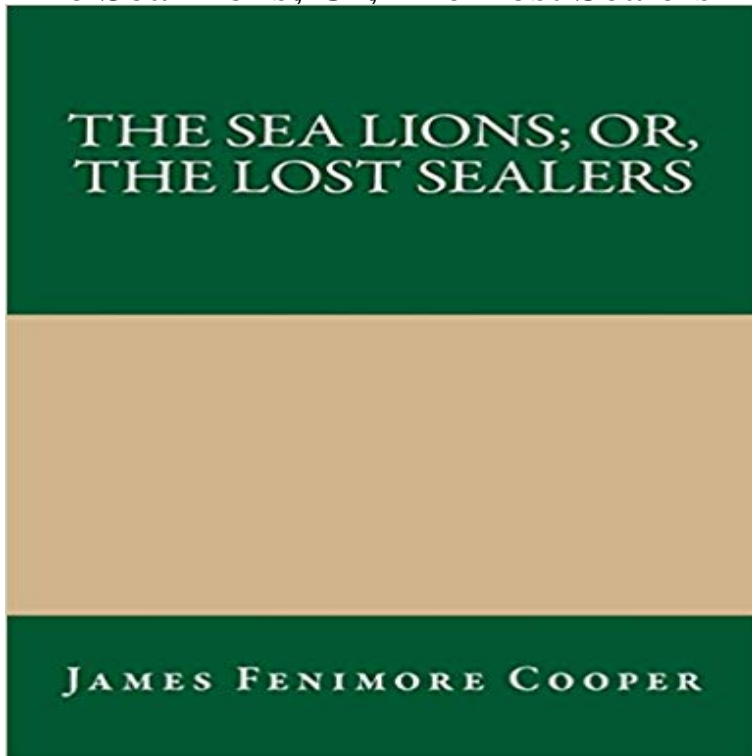


The Sea Lions; Or, The Lost Sealers



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.

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