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## HERMAN MELVILLE IN HONOLULU

ROBERT S. FORSYTHE

NOT much is known, as yet, of Herman Melville's residence in the Hawaiian Islands, during a part of the year of 1843. Mr. Arthur Stedman has stated, no doubt upon the authority of Melville himself or that of some member of his immediate family, that he was employed in Honolulu as a clerk.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Weaver surmised that Melville shipped on board the man-of-war *United States* at Honolulu in the summer of 1843.<sup>2</sup> This conjecture, as Mr. Albert Mordell has shown,<sup>3</sup> was well founded. Mr. Mordell proves from the muster-roll of the frigate *United States* that Melville enlisted in the United States Navy at Honolulu, on August 17, 1843.

By virtue of a lucky find, I am able to add something to what Mr. Weaver has rightly called "the meagre details" of Melville's sojourn in Honolulu. The following article, probably by its editor, the Reverend Samuel C. Damon, appeared in the *Friend* (Honolulu), New Series, xxii, 71<sup>4</sup> (August 1, 1873) :

## A CURIOSITY RELATING TO A LITERARY AUTHOR

Among the papers of the late Isaac Montgomery, Esq., was found the following. The literary fame which has been achieved by one of the parties, whose name is attached, imparts an interest to the document. Herman Melville, author of "Typee" and "Omoo," resided several months in Honolulu during the year 1843, and we believe left on board the U. S. frigate *United States*, in August of that year, before the stipulations of this agreement could have been fulfilled. It was during that cruise that he gathered the materials for his "White Jacket," or life on board a man-of-war. We would merely add that Mr. Melville now resides in New York, and his brother is now Superintendent of the Sailor's Snug Harbor on Staten Island. Mr. Montgomery died a few years ago in Honolulu, bequeathing some twenty or thirty thousand dollars to the Catholic Church on the Sandwich Islands.

THIS INDENTURE sheweth that Isaac Montgomery and Herman Melville do hereby enter as parties into the following covenant.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by R. M. Weaver, *Herman Melville* (New York, 1921), 236.

<sup>2</sup> Weaver, *Melville*, 236.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (July 4, 1931), 946.

<sup>4</sup> Misprinted "67."

1st. The said Isaac Montgomery, the party of the first part, hereby promises and [a]grees to employ the said Melville, the party of the second part, as a clerk in his the said Montgomery's business. The said Melville to keep the said Montgomery's Books and Accounts, and to do and perform for the said Montgomery such other things as may pertain to the said Melville in his duties as a clerk.

2nd. In consideration of these the said Melville [*sic*] services, herein before mentioned, the said Isaac Montgomery, the party of the first part, herein promises and agrees with the said Herman Melville, the party of the second part, to provide the said Melville during the time hereafter mentioned with good and sufficient board and lodging, and to procure his, the said Melville [*sic*], washing done during the said time, and all without any charge to the said Melville. And furthermore, in consideration of the said Melville's services herein before mentioned, the said Montgomery hereby covenants and agrees to pay the said Melville the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars as a yearly salary, to be paid in quarterly payments.

3d. And in consideration of the compensation herein before mentioned, the said Herman Melville hereby covenants and agrees with the said Isaac Montgomery, faithfully to do and perform such duties as by the tenor of this agreement he may be bound to perform for the said Montgomery.

4th. This agreement to commence on the first day of July, 1843, and to remain in force for one year from that date.

5th. And in consideration of this agreement, the said Montgomery promises to furnish the said Melville with his board, lodging and washing, without additional charge for the period elapsing between the 1st day of June, 1843, and the 1st day of July, of the same year.

And in witness of this covenant, we the parties concerned, hereby affix our names this first day of June, 1843, at Honolulu, Oahu, Sandwich Islands.

ISAAC MONTGOMERY,  
HERMAN MELVILLE.

IN THE PRESENCE OF,  
JAMES AUSTIN,  
A. JENKINS.

Of Isaac Montgomery I have been able to learn little. Possibly he was the Englishman who was much employed by Lord George Paulet, and in whose confidence Melville was.<sup>5</sup> That Montgomery kept a store in Honolulu is clear from the contract which he and Melville signed. It may be added that he took out a license for a retail store for the years 1844-1845 and 1845-1846.<sup>6</sup> Montgomery's advertisement appears in many issues of the *Polynesian*.<sup>7</sup> It reads:

Isaac Montgomery  
Dealer in General Merchandise,  
Honolulu, Oahu, H. I.  
Ships supplied with Stock at the shortest notice.

Melville's employer seems to have been that Isaac Montgomery who died at Honolulu on June 16, 1870, at the age of fifty-four.<sup>8</sup> This man, who was a naturalized citizen of Hawaii by 1847,<sup>9</sup> was a native of Workington, Cumberlandshire, England, who had come to the islands in 1838.<sup>10</sup> He seems to have lived in Emma Street, Honolulu, in the last years of his life.<sup>11</sup> His wife, Mrs. Fanny Montgomery, died May 3, 1868, at fifty-three years of age.<sup>12</sup> Evidently he prospered in business. This is indicated first, by the fact that he was the owner of the 119 ton schooner, *Queen Kalama*, in 1846;<sup>13</sup> second, that he was robbed in September of that year of \$16,800 in gold and silver coin (for the return of which and the arrest of the thief he offered a reward of \$1500);<sup>14</sup> third, that he bequeathed "some twenty or thirty thousand dollars" to the Roman Catholic Church in the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Appendix to *Typee*, Standard Edition, 343.

<sup>6</sup> The Honolulu *Polynesian*, New Series, I, 27 (July 6, 1844); II, 29 (July 5, 1845); II, 83 (October 4, 1845); II, 143 (January 10, 1846). Later, Montgomery was among the merchants licensed to sell spirituous liquors by the bottle in Honolulu (*Polynesian*, IV, 81, July 10, 1847). He is described as a store-keeper in the *Polynesian*, III, 137 (January 9, 1847).

<sup>7</sup> See the *Polynesian*, II, 137 (January 3, 1846), and subsequent issues.

<sup>8</sup> *Friend*, New Series, XX, 64 (July 6, 1870).

<sup>9</sup> See "Register of Foreigners Residing in Honolulu," *Polynesian*, III, 137 (January 9, 1847).

<sup>10</sup> *Friend*, New Series, XX, 64 (July 6, 1870).

<sup>11</sup> *Friend*, New Series, XIX, 96 (November 1, 1869); *ibid.*, New Series, XX, 65 (August 1, 1871).

<sup>12</sup> *Friend*, New Series, XVIII, 48 (June 1, 1868).

<sup>13</sup> *Polynesian*, III, 2 (May 23, 1846).

<sup>14</sup> *Polynesian*, III, 73 (September 19, 1846).

<sup>15</sup> *Friend*, New Series, XXII, 71 (August 1, 1873).

It may be hazarded that not only Melville's pro-English bias, but, to some degree, his fairness toward Roman Catholicism in the Pacific islands arose from his association with Montgomery, a man only three years older than he, a fact which should have made for some natural intimacy and confidence between the two.

Apparently, however, Melville's third known experiment in business proved no more successful than its predecessors had been. Acting as book-keeper and clerk in a Hawaiian retail mercantile establishment held for him seemingly no greater attraction than had a place in the New York State Bank or a salesman's position in Gansevoort Melville's fur and cap shop in Albany almost a decade before.<sup>16</sup> In less than seven weeks after the beginning of his term of service in Isaac Montgomery's store, Melville had enlisted as an able seaman on the frigate *United States*.

There is a possibility that Melville's stay in Honolulu was shortened by considerations of a very practical sort. Between May 28 and June 2, 1843, the whaleship *Acushnet*, which he had deserted at the Marquesas Islands almost a year before, was lying in the port of Lahaina, Island of Hawaii. The proof of this fact is a declaration made by Captain Valentine Pease, 2nd, of the *Acushnet*, on June 2, 1843, before John Stetson, United States consul at Lahaina. Because this declaration is of considerable importance as fixing the date of a significant incident in Melville's career, the document is given in full:

U. S. CONSUL AGENCY LAHAINA.

I hereby certify that Valentine Pease 2nd Master of the within named ship personally appeared before me and declared that — that David Smith deserted at Sahta June 30th 1841, Richard T. Greene and Herman Melville deserted at Nakehiva July 9th 1842 — John Wright deserted at ditto September 14th 1842 and Martin Brown at Rooapooa September 22 1842 and Jim Rosman deserted at Salango February 3d 1843. I also certify that Henry Hume deserted at this port May 28 1843.

2nd June 1843.

JOHN STETSON  
U. S. CONSUL AGENT<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Weaver, *Melville*, 71 and 72.

<sup>17</sup> The original is filed with the crew list of the *Acushnet* at the custom-house in New Bedford, Massachusetts. For a transcript and permission to publish it, I am indebted to the kindness of the discoverer of the document, my friend and former colleague, Professor Robert Forbes Almy, of Miami University, a native of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, the home port of the *Acushnet*.

From Lahaina, the *Acushnet* made her way to Honolulu, whence she sailed on June 8.<sup>18</sup> This was exactly a week after Melville, probably in total ignorance of the ship's proximity, had signed his contract with Isaac Montgomery, binding himself thereby for a year. It may well be that Melville feared that he would be recognized as a deserter, at some future visit of the whaler, and, consequently, be forced back into service on the vessel which he had disliked intensely. Because Captain Pease of the whaler *Acushnet* could hardly have successfully reclaimed a deserter from Captain Armstrong of the man-of-war *United States*, Melville, as a *pis aller*, chose the frigate, which offered him immediate protection and ultimately a passage home.

The *Acushnet*, it should be said, continued to hover about the Hawaiian Islands. In September, 1843, she was back from her cruise, and lay at Lahaina,<sup>19</sup> where she was reported again on October 15 of that year;<sup>20</sup> and in March, 1844, she returned a third time to the islands,<sup>21</sup> which had evidently become a kind of headquarters for her. Perhaps flight was the better course for Melville to take.

It may be observed that over a year after Melville's enlistment in the navy and only a month before he reached Boston, Mr. Damon, even then editor of the *Friend* and seamen's chaplain at Honolulu, published the following advertisement in his journal:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN. — The seamen's chaplain has received letters, overland, for the following persons, viz.: Capt[ain] C. S. Holt, Am[erican] W[hale] S[hip] General Williams; Capt[ain] G. Benjamin, Am[erican] W[hale] S[hip] Lowell; Capt[ain] P. H. Smith, Nantasket; Capt[ain] C. Pendleton, Benj[amin] Morgan. If Mr. Herman Melville, formerly officer on board Am[erican] W[hale] S[hip] *Acushnet*, is in this part of the world, and will call upon the seamen's chaplain, he may find several letters directed to his address. Frederick Buel, on board the Am[erican] W[hale] S[hip] *Braganza*, will find a letter.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Whalemens' Shipping List*, November 7, 1843. This reference, as well as others to the same journal, I owe to Professor Almy.

<sup>19</sup> *The Whalemens' Shipping List*, January 30, 1844.

<sup>20</sup> *The Whalemens' Shipping List*, March 26, 1844.

<sup>21</sup> *The Whalemens' Shipping List*, September 10, 1844, when the *Acushnet* was reported at the Island of Maui on March 11, 1844; and for October 1, 1844, when she was reported at Honolulu on March 25, 1844.

<sup>22</sup> *The Friend*, II, 84 (September 4, 1844). For my first knowledge of this advertisement, I am indebted to Mr. Philip Edwards, of Intervale, New Hampshire.

Unfortunately we do not know with certainty upon what terms Melville and Montgomery parted; but it may reasonably be conjectured that they were amicable. Nowhere does Melville make any slighting reference to his former employer: in fact, he seems to allude to Montgomery respectfully as a confidant of Lord George Paulet. From the Reverend Mr. Damon's advertisement may be drawn two inferences supporting the theory of friendly relations between the men up to their separation. One is that Melville's departure over a year before had been attended by no unpleasant publicity which had attracted the chaplain-editor's attention. The other is that probably the letters sent Melville in Honolulu had been sent to him in answer to his own missives, which had been despatched from the islands in 1843 and in which he had announced his plan of remaining there in some sort of employment. To support this is the fact that he was addressed as *formerly* of the *Acushnet*—he was, however, never one of her officers. This would indicate, of course, that Melville had communicated his desertion of his ship to some of his correspondents at home. His letters from Honolulu, if letters there were, must have been written and despatched before June 1, 1843, or the replies to them would have surely been sent in care of Isaac Montgomery.

The Hawaiian critics of Melville's books, interested, as most of them were, in discrediting the caustic commentator upon missionary enterprises, nowhere allude to his having been engaged in any quarrel or other difficulty during his stay in Honolulu. Mr. Damon, a missionary himself and a resident in the islands in Melville's day, certainly was ignorant of any cloud over the latter's departure, although his knowledge of the younger man's Hawaiian history indicates not only his interest in it, but more knowledge of it than Melville's three biographers have displayed. In 1844, as Damon's above-quoted notice in the *Friend* shows, he was unaware that the young sailor had left the island over a year earlier on the *United States*. Probably he made his first acquaintance with Melville's name when he received the letters sent in his care; and he took steps to learn more about the obscure visitor of 1843, when *Typee* and *Omoo* appeared.

The evidence that Melville and Montgomery by mutual agreement nullified the document above reprinted is by no means

conclusive. It would be quite unwarranted, on the other hand, to assume that Melville merely grew tired of "clerking" and as an alternative coolly deserted his post and returned to the sea. Nothing supports this view except the facts that Melville did not "serve out his time" and that there is no notation of cancellation on Montgomery's copy of the contract. Final judgment must be suspended until more information has been secured, although it does seem safe to suppose that no breaking of faith was involved in Melville's exchange of a book-keeper's stool in Honolulu for the maintop of a United States frigate on the high seas.

## WHITTIER AND THE AMESBURY-SALISBURY STRIKE

THOMAS FRANKLIN CURRIER

A SCARCE pamphlet printed in 1852 reveals Whittier's activity in the famous Amesbury-Salisbury mill strike of that year, and is a valuable document in the history of the agitation in Massachusetts for a ten-hour working-day for factory hands. Its title is: *A Succinct Account of the Late Difficulties in the Salisbury Corporation*, and it was printed in Salisbury by Currier & Gerrish, publishers and printers.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the agent of the Salisbury Manufacturing Company resigned, after a service of thirty years, and a new agent, a Mr. Derby of Cavendish, Vermont, entered upon his duties on the first day of May, 1852. It had long been the custom for the mills to open at five in the morning and close at seven in the evening with intermissions of half an hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner. In addition, the male operatives had the privilege of leaving the mills for a period of fifteen minutes, both forenoon and afternoon, nominally for luncheon, but the time could be used for other pur-

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. P. K. Foley, of Boston, called my attention to the existence of this interesting pamphlet but my search for it had been in vain until Mr. Roland Woodwell, of Amesbury, reported to me that a copy was in the hands of Mr. Albert Davis, of Amesbury, who was good enough to lend it to me. Lately another copy has found its way into the library of the American Antiquarian Society, in Worcester.