

THE EDITOR RECOMMENDS—

Melville Again

EDMOND BYRNE HACKETT'S first venture into the publishing world is more than successful. Meade Minnigerode has found, and arranged in wisdom and taste, "Some Personal Letters of Herman Melville and A Bibliography" (Brick Row Book Shop). What a bellow and roarer old seadog Melville must have been! Like whom does this sound? When asked to review a book, he replies:

What has Mr. Hart done that I should publicly devour him? I bear that hapless man no malice. Then why smite him? And as for glossing over his book with a few commonplaces—*that* I can not do. The book deserves to be burnt in a fire of asafetida, and by the hand that wrote it.

Seriously again . . . the book is an abortion, the mere trunk of a book, minus head, arm or leg. Take it back, I beseech, and get some one to cart it back to the author.

Is it not our very Mencken?

Of all the letters in the book, the first is the best. Melville's analysis of madness is poetry. But it is dishonest to quote the best part of a book, and anyone actually interested in the background of American letters who does not own this volume does not deserve to read this fine letter. One more quotation, however, I can't resist. It is the old cry of the man with more ideas than time to carry them through to actuality. Melville bellows for "fifty fast-writing youths" to turn out as many novels.

But I don't know but a book in a man's brain is better off than a book bound in calf—at any rate it is safer from criticism. And taking a book off the brain, is akin to the ticklish and dangerous business of taking an old painting off a panel—you

have to scrape off the whole brain in order to get at it with due safety—and even then the painting may not be worth the trouble. . . .

The bibliography is like most others except that it is actually readable!