like a vast hollow gulf of awful depths. Then imagine yourself sailing round on the outer edge of this immense tunnel, with the water black and level on one side of you, and on the other inclined, and running round and downward, rolling, tumbling, rushing, dashing, seething, whirling and boiling, the centre lashed into a milk-white foam, and sending up the deafening roar of a thousand Niagara's. If to all this, you add the fancy that you are floating around this awful gulf in a frail vessel, that seems only an air bubble to be sucked in and crushed, and which, while driving before the wind, is now and then caught by a current and turned several points toward destruction, so that the master stows bravely, and the sailors make almost superhuman exertions to keep her from rushing madly into the vortex, and you pray agonizingly, with breath suspended and hair standing on end, till the wavering balance has inclined to life—if, I say, you add this to all the rest, you get perhaps, as good an external of the scene and situation of the beholder as my poor, feeble descriptive powers are able to convey.

But the internal—when the soul became rapt, absorbed, and lost to the outer sense of danger—lost to all but the mighty, over-overflowing sublimity of this woe-begone work of God—no mortal tongue can ever make known.

Amid the bewilderment of this indescribable scene—my eyes dazzled with the whirling, rushing, flashing of the waters—my ears stunned with their hissing, dashing, thundering roar—my soul going down into the eternity beyond—the old fisherman laid one hand upon my arm, pointed with the other, and shouted:

"Look! behold!"

I turned and saw one of the seamen holding a large sea-bird, to one of whose legs was attached a long coil, the other end of which was secured to a short, heavy stick of timber, which another sailor was in the act of casting into the sea. As the timber struck the water, the one holding the bird let him go, and with a wild scream he flew to the length of his tether, and then struggled in the air to break his bonds

and escape. But the cord held him, and the moving timber took a gradual inclination toward the vortex. While the schooner ran safely back from the gyratory draught, I watched the bird with a glass, as the descending timber dragged him downward, fluttering and screaming, and seeming to my excited fancy like some unfortunate spirit being dragged down to perdition. Round and round went the timber slowly at first, but with steadily increasing velocity, till at last, with quick jerking and rapid descent, the fluttering bird disappeared from my view.

I had seen enough—I had felt the emotions of a life time compressed into a few hours—and we sailed away from that never-to-be-forgotten Maelstrom.

## SPANISH MERINO SHEEP OF VERMONT.

Vermont has the honor of having imported to this country the first Spanish Merino Sheep, and it is said by those who have traveled extensively that the Merinos of Spain do not compare with those now owned in Vermont. In fact, Vermont possesses the best fine wool sheep in the world.

William Jarvis, a native of Boston, received an appointment as Consul to Lisbon, from Jefferson, and while there, in 1811, Napoleon invaded Portugal and Spain, and some of the flocks were seized by him to feed his army, while others were sold to defray the expenses of the war. Previously not a single sheep had been allowed to leave Spain, the penalty of death having been established to prevent it. Mr. Jarvis wishing to benefit his countrymen, purchased ten bucks at a cost of \$200 each, and shipped them to New York. He ordered his agent to advertise them throughly and then sell them at auction. His request was complied with, and the report of the sale was sent to Mr. Jarvis.

He opened the letter, from which he read that his sheep had been sold at \$100 each. The letter was thrown down in a passion, and his countrymen were considered the most unappreciative people in the world. He thought they certainly might have shown gratitude enough by paying at least what the sheep had cost him. The next day, having occasion to refer to the letter, he found that he had made a mistake of one cipher in the first reading. Instead of the sheep having sold for \$100 each, they had sold for \$1000—a slight difference. This induced him to make further purchases, and during his stay at Lisbon he shipped to this country 3500 sheep, all but 300 of which were sold at New York, Boston, Portland, New Haven and Philadelphia, at enormous prices. The 300 that he reserved were taken to Weatherfield, Vt., where 8000 acres of land had been purchased at a cost of \$20,000. On his return to this country, Mr. Jarvis settled in Vermont and continued the rearing of sheep, from which, together with the profits made on those that he had imported, he amassed a fortune. He died in 1858, at the age of ninety years, and at that time was the richest man in Vermont, his estate being valued at \$800,000. Each of his eight children received from their father's estate \$80,000. They certainly ought to be devoted believers in the "animal with the golden hoof." Mr. Jarvis once remarked that he was indebted to Jefferson and Napoleon for his fortune—Jefferson for having appointed him Consul, and Napoleon for having invaded Spain.

While Vermont was the first to take the lead in this important branch of husbandry, she still continues to hold the reputation gained at the commencement of the enterprise, and no other State has better sheep or realizes larger profits. We believe there are a few farmers in the State who keep flocks of more than 1000 head, but the average of the larger farmers will not exceed 500. The average yield of wool is about five pounds, but there are instances where from 15 to 25 pounds have been sheared from a single sheep. The average prices of

good Spanish Merino ewes, estimating them by the flock, is from \$6 to \$8 per head. The very best for breeding purposes are sold at much higher prices. Edwin Hammond, President of the Vermont State Agricultural Society, sold a two year old buck to a California sheep breeder a few years since for \$1000. This is the highest price that any have been sold for in the State. It is not unfrequently that bucks sell for \$500, but the average price for medium animals ranges from \$25 to \$250. George Campbell of Westminster, who is one of the largest breeders of the State, owns a buck that he will not sell for \$1500, for the reason that its lambs are of the best quality that always sell at the highest prices. Mr. Campbell has traveled through France, Spain and Germany, and he reports that the celebrated Spanish Merino flocks in those countries have greatly deteriorated from their original standard. He has imported from 300 to 400, and now keeps 500 head for breeding purposes. Before the war he found a market in the Southern States, but is now selling his sheep to breeders in the West, California and South America—Buenos Ayres.

A practice is becoming quite common in Vermont, and will ultimately be adopted elsewhere. It is shearing without washing. It is the testimony of those who have practised both systems that the health of the sheep is affected by washing, and not unfrequently colds are contracted that cause death. The manufacturer can easily cleanse the wool by a chemical process, and if he becomes accustomed to purchasing without washing, he will more thoroughly examine the wool—a fair price will then be established for all qualities.—Northampton, (Mass.) Free Press.

## RAILWAYS AND BRIGANDS IN SPAIN.

It was evident that these railways, if allowed to proceed unmolested, would interfere with the brigand's calling. If men traveled at forty miles an hour and in troops of a hundred, the freebooter could not waylay his victim as of yore in a quiet corner of the highway and despoil him of his money. In this desperate state of affairs another bold stroke was made to render even railroads remunerative to the profession. It appears that one Alexander Floricourt was attached to the Barcelona railway company as one of its train guards. It was one of the functions of this officer to collect the weekly receipts at the several stations and deposit the money at the company's headquarters in Barcelona. The financial worth of the man became known to the freebooters, and they determined to seize him. For this purpose Borjes, at the head of about 100 men, one spring evening, at six o'clock, entered a cafe in Matara, and carried off poor Floricourt in open daylight, out of a town of 25,000 inhabitants. The officer was safely lodged in the brigand's retreat in the mountain, and the modest sum of one thousand dollars demanded as the price of his ransom. Floricourt does not appear to have been admitted to all the rollicking festivities of his mountain home, as he wrote pressingly to William Locke for the ransom money. But the company thought, if this demand was complied with, that the abduction of its officers would be frequently had recourse to, as one of the best weapons for replenishing an exhausted treasury. Floricourt, therefore, was obliged to get on as well as he could with his new acquaintances. His captivity, however, was only short; for at that time (April, 1848) Catalonia was covered with the queen's troops, hunting both Carlists and brigands out of the province; Borjes and his men were in consequence reduced to great extremities, and whilst they were dodging about from one hiding place to another, Floricourt contrived to effect his escape, and return home after about sixteen days' absence.—London Athlete.