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THE  
SEA LIONS;  
OR,  
THE LOST SEALERS.

BY J. FENIMORE COOPER

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Daughter of Faith, awake, arise, illumine  
The dread unknown, the chaos of the tomb:  
Melt, and dispel, ye spectre doubts that roll  
Cimmerian darkness o'er the parting soul.

Campbell.

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COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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NEW EDITION.

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NEW YORK:  
STRINGER AND TOWNSEND.

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1856.

## SEA LIONS.

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## P R E F A C E .

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If any thing connected with the hardness of the human heart could surprise us, it surely would be the indifference with which men live on, engrossed by their worldly objects, amid the sublime natural phenomena that so eloquently and unceasingly speak to their imaginations, affections, and judgments. So completely is the existence of the individual concentrated in self, and so regardless does he get to be of all without that contracted circle, that it does not probably happen to one man in ten, that his thoughts are drawn aside from this intense study of his own immediate wants, wishes, and plans, even once in the twenty-four hours, to contemplate the majesty, mercy, truth, and justice, of the Divine Being that has set him, as an atom, amid the myriads of the hosts of heaven and earth.

The physical marvels of the universe produce little more reflection than the profoundest moral truths. A million of eyes shall pass over the firmament, on a cloudless night, and not a hundred minds shall be filled with a proper sense of the power of the dread Being that created all that is there—not a hundred hearts glow with the adoration that such an appeal to the senses and understanding ought naturally to produce. This indifference, in a great measure, comes of familiarity; the things that we so constantly have before

us, becoming as a part of the air we breathe, and as little regarded.

One of the consequences of this disposition to disregard the Almighty Hand, as it is so plainly visible in all around us, is that of substituting our own powers in its stead. In this period of the world, in enlightened countries, and in the absence of direct idolatry, few men are so hardy as to deny the existence and might of a Supreme Being; but, this fact admitted, how few really feel that profound reverence for him that the nature of our relations justly demands! It is the want of a due sense of humility, and a sad misconception of what we are, and for what we were created, that misleads us in the due estimate of our own insignificance, as compared with the majesty of God.

Very few men attain enough of human knowledge to be fully aware how much remains to be learned, and of that which they never can hope to acquire. We hear a great deal of god-like minds, and of the far-reaching faculties we possess; and it may all be worthy of our eulogiums, until we compare ourselves in these, as in other particulars, with Him who produced them. Then, indeed, the utter insignificance of our means becomes too apparent to admit of a cavil. We know that we are born, and that we die; science has been able to grapple with all the phenomena of these two great physical facts, with the exception of the most material of all—those which should tell us what is life, and what is death. Something that we cannot comprehend lies at the root of every distinct division of natural phenomena. Thus far shalt thou

go and no farther, seems to be imprinted on every great fact of creation. There is a point attained in each and all of our acquisitions, where a mystery that no human mind can scan takes the place of demonstration and conjecture. This point may lie more remote with some intellects than with others; but it exists for all, arrests the inductions of all, conceals all.

We are aware that the more learned among those who disbelieve in the divinity of Christ suppose themselves to be sustained by written authority, contending for errors of translation, mistakes and misapprehensions in the ancient texts. Nevertheless, we are inclined to think that nine-tenths of those who refuse the old and accept the new opinion, do so for a motive no better than a disinclination to believe that which they cannot comprehend. This pride of reason is one of the most insinuating of our foibles, and is to be watched as a most potent enemy.

How completely and philosophically does the venerable Christian creed embrace and modify all these workings of the heart! We say philosophically, for it were not possible for mind to give a juster analysis of the whole subject than St. Paul's most comprehensive but brief definition of Faith. It is this Faith which forms the mighty feature of the church on earth. It equalizes capacities, conditions, means, and ends, holding out the same encouragement and hope to the least, as to the most gifted of the race; counting gifts in their ordinary and more secular points of view.

It is when health, or the usual means of success abandon us, that we are made to feel how totally we

are insufficient for the achievement of even our own purposes, much less to qualify us to reason on the deep mysteries that conceal the beginning and the end. It has often been said that the most successful leaders of their fellow men have had the clearest views of their own insufficiency to attain their own objects. If Napoleon ever said, as has been attributed to him, "*Je propose et je dispose,*" it must have been in one of those fleeting moments in which success blinded him to the fact of his own insufficiency. No man had a deeper reliance on fortune, cast the result of great events on the decrees of fate, or more anxiously watched the rising and setting of what he called his "star." This was a faith that could lead to no good; but it clearly denoted how far the boldest designs, the most ample means, and the most vaulting ambition, fall short of giving that sublime consciousness of power and its fruits that distinguish the reign of Omnipotence.

In this book the design has been to portray man on a novel field of action, and to exhibit his dependence on the hand that does not suffer a sparrow to fall unheeded. The recent attempts of science, which employed the seamen of the four greatest maritime states of Christendom, made discoveries that have rendered the polar circles much more familiar to this age, than to any that has preceded it, so far as existing records show. We say "existing records;" for there is much reason for believing that the ancients had a knowledge of our hemisphere, though less for supposing that they ever braved the dangers of the high latitudes. Many are, just at this moment, much disposed to believe that "Ophir" was on this

continent; though for a reason no better than the circumstance of the recent discoveries of much gold. Such savans should remember that 'peacocks' came from ancient Ophir. If this be in truth that land, the adventurers of Israel caused it to be denuded of that bird of beautiful plumage.

Such names as those of Parry, Sabine, Ross, Franklin, Wilkes, Hudson, Ringgold, &c., &c., with those of divers gallant Frenchmen and Russians, command our most profound respect; for no battles or victories can redound more to the credit of seamen than the dangers they all encountered, and the conquests they have all achieved. One of those named, a resolute and experienced seaman, it is thought must, at this moment, be locked in the frosts of the arctic circle, after having passed half a life in the endeavour to push his discoveries into those remote and frozen regions. He bears the name of the most distinguished of the philosophers of this country; and nature has stamped on his features—by one of those secret laws which just as much baffle our means of comprehension, as the greatest of all our mysteries, the incarnation of the Son of God—a resemblance that, of itself, would go to show that they are of the same race. Any one who has ever seen this imprisoned navigator, and who is familiar with the countenances of the men of the same name who are to be found in numbers amongst ourselves, must be struck with a likeness that lies as much beyond the grasp of that reason of which we are so proud, as the sublimest facts taught by induction, science, or revelation. Parties are, at this moment, out in search of him and his followers; and it is to be

hoped that the Providence which has so singularly at-tempered the different circles and zones of our globe, placing this under a burning sun, and that beneath enduring frosts, will have included in its divine forethought a sufficient care for these bold wanderers to restore them, unharmed, to their friends and country. In a contrary event, their names must be transmitted to posterity as the victims to a laudable desire to enlarge the circle of human knowledge, and with it, we trust, to increase the glory due to God.

# THE SEA LIONS.

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## CHAPTER I.

——“When that's gone  
He shall drink naught but brine.”

*Tempest.*

WHILE there is less of that high polish in America that is obtained by long intercourse with the great world, than is to be found in nearly every European country, there is much less positive rusticity also. There, the extremes of society are widely separated, repelling rather than attracting each other; while among ourselves, the tendency is to gravitate towards a common centre. Thus it is, that all things in America become subject to a mean law that is productive of a mediocrity which is probably much above the average of that of most nations; possibly of all, England excepted; but which is only a mediocrity, after all. In this way, excellence in nothing is justly appreciated, nor is it often recognised; and the suffrages of the nation are pretty uniformly bestowed on qualities of a secondary class. Numbers have sway, and it is as impossible to resist them in deciding on merit, as it is to deny their power in the ballot-boxes; time alone, with its great curative influence, supplying the remedy that is to restore the public mind to a healthful state, and give equally to the pretender and to him who is worthy of renown, his proper place in the pages of history.

The activity of American life, the rapidity and cheapness of intercourse, and the migratory habits both have induced, leave little of rusticity and local character in any

particular sections of the country. Distinctions, that an acute observer may detect, do certainly exist between the eastern and the western man, between the northerner and the southerner, the Yankee and middle states' man; the Bostonian, Manhattanese and Philadelphian; the Tuckahoe and the Cracker; the Buckeye or Wolverine, and the Jersey Blue. Nevertheless, the world cannot probably produce another instance of a people who are derived from so many different races, and who occupy so large an extent of country, who are so homogeneous in appearance, characters and opinions. There is no question that the institutions have had a material influence in producing this uniformity, while they have unquestionably lowered the standard to which opinion is submitted, by referring the decisions to the many, instead of making the appeal to the few, as is elsewhere done. Still, the direction is onward, and though it may take time to carve on the social column of America that graceful and ornamental capital which it forms the just boast of Europe to possess, when the task shall be achieved, the work will stand on a base so broad as to secure its upright attitude for ages.

Notwithstanding the general character of identity and homogeneity that so strongly marks the picture of American society, exceptions are to be met with, in particular districts, that are not only distinct and incontrovertible, but which are so peculiar as to be worthy of more than a passing remark in our delineations of national customs. Our present purpose leads us into one of these secluded districts, and it may be well to commence the narrative of certain deeply interesting incidents that it is our intention to attempt to portray, by first referring to the place and people where and from whom the principal actors in our legend had their origin.

Every one at all familiar with the map of America knows the position and general form of the two islands that shelter the well-known harbour of the great emporium of the commerce of the country. These islands obtained their names from the Dutch, who called them Nassau and Staten; but the English, with little respect for the ancient house whence the first of these appellations is derived, and consulting only the homely taste which leads them to a practical rather

then to a poetical nomenclature in all things, have since virtually dropped the name of Nassau, altogether substituting that of Long Island in its stead.

Long Island, or the island of Nassau, extends from the mouth of the Hudson to the eastern line of Connecticut; forming a sort of sea-wall to protect the whole coast of the latter little territory against the waves of the broad Atlantic. Three of the oldest New York counties, as their names would imply, Kings, Queens, and Suffolk, are on this island. Kings was originally peopled by the Dutch, and still possesses as many names derived from Holland as from England, if its towns, which are of recent origin, be taken from the account. Queens is more of a mixture, having been early invaded and occupied by adventurers from the other side of the Sound; but Suffolk, which contains nearly, if not quite, two-thirds of the surface of the whole island, is and ever has been in possession of a people derived originally from the puritans of New England. Of these three counties, Kings is much the smallest, though next to New York itself, the most populous county in the state; a circumstance that is owing to the fact that two suburban offsets of the great emporium, Brooklyn and Williamsburg, happen to stand, within its limits, on the waters of what is improperly called the East River; an arm of the sea that has obtained this appellation, in contradistinction to the Hudson, which, as all Manhattanese well know, is as often called the North River, as by its proper name. In consequence of these two towns, or suburbs of New York, one of which contains nearly a hundred thousand souls, while the other must be drawing on towards twenty thousand, Kings county has lost all it ever had of peculiar, or local character. The same is true of Queens, though in a diminished degree; but Suffolk remains Suffolk still, and it is with Suffolk alone that our present legend requires us to deal. Of Suffolk, then, we purpose to say a few words by way of preparatory explanation.

Although it has actually more sea-coast than all the rest of New York united, Suffolk has but one sea-port that is ever mentioned beyond the limits of the county itself. Nor is this port one of general commerce, its shipping being principally employed in the hardy and manly occupation

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