

EDITOR'S NOTE

"Omoo" is so close a sequel to "Typee," that it almost forms a part of that work. Herman Melville's second book appeared in 1847, published (as its fore-runner had been the year before) simultaneously in London and New York. In "Omoo," as Mr. Arthur Stedman says—"We leave for the most part the dreamy pictures of island life, and find ourselves sharing the extremely realistic discomforts of a Sydney whaler in the early forties." Both books are without a doubt largely autobiographical, and based on the writer's early sea-adventures, of which his voyage in the "Acushnet" in 1841-2 was the most memorable.

Herman Melville was born in New York, on August r, 1819, and came of mixed Dutch and English stock. His father was a merchant, and died before the boy left school, whose charge then devolved on an uncle, a well-to-do farmer. But Herman, wishing to be free, soon declared a love for the sea, and made his first voyage as a cabin-boy. After leaving the sea finally in 1842, Melville lived first in New York, and then for many years near Pittsville, where he had for a time Nathaniel Hawthorne as his neighbour. For fuller particulars of his career, see the introduction to the companion volume of "Typee." He died in New York, on September 28, 1891. The following is the list of his published volumes.

December, 1907.

Typee: Narrative of a Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands, etc., 1846; Omoo, a Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas, 1847; Mardi, and a Voyage Thither, 1848; Redburn, his First Voyage, 1848; White Jacket; or, The World in a Man of War, 1850; The Whale (or, Moby Dick), 1851; Pierre; or, The Ambiguities, 1852; Israel Potter: his Fifty Years of Exile, 1855; The Piazza Tales, 1856; The Confidence Man, his Masquerade, 1857; Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War, 1866; Clarel: a Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land, 1876.

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PREFACE

Nowhere, perhaps, are the proverbial characteristics of sailors shown under wilder aspects than in the South Seas. For the most part, the vessels navigating those remote waters are engaged in the Sperm Whale Fishery; a business which is not only peculiarly fitted to attract the most reckless seamen of all nations, but, in various ways, is calculated to foster in them a spirit of the utmost licence. These voyages, also, are unusually long and perilous; the only harbours accessible are among the barbarous or semi-civilized islands of Polynesia, or along the lawless western coast of South America. Hence, scenes the most novel, and not directly connected with the business of whaling, frequently occur among the crews of ships in the Pacific.

Without pretending to give any account of the whalefishery (for the scope of the narrative does not embrace the subject), it is, partly, the object of this work to convey some idea of the kind of life to which allusion is made by means of a circumstantial history of adventures befalling the author.

Another object proposed is to give a familiar account of the present condition of the converted Polynesians, as affected by their promiscuous intercourse with foreigners, and the teachings of the missionaries, combined.

As a roving sailor, the author spent about three months

in various parts of the islands of Tahiti and Imeeo, and under circumstances most favourable for correct observations on the social condition of the natives.

In every statement connected with missionary operations, a strict adherence to facts has, of course, been scrupulously observed; and in some instances it has even been deemed advisable to quote previous voyagers, in corroboration of what is offered as the fruit of the author's own observations. Nothing but an earnest desire for truth and good has led him to touch upon this subject at all. And if he refrains from offering hints as to the best mode of remedying the evils which are pointed out, it is only because he thinks that, after being made acquainted with the facts, others are better qualified to do so.

Should a little jocoseness be shown upon some curious traits of the Tahitians, it proceeds from no intention to ridicule: things are merely described as, from their entire novelty, they first struck an unbiassed observer.

The present narrative necessarily begins where "Typee" concludes, but has no further connection with the latter work. All, therefore, necessary for the reader to understand, who has not read "Typee," is given in a brief introduction.

No journal was kept by the author during his wanderings in the South Seas; so that, in preparing the ensuing chapters for the press, precision with respect to dates would have been impossible; and every occurrence has been put down from simple recollection. The frequency, however, with which these incidents have been verbally related, has tended to stamp them upon the memory.

Although it is believed that one or two imperfect Poly-

nesian vocabularies have been published, none of the Tahitian dialect has as yet appeared. At any rate, the author has had access to none whatever. In the use of the native words, therefore, he has been mostly governed by the bare recollection of sounds.

Upon several points connected with the history and ancient customs of Tahiti, collateral information has been obtained from the oldest books of South Sea voyages and also from the "Polynesian Researches" of Ellis.

The title of the work—Omoo—is borrowed from the dialect of the Marquesas Islands, where, among other uses, the word signifies a rover, or rather a person wandering from one island to another, like some of the natives, known among their countrymen as "Taboo kannakers."

In no respect does the author make pretensions to philosophic research. In a familiar way, he has merely described what he has seen; and if reflections are occasionally indulged in, they are spontaneous, and such as would, very probably, suggest themselves to the most casual observer.

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OMOO:

ADVENTURES IN THE SOUTH SEAS

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1842, the author of this narrative, as a sailor before the mast, visited the Marquesas Islands in an American South Seaman. At the island of Nukuheva he left his vessel, which afterward sailed without him. Wandering in the interior, he came upon the valley of Typee, inhabited by a primitive tribe of savages, from which valley a fellow-sailor who accompanied him soon afterward effected his escape. The author, however, was detained in an indulgent captivity for about the space of four months; at the end of which period, he escaped in a boat which visited the bay.

This boat belonged to a vessel in need of men, which had recently touched at a neighbouring harbour of the same island, where the captain had been informed of the author's detention in Typee. Desirous of adding to his crew, he sailed round thither, and "hove to" off the mouth of the bay. As the Typees were considered hostile, the boat, manned by "Taboo" natives from the other harbour, was then sent in, with an interpreter at their head, to procure the author's release. This was finally accomplished, though not without peril to all concerned. At the time of his escape, the author was suffering severely from

lameness.

The boat having gained the open sea, the ship appeared in the distance. Here the present narrative opens.

PART I

CHAPTER I

MY RECEPTION ABOARD

It was the middle of a bright tropical afternoon that we made good our escape from the bay. The vessel we sought lay with her main-topsail aback about a league from the land, and was the only object that broke the

broad expanse of the ocean.

On approaching, she turned out to be a small, slatternly-looking craft, her hull and spars a dingy black, rigging all slack and bleached nearly white, and everything denoting an ill state of affairs aboard. The four boats hanging from her sides proclaimed her a whaler. Leaning carelessly over the bulwarks were the sailors, wild, haggard-looking fellows in Scotch caps and faded blue frocks; some of them with cheeks of a mottled bronze, to which sickness soon changes the rich berry-brown of a seaman's complexion in the tropics.

On the quarter-deck was one whom I took for the chief mate. He wore a broad-brimmed Panama hat, and his

spy-glass was levelled as we advanced.

When we came alongside, a low cry ran fore and aft the deck, and everybody gazed at us with inquiring eyes. And well they might. To say nothing of the savage boat's crew, panting with excitement, all gesture and vociferation, my own appearance was calculated to excite curiosity. A robe of the native cloth was thrown over my shoulders, my hair and beard were uncut, and I betrayed other evidences of my recent adventure. Immediately on gaining the deck, they beset me on all sides with questions, the half of which I could not answer, so incessantly were they put.

As an instance of the curious coincidences which often befall the sailor, I must here mention that two countenances before me were familiar. One was that of an old man-of-war's-man, whose acquaintance I had made in Rio de Janeiro, at which place touched the ship in which I sailed from home. The other was a young man, whom, four years previous, I had frequently met in a sailor boarding-house in Liverpool. I remembered parting with him at Prince's Dock Gates, in the midst of a swarm of police-officers, truckmen, stevedores, beggars, and the like. And here we were again:—years had rolled by, many a league of ocean had been traversed, and we were thrown together under circumstances which almost made me doubt my own existence.

But a few moments passed ere I was sent for into the

cabin by the captain.

He was quite a young man, pale and slender, more like a sickly counting-house clerk than a bluff sea-captain. Bidding me be seated, he ordered the steward to hand me a glass of Pisco.¹ In the state I was, this stimulus almost made me delirious; so that of all I then went on to relate concerning my residence on the island I can scarcely remember a word. After this I was asked whether I desired to "ship"; of course I said yes; that is, if he would allow me to enter for one cruise, engaging to discharge me, if I so desired, at the next port. In this way men are frequently shipped on board whalemen in the South Seas. My stipulation was acceded to, and the ship's articles handed me to sign.

The mate was now called below, and charged to make a "well man" of me; not, let it be borne in mind, that the captain felt any great compassion for me, he only desired to have the benefit of my services as soon as possible.

Helping me on deck, the mate stretched me out on the windlass and commenced examining my limb; and then doctoring it after a fashion with something from the medicine-chest, rolled it up in a piece of an old sail, making so big a bundle that, with my feet resting on the windlass, I might have been taken for a sailor with the gout. While this was going on, someone removing my tappa cloak

¹ This spirituous liquor derives its name from a considerable town in Peru, where it is manufactured in large quantities. It is well known along the whole western coast of South America, whence some of it has been exported to Australia. It is very cheap.

slipped on a blue frock in its place; and another, actuated by the same desire to make a civilized mortal of me, flourished about my head a great pair of sheepshears, to the imminent jeopardy of both ears, and the certain destruction of hair and beard.

The day was now drawing to a close, and, as the land faded from my sight, I was all alive to the change in my condition. But how far short of our expectations is oftentimes the fulfilment of the most ardent hopes. Safe aboard of a ship-so long my earnest prayer-with home and friends once more in prospect, I nevertheless felt weighed down by a melancholy that could not be shaken off. It was the thought of never more seeing those who, notwithstanding their desire to retain me a captive, had, upon the whole, treated me so kindly. I was leaving them for ever.

So unforeseen and sudden had been my escape, so excited had I been through it all, and so great the contrast between the luxurious repose of the valley, and the wild noise and motion of a ship at sea, that at times my recent adventures had all the strangeness of a dream; and I could scarcely believe that the same sun now setting over a waste of waters, had that very morning risen above the mountains and peered in upon me as I lay on my mat in

Typee.

Going below into the forecastle just after dark, I was inducted into a wretched "bunk" or sleeping-box built over another. The rickety bottoms of both were spread with several pieces of a blanket. A battered tin can was then handed me, containing about half a pint of "tea"-so called by courtesy, though whether the juice of such stalks as one finds floating therein deserves that title, is a matter all shipowners must settle with their consciences. A cube of salt beef, on a hard round biscuit by way of platter, was also handed up; and without more ado, I made a meal, the salt flavour of which, after the Nebuchadnezzar fare of the valley, was positively delicious.

While thus engaged, an old sailor on a chest just under me was puffing out volumes of tobacco smoke. My supper finished, he brushed the stem of his sooty pipe against the

sleeve of his frock, and politely waved it toward me. The attention was sailor-like; as for the nicety of the thing, no man who has lived in forecastles is at all fastidious; and so, after a few vigorous whiffs to induce repose, I turned over and tried my best to forget myself. But in vain. My crib, instead of extending fore and aft, as it should have done, was placed athwartships, that is, at right angles to the keel; and the vessel, going before the wind, rolled to such a degree, that every time my heels went up and my head went down, I thought I was on the point of turning a somerset. Beside this, there were still more annoying causes of inquietude; and every once in a while a splash of water came down the open scuttle, and flung the spray in my face.

At last, after a sleepless night, broken twice by the merciless call of the watch, a peep of daylight struggled into view from above, and someone came below. It was my

old friend with the pipe.

"Here, shipmate," said I, "help me out of this place,

and let me go on deck."

"Halloa, who's that croaking?" was the rejoinder, as he peered into the obscurity where I lay. "Ay, Typee, my king of the cannibals, is it you! But I say, my lad, how's that spar of your'n? the mate says it's in a devil of a way; and last night set the steward to sharpening the

handsaw: hope he won't have the carving of ye."

Long before daylight we arrived off the bay of Nukuheva, and making short tacks until morning, we then ran in and sent a boat ashore with the natives who had brought me to the ship. Upon its return, we made sail again, and stood off from the land. There was a fine breeze; and notwithstanding my bad night's rest, the cool, fresh air of a morning at sea was so bracing, that, as soon as I breathed it, my spirits rose at once.

Seated upon the windlass the greater portion of the day, and chatting freely with the men, I learned the history of the voyage thus far, and everything respecting the ship

and its present condition.

These matters I will now throw together in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE SHIP

FIRST and foremost, I must give some account of the Julia herself; or "Little Jule," as the sailors familiarly styled her.

She was a small barque of a beautiful model, something more than two hundred tons, Yankee-built and very old. Fitted for a privateer out of a New England port during the war of 1812, she had been captured at sea by a British cruiser, and, after seeing all sorts of service, was at last employed as a government packet in the Australian seas. Being condemned, however, about two years previous, she was purchased at auction by a house in Sydney, who, after some slight repairs, dispatched her on the present yovage.

Notwithstanding the repairs, she was still in a miserable plight. The lower masts were said to be unsound; the standing rigging was much worn; and, in some places, even the bulwarks were quite rotten. Still, she was tolerably tight, and but little more than the ordinary pumping

of a morning served to keep her free.

But all this had nothing to do with her sailing; at that, brave Little Jule, plump Little Jule, was a witch. Blow high, or blow low, she was always ready for the breeze; and when she dashed the waves from her prow, and pranced, and pawed the sea, you never thought of her patched sails and blistered hull. How the fleet creature would fly before the wind! rolling, now and then, to be sure, but in very playfulness. Sailing to windward, no gale could bow her over: with spars erect, she looked right up into the wind's eye, and so she went.

But after all, Little Jule was not to be confided in. Lively enough, and playful she was, but on that very account the more to be distrusted. Who knew, but that like some vivacious old mortal all at once sinking into a decline, she might, some dark night, spring a leak and carry us all to the bottom. However, she played us no such ugly trick, and therefore, I wrong Little Jule in supposing it.

She had a free roving commission. According to her papers she might go whither she pleased—whaling, sealing, or anything else. Sperm whaling, however, was what she relied upon; though, as yet, only two fish had been

brought alongside.

The day they sailed out of Sydney Heads, the ship's company, all told, numbered some thirty-two souls; now, they mustered about twenty; the rest had deserted. Even the three junior mates who had headed the whaleboats were gone: and of the four harpooners, only one was left, a wild New Zealander, or "Mowree," as his countrymen are more commonly called in the Pacific. But this was not all. More than half the seamen remaining were more or less unwell from a long sojourn in a dissipated port; some of them wholly unfit for duty, one or two dangerously ill, and the rest managing to stand their

watch though they could do but little.

The captain was a young cockney, who, a few years before, had emigrated to Australia, and, by some favouritism or other, had procured the command of the vessel, though in no wise competent. He was essentially a landsman, and though a man of education, no more meant for the sea than a hairdresser. Hence everybody made fun of him. They called him "The Cabin Boy," "Paper Tack," and half a dozen other undignified names. In truth, the men made no secret of the derision in which they held him; and as for the slender gentleman himself, he knew it all very well, and bore himself with becoming meekness. Holding as little intercourse with them as possible, he left everything to the chief mate, who, as the story went, had been given his captain in charge. despite his apparent unobtrusiveness, the silent captain had more to do with the men than they thought. In short, although one of your sheepish-looking fellows, he

S Omoo

had a sort of still, timid cunning, which no one would have suspected, and which, for that very reason, was all the more active. So the bluff mate, who always thought he did what he pleased, was occasionally made a tool of; and some obnoxious measures which he carried out, in spite of all growlings, were little thought to originate with the dapper little fellow in nankeen jacket and white canvas pumps. But, to all appearance, at least, the mate had everything his own way; indeed, in most things this was actually the case; and it was quite plain that the captain stood in awe of him.

So far as courage, seamanship, and a natural aptitude for keeping riotous spirits in subjection were concerned, no man was better qualified for his vocation than John Jermin. He was the very beau-ideal of the efficient race of short, thick-set men. His hair curled in little rings of iron grav all over his round, bullet head. As for his countenance, it was strongly marked, deeply pitted with the small-pox. For the rest, there was a fierce little squint out of one eye; the nose had a rakish twist to one side: while his large mouth, and great white teeth, looked absolutely sharkish when he laughed. In a word, no one, after getting a fair look at him, would ever think of improving the shape of his nose, wanting in symmetry as it was. Notwithstanding his pugnacious looks, however, Termin had a heart as big as a bullock's; that you saw at a glance.

Such was our mate; but he had one failing: he abhorred all weak infusions, and cleaved manfully to strong drink. At all times he was more or less under the influence of it. Taken in moderate quantities, I believe, in my soul, it did a man like him good; brightened his eyes, swept the cobwebs out of his brain, and regulated his pulse. But the worst of it was, that sometimes he drank too much, and a more obstreperous fellow than Jermin in his cups, you seldom came across. He was always for having a fight; but the very men he flogged loved him as a brother, for he had such an irresistibly good-natured way of knocking them down, that no one could find it in his heart to bear malice against him. So much for stout little Jermin.

All English whalemen are bound by law to carry a physician, who, of course, is rated a gentleman, and lives in the cabin, with nothing but his professional duties to attend to; but incidentally he drinks "flip" and plays cards with the captain. There was such a worthy aboard of the Julia; but, curious to tell, he lived in the forecastle with

the men. And this was the way it happened.

In the early part of the voyage the doctor and the captain lived together as pleasantly as could be. To say nothing of many a can they drank over the cabin transom. both of them had read books, and one of them had travelled: so their stories never flagged. But once on a time they got into a dispute about politics, and the doctor, moreover, getting into a rage, drove home an argument with his fist, and left the captain on the floor literally silenced. This was carrying it with a high hand; so he was shut up in his state-room for ten days, and left to meditate on bread and water, and the impropriety of flying into a passion. Smarting under his disgrace, he undertook, a short time after his liberation, to leave the vessel clandestinely at one of the islands, but was brought back ignominiously, and again shut up. Being set at large for the second time, he vowed he would not live any longer with the captain, and went forward with his chests among the sailors, where he was received with open arms as a good fellow and an injured man.

I must give some further account of him, for he figures largely in the narrative. His early history, like that of many other heroes, was enveloped in the profoundest obscurity; though he threw out hints of a patrimonial estate, a nabob uncle, and an unfortunate affair which sent him a-roving. All that was known, however, was this. He had gone out to Sydney as assistant-surgeon of an emigrant ship. On his arrival there, he went back into the country, and after a few months' wanderings, returned to Sydney penniless, and entered as doctor aboard of the

Tulia.

His personal appearance was remarkable. He was over six feet high—a tower of bones, with a complexion absolutely colourless, fair hair, and a light unscrupulous gray