

the endless tale of the sultana of the *Arabian Nights*. It is not surprising that Mr. Arthur Stedman has judged it well to bring out a new edition of the romances of Herman Melville, which delighted our fathers, and may very well be handed down a pleasant heritage to the readers of the twentieth century. For these stories have a life of their own—and as for books that have it not, in vain does friendship try to galvanize and advertise them that they may take hold upon popular favor. Give us a good story! is the constant cry of the worthy public.

Melville's novels answer this need. His own disposition to the hearing and the telling of tales began auspiciously in childhood, when (as he wrote in *Redburn*) his father "of winter evenings, by the well-remembered sea-coal fire in old Greenwich Street, used to tell my brother and me of the monstrous waves at sea, mountain high, of the masts bending like twigs, and all about Havre and Liverpool." No better preparatory course than this could there have been to fit young Melville for his university course of seamanship and adventure, of which he wrote:

If hereafter I shall do anything that on the whole a man might rather have done than to have left undone, . . . then here I prospectively ascribe all the honor and the glory to whaling; for a whale-ship was my Yale and my Harvard.

This discipline, both congenial and useful, was very fruitful of results. Mr. Stedman acutely observes:

Whether our author entered on his whaling adventures in the South Seas with a determination to make them available for literary purposes, may never be certainly known. There was no such elaborate announcement or advance preparation as in some later cases. I am inclined to believe that the literary prospect was an afterthought, and that this insured a freshness and enthusiasm of style not otherwise to be attained.

In either case Melville's romances have the truthfulness and open-air clearness belonging to stories of actual experience; there is no suspicion here of the man in search of copy. Rather does the copy hunt the man; he writes because he has somewhat to tell.

When *Typee* was first published, in 1846, by Mr. John Murray of London, he—his plans not including fiction—accepted the MS. on the assurance of the author's brother that it contained nothing which had not been really experienced by Herman Melville. The London edition bore two or three long and heavy titles, the briefest of which was *Melville's Marquesas Islands*. In America it was issued with the name given to it by the writer: *Typee*.

The story opens effectively and in the most natural manner. Six months at sea, out of sight of any land, following the sperm whale under the fierce equinoctial sunlight, beaten by the long-rolling Pacific waters; fresh vegetables and fruits exhausted; the seamen weary with the nostalgia of the ocean, sharpened by disgust for salt pork and biscuit—these particulars form a prelude, hollow and discouraging as a certain introduction of Beethoven's in-

THE ROMANCES OF HERMAN MELVILLE.*

MANKIND might not be described amiss as the story-loving animal. Since the days of Homer, whoever has a straightforward, dramatic tale to tell has been sure of a hearing. But the story must be full of human nature, along the line either of facts or of aspirations and fancies, realistic as the narrative of Defoe, or nourishing the love of marvel and splendor, like

*Typee. A Real Romance of the Southern Seas. By Herman Melville.

Omoo. A Sequel to Typee. Edited by Arthur Stedman. United States Book Co. Each, \$1.50.

secutive fifths, to the harmonious delights of the vale of Typee on the island of Nukuheva. There the mariners found a real land of the lotus-eaters, with deep inlets, densely wooded valleys and grass-covered mountains. The local sirens, brown and laughing, swam out to meet them, and to weave lithe dances upon the deck for their entertainment. Other natives came bobbing through the waves amid a wreath of cocoanuts for sale so like in appearance to their own heads that the purchaser had to look twice to be sure of buying a vegetable. The inhabitants of this lovely isle, with its woody hills and leaping waterfalls, had the ill fame of being cannibals. Yet Tom and Toby, the heroes of the tale, prefer to run away from the ship and take their chances with the savages of Nukuheva, while awaiting an occasion to escape by means of some vessel which might touch there. The progress of the two sailors through canebrakes and forests, down steep precipices, dropping through boughs or scaling rock façades, is a narrative which causes the non-adventurous reader to hold tight to the arms of his study chair lest he fall into an imaginary abyss. Tom and Toby, having made a snap decision as to which tribe might be the more vegetarian in its tastes, Typee or Happar, decide in favor of the former, and settle down among the dwellers of that vale. They are formally protected by the King Mehevi, a noble savage who rules his people by force of superiority, without tyranny and without pomp.

The life of Typee, as described by Mr. Melville, was charming in its amiable lawlessness. The people — healthy, and surrounded by a delicious climate in a country where there was plenty of breadfruit and cocoanuts for all, and nobody need go hungry if he would take the trouble to stretch out his hand to pluck and open his mouth to eat — were all amiable, without envy or ill-will. The absence of statutes and courts of justice removed also the temptation to technical misdemeanors. It was a veritable Eden — if one looked at it without searching deeply. But the disappearance of Toby caused "Tommo," as the islanders called him, to do some very serious thinking. Nor were certain mummified skulls, of which he had a glimpse, reassuring to his fears. So finally — after many strange and not unpleasant experiences of Marquesan life, the kindly services of its people, the gentle companionship of the little maiden Fayaway (the portrait of the nymph, with her mantle spread for a sail to speed the canoe, is the frontispiece to the volume), and the manners and customs of the island — Tommo obtains a safe conduct from King Mehevi, and departs upon an Australian ship for civilized shores. In justice to the Marquesans it should be said that Toby turns up safe in New York.

The reader, whose sympathies are enlisted for Tommo, will be glad to learn the sequel

to his sojourn in the isle of Typee. Another volume, *Omoo*, finds Tommo aboard the "Julia," a poorly equipped craft, but a real sea-witch that "looked right up into the wind's eye, and so she went." She was a whaler, and manned by an oddly assorted crew, among whom the doctor, called "Long Ghost," became Tommo's friend and ally. After the vessel anchors at Tahiti, the hero passes three months on that island and the neighboring Imeeo. The quality of *Omoo* is rather less romantic than that of *Typee*; it has less of narrative and more of study of the local customs and conditions. This is justified by the partly sophisticated state of society which, even half a century ago, differentiated Tahiti from the South Sea Islands unvisited by missionaries. According to Melville, civilization and doctrine have been productive of more harm than good to the Polynesians. His judgment appears to proceed from a mind with every wish for fairness, as well as respect for true religion. But the bad example of many of the white visitants; the alien quality of an austere standard of faith and works, little suited to the temperament of the Polynesians; the defects, more or less inevitable, in the work of the missionaries; and the unseemly strife of sects, have proved most unedifying to the islanders.

The arraignment made by the author of *Omoo* is grave and temperate in manner. It certainly demands thought on the part of those who would convert the heathen. For our part we like to imagine the South Sea Islanders floating happily and carelessly as the cocoanuts on the waves — trusting instinctively in the Power that made this world so beautiful for them to carry them on some fortunate current to the next world, a Paradise in golden seas. Who knows that they do not go there as directly as the Puritans, of less liberal climates, who steer with charts and much straining of cordage and hauling about of helms? For surely a special benediction is upon natural goodness, neither self-conscious nor fear-tormented.

We have to commend *Typee* and *Omoo* as most readable books; they are made vivid by a noble art of telling a straight story, and they are strong with a manliness inspired by the free influences of the sea-wind and the waves.