CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT FIVE-AND-TWENTY—1873-76

"Since I am sworn to live my life
And not to keep an easy heart,
Some men may sit and drink apart,
I bear a banner in the strife.

"Some can take quiet thought to wife,
I am all day at *tierce* and *carte*,
Since I am sworn to live my life
And not to keep an easy heart.

"I follow gaily to the fife,
Leave Wisdom bowed above a chart,
And Prudence brawling in the mart,
And dare Misfortune to the knife,
Since I am sworn to live my life."

R. L. S.

EIGHTEEN hundred and seventy-three was a decisive year: for although it left Stevenson, as it found him, a law student with literary tastes, it yet marked a definite change in his life. It saw the religious question come to a crisis, and by so much, therefore, nearer to a settlement; it brought him new friends with both interest and influence in the career for which he was longing; and it foreshadowed the beginning of that career in the acceptance and publication of the first of the magazine articles which, being either travel-notes or essays, were for some time to come his principal, and, as some critics have held, his most characteristic achievement.

The most important event of the year for him sounds in itself one of the most trivial that can well be imagined—a visit to a country parsonage in Suffolk. A grand-daughter of the old minister of Colinton had several years before married the Rev. Churchill Babington, Disney Professor of Archæology in the University of Cambridge, and formerly a Fellow of St. John's College, who had taken the college living of Cockfield, a few miles from Bury St. Edmunds. Here Stevenson had paid a visit in 1870, one of those excursions into England of which he speaks in the essay on "The Foreigner at Home," and from which he received "so vivid an impression of foreign travel and strange lands and manners." These sensations were now renewed and deepened, but the later visit was to have other and more lasting effects: Stevenson now met for the first time two fellow-guests, whose friendship became at once an important element in his life, affecting his development, changing his horizon, and opening for him a direct outlook into the world of letters in which he was to be hereafter so brilliant a figure. The first of these, a connection by marriage and intimate friend of his hostess, was the Mrs. Sitwell to whom those letters were addressed which throw so much light on the inner feelings and thoughts of the ensuing period of Stevenson's life. The second was Mr. Sidney Colvin, who then and there began that friendship which was so immediately helpful, which survived all shocks of time and change, which separation by half the world seemed only to render more close and assiduous, and which has its monument in the *Vailima Letters*, in the two volumes of Stevenson's other correspondence, and

in the final presentation of his works. Mr. Colvin was then still resident at Cambridge as a Fellow of Trinity College, and had that same year been elected Slade Professor of Fine Arts in the University. Although Stevenson's elder by only a few years, he had already established for himself a reputation as a critic in literature and art, was favourably regarded by editors, and was fast becoming a personage of influence and authority.

It might seem that the list of Stevenson's friends already included as many as one man could retain in intimate relation; but for these two, and others yet to come, there was ample room. A few years after this he questions whether any one on this earth be so wealthy as to have a dozen friends, and indeed the doubt is permissible to most of us unless we knew Stevenson. Only six months before, in one of the morbid moods he was gradually putting behind him, as he sloughed the unhappiness of his youth, he had written down the chief desires of his heart. "First, good health: secondly, a small competence: and thirdly, O Du Lieber Gott! friends." Seldom was any prayer more fully answered than this last petition. Had he but known, the means of gaining it were already within his hands in a measure rarely granted to any man. At this very time, Mr. Colvin tells us,[1] "his social charm was already at its height." "He was passing through a period of neatness between two of Bohemian carelessness as to dress, and so its effect was immediate." But indeed at any time he "had only to speak in order to be recognised in the first minute for a witty

[1] *Letters*, i. 45, xxxix, xl.

and charming gentleman, and within the first five for a master spirit and man of genius."

At all events, by his hosts and by his fellow-guests his attraction was quickly felt, and the month of August, which passed away with no other episodes than a croquet party or a school feast, was nevertheless a landmark in his career.

From Suffolk he returned to Swanston with increased confidence and raised hopes, and at once plunged into work. The essay on "Roads" was completed and sent to the *Saturday Review*, and he began a paper on "Walt Whitman."[1]

But the preceding winter had tried him in mind and body, and he was now further weakened by a severe attack of diphtheria. In February his father had come across a draft of the constitution of the L. J. R. (p. 107, footnote), and had taken the society as seriously as the youngest of its members could have wished. The acute misunderstanding was limited to part of this year, and then by degrees it passed away. When Mr. Stevenson had determined beforehand on any course of action, he would throw himself into the part he had proposed with an energy and emphasis which were often, unconsciously to himself, far in excess of the situation or of the words he had intended to employ. "I have the family failing of taking strong views," he had written to his future wife in 1848, "and of express-

[1] It was this article that he afterwards described:—"I had written another paper full of gratitude for the help that had been given me in my life, full of enthusiasm for the intrinsic merit of the poems, and conceived in the noisiest extreme of youthful eloquence."—*Preface to Familiar Studies.*

ing those views strongly." A scene with him was no figure of words: he suffered the extreme of the emotions he depicted; and the knowledge and fear of this result made any difference between them very painful to his son. The differences arose, or threatened to arise again, the winter was coming on, and Louis' work came to an end.

An idea had arisen that he might be called not to the Scotch, but to the English Bar; and as his hopes were now directed towards London, the scheme was very welcome. To London accordingly he went in the last week of October with a view of entering one of the Inns of Court and passing the preliminary examination, if he could convince the examiners. The scheme was quickly laid aside. His friends in town found him so unwell that they at once insisted on his seeing Dr. (afterwards Sir Andrew) Clark. The diagnosis was plain—nervous exhaustion with a threatening of phthisis: the prescription was chiefly mental—a winter in the Riviera by himself, and in complete freedom from anxiety or worry. His mother came and saw him off, and on the 5th of November he started for Mentone, three weeks before his article on "Roads" had appeared in the *Portfolio*, of which P. G. Hamerton was editor.

How he sat in the sun and read George Sand his letters tell us; and all that he thought and felt and saw during the first six weeks was written down next spring in "Ordered South": a paper "not particularly well written," he thought, but "scrupulously correct." In the meantime, in "numbness of spirit" he rested and recovered strength. It was one of the halting-places of life, and there he sat by the wayside to recruit and prepare for a fresh advance. Mrs. Sitwell's letters

brightened his solitude, as they had already cheered and helped him in Edinburgh. His answers to her show better than any analysis or description the solace and the strength which came to him from her hands. To overcome depression, to realise a due proportion in the troubles of youth, to surmount the passing moods of immaturity—all this falls more or less to the lot of every man. It is the good fortune of some to receive in this crisis that service which it is generally beyond the power of a man to bestow, and which is possible only for the few women who combine a quick intelligence and a knowledge of the world with charm of temperament and intuition heightened by sympathy.

In his hotel at Mentone Stevenson made the acquaintance of two or three congenial people, who lent him Clough and other books which he read with interest; but as yet he was too weak for any serious reading, and was hardly fit for the exertion of talking to strangers. His internal struggles were of course not at an end, although he found them for the time less harassing. His moral doubts changed with his position, and took on a new phase. His own account, of which I have already quoted a part, after mentioning the circumstances of his being sent abroad for his health, thus continues:—

"In the meantime you must hear how my friend acted. Like many invalids he supposed that he would die. Now should he die, he saw no means of repaying this huge loan which, by the hands of his father, mankind had advanced him for his sickness. In that case it would be lost money. So he determined that the advance should be as small as possible; and, so long

as he continued to doubt his recovery, lived in an upper room, and grudged himself all but necessaries. But so soon as he began to perceive a change for the better, he felt justified in spending more freely, to speed and brighten his return to health, and trusted in the future to lend a help to mankind, as mankind, out of its treasury, had lent a help to him."[1]

In April he described the course of his recovery to his mother in similar terms. "I just noticed last night a curious example of how I have changed since I have been a little better: I burn two candles every night now; for long, I never lit but one, and when my eyes were too weary to read any more, I put even that out and sat in the dark. Any prospect of recovery changed all that."

By the middle of December one stage of his convalescence was already made. He was now to experience another advantage of his newly-formed friendships, as Mr. Colvin joined him at Mentone, and supplied the intimate conversation and discussion which had become his chief need. There was no great change in his life; they passed the time quietly enough, together or apart, as the fancy took them; reading *Woodstock* aloud, or plunged in talk on any or all subjects; sitting in the olive yards or in a boat, basking in the sun; or in "some nook upon St. Martin's Cape, haunted by the voice of breakers, and fragrant with the threefold sweetness of the rosemary and the sea pines and the sea."

For a few days they went to Monte Carlo, where they "produced the effect of something unnatural upon the people," because where everybody gambled all night,

[1] "Lay Morals," *Juvenilia*, p. 331.

they spent their evenings at home; but they soon returned to Mentone, and there in the hotel to which the chance of accommodation brought them, were fortunate in finding a small but very cosmopolitan society, which greatly brightened Stevenson's stay when his companion had to leave him. The chief members of this little coterie were a Georgian lady and her sister with two little daughters; M. Robinet, a French painter; and an American and his wife and child, "one of the best story-tellers in the world, a man who can make a whole table d'hôte listen to him for ten minutes while he tells how he lost his dog and found him again." With the younger of the Russian children, Nelitschka, "a little polyglot button" of only two and a half, who spoke six languages, or fragments of them, Stevenson at once struck up a great friendship, and his letters for the next three months are full of her, and her sayings and doings.

She was almost, if not quite, the only very young child who ever came much under his notice after the days of his own boyhood, and she seems to have been so extraordinarily brilliant and fascinating a little creature that there is nothing to wonder at in the great attraction which she had for him. The ladies, moreover, were women of cultivation and refinement; full of spirits, and always devising fresh amusements: telling fortunes, writing characters, dancing Russian dances and singing Russian airs, and charmed, to Stevenson's intense delight, by what he afterwards loved to call, with James Mohr, "the melancholy tunes of my native mountains." It was one of the episodes of real life; an introduction of characters who never reappear in the

story, an episode such as literature rejects; but it made Stevenson's path smoother at a time when he was unable to climb steep places, and it took his thoughts off himself and hastened his recovery, while he was still unfit for prolonged exertion or any serious study.

Their circle was afterwards increased by the arrival of another friend of the Russians, the prince whose clever and voluble talk he has described in one of his letters, by whom he was nearly persuaded to take a course of Law, during the summer, at the University of Göttingen. In this time and place also began Stevenson's friendship with Mr. Andrew Lang, who was then staying in the Riviera and one day called upon Mr. Colvin. The impression Stevenson produced was, Mr. Lang confesses, "not wholly favourable":—

"A man of twenty-two, his smooth face, the more girlish by reason of his long hair, was hectic. Clad in a wide blue cloak, he looked nothing less than English, except Scotch." The impression received was that the other was "Oxfordish"; but Mr. Lang may console himself with the thought that this was before he had avowed his preference for St. Andrews. In spite of so tepid a beginning the acquaintance prospered, and grew into a friendship which endured until the end.

When Mr. Colvin, after one brief absence, finally returned to England, his companion was already working again, though still far from strong. Even by the middle of March, he says that he is "idle; but a man of eighty can't be too active, and that is my age."

As the days went on, it was time for him to turn northwards, but he was loth to go. He wrote to his mother: "*22nd Feb., 1874.*—What keeps me here is

just precisely the said society. These people are so nice and kind and intelligent, and then as I shall never see them any more, I have a disagreeable feeling about making the move. With ordinary people in England, you have always the chance of rencountering one another; at least you may see their death in the papers; but for these people, they die for me and I die for them when we separate." On such terms he parted from them, not without the promise of a visit to their home in Poland, which, by no fault of his, was never accomplished.

In the beginning of April he reached Paris, and there found his cousin R. A. M. Stevenson, who had now taken up painting as a profession, and had been studying during the winter at Antwerp. This was Louis' first independent acquaintance with Paris, and he delayed his return to Edinburgh till the end of the month, when the weather in the North might be more favourable. But this was only a measure of caution, and for several years to come we hear no more of his health as affecting his movements, or seriously hindering his work.

On his return home he found that many of his troubles had vanished. He had not of course solved the riddle of the universe, nor adjusted all contending duties, nor mastered all his impulses and appetites. He had not learned to handle his pen with entire precision, or to say exactly the thing he wished in the manner perfectly befitting it; nor was his way of life open before him. But his relations with his parents were on the old footing once more, and in the religious question a *modus vivendi* seems to have been estab-

lished with his father. Probably nothing short of dogmatic orthodoxy would have given entire satisfaction, but at least this much already was gained, that the son's character for honesty was established, and his desire for the truth fully recognised.

The question of his allowance was now reconsidered. The man who had been trusted freely with all the money necessary for his expensive sojourn abroad could not be put back to his small pocket-money, and it was settled that in future he was to receive seven pounds a month, more even than he himself had thought of suggesting.

Money at his command and friends in the South forthwith changed his mode of life. For the whole seven years of the preceding period he had only crossed the Border thrice, but henceforth he was never continuously at home for more than three months at a time. Three springs and two autumns he spent in Edinburgh or at Swanston, but in the intervals his face became familiar in London, Paris, and the resorts of painters near Fontainebleau. But all the time he never went far afield, and between 1874 and 1879 seems not to have travelled further than three hundred miles from the English coast.

In Edinburgh his attention still had for some little time to be given to the study and pursuit of the Law. All idea of the English Bar was apparently given up, and in the winter session of 1874 he resumed his attendance at the lectures of the University professors on Conveyancing, Scots Law, and Constitutional Law and History. On July 14, 1875, he successfully passed his Final Examination, and two days after was called to

the Scottish Bar. On the 25th he had his first complimentary brief, and the following day he sailed for London on his way to France. "Accept my hearty congratulations on being done with it," Jenkin wrote. "I believe that is the view you like to take of the beginning you have just made." Stevenson returned, however, in the end of September, and during the next few months made some sort of effort to practise, although he does not seem to have impressed anybody outside his own family as being a serious lawyer. He frequented the great hall of the Parliament House, which, like Westminster in old days, is the centre of the courts, and the haunt of advocates waiting for business. The brass plate with his name, usual in Scotland, was affixed to the door of 17 Heriot Row, and he had the fourth or fifth share in the services of a clerk, whom it is alleged that he did not know by sight. He had in all four briefs, and the total of his fees never reached double figures. One piece of business might, he told me, have assumed real importance, but a compromise brought it to an end. "If it had prospered," he said, "I might have stuck to the Bar, and then I suppose I should have been dead of the climate long ago."

Once only was he conspicuously before the Court, and this publicity was due neither to the weightiness of the matter nor to the brilliancy of the advocate. One day he met in the street a certain judge of the Court of Session, whom he saluted in the customary manner. Stevenson had just emerged from a public-house, and was dressed at the time in a suit of old clothes which may have been dear to his heart, but

were certainly not of the style habitual to members of the Bar. The judge looked surprised, but acknowledged the salute and passed on. When Stevenson reached home, he found a brief waiting for him with instructions to "revive"[1] a certain case the next day before this very judge. At the hour appointed he appeared in his robes, wigged and properly habited, and expecting the empty court usual for such formal business. But he reckoned without numbers of his friends, who, having got wind of the brief, came in to see how he would acquit himself, and the court was crowded. The judge scented a joke; recognised his young friend of the day before; asked who he was, and proceeded to require a great deal of entirely unnecessary information about the details of the case. The brief contained no allusion to these facts; counsel was completely ignorant of the history; the solicitor took care to keep well out of the way, and enjoyed the joke from the back of the court, until at last Stevenson's eye fell upon him, and the judge was referred to him for all further facts. So counsel escaped, but he had his quarter of an hour.

The Advocates' Library in the Parliament House is the best in Scotland; and here Stevenson hoped to get some of his literary work done, while he was waiting for briefs. But the division of interests and the attractive company of his fellows were too unsettling; he soon returned to his own upper room in his father's house, and came no more to the *Salle des Pas Perdus*.

But although, after he abandoned Parliament House,

[1] *I.e.* make a purely formal motion that it be replaced in the list, in order to prevent it from lapsing.

he was no longer confined to the city of his birth, it was still his home and the point of return from his wanderings in England or abroad. Three of the first four friends named in the preceding chapter were, like himself, now released from the necessity of living constantly in Edinburgh, yet their connection with it was maintained, and they continued more or less frequently to visit it; while Professor Jenkin and Mr. Baxter remained resident there as before.

Nor did Stevenson's manner of life, at the times when he was in Edinburgh, suffer any sudden change. We must think of him in Scotland at this time as living chiefly in the society of a few intimates, still wandering about the city and its neighbourhood, "scraping acquaintance with all classes of man- and woman-kind," travelling deliberately through his ages and getting the heart out of his own liberal education, still to some extent in bonds to himself, though he had escaped in a degree from circumstance. No longer as a supplement to professional studies, but now as his avowed business, he wrote and rewrote, he blotted and recast his essays, tales, verses, and plays as before, and accomplished much solid work. From general society he still held aloof, and it was in 1875 that he last took part in the Jenkins' theatricals, acting the Duke in *Twelfth Night*.

"He played no character on the stage as he could play himself among his friends," was his verdict upon Jenkin, and it was even more applicable to himself where his own friends were concerned; but as yet he could not modify his attitude towards the burgess or the Philistine, or forego the intolerance of youth.

All this did not heighten his popularity or the estimation in which he was held, nor was he generally looked upon at this time as likely ever to bring honour to his native city. The brilliance and diversity of his talk appealed to few of his fellow-citizens, whether old or young, and merely disconcerted those whose minds ran in narrower grooves. Mostly they perceived little more than the exterior of the lad with his dilapidated clothes, his long hair, and distaste for office life. The companions who knew him best did not spare their criticism or laughter, and it was at this time that names like Flibbertigibbet and Mr. Fastidious Brisk were aimed at his volubility and exaggeration on the one hand, and a supposed tendency to sprightliness and affectation of phrase upon the other.

It is a keen eye which can discern in a young man the difference between the belief in gifts which he does not possess, and his consciousness of powers as yet undeveloped, until Time, which tries all, reduces the one and justifies the other. It was chiefly the older men who looked with a kindly glance upon the manifestations of his youth, such as old Mr. Baxter, who had for him as warm an appreciation as his son Charles had found in turn at the hands of Thomas Stevenson; Mr. J. T. Mowbray, the family lawyer, a grim, dry, warm-hearted old bachelor, whom I have always fancied to be the original of Mr. Utterson in *Jekyll and Hyde;* Mr. Robert Hunter, of whom Stevenson has left a speaking portrait in the second part of "Talk and Talkers"; and other friendly veterans. These seem best to have realised the good that was in him, and indeed the husk is hardly noticeable to those who can read (as his con-

temporaries could not) how the frail lad found a lost child of three crying in the street in the middle of the night, and carried him half over Edinburgh, wrapped in his own greatcoat, while he sought in vain for the missing parents.[1]

And still, as in his childhood and as in most of his books, happiness came to him chiefly in the country. Long walks in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; summer evenings in the garden at Swanston, or on Caerketton or Allermuir; days passed in canoeing on the Forth at Queensferry, or skating upon Duddingston Loch — these were the chief part of his outdoor life, and the last of his time that was spent amid the scenery of his boyish days.

In August, 1874, he was yachting for a month with Sir Walter Simpson and Mr. T. Barclay, on the west coast of Scotland — a happy experience not to be renewed for many a long year. The *Heron*, a fore-and-aft schooner of sixteen tons, had two Devon men as crew, and their labours were supplemented by the help of the owners and their friends. Stevenson lived a hard, open-air life, and throve upon it. "My health is a miracle. I expose myself to rain, and walk, and row, and over-eat myself. I eat, I drink, I bathe in the briny, I sleep." His return to Swanston was characteristically announced: "I left my pipe on board the yacht, my umbrella in the dog-cart, and my portmanteau by the way," and he reached home without his luggage, in a hat borrowed from one of his friends and a coat belonging to another.

In the following winter there came to him a new

[1] *Letters*, i. 89.

friendship. "Yesterday,[1] Leslie Stephen, who was down here to lecture, called on me and took me up to see a poor fellow, a poet who writes for him, and who has been eighteen months in our infirmary, and may be, for all I know, eighteen months more. It was very sad to see him there in a little room with two beds, and a couple of sick children in the other bed; a girl came in to visit the children, and played dominoes on the counterpane with them; the gas flared and crackled, the fire burned in a dull, economical way; Stephen and I sat on a couple of chairs, and the poor fellow sat up in his bed with his hair and beard all tangled, and talked as cheerfully as if he had been in a king's palace, or the great King's palace of the blue air."

Here was no ordinary patient: the poet was Mr. W. E. Henley, who had come to Edinburgh to be under the care of Lister. The cheerful talk was but the first of many; if we may treat Stevenson's essays[2] as autobiographical, for a part of his youth he was wont to "avoid the hospital doors, the pale faces, the sweet whiff of chloroform," but that time was now past. Here was a man of kindred spirit to himself, in need of the companionship that none could better give, and from that time forth Stevenson was his friend, and placed himself and all that he had at his disposal. He soon returned, bringing books, piles of Balzac, "big yellow books, quite impudently French,"[3] and with the books he brought Mr. Baxter and others of his friends.

[1] 13th February, 1875. *Letters*, i. 86.
[2] "Old Mortality," *Memories and Portraits*, p. 111.
[3] *Book of Verses*, p. 47, by William Ernest Henley.

In return, he found a friendship based on common tastes in literature and music, the talk of a true poet, the insight of one of the freshest and clearest and strongest of critics, whose training had been free from academic limitations, and whose influence was different in kind from the criticism on which the younger man had learned to rely, though not less full of stimulation and force.

In these years he first discovered that taste for classical music which was afterwards fostered by successive friends. The revelation dated from a concert in Edinburgh for which some one had given him a ticket, and to which he went with reluctance. It was a Beethoven quartet, I think, that then burst upon him for the first time, and on that day he permanently added another to the many pleasures he so keenly enjoyed, although it was some years before he attempted to make any music for himself.

To London in these years he paid frequent visits, and several times stayed with Mr. Colvin at Cambridge, besides spending a week or two with him at Hampstead in June, 1874. This last occasion, however, and a return to the same place in the autumn of that year were practically indistinguishable from his life in London. On June 3, 1874, after only six weeks' delay, he was elected a member of the Savile Club,[1] which had been founded five years before, and was still in its original house, 15 Savile Row. This was for the next five years the centre of his London life, and though it

[1] Mr. Colvin proposed him, and he was supported by Mr. Andrew Lang, Professor Fleeming Jenkin, Mr. Basil Champneys, Professor W. K. Clifford, and Mr. C. B. B Maclaren.

would probably be a mistake to speak as if it were at once to him all that it afterwards became, yet, since he was of all men the most clubbable, from the beginning it gave him ample opportunities of acquaintance with men of various tastes, many of them of great ability, even if they had not yet achieved or were not achieving a reputation. Some of the members he already knew. Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Andrew Lang he had previously met in the Riviera; Professor Masson was an Edinburgh friend of the family; to Dr. Appleton, editor of the *Academy*, and Mr. Walter Pollock, editor of the *Saturday Review*, he was soon introduced; but it would be long to enumerate the friends, and idle to recapitulate the acquaintances, that Stevenson soon made within those walls.

Into formal society nothing would ever have induced him to go in London any more than in Edinburgh; he invariably refused the opportunities which presented themselves to him, as they sooner or later have always presented themselves to young men with any reputation for social gifts and original conversation. In 1874, when he came to London for the first time under new auspices, he seems to have met a few well-known people; to have been taken to see Burne-Jones's pictures, then strictly withheld from any chance of public recognition; to have met Miss Thackeray, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and a few other ladies, chiefly at the house of Mr. Leslie Stephen, to whom he had been introduced by Mr. Colvin. His great and natural desire to see Carlyle was frustrated, for Mr. Stephen, on whose kind offices he depended, found the sage in one of his darker moods and at a moment of irritation. He had just

been suffering at the hands of an interviewer for whom he fancied Mr. Stephen was responsible, and when Stevenson was mentioned as a young Scot who was most anxious to meet him, and who had taken to the study of Knox, the senior would only say that he did not see why anybody should want either to see his "wretched old carcase" or to say anything more about Knox, and that the young man had better apply when he had put his studies into an articulate shape.

Besides the visits to London and Cambridge there were many journeys and excursions;[1] and the importance of such travel to him in these days may be estimated by the degree in which it formed the topic of his early writings. Between 1871 and 1876 no less than nine of his papers deal with travel or the external appearance of places known to him; and it is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that his first three books were the *Inland Voyage*, the *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, and the *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes.*

In the autumn of 1874 he joined his parents in an expedition to Chester and Barmouth, and in October took the walk in Buckinghamshire described the following spring in the *Portfolio* under the title of "An Autumn Effect." This ended, as a matter of fact, with his only visit to Oxford;[2] but Oxford and Cambridge left no more trace in his work than, at an earlier age,

[1] A pencil list of towns in which he had slept, compiled about 1886, to relieve the tedium of illness, gives the following totals: — England, 46 towns — 19 more than once; Scotland, 50 — 21 more than once; France, 74 — 31 more than once; the rest of Europe, 40 — 16 more than once.

[2] Unless it were another time when he visited Mr. Lang at Merton. The visit to Oxford is not mentioned in the *Portfolio*, but in a letter to his mother.

Rome or Naples or Venice. A reference to the chimes of the one, a conversation (in an unpublished novel) carried on at the other, and a few general remarks about the contrast between Scotch and English universities are all that is to be found about them in his writings.

In 1875 came the walk up the valley of the Loing with Sir Walter Simpson, in which Stevenson's costume led to the incarceration described in the *Epilogue to An Inland Voyage*, and this trip being cut short, he joined his parents, as he had intended, at Wiesbaden, and went with them to Homburg and Mainz.

In 1876 he spent the second week in January walking in Carrick and Galloway, when he slept a night at Ballantrae, and later in the year, after a visit in August to the Jenkins near Loch Carron, he joined Sir Walter Simpson again and took the canoe journey of the *Inland Voyage* from Antwerp to Brussels, and then from the French frontier by the Oise almost to the Seine.

These journeys and the general change in Stevenson's life were rendered possible, as I have said, by the liberality of his father (some ten years later he wrote, "I fall always on my feet; but I am constrained to add that the best part of my legs seems to be my father"[2]), yet it must not be supposed that Stevenson even now was often in funds. He was open-handed to a fault; and he had many wants of his own which often went unsatisfied. It is to this period that a story belongs which he was fond of telling against himself. He was staying in London, and had protracted his visit to the

[1] *Juvenilia*, p. 169. [2] May, 1885.

extreme limit of his resources. On his way back to the North he arrived at the station with a sum barely sufficient for the cheapest ticket, available only by a night journey, and a newly bought copy of Mr. Swinburne's *Queen Mother and Rosamond.* On learning his deficiency, he tried his best powers of persuasion on the booking-clerk, but in vain: the man, in his blindness, refused to accept the book as any part of the payment, and, if I remember right, Stevenson passed the day in the station without food, and reached home next morning in a famished condition.

Thus, as we have seen, with the exception of his release from law and the friendship with Mr. Henley, conditions in Edinburgh remained much the same; the Savile and the people he met there were, together with Mr. Colvin's advice and help, the principal feature of his life in England; it is to France that we must turn for the other influences chiefly affecting him, and for the circumstances of most importance in determining his development at this period. In the winter of 1873-74 he had, as we have seen, renewed acquaintance with the Riviera, which in later days was to become yet more familiar. For the present he returned to that neighbourhood no more, but there was no year from 1874 to 1879 in which he did not pay one or more visits of several weeks' duration to another part of France. Except for the time that he was in the Cévennes and on his cruise down the Oise, he stayed mostly in the outskirts of the forest of Fontainebleau, in the valley of the Loing, or in Paris itself. Sometimes, as at Monastier, he was alone; sometimes, as at Nemours or at Cernay la Ville, he was with his

cousin Bob or Sir Walter Simpson; but for the most part he lived in familiar intercourse with the artists who frequented his favourite resorts. The life was congenial to him, and his companions understood his temperament, if they did not necessarily appreciate his passion for letters. French was the only foreign tongue he ever mastered, and in that he acquired real proficiency. His knowledge of the language and literature was considerable, and its influence on his work was entirely for good, as it increased the delicacy and clearness of his style, and yet left his originality unimpaired.

It was the country again which seems to have affected him most and not the city; in both he lived with the same intimates, but though Paris might be the more exciting, yet at Fontainebleau he came with lasting results under the influence of the forest, and from it he carried away many vital memories.[1]

When his friends were painting, he often betook himself to lonely walks and meditations among the heaths and woods, but company and conversation counted for a great deal. "I knew three young men who walked together daily for some two months in a solemn and beautiful forest and in cloudless summer weather; daily they talked with unabated zest, and yet scarce wandered that whole time beyond two subjects—theology and love."[2]

His earliest and perhaps his most frequent haunt was Barbizon. It had been the home of Millet, and its fields were the scene of the *Angelus*. In the village there existed an inn which was reserved for the artists,

[1] "Forest Notes," *Juvenilia*, p. 211.

[2] *Talk and Talkers*, p. 185.

a strange society compounded of all nationalities, in which French, English, and Americans predominated. Stevenson himself has described it in an essay.[1]

"I was for some time a consistent Barbizonian; *et ego in Arcadia vixi;* it was a pleasant season; and that noiseless hamlet lying close among the borders of the wood is for me, as for so many others, a green spot in memory. The great Millet was just dead; the green shutters of his modest house were closed; his daughters were in mourning. The date of my first verse was thus an epoch in the history of art.

"Siron's inn, that excellent artists' barrack, was managed upon easy principles. At any hour of the night, when you returned from wandering in the forest, you went to the billiard-room and helped yourself to liquors, or descended to the cellar and returned laden with beer or wine. The Sirons were all locked in slumber; there was none to check your inroads; only at the week's end a computation was made, the gross sum was divided, and a varying share set down to every lodger's name under the rubric, *estrats.* Upon the more long-suffering the larger tax was levied; and your bill lengthened in a direct proportion to the easiness of your disposition. At any hour of the morning, again, you could get your coffee or cold milk and set forth into the forest. The doves had perhaps wakened you, fluttering into your chamber; and on the threshold of the inn you were met by the aroma of the forest. Close by were the great aisles, the mossy boulders, the interminable field of forest shadow. There you were free to dream and wander. And at

[1] "Fontainebleau," *Later Essays*, p. 212.

noon, and again at six o'clock, a good meal awaited you on Siron's table. The whole of your accommodation, set aside that varying item of the *estrats*, cost you five francs a day; your bill was never offered you until you asked for it; and if you were out of luck's way, you might depart for where you pleased and leave it pending.

"Theoretically, the house was open to all comers; practically, it was a kind of club. The guests protected themselves, and, in so doing, they protected Siron. Formal manners being laid aside, essential courtesy was the more rigidly exacted; the new arrival had to feel the pulse of the society; and a breach of its undefined observances was promptly punished. A man might be as plain, as dull, as slovenly, as free of speech as he desired; but to a touch of presumption or a word of hectoring these free Barbizonians were as sensitive as a tea-party of maiden ladies. I have seen people driven forth from Barbizon; it would be difficult to say in words what they had done, but they deserved their fate. They had shown themselves unworthy to enjoy these corporate freedoms; they had pushed themselves; they had 'made their head'; they wanted tact to appreciate the 'fine shades' of Barbizonian etiquette. And, once they were condemned, the process of extrusion was ruthless in its cruelty: after one evening with the formidable Bodmer, the Bailly of our commonwealth, the erring stranger was beheld no more; he rose exceeding early the next day, and the first coach conveyed him from the scene of his discomfiture. These sentences of banishment were never, in my knowledge, delivered against an artist; such would, I

believe, have been illegal; but the odd and pleasant fact is this, that they were never needed. Painters, sculptors, writers, singers, I have seen all of these in Barbizon, and some were sulky, and some were blatant and inane; but one and all entered into the spirit of the association. . . .

"Our society, thus purged and guarded, was full of high spirits, of laughter, and of the initiative of youth. The few elder men who joined us were still young at heart, and took the key from their companions. We returned from long stations in the fortifying air, our blood renewed by the sunshine, our spirits refreshed by the silence of the forest; the Babel of loud voices sounded good; we fell to eat and play like the natural man; and in the high inn chamber, panelled with indifferent pictures, and lit by candles guttering in the night air, the talk and laughter sounded far into the night. It was a good place and a good life for any naturally minded youth; better yet for the student of painting, and perhaps best of all for the student of letters. He, too, was saturated in this atmosphere of style; he was shut out from the disturbing currents of the world; he might forget that there existed other and more pressing interests than that of art. But, in such a place, it was hardly possible to write; he could not drug his conscience, like the painter, by the production of listless studies; he saw himself idle among many who were apparently, and some who were really, employed; and what with the impulse of increasing health and the continual provocation of romantic scenes, he became tormented with the desire to work. He enjoyed a strenuous idleness full of visions,

hearty meals, long, sweltering walks, mirth among companions; and, still floating like music through his brain, foresights of great works that Shakespeare might be proud to have conceived, headless epics, glorious torsos of dramas, and words that were alive with import. . . . We were all artists; almost all in the age of illusion, cultivating an imaginary genius, and walking to the strains of some deceiving Ariel; small wonder, indeed, if we were happy!"

Barbizon, however, was by no means the only resort of painters in this neighbourhood, nor the only one which Stevenson frequented: in the same paper he enumerates its rivals from his full knowledge. Marlotte, Montigny,[1] and Chailly-en-Bière he knew; Cernay la Ville was a favourite of his cousin Bob; but it was Grez which, in spite of an unpromising introduction, was his favourite quarters, and has the most important place in his history.

"*Barbizon, Summer '75.*

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have been three days at a place called Grez, a pretty and very melancholy village on the plain. A low bridge, with manyarches choked with sedge; green fields of white and yellow water-lilies; poplars and willows innumerable; and about it all such an atmosphere of sadness and slackness, one could do nothing but get into the boat and out of it again, and yawn for bedtime. . . . I was very glad to be back again in this dear place, and smell the wet forest in the morning."

[1] Where Mr. W. H. Low's quarters summed up the delights of the Envoy to *Underwoods*.

But later he wrote how delightful it was "to awake in Grez, to go down the green inn-garden, to find the river streaming through the bridge, and to see the dawn begin across the poplared level. The meals are laid in the cool arbour, under fluttering leaves. The splash of oars and bathers, the bathing costumes out to dry, the trim canoes beside the jetty, tell of a society that has an eye to pleasure. There is 'something to do' at Grez. Perhaps, for that very reason, I can recall no such enduring ardours, no such glories of exhilaration, as among the solemn groves and uneventful hours of Barbizon. This 'something to do' is a great enemy to joy; it is a way out of it; you wreck your high spirits on some cut-and-dry employment, and behold them gone! But Grez is a merry place after its kind: pretty to see, merry to inhabit. The course of its pellucid river, whether up or down, is full of attractions for the navigator; the mirrored and inverted images of trees; lilies, and mills, and the foam and thunder of weirs. And of all noble sweeps of roadway, none is nobler, on a windy dusk, than the highroad to Nemours between its lines of talking poplar." [1]

Nemours itself he knew well, and there he often stayed. His first visit is described in a letter to his mother in 1875:—

"Nemours is a beautiful little town, watered by a great canal and a little river. The river is crossed by an infinity of little bridges, and the houses have courts and gardens, and come down in stairs to the very brim; and washerwomen sit everywhere in curious

[1] "Fontainebleau," *Later Essays*, p. 220; *cf. Juvenilia*, p. 199.

little penthouses and sheds. A sort of reminiscence of Amsterdam. The old castle turned now into a ball-room and cheap theatre; the seats of the pit (the places are 1f. and 2fs. in this theatre) are covered with old Gobelins tapestry; one can still see heads in helmets. In the actors' dressing-room are curious old Henry Fourth looking-glasses. On the other hand, the old manacles are now kept laid by in a box, with a lot of flower-pots on the top of it, in a room with four canary birds."

If the country had the more influence in the end, Paris provided more variety and more diversion. There Stevenson stayed, in all manner of lodgings, varying from Meurice's Hotel (which was little to his liking) to students' accommodation in the Quartier Latin, and scattered throughout a region extending from Montmartre on the north to Mont Parnasse on the south.

At one time he writes: "I am in a new quarter, and *flâne* about in a leisurely way. I dine every day in a crèmerie with a party of Americans, an Irishman, and sometimes an English lady." Again: "I am living along with some fellows, and we partly make our own food, and have great fun marketing." Another time: "I have been engaged in a wild hunt for books—all forenoon, all afternoon, with occasional returns to Rue Racine with an armful. I have spent nearly all my money; and if I have luck in to-day's hunt, I believe I shall lay my head on the pillow to-night a beggar. But I have had goodish luck, and a heap of nice books. Please advance me £10 of my allowance. . . . Heaps of articles growing before me. Hurray." An attempt to work in some of the public libraries of Paris failed:

the face of officialism was too daunting. "They are worse than banks—if that be possible. . . . In public offices of all kinds I feel like Esther before Ahasuerus. I suspect there was some truth in my father's turkeying;[1] for the vice has descended to me."

This was the period when his letters were least frequent and least satisfactory, but of his sojourns in Paris no other memorial survives except the first chapters of *The Wrecker*, which partly in detail and wholly in spirit are drawn from Stevenson's recollections of these years. In addition I have collected a few fragments of letters and papers, which may help to eke out the scanty material for a picture of that time.

The first is a letter to his mother, describing a student's entertainment in the studio which was afterwards depicted in *Trilby*.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I was out last night at a party in a fellow's studio over in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. Some of the people were in costume. One girl was so pretty and looked so happy that it did your heart good to see her. The studio looked very strange, lit with Chinese lanterns and a couple of strange lamps. The floor had been rubbed with candles, and was very slippery. O'Meara, in his character of young Donnybrook, tumbled about like a pair of old boots, and ——, for all he is so little, managed to fall into the arms of every girl he danced with, as he went round in the last figure of the quadrille. There was nothing to eat but sweet biscuits, and nothing to drink but syrup and water. It was a rum event."

The next was a typical holiday.

[1] P. 21.

"*11th October, Paris.*— Here I am so far on my way home. . . . Yesterday I had a splendid day. Luxembourg in the morning. Breakfast. Bob, St. Gaudens the sculptor, Low and I: hours of very good talk in the French idiom. All afternoon in the Louvre, till they turned us out unwilling. At night, the Français, *Rome Vaincue*, an impossible play, with Sarah Bernhardt as the blind grandmother, most sublime to behold. At breakfast we had lobster mayonnaise, kidneys, brochet, and tomates farcies, with lots of Carton. Dinner was a mere hurried sustentation of the immortal spirit before exposing it to another excitement. A splendid day, but two running would not do."

The theatre was a source of great delight to him. Although he had read (and written) plays from his early years, had revelled in the melodramas of the toy-theatre, and had acted with the Jenkins and in other private theatricals, I find no reference to his having visited a theatre before December, 1874, when he found Irving's Hamlet "interesting (for it is really studied) but not good"; and there is no sign of his having been really impressed until he saw Salvini as Macbeth at Edinburgh in the spring of 1876. Of this performance he wrote a criticism for the *Academy*, which he afterwards condemned as dealing with a subject that was still beyond the resources of his art.[1] He himself, I am told, was never a tolerable actor, and certainly was never allotted a part of any importance. But his enthusiasm for the drama was great, and during these years was heightened and instructed by the two chief friends who shared his taste — Professor Jenkin and Mr. Henley.

He used to speak with delight of Delaunay's per-

[1] *Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin*, p. 145.

formance in a play by Alexandre Dumas, *Mademoiselle de Belleisle*, declaring that in calling out through a window on the stage to some one supposed to be in the castle-court below, Delaunay had succeeded in so modulating his voice as "to make you feel the cold night air and the moonlight."

One of his visits to the theatre led to a very characteristic scene, described long afterwards in a letter to Mr. Archer. The play had been the *Demi-Monde* of Dumas fils, in the last act of which Olivier de Jalin employs an unworthy stratagem against the woman who had been his mistress.

"I came forth from that performance in a breathing heat of indignation. . . . On my way down the Français stairs, I trod on an old gentleman's toes, whereupon, with that suavity which so well becomes me, I turned about to apologise, and on the instant, repenting me of that intention, stopped the apology midway, and added something in French to this effect: 'No, you are one of the *lâches* who have been applauding that piece. I retract my apology.' Said the old Frenchman, laying his hand on my arm, and with a smile that was truly heavenly in temperance, irony, good-nature, and knowledge of the world, 'Ah, monsieur, vous êtes bien jeune.'"[1]

To this time also belongs the story reported by Mr. Andrew Lang.[2] Stevenson, one day at a café, hearing a Frenchman say that the English were cowards, promptly hit him across the face. "Monsieur, vous m'avez frappé!" said the Gaul. "A ce qu'il paraît," said the Scot, and there the incident ended. It is an

[1] *Letters*, ii. 94. [2] *North American Review*, February, 1895.

instance the more of his fearlessness; for although he would never have hesitated, he was quite incompetent to fight a duel with either pistol or sword.

The effect produced upon outsiders must sometimes have been rather bewildering. He used to tell how one day he and his cousin Bob, happening to be rather more in funds than usual, went to dine in one of the cafés of the Palais Royal. "The café was not very full," so I remember the story, "and there was nobody near us, but presently a gentleman and his wife came in and sat down at the next table. They were evidently people of good position, well dressed and distinguished in appearance. But they were talking French, and we paid not the slightest attention to them. We had lately got hold of the works of Thomas Aquinas, and our conversation was on the most extraordinary medley of subjects — on men, women, and things, with a very large leaven of mediæval theology, and on all we spoke in English with the most startling frankness and with the most bewildering transitions. Bob is the best talker in the world; I never knew him more brilliant, and I did my best.

"Those people sat and had their dinner and took not the slightest notice of us, but talked quietly to one another in Parisian French. Just before they got up to go, the gentleman turned to his wife and said to her in English without a trace of accent, 'My dear, won't you take anything more?' I have often wondered who they were, and what on earth they thought of us."

His deficiencies in letter-writing and his protracted absences from home led very naturally to protests from

his parents and especially from his mother. The answer was characteristic.

"*Euston Hotel, 16th Oct., 1874.*

"You must not be vexed at my absences. You must understand that I shall be a nomad, more or less, until my days be done. You don't know how much I used to long for it in old days; how I used to go and look at the trains leaving, and wish to go with them. And now, you know, that I have a little more that is solid under my feet, you must take my nomadic habits as a part of me. Just wait till I am in swing, and you will see that I shall pass more of my life with you than elsewhere; only take me as I am, and give me time. I *must* be a bit of a vagabond; it 's your own fault, after all, is n't it? You should n't have had a tramp for a son."

While the man was in the making during these years, the writer also was passing through the stages of a development which was unusually protracted. The perfecting of his style was necessarily a work of time, but in the meanwhile, if he had seen his way to use the gifts at his command, his love of romance, his imagination, and his vivid interest in life might well have enabled him to produce work which would have secured him immediate popularity and reward.

Nothing of the sort, however, was accomplished, and, high as his standard always was, this delay may well have been a gain for his ultimate success. During the six years between his first appearance as a printed and paid author and the publication of the *Travels with a Donkey*, his published work consisted of some six-and-

twenty magazine articles, chiefly critical and social essays, just half of which were in the *Cornhill Magazine;* two small books of travel; two books in serial instalments, afterwards reprinted; and five short stories also in periodicals. There were besides a few rejected articles, a certain amount of journalism, and at least eight stories or novels, none of which ever saw the light, as well as a play or two and some verses, a small part of which were ultimately included in his published works.

By this time Stevenson had left behind him the early stages of apprenticeship, and far as he still was from satisfying his own taste and aims, there is no longer any possibility of pointing out the definite stages through which he passed year by year, or the methods of work which he employed.

A list of his writings will be found in the Appendix, arranged under separate years. It is therefore unnecessary in this place to do more than record his general progress, adding merely a detached note on any point of interest as it arises, or quoting his own criticisms, which, for the most part, are singularly shrewd and free from bias.

In September, 1873, he wrote: "There is no word of 'Roads'; I suspect the *Saturday Review* must have looked darkly upon it—so be it; we must just try to do something better." And so, as we have seen, the article appeared in the *Portfolio* for December. Three weeks later, in a letter to his mother, he expressed the opinion that "it is quite the best thing I have ever done, to my taste. There are things expressed in it far harder to express than in anything else I ever had; and

that, after all, is the great point. As for style, *ça viendra peut-être.*"

In 1874 he had five articles in four different magazines: these included "Ordered South" in *Macmillan's*, and, still more important, the paper on "Victor Hugo's Romances" in the *Cornhill*. The former, which took him three months to write, was his first work ever republished in its original form; the latter, which was anonymous, but afterwards reappeared in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, marked, in his own judgment, the beginning of his command of style. Long afterwards in Samoa, in answer to a question, he told me that in this essay he had first found himself able to say several things in the way in which he felt they should be said. It may also be noticed that this was his first appearance in the magazine which by the discernment of Mr. Leslie Stephen did so much for him in taking his early work.

This year he proposed to himself, and began to read for, a book on four great Scotsmen—Knox, Hume, Burns, and Scott. All that ever came of it, and he had the subjects a long time in his mind, were the essays on Burns and Knox, which dealt only with one aspect of either character. At this time he was working at an essay on Walt Whitman, but his views did not find expression till 1878. The papers on Knox were read before the Speculative Society in November, 1874, and January, 1875. Late in the former year he was making another assault upon the stronghold of the Novel with a tale called "When the Devil was Well," dealing with the adventures of an Italian sculptor of the fifteenth century. It was finished the next year, and the

unfavourable opinion of his friends was accepted as final.

1875 saw nothing published except two double articles, the "Autumn Effect" and "Knox," the notice of Béranger in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to the Clergy of the Church of Scotland*. This last had been set up in type the preceding autumn, and was an appeal to the Scottish clergy to use the Church Patronage Act of 1874 as an opportunity for effacing differences between their own communion and the dissenting bodies, and to do all in their power to restore religious unity.

In January, 1875, Stevenson proposed to the *Academy* a series of papers on the Parnassiens—de Banville, Coppée, Soulary, and Prudhomme—and when this was not accepted, he devoted a good deal of his time to the study of the French literature of the fifteenth century, which resulted in the articles on Villon and Charles of Orleans. He was filled with enthusiasm for Joan of Arc, a devotion and also a cool-headed admiration which he never lost. He projected a series of articles which should include the Maid, Louis XI., and René of Anjou. The same reading led to the experiments in the French verse metres of that date which were almost contemporary with the work of Mr. Andrew Lang and Mr. Austin Dobson, who brought the Ballade and Rondeau back to favour in England. Stevenson, however, never published any of these attempts, and except two translations published in the *Letters*, and one set preserved by Mr. Lang, I believe the characteristic verses at the head of this chapter are the only finished piece which survives.

A prose poem on "The Spirit of the Spring" unfortunately went astray, but one or two short studies of the same date and in a similar vein indicate that it was no masterpiece. After the Italian story was finished, he took up one of his old tales called *A Country Dance*, which likewise came to nothing; and also wrote *The Story of King Matthias' Hunting Horn*, of which I only know that it was "wild and fantastic."

As the result of a condensation of Burns's life and a criticism of his works for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the famous Scotsmen had now become "Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns." The editor of the *Encyclopædia* found the Burns too critical, and too much at variance with the accepted Scottish tradition, and though payment was made for it, it was not used. Stevenson wrote: "*8th June, 1876.*—I suppose you are perfectly right in saying there was a want of enthusiasm about the article. To say truth, I had, I fancy, an exaggerated idea of the gravity of an encyclopædia, and wished to give mere bones, and to make no statements that should seem even warm. And perhaps, also, I may have a little latent cynicism, which comes out when I am at work. I believe you are right in saying I had not said enough of what is highest and best in him. Such a topic is disheartening; the clay feet are easier dealt with than the golden head."

To 1876 we owe the only piece of dramatic criticism that Stevenson ever published, and four articles in the *Cornhill Magazine*, which from this time onward marked all his contributions to its pages with the initials R. L. S. The full names of a few very eminent authors had been given from the commencement; but

about the beginning of Mr. Leslie Stephen's editorship, in 1871, a second rank of distinction was established by allowing an equally small number of writers to denote their articles by their initials. All Stevenson's papers except the first (1874) were thus distinguished; and though the R. L. S. caused them at first to be frequently attributed to the editor, yet it was under these initials that Stevenson first won recognition in the select circle which knew and appreciated literature.

A novel, *The Hair Trunk, or The Ideal Commonwealth*, was begun and partly carried out at this time. A party of friends meeting at Cambridge proposes to form a colony, which is to be established in "Navigator's Island"—Samoa, of all places—of which the author had heard only the year before from his connection, the Hon. J. Seed, formerly Secretary to the Customs and Marine Departments of New Zealand,[1] who had been sent to report upon the islands by the New Zealand Government. *In the Windbound Arethusa* was another attempt of the same date which attained no better result.

The year 1876 thrice saw the rejection of the article on "Some Portraits by Raeburn," afterwards included in *Virginibus Puerisque*. It was refused in turn by the *Cornhill*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and *Blackwood's Magazine*, though it is only fair to Mr. Stephen to say that he helped the author in trying to place it elsewhere. It was seldom that Stevenson either continued, or was driven, to try his fortune elsewhere with a rejected article. But this case is all the more interesting because he tried again and again, and was clearly in

[1] *Letters*, i. 95.

the right. Editors cannot always follow their judgment or their inclinations, but articles such as the Raeburn seldom come their way.

The event of the year was, of course, the canoe voyage. Stevenson, as we have already seen, had for some time shared his friends' taste for navigating the Firth of Forth in these craft, which the enthusiasm of "Rob Roy" Macgregor had made popular ten years before. A good deal of time was spent, as we have seen, on the river at Grez, and canoes were introduced there by the English colony, headed by Sir Walter Simpson and his brother, and by R. A. M. Stevenson, who devised a leather canoe of his own "with a niche for everything," and, as his friends said, "a place for nothing." Mr. Warington Baden-Powell had published in the pages of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1870 the log of the *Nautilus* and *Isis* canoes on a journey through Sweden and on the Baltic. But the idea of the journey itself seems to have been suggested by *Our Autumn Holiday on French Rivers*, by Mr. J. L. Molloy, published in 1874, the account of a journey up the Seine and down the Loire in a four-oared outrigger.

That the cruise itself was on the whole rather a cheerless experience, is seen by the following letter, in which Stevenson lets us behind the scenes, and for once even grumbles a little.

"*Compiègne, 9th Sept., 1876.* [*Canoe Voyage.*]

"We have had deplorable weather quite steady ever since the start; not one day without heavy showers; and generally much wind and cold wind forbye. . . . I must say it has sometimes required a stout heart; and

sometimes one could not help sympathising inwardly with the French folk who hold up their hands in astonishment over our pleasure journey. Indeed I do not know that I would have stuck to it as I have done, if it had not been for professional purposes; for an easy book may be written and sold, with mighty little brains about it, where the journey is of a certain seriousness and can be named. I mean, a book about a journey from York to London must be clever; a book about the Caucasus may be what you will. Now I mean to make this journey at least a curious one; it won't be finished these vacations.

"Hitherto a curious one it has been; and above all in its influence on S. and me. I wake at six every morning; and we are generally in bed and asleep before half-past nine. Last night I found my way to my room with a dark cloud of sleep over my shoulders, so thick that the candle burnt red at about the hour of 8.40. If that is n't healthy, egad, I wonder what is."