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## Wild Life in the Sub-Antarctic

had eight flower-spikes in full bloom and another developing. Each spike had from 25 to 30 aster-like flowers coloured from mauve to lilac.

Through this almost tropical verdure huge sea-lions staggered drunkenly along, disturbing dozens of brilliant green parakeets and dainty little Auckland Island snipe. The air was shrill with the calls of sea-birds, the soft calls of burrowing petrels protested from beneath the ground one walked over, a colony of giant petrels on a clear headland fluttered awkwardly, and at higher altitudes the hillsides were starred with hundreds of sitting albatrosses. Across the harbour on the steep western cliffs could be seen thousands of mollyhawks, generally confined now to almost inaccessible faces because of the ravages of wild pigs.

The heavy rata forest with which the lower slopes of the Auckland Islands are

clad also provides a memorable sight when the great splashes of scarlet brighten the sombre upland tussock country.

The name "Fairchild's Garden" is a fitting tribute to a gallant captain of one of the earlier Government vessels which periodically visited the lonely Sub-antarctic Islands

### South to the Campbells

Campbell Island lies farther south and does not possess any forest at all. Only stands of the endemic shrub *Dracophyllum scoparium* darken the lower country: all else seems to be tussock. But here, too, the beautiful plants seen on the Aucklands are growing, and would provide as fair a sight were it not for the browsing of the wild sheep, descendants of those left when the island was deserted in 1927.

But if Campbell Island is to-day not so spectacular for its plant life, at least it has a unique animal and bird population. The huge and grotesque sea-elephants litter the shores of the harbours, sea lions abound on the sandy beaches and tussock slopes, and wary fur-seals are moderately plentiful on the exposed rocky coasts. Rockhopper penguins nest in millions, grey-headed and black-browed mollyhawks star their colonies in tens of thousands and the island is the stronghold of thousands of the well-named royal albatross. The colony of rockhopper penguins below Mt. Paris has been estimated to contain not less than 2½ million birds, surely one of the largest colonies of this quaint little bird in the world.

I had, therefore, ample material to study during my years in the sub-antarctic, and will try in succeeding articles to give *Listener* readers detailed accounts of the plants and animals that I saw every day.

(To be continued)

## MELVILLE'S "MOBY DICK" FROM 2YD

### Charles Laughton as Captain Ahab

A RECORDING of a 30-minute adaptation of Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* will be broadcast from 2YD at 9.2 p.m. on Wednesday, August 7, with Charles Laughton playing the part of Captain Ahab. *Moby Dick* was written in 1850 and 1851, and based on its author's adventures during a whaling voyage he had made ten years before, after which he left the sea for good. Near the farmhouse in which Melville wrote most of the book lived another famous American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and a letter from Melville to Hawthorne provides a glimpse of the state of mind in which he wrote:

"If ever, my dear Hawthorne, in the eternal times that are to come, you and I shall sit down in Paradise, in some little shady corner by ourselves; and if we shall by any means be able to smuggle a basket of champagne there (I won't believe in a temperance Heaven), and if we shall then cross our celestial legs in the celestial grass that is for ever tropical, and strike our glasses and our heads together, till both musically ring

in concert—then, O my dear fellow-mortal, how shall we pleasantly discourse of all the things manifold which now so distress us—when all the earth shall be but a reminiscence, yea, its final dissolution an antiquity.

"... But I was talking about the Whale. As the fishermen say, 'He's in his flurry, when I left him some three weeks ago. I'm going to take him by his jaw, however, before long, and finish him up in some fashion or other. What's the use of elaborating what, in its very essence, is so short-lived as a modern book? Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter.'

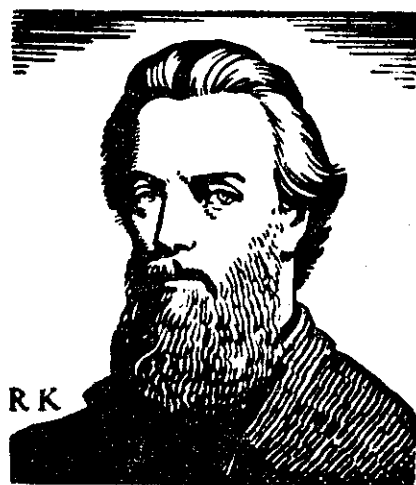
### "As Wide as the World"

Louis Untermeyer, American poet and critic, wrote an introduction to the present recording, and the following is an extract from it:

"*Moby Dick* is the greatest novel ever produced in this country. It is American in background, universal in scope, a work as wide as the world. 'It is conceived, from first to last, on a vast scale,' wrote Clifton Fadiman. 'It shakes hands with prairie seas and great distances... It will remain, I think, America's unarguable contribution to world-literature.' Viola Meynell declared, 'To read *Moby Dick*, and absorb it is the crown of one's reading life.' Yet when Herman Melville finished his masterpiece almost 100 years ago, he heard no such enthusiastic acclaim. The critics were baffled by the breathlessness of the subject and the vehemence of the style. The reviews were unrewarding. Melville's publishers refused to give him an advance on any further work. He attempted, unsuccessfully, to get a consular appointment, tried to support himself by lecturing, and spent twenty years of his life as a customs inspector on a New York wharf. The author of the most challenging and eloquent book of the century, died a silenced and unknown man.

### Symbolic Narrative

"What, then, is the reason for *Moby Dick*'s re-discovery, for its continuing and ever-growing appeal? Not merely because it is a heroic epic, a gigantic sea-story, a huge panorama in which the towering elements are actors. *Moby Dick* catches hold of the imagination and fas-



HERMAN MELVILLE  
A woodcut by Rockwell Kent

tens upon the mind because it seems so many different things to so many different people. On the level of sheer story-telling it is an adventure in excitement, the terrifying hunt for a white whale, a long and violent conflict between Captain Ahab, whose leg has been severed, and the monster who is the cause not only of Ahab's hate, but his death. But the implications are deeper, deep as the ocean which is the setting of the saga. *Moby Dick* is a symbolic narrative, a mighty fable; it is not only a prolonged act of revenge but a projection of man's endless battle against malicious fate. It is a myth in terms of action, a myth which, according to Fadiman, 'is a disguised method of expressing mankind's deepest terrors and longings.'

"One thing assures the permanence of *Moby Dick*. It is written in an ecstatic prose which is always bursting into poetry; it is, in fact, an extended prose-poem. *Moby Dick* might well be read as one long magnificent soliloquy. It is in this spirit that Charles Laughton delivers Melville's resounding lines. Captain Ahab takes on the proportions of a Hamlet or an Othello—those self-driven, self-doomed strugglers—as Laughton's voice rises with many-voiced passion and orchestral sonority."