



The Encantadas and Other Stories (Dover Thrift Editions)

Herman Melville

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Best known as the creator of Captain Ahab and the great white whale of *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville (1819–91) found critical and popular success with his first novels, which he based on his adventures in the South Seas. His reputation was diminished by his preoccupation with metaphysical themes and allegorical techniques in later works; and by the time of his death, his books were long forgotten. Generations later, Melville's readers recognized his work as keenly satirical and rich in elements that prefigured the emergence of existentialism and Freudian psychology.

Melville's critical fortunes temporarily rebounded in the early to mid-1850s, with the favorable reception of his contributions to *Harper's* and *Putnam's*—two of the era's leading monthly magazines. This collection features fourteen of his works of short fiction from that period—most prominently, "The Encantadas or Enchanted Isles." This series of descriptive sketches, a reminiscence from Melville's sailor days, reveals the ecologically pristine Galápagos Islands as both enchanting and horrifying. The other stories showcase the author's mastery of a diverse range of writing styles. "The Lightning-Rod Man" demonstrates his deftness at Dickensian comedy, and "The Piazza" anticipates his subsequent absorption with poetry. "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," with its incisive contrast of upper-class frivolity with the desperate lives of factory workers, offers a moving portrait of social inequality. These rediscovered tales by a writer who was ahead of his time provide a captivating blend of artistry and cultural commentary.

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