

**A HISTORY OF THE
AMERICAN WHALE
FISHERY, NO. 20**

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A history of the American whale fishery, No. 20 by Walter S. Tower

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A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN
WHALE FISHERY

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PREFACE.

Whaling was once a great industry in the United States. Whole communities were dependent on its success. When voyages were successful there was prosperity and plenty. When voyages failed there was hardship and hunger. Fortunes were made and lost. The foundation of many a stately old mansion in New England rests on "oil and bone." But whaling was not a passing boom, not a thing apart from all other interests, not local in nature and local in effect. Its influence as a social and economic factor was widespread. Whaling was a unit in a great whole—a part of the vast industrial interests of a growing country. It is so no longer. Whaling is practically dead. The almost complete cycle of whaling activity is a good lesson in economics—the lesson of a flourishing enterprise quickly wiped out by changing economic conditions. The history of whaling forms an important chapter in the commercial history of the United States.

The history of the American whale fishery, however, is not an untried field. From time to time discussions of different phases or periods in the development of the fishery have appeared in print. But there seems still to be a field for further work along much the same lines. On the whole these previous works on the whaling industry are incomplete—incomplete as regards both time and treatment. The most recent history was published in 1876, but the discussion of the years subsequent to 1815 is unfinished. Furthermore none of the

authors have accorded whaling its proper significance as a factor in commercial development. The histories have been chronicles instead of interpretations.

The present history of the American whale fishery aims to give a comprehensive idea of its origin and growth from colonial times to the present, emphasizing the economic aspects. A chapter on the origin of whaling in Europe, which may seem not to belong here, has been introduced at the outset as a background for our own early colonial efforts. The subsequent chapters deal solely with the ups and downs of the American fishery, and they attempt to give an intelligent interpretation of the conditions inducing prosperity or depression in this rather typical New England industry. The chapters on the "Rise of Pacific Whaling," the "Decline of American Whaling" and "Whaling Products in Commerce," will prove the most interesting and most valuable to the economist or the student of trade and industrial conditions. Appendix I will be found to give practically all of the available statistics relating to the whale fishery during the last century. Most of these tables have never before appeared in print, being compilations and combinations from a variety of sources. Appendix II gives a rather full list of references to books and articles about whaling. A critical analysis of the most important will be found in the introductory chapter.

Much valuable information and important data have been obtained from a wide range of sources, to which reference has been made in every case. I am indebted to the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D. C., for aid received in preparing this volume. I also owe thanks to Professor Emory R. Johnson, of the Uni-

versity of Pennsylvania, who has kindly read the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions and criticisms; to Mr. George R. Phillips, editor of the "Whalemen's Shipping List," and especially to Mr. George H. Tripp, Librarian of the New Bedford Public Library, and his assistants, for their unfailing courtesy and readiness to aid in facilitating my work.

WALTER S. TOWER.

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 1, 1906.



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