CHAPTER XV

VAILIMA — 1891–94

"We thank Thee for this place in which we dwell; for the love that unites us; for the peace accorded us this day; for the hope with which we expect the morrow; for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies that make our lives delightful; for our friends in all parts of the earth, and our friendly helpers in this foreign isle. . . . Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind. Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies. Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavours. If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another." — R. L. S., Vailima Prayers.

THE new house and the augmentation of his household marked the definite change in Stevenson's life, which now assumed the character that it preserved until the end. In private his material comfort was increased, and he was delivered from most of the interruptions to which his work had lately been subject; in public it now became manifest that he was to be a permanent resident in Samoa, enjoying all the advantages of wealth and fame, and the consideration conferred by numerous retainers.

To the world of his readers, and to many who never read his books, his position became one of extreme interest. He was now living, as the legend went, among the wildest of savages, who were clearly either always at war or circulating reports of wars immediately to come; settled in a house, the splendour and

luxury of which were much exaggerated by rumour; dwelling in a climate which was associated with all the glories of tropic scenery and vegetation, and also, in the minds of his countrymen at all events, with a tremendous cataclysm of the elements, from which the British navy had emerged with triumph. It was little wonder that, as Mr. Gosse wrote to him, "Since Byron was in Greece, nothing has appealed to the ordinary literary man so much as that you should be living in the South Seas."

It is clear that a mode of life so unusual for a man of letters not only absolves his biographer from the duty of withholding as far as possible the details of every-day existence, but even lays upon him the necessity of explaining various trivial matters, which, if they belonged to the life of cities or of states, it would be his first anxiety to suppress. It well may be that no author of eminence will ever again take up his abode in Samoa or even in the South Seas, but the problem of keeping in touch at the same time with man, with nature, and with the world of letters, is as far from its solution as from losing its general interest. And the most stolid of glances cannot fail to be arrested for a moment by the sight of a figure as chivalrous and romantic as Stevenson, living in a world so striking, so appropriate, and so picturesque.

To trace in detail the growth of the house or the development of the estate would be no less tedious than to follow closely the course of political intrigues or the appointment and departure of successive officials. I shall therefore abandon the temporal order, and briefly describe, in the first instance, the material environment

in which Stevenson lived, his house, and the surrounding country, his mode of life, his friends and visitors, his work, and his amusements. It will then be necessary to mention very briefly his political relations before passing on to the record of his writings during this period.

The island of Upolu, on which he lived, was the central and most important of the three principal islands composing the group to which the collective name of Samoa is applied. It is some five-and-forty miles in length and about eleven in average breadth. The interior is densely wooded, and a central range of hills runs from east to west. Apia, the chief town, is situated about the centre of the north coast, and it was on the hills about three miles inland that Stevenson made his home.

The house and clearing lay on the western edge of a tongue of land several hundred yards in width, situated between two streams, from the westernmost of which the steep side of Vaea Mountain, covered with forest, rises to a height of thirteen hundred feet above the sea. On the east, beyond Stevenson's boundary, the ground fell away rapidly into the deep valley of the Vaisigano, the principal river of the island. On the other hand, the western stream, formed by the junction of several smaller watercourses above, ran within Stevenson's own ground, and, not far below the house, plunged over a barrier of rock with a fall of about twelve feet into a delightful pool, just deep enough for bathing and arched over with orange-trees. A few hundred yards lower down it crossed his line with an abrupt descent of forty or fifty feet. It was from this stream and its

four chief tributaries that Stevenson gave to the property the Samoan name of Vailima, or Five Waters.

The place itself lay, as has been said, some three miles from the coast, and nearly six hundred feet above sea-level. From the town a good carriage-road, a mile in length, led to the native village of Tanugamanono, where the Stevensons had lodged upon their first arrival. Beyond that point there was for a time nothing but the roughest of footpaths, which led across the hills to the other side of the island through a forest region wholly uninhabited, all the native villages being either by the sea or within a short distance of the coast.

The track to Vailima was made over and over again by Stevenson, occasionally in concert with some of the owners of the lower lands, until it gradually assumed the appearance of a road, and could be traversed in dry weather by wagons or even by a buggy. But to the last the carrying for the house was done by the two big New Zealand pack-horses. East, and west, and south of the clearing the land was covered with thick bush, containing many scattered lofty forest trees like those judiciously spared by the axemen where they did not endanger the new house. Here and there in the forest was a great banyan with branching roots, covering many square yards of surface, and affording a resting-place for the flying-foxes, the great fruit-eating bats, which sally forth at dusk with a slow, heavy flight, like a straggling company of rooks making for the coast. Even to the north, although most of the ground between Vailima and Apia had to some extent been cultivated, yet along the "road" the trees grew close

and high, and on a dark night the phosphorescence gleamed on fallen logs amid the undergrowth, twinkling and flickering to and fro, like the hasty footsteps of the witches the Samoans believed it to be. On the estate itself the route lay by the lane of limes, a rugged, narrow, winding path, that seemed, as Stevenson said, "almost as if it was leading to Lyonesse, and you might see the head and shoulders of a giant looking in."[1] But this part of the track was afterwards cut off by the Ala Loto Alofa, the Road of the Loving Heart, built by the Mataafa chiefs in return for Tusitala's kindness to them in prison. It was a broader and more level way, also leading past a fragrant lime-hedge, and having as the centre of its view for any one journeying to Vailima the wooded crest of Vaea.

The house of Vailima was built of wood throughout, painted a dark green outside, with a red roof of corrugated iron, on which the heavy rain sounded like thunder as it fell and ran off to be stored for household purposes in the large iron tanks. The building finally consisted of two blocks of equal size, placed, if I may use a military phrase in this connection, in échelon. It was the great defect of the house in its master's eyes that from a strategical point of view it was not defensible, but fortunately there was never an occasion during his lifetime when it would have been desirable to place it in a state of siege. It fulfilled many of the requirements both of structure and more especially of position which he had laid down for his ideal house.[2]

After December, 1892, the downstairs accommodation consisted of three rooms, a bath, a storeroom and

[1] *Vailima Letters*, p. 258. [2] *Miscellanea*, p. 42.

cellars below, with five bedrooms and the library upstairs. On the ground-floor, a verandah, twelve feet deep, ran in front of the whole house and along one side of it. Originally there had been a similar gallery above in front of the library, but it so darkened that room as to make it almost useless for working. Stevenson then had half of the open space boarded in, and used it as his own bedroom and study, the remainder of the verandah being sheltered, when necessary, by Chinese blinds. The new room was thus a sort of martin's nest, plastered as it were upon the outside of the house; but except for being somewhat hot in the middle of the day, it served its purpose to perfection. A small bedstead, a couple of bookcases, a plain deal kitchen table and two chairs were all its furniture, and two or three favourite Piranesi etchings and some illustrations of Stevenson's own works hung upon the walls. At one side was a locked rack containing half-a-dozen Colt's rifles for the service of the family in case they should ever be required. One door opened into the library, the other into the verandah; one window, having from its elevation the best view the house afforded, looked across the lawns and pasture, over the tree-tops, out to the sapphire sea, while the other was faced by the abrupt slope of Vaea. The library was lined with books, the covers of which had all been varnished to protect them from the climate. The most important divisions were the shelves allotted to the history of Scotland, to French books either modern or relating to the fifteenth century, to military history, and to books relating to the Pacific.

At this height the beat of the surf was plainly to be heard, but soothing to the ear and far away; other

noises there were none but the occasional note of a bird, a cry from the boys at work, or the crash of a falling tree. The sound of wheels or the din of machinery was hardly known in the island: about the house all went barefoot, and scarcely in the world could there be found among the dwellings of men a deeper silence than in Stevenson's house in the forest.

The chief feature within was the large hall that occupied the whole of the ground-floor of the newer portion of the house—a room about sixty feet long and perhaps forty wide, lined and ceiled with varnished redwood from California. Here the marble bust of old Robert Stevenson twinkled with approval upon many a curiously combined company, while a couple of Burmese gilded idols guarded the two posts of the big staircase leading directly from the room to the upper floor. An old Samoan chief, being one day at his own request shown over the house, and having seen many marvels of civilisation of which he had never dreamed, showed no sign of interest, far less of amazement, but as he was departing he looked over his shoulder at the two Buddhas and asked indifferently: "Are they alive?" In one corner was built a large safe, which, being continually replenished from Apia, rarely contained any large amount of money at a time, but was supposed by the natives to be the prison of the Bottle Imp, the source of all Stevenson's fortune. In this room hung Mr. Sargent's portrait of Stevenson and his wife, Sir George Reid's portrait of Thomas Stevenson, two reputed Hogarths which the old gentleman had picked up, two or three of R. A. M. Stevenson's best works, a picture of horses by Mr. Arthur Lemon, and—greatly

to the scandal of native visitors — a plaster group by Rodin.

In front of the house lay a smooth green lawn of couch-grass, used for tennis or croquet, and bounded on two sides by a hibiscus-hedge which, within a few months of its planting, was already six feet high and a mass of scarlet double blossoms — the favourite flowers of the Samoan.

Immediately behind the mansion lay the wooden kitchen and a native house for the cook. A hundred yards to one side the original cottage in which Stevenson first lived had been re-erected, to serve upstairs as bedrooms for Mr. Osbourne and myself, downstairs for the house-boys,[1] for stores, tool-house, and harness-room.

Upon the other side another native house lay, halfway towards the stream. The ground below the home fence was all used for pasture; in front, the milking-shed occupied the site of the old house; and the pig-pen, impregnably fenced with barbed wire, lay a couple of hundred yards in the rear. At the back also were the old disused stables, for in later days the horses were always kept out at grass in the various paddocks, coming up for their feed of corn every morning and evening.

But even when the house itself was provided, its service was the great difficulty. Competent and willing white helpers were not to be procured, and though there were many natives employed in Apia, yet Samoa, less fortunate than India, possessed no class of servants

[1] In Samoa, as in many other lands, native servants of all ages are known in English as "boys."

ready to minister to a white master with skill and devotion for a trifling wage.

At first Stevenson tried European and colonial servants. Two German men cooks passed through his kitchen: a Sydney lady's-maid brought dissensions into the household: a white overseer and three white carters came and left, causing various degrees of dissatisfaction. Then Mrs. Stevenson went away for a change to Fiji; in her absence the family made a clean sweep of the establishment, and Mrs. Strong and her brother took the entire charge of the kitchen into their own hands with complete success. This was of necessity a passing expedient. One day, however, Mr. Osbourne found a Samoan lad, with a hibiscus flower behind his ear, sitting on an empty packing-case beside the cook-house. He had come, it seemed, to collect half a dollar which the native overseer owed him, and he was quite content to wait for several hours until his debtor should return. In the meantime he was brought into the kitchen, and then and there initiated into the secrets of the white man's cookery. He was amused, interested, fascinated, and he plunged enthusiastically into the mysteries of his future profession. Fortunately in Samoa cookery was regarded as an art worthy of men's hands, and was practised even by high chiefs. The newcomer showed great aptitude; Mr. Osbourne persuaded him to stay, sent for his chest, and for several days would hardly let him out of his sight. So from that time forth Ta'alolo was head cook of Vailima, soon having a "boy" under him as scullion, taking only a few occasional holidays, and perfecting his art by visits to the kitchen of the French priests. In time he brought into the

household several of his relations, who were Catholics like himself, and proved the best and most trustworthy of all the boys.

A very few days after my first arrival one of these newcomers appeared in the character of assistant table-boy, a clumsy, half-developed, rather rustic youth, who of course knew no English, a sign that he was at any rate free from the tricks of the Apia-bred rascal. At the first, Sosimo seemed unlikely material, but there was a certain seriousness and resolution about him which quickly produced their effect. He soon became known as "The Butler," and before long was promoted to be head boy in the pantry. From the beginning he attached himself to Tusitala with a whole-hearted allegiance. He waited on him hand and foot, looked scrupulously after his clothes, devoted special attention to his pony "Jack," and made one of the most trustworthy and efficient servants I have ever known. When the end came, few if any showed as much feeling as Sosimo, and his loyalty to his master's memory lasted to the end of his own life.

These two men were the best, but as I write, I recall Leuelu, and Mitaele, and Iopu, and old Lafaele, and many more, not all such good servants, not all so loyal or so honest as those first named, but all with many solid merits, many pleasing traits, and a genuine personal devotion to Tusitala which pleased him as much as many more brilliant qualities.

The table was fully provided with white napery and silver and glass according to the usual English custom, as it had prevailed in the house of Stevenson's father. The cookery was eclectic and comprised such English

and American dishes as could be obtained or imitated, together with any native food which was found palatable. Of the supplies I shall speak later: it was the contrast between table and servants that was most striking. Nothing could have been more picturesque than to sit at an ordinary modern dinner-table and be waited on skilfully by a noble barbarian with perfect dignity and grace of carriage and manners hardly to be surpassed, who yet, if the weather were warm and the occasion ordinary, had for all his clothing a sheet of calico, in which his tattooed waist and loins alone were draped.

The actual house-servants were usually about half a dozen in number, two in the kitchen, two or three for house and table service; one, Mrs. Stevenson's special boy, for the garden and her own general service, and one more to take charge of the cows and pigs. Besides these, there was always a band of outside labourers under a native overseer supervised by Mr. Osbourne, working on the plantation, varying in number, according to the amount of clearing in hand, from half-a-dozen to twenty or thirty men. The signal for beginning and leaving off their work was always given by blowing the *pu*, a large conch-shell,[1] that made a great booming sound that could be heard in the farthest recesses of the plantation.

The great fear of the householder in Samoa used to be the dread of war, lest he should wake one morning and find that all his servants had been ordered out on service by their respective chiefs. By Stevenson's intervention the Vailima household staff was generally kept

[1] *Triton variegatus.*

at home, but the plantation was several times deserted and had to await the restoration of peace.

The government of the household was as far as possible on the clan system. "It is something of your own doing," Stevenson had written to his mother from Bournemouth in 1886, "if I take a somewhat feudal view of our relation to servants. . . . The Nemesis of the bourgeois who has chosen to shut out his servants — his 'family' in the old Scotch sense — from all intimacy and share in the pleasures of the house, attends us at every turn. An impossible relation is created, and brings confusion to all."[1]

If this were his attitude among the artificial conditions of England, he was not likely to adopt a more modern position in Samoa, where the patriarchal stage of society still prevailed. Accordingly from the first he used all opportunities to consolidate the household as a family, in which the boys should take as much pride and feel as much common interest as possible. His ideal was to maintain the relation of a Highland chief to his clan, such as it existed before the '45, since this seemed to approach most nearly to the actual state of things in Samoa at the time, and best met the difficulties which beset the relations of master and servant in his own day. He adopted a tartan for the Vailima kilt, to be worn on high days and holidays; he encouraged the boys to seek his help and advice on all matters, and was especially delighted when they preferred to him such requests as to grant his permission to a marriage.

It must not, however, be supposed that they were allowed their own way, or indulged when they mis-

[1] Cf. *Letters*, ii. 21.

behaved themselves. On such occasions the whole household would be summoned, a sort of "bed of justice" would be held, and sharp reprimands and fines inflicted.

Even with all these servants, the white man was separated from the material crises of life by a somewhat thin barrier, for even the best and most responsible natives were at times brought face to face with emergencies beyond their powers, and had to fall back upon their master's help. Such occasions of course befell Stevenson most frequently in the early days when he was living in the cottage with his wife and the white cook. Much of his time was then taken up unexpectedly with such pieces of business as may be found in the first pages of the *Vailima Letters:* in measuring land, rubbing down foundered cart-horses, ejecting stray horses during the night or wandering pigs during the day, or even in little household tasks which no one else was available to discharge. In later days his wife and all the family were able jealously to prevent such encroachments on his time, but during the last two years I can remember the master of the house himself helping with delight to feed a refractory calf that refused the bottle, driving out an angry bull, or doctoring stray natives suffering from acute colic or wounded feet, to say nothing of chance hours spent in planting or in weeding the cacao.

One morning's work stands out conspicuously in my memory. A hogshead of claret had, after many misadventures, arrived from Bordeaux slightly broached, so that it had to be bottled immediately. Stevenson feared the effect of the fumes even of the light wine upon the

natives, so he himself with our aid undertook the work. The boys were sent off to the stream with relays of bottles to wash while we tapped the cask, and the red wine flowed all the morning into jugs and basins beneath. It was poured away into the bottles, and they were corked and dipped into a large pot of green sealing-wax kept simmering on the kitchen fire. There seemed not to be any fumes to affect us, but the anticipation, and the pressure to get done, the novelty of the work, and, above all, Stevenson's contagious enthusiasm, produced a great feeling of delight and exhilaration, and made a regular vintage festival of the day. Stevenson was in his glory, as he always was when he felt that he was doing a manual task, and, above all, when he was able to work in concert with others, and give his love of camaraderie full scope.

And throughout his life, for Stevenson to throw himself into any employment which could kindle his imagination was to see him transfigured. The little boy who told himself stories about his football[1] came to weed in Samoa, and was there ever such an account of weeding since the world began? He drove stray horses to the pound, and it became a Border foray. He held an inquiry into the theft of a pig, and he bore himself as if he were the Lord President in the Inner House. But on the memorable day when we scampered through the outposts of Mataafa's troops, and for the first time in his life Louis saw armed men actually taking the field, even his own words hardly serve to express his exhilaration and outburst of spirit: "So home a little before six, in a dashing squall of rain, to a bowl of kava

[1] See vol. i, p. 66.

and dinner. But the impression on our minds was extraordinary; the sight of that picket at the ford, and those ardent, happy faces, whirls in my head; the old aboriginal awoke in both of us and nickered like a stallion. . . . War is a huge *entraînement;* there is no other temptation to be compared to it, not one. We were all wet, we had been about five hours in the saddle, mostly riding hard; and we came home like schoolboys, with such a lightness of spirits, and I am sure such a brightness of eye, as you could have lit a candle at."[1]

When any special entertainment was to be given, a dinner-party or a large luncheon, the whole family of course set to work to see that everything was properly done. Some saw to the decoration of the table or the polishing of the silver, or the blending of the preliminary "cocktail"; Stevenson loved to devote himself to the special cleaning of what he called in the Scots phrase "the crystal," and his use of the glass-cloth on decanter and wine-glasses would have rejoiced the heart of an expert.

Nor were there wanting occasions in which prompt action or careful and skilled investigation was needed. On two successive nights the house was nearly set on fire by a defective oil lantern, and only boxes of earth saved it; at another time the dishonest use of red lead upon the roof turned all the rain-tanks into so many poisoned wells, and disabled the whole party for several weeks.

As for the food, when there was a large household to be supplied and a daily delivery from Apia had been

[1] *Vailima Letters*, June 28th, 1893.

arranged, there was no great difficulty in catering, apart from the expense. The meat came from the butcher, and the bread from the baker, the groceries, if needed, from the grocer, and the washing from the washer-woman, as in less romantic communities. There was a large storeroom, plentifully supplied from the Colonies and from home. There were generally three or four cows in milk, and a supply of pigs and chickens being reared for the table. The herd of wild cattle sold with the estate certainly did not exist within many miles of its boundaries, though I believe that the animals were not mythical, but led a real existence in another part of the island, whither they had betaken themselves. But if there were no four-footed creatures, birds were plentiful. Large pigeons were brought in from the surrounding woods, especially at the season when they had been feeding on the wild nutmeg-trees. The only game to be obtained was an occasional mallard, a rail, or a gallinule, unless the *manume'a* be reckoned, the one surviving species of dodo, a bird about the size of a small moor-hen, which has only recovered its present feeble powers of flight since cats were introduced into the island. I have found it in the woods above Vailima, but we never shot it ourselves, and its dark flesh was as rare upon the table as it was delicious. Fresh-water prawns came from the stream, and now and again some sea-fish might be sent up from the coast, where it was abundant. Vegetables were hardly to be bought, but a piece of swampy ground half a mile from the house was turned into a patch for taro, the finest of all substitutes for the potato. Bananas and breadfruit-trees were planted, and Mrs. Stevenson developed under

her own supervision a garden in which all sorts of new plants were tried, and most of them successfully adopted. Cocoanuts, oranges, guavas, and mangoes grew already on the estate or in a paddock just below, which was taken on lease; and many more of the most improved kinds of these trees were planted and throve. The common hedges on the estate were composed of limes, the fruit being so abundant that it was used to scour the kitchen floors and tables, and citrons were of so little account that they rotted on the trees. Several acres were planted with pineapples, which, after only a little cultivation, equalled the best varieties of their kind. There was also an unrivalled plantation of kava, the shrub whose powdered root yields the Samoan national drink. Wherever the ground was cleared, the papaw or mummy-apple at once sprang up and bore its wholesome and insipid fruit. Cape gooseberries were mere weeds; soursops, sweet potatoes and avocado pears, lemons and plums, egg-plants and the large granadillas all did well in that rich volcanic soil and that marvellous climate. Nothing failed of tropical products except the ambrosial mangosteen, the capricious child of the Malay Peninsula. The cacao, of which frequent mention is made in the *Vailima Letters*, grew and came into bearing; but the broken and rocky surface of the ground made it difficult to keep clean, and also caused the plantation to be very straggling and irregular.

But, in truth, if Stevenson were unfitted for a South Sea trader, he was even less likely to be the successful manager of a plantation run for his own profit. No Samoan had either need or desire to work regularly for any sum less than seven dollars a month and his food,

but these wages and the amount of work rendered for them were quite incompatible with the idea of competition in the markets of the civilised world. Stevenson fed his men, paid them regularly in cash and not in trade, and neither worked them in bad weather nor discharged them for sickness, if he thought it was brought on by exposure in the course of doing work for him. If all this be accounted only common fair dealing, he had besides an unusual measure of that generosity he has attributed to others, "such as is possible to those who practise an art, never to those who drive a trade." At any rate, the little plantation never paid its way, and never seriously promised to become self-supporting.

The temperature was generally between 85° and 90° Fahrenheit at noon, and always fell during the darkness to 70°, or less. I have never seen it at any time lower than 62° or higher than 95° in the shade. But in the early morning the lower temperature strikes one by contrast as bitterly cold, and so acutely had Stevenson felt it in his cottage in the bush that two large fireplaces with a brick chimney were built in the big house, though after a while they were seldom or never used. It was the contrast that was trying, even at higher temperatures. "The thermometer is only 80°," wrote Stevenson, "and it 's as cold as charity here. *You* would think it warm. What makes these differences? Eighty degrees is a common temperature with us, and usually pleasant. And to-day it pricks like a half frost in a wet November." Through the dry season from April to October a fresh trade-wind blew during the day from the south-east, and during the other months,

although heavy rain was more frequent, the fine days were beyond words delightful. "The morning is, ah! such a morning as you have never seen; heaven upon earth for sweetness, freshness, depth upon depth of unimaginable colour, and a huge silence broken at this moment only by the far-away murmur of the Pacific and the rich piping of a single bird." [1]

The rainfall is said to average about one hundred and thirty inches during the year, but as five or six inches fall during a really wet twenty-four hours, it does not argue many wet days, and, moreover, showers fall freely during the so-called dry season. The climate, of course, is not bracing, but it is probably as little debilitating as that of any place lying in the same latitude and no further removed from the sea-level.

There is a total absence of tropical and malarial fevers, which must be due to the fact that the germ-bearing mosquito either does not exist, or finds no virus to convey.[2] And this is the more remarkable because in the western limits of the Pacific the fevers of New Guinea and New Britain are the deadliest of their kind.

Samoa, in common with the rest of Polynesia, is fortunate in this also, that it contains nothing more venomous than a few centipedes, and even these have been accidentally imported with merchandise.

Stevenson's ordinary manner of life was this: He would get up at six, or perhaps earlier, and begin work.

[1] *Vailima Letters*, p. 243.

[2] If it be the latter reason, it is a strong argument against "labour-traffic" importing Melanesians impregnated with this poison into districts where the inhabitants are healthy.

From my bed in the cottage I commanded a view of his verandah, and often and often I have waked in the chill early dawn to see through the window the house with the mass of Vaea towering behind it: in the midst there would be the one spot of bright light where Tusitala, the only other person awake of all the household, was already at his labours. Down below, the monotonous beating of the surf could be heard; above, through the chill air, there rang the repeated call of the *manu-iao*, "the bird of dawn"[1] — a succession of clear phrases recalling with a difference the notes at once of the thrush and of the blackbird. The sky brightened; the lamp was extinguished; the household began to stir; and about half-past six a light breakfast was taken to the master. He continued to work by himself, chiefly making notes, until Mrs. Strong, her housekeeping finished, was able to begin his writing, generally soon after eight. Then they worked till nearly noon, when the whole household met for the first time at a substantial meal of two or three courses in the large hall.

Afterwards there would be talk, or reading aloud, or a game of piquet; a bowl of kava was always made early in the afternoon, and, having been served once, was then left in the verandah. When Austin Strong was at Vailima, his "Uncle Louis" would at some time during the day give him a history lesson, and also began to teach him French; for the boy's education was undertaken by the household at large. Later in the afternoon there might follow a visit to Apia, or a ride, or a stroll into the woods or about the plantation, or a game of croquet or tennis, until close upon six o'clock,

[1] *Ptilotis carunculata*, the wattled creeper.

when the dinner was served. Then followed a round game at cards, or reading, or talk as before, or music, if there were any visitor in the house able to play the piano or sing, for in the end Stevenson had altogether given up the practice of his flute. Soon after eight on an ordinary night the members of the household had generally dispersed to their rooms, to go to bed at what hour they chose. The master of the house used, I think, to do most of his reading at these times, but usually he was in bed soon after ten, if not actually before.

His own favourite exercise was riding, and though for the dozen years before he came to the Pacific he had probably never mounted a horse, he was an excellent rider. His light weight (I doubt if he ever actually weighed eight stone) served him in good stead, and Jack, the Samoan-bred pony which he bought in 1890, carried him well. The first and unflattering mention describes Jack as "a *very* plain animal, dark brown, but a good goer, and gentle, except for a habit of shying and sitting down on his tail, if he sees a basket in the road, or even a bunch of bananas. However, he will make a very good makeshift." He reigned alone in Stevenson's affection, and, never having been mounted since, is passing a peaceful old age in a friend's paddock in Upolu.

Except on the roads of the Neutral Territory and in the big German plantation, the ground was not very suitable for horses, and a dozen miles was usually the limit of an afternoon's excursion.

I have called this the ordinary mode of life, but it was subject to endless variations. If Stevenson were in a

hot fit of work with a story just begun or some new episode just introduced, he could do nothing and think of nothing else, and toiled all day long; for if there were no interruptions and no other pressing business, he would at such times return to his labours for all the afternoon and evening. On the other hand, if he were ailing or disinclined for writing, he would stop work some time before luncheon. But almost at any time he was at the mercy of visitors, white or brown, and the matters which were referred to him for advice or settlement were endless. Mr. Osbourne has well described them:—

"He was consulted on every imaginable subject: . . . Government chiefs and rebels consulted him with regard to policy; political letters were brought to him to read and criticise; his native following was so widely divided in party that he was often kept better informed on current events than any one person in the country. Old gentlemen would arrive in stately procession with squealing pigs for the 'chief-house of wisdom,' and would beg advice on the capitation tax or some such subject of the hour; an armed party would come from across the island with gifts, and a request that Tusitala would take charge of the funds of the village and buy the roof-iron for a proposed church. Parties would come to hear the latest news of the proposed disarming of the country, or to arrange a private audience with one of the officials; and poor war-worn chieftains, whose only anxiety was to join the winning side, and who wished to consult with Tusitala as to which that might be. Mr. Stevenson would sigh sometimes as he saw these stately folk crossing the lawn in single file, their

attendants following behind with presents and baskets, but he never failed to meet or hear them." [1]

During his mother's first period of residence at Vailima, Stevenson used every morning at eight to have prayers at which the whole household were present. A hymn was sung in Samoan from the Mission book, a chapter read verse by verse in English, and two or three prayers were read in English, ending with the Lord's Prayer in Samoan. But it was impossible to assemble before anybody had begun work, and so much delay was caused by summoning the household from their various labours, that the practice was reserved in the end for Sunday evenings only, when a chapter of the Samoan Bible was read, Samoan hymns were sung, and a prayer, written by Stevenson himself for the purpose, was offered in English, concluding, as always, with the native version of the Lord's Prayer. [2]

There is one feature in Stevenson's residence in Samoa which has probably never yet been mentioned, and that is the constancy with which he stayed at home in Vailima. After his visit to Tutuila in 1891 I know of only two occasions during his life in Upolu — the two separate nights which he passed at Malie — when he did not sleep either at Apia or in his own house. This was largely a precaution for the sake of health, since there was little good accommodation outside those two places, but it entirely prevented his becoming personally acquainted with many interesting spots in the islands and many of the Samoans whom he would have been glad to meet.

[1] *Scribner's Magazine*, p. 462, October, 1895.

[2] Appendix C, Vailima Prayers, vol. ii. p. 232.

Thus he never crossed the central range of his own island, the track over which passed near his house; he never visited Lanuto'o, the crater lake, set in the midst of the forest among the hills, only a dozen miles away, or the stone circle known as "The House of the Cuttle-fish" in a neighbouring glen, the crater islet of Apolima, or (to cut short my list) even any of the lovely villages along the south-western shore.

Now and again, for some special reason, generally connected with the arrival of the mail-steamer, he would sleep in Apia, but on all ordinary occasions he preferred to return home. At these times he liked the lamps left burning in his absence, that he might ride up the dark road and out into the solitary and silent woods, there to find the house lighted up to welcome his return even at the dead of night.

At Vailima visitors were always coming and going. All white residents who chose to appear were made welcome. The American Chief-Justice Ide and his family; Herr Schmidt, the President; the Consuls; the Land Commissioners, especially his friend Bazett Haggard; the Independent and Wesleyan missionaries; the French Bishop, the priests and sisters; the doctor, the magistrate, the postmaster, the surveyor; the managers of firms and their employés, English or German; and traders from all parts of the islands: such were some of the residents who might arrive at any time. To them might be added passing visitors, spending a week or two in Samoa between two steamers, or remaining several months to see the islands more thoroughly. The latter, if not actually staying in the house, were yet sure to be frequently invited to Vailima. Mr. Barrie

and Mr. Kipling, to their own bitter regret, too long deferred the visits for which their host was so eager; but of those who came, the Countess of Jersey, Mr. La Farge the artist, and Mr. Henry Adams the historian are the most familiar names.

And perhaps most frequent and certainly not least welcome were the officers and men of the warships, of which Apia saw only too many for her peace in those troubled days. The Germans toiled but seldom up the hill, the American vessels came rarely to the islands; but in the four years of Stevenson's residence at least eight British men-of-war entered the harbour, and one—his favourite *Curaçoa*—not only came most frequently, but stayed the longest, spending in the group seven out of the last eight months of his life. The experience which I think gave him more pleasure than any other in that time was his visit as a guest in the *Curaçoa* to the outlying islets of Manu'a, which he had in vain tried to reach three years before with Mr. Sewall.

In wardroom and gunroom some were, of course, closer friends than others, but I think there was not an officer in the ship, from the captain to the youngest midshipman, who was not definitely a friend. The most intimate were perhaps Dr. Hoskyns, Hugo Worthington, the marine officer, Lieutenant (now Commander) Eeles; but the road from Apia became known as the "Curaçoa track," and if any one of the officers was placed upon the sick-list, he was speedily invited to stay in the house and try the effect of the climate of Vailima. With the men also, petty officers, bluejackets, and marines, Stevenson's relations were of the happiest.

"A most interesting lot of men," he wrote of another ship; "this education of boys for the navy is making a class, wholly apart—how shall I call them?—a kind of lower-class public-school boy, well-mannered, fairly intelligent, sentimental as a sailor."

He had doubted at Honolulu if the navies of the world held such another ship as the *Cormorant,* and the answer came to his door.

There was also the merchant service: the captains and officers of the mail-steamers, both of the San Francisco vessels and the local New Zealand boats. "Captain Smith of the *Taviuni,*" as Mr. Osbourne reminds me, "once paid a visit to Vailima with some friends. On his road home he passed the Ala Loto Alofa, on which the chiefs were then working like good fellows. He asked — and was told — the reason of their task; and the bluff, hearty old seaman at once insisted in getting off his horse and felling one of the trees himself. '*I* must be in that, too,' he said, with a genuine emotion; and spent half an hour swinging an axe."

Other and stranger visitors would turn up from the various islands which the family had visited. As Stevenson wrote to Mr. Barrie: "Another thing you must be prepared for — and that is the arrival of strange old shell-back guests out of every quarter of the island world, their mouths full of oaths for which they will punctiliously apologise; their clothes unmistakably purchased in a trade-room, each probably followed by a dusky bride. These you are to expect to see hailed with acclamation and dragged in as though they were dukes and duchesses. For though we may be out of

touch with 'God knows what,' we are determined to keep in touch with appearances and the Marquesas."

The bust of old Robert Stevenson, looking down upon the hall, must have been reminded again and again of the breakfasts in Baxter's Place, and his "broad-spoken, home-spun officers."[1]

The departure of one of these old traders was most characteristic, and would hardly, I think, occur in just the same way outside the South Seas. He had come from his island; he had made his way to Vailima and renewed his friendship; he had enjoyed himself and received such kindness and consideration as perhaps he did not often get. When he rose to take his leave, "Now don't you move," he said, "don't one of you move. Just let me take a last look of you all sitting there on that verandah, and I shall have that always to think of, when I 'm away."

It was Stevenson's intimate knowledge of this class which made him particularly anxious to heal as far as possible the unnecessary division between them and the missionaries. On this point he particularly insisted in an address delivered in Sydney in 1893.[2] That paper does not relate exclusively to Samoa; on the contrary, there is much of it which was applicable only elsewhere; but it is the general conclusion of Stevenson's experiences of British Protestant missions in the Pacific, and one of the wisest and most valuable utterances upon the whole subject.[3]

His personal relations with the Protestant missionaries in Samoa were most pleasant. He was a loyal and

[1] *Vide* vol. i, p. 10. [2] Appendix B.

[3] Compare especially *Letters*, ii. 340.

generous friend to every man and woman among them, told them quite plainly whenever he disagreed with them or disapproved of their line of conduct, and was a most stimulating and liberal influence on their work. It is almost invidious to single out names, but the Rev. W. E. Clarke and his wife were his closest and most thorough-going friends among the residents. Outside Samoa, the Rev. George Brown, the Rev. F. E. Lawes of Savage Island, and the Rev. F. Damon of Honolulu held high places in his affection and regard; but for Mr. Chalmers,[1] "Tamate" of New Guinea, he felt a kind of hero-worship, a greater admiration probably than he felt for any man of modern times except Charles Gordon.

His appreciation of the Mission he showed not only by giving his influence and his money, but also by offering his services to take a Bible-class of young half-caste lads on Sunday afternoons. Nothing was more irksome to him than a periodical engagement. The boys, it is gathered, were quite impenetrable, and the process was that of cutting blocks with a razor; but for several months Stevenson held firmly to his undertaking, and in the end it was dropped only from some urgent external cause, and never resumed.

With the Catholics Stevenson was on equally pleasant but quite different terms. His interest in Molokai, even apart from Father Damien, always made his heart warm towards the priests and Catholic sisters; the accidental circumstance that all his best boys at Vailima

[1] The Rev. Dr. James Chalmers was killed at the Aird River in New Guinea, in April, 1901, as he was endeavouring to make peace between the natives who were engaged in a tribal war.

belonged to the Church of Rome strengthened the connection. For the Bishop he had a real appreciation: "a superior man, much above the average of priests"; "Monseigneur is not unimposing; with his white beard and his violet girdle he looks splendidly episcopal, and when our three waiting lads came one after another and kneeled before him in the big hall, and kissed his ring, it did me good for a piece of pageantry."

Of the spiritual merits of their work he was of course in no position to judge; but he always had a special admiration for the way in which they identified themselves with the natives and encouraged all native habits and traditions at all compatible with Christianity. Above all things he welcomed the fact that the influence of the chiefs was increased instead of weakened by their efforts. He agreed with them that it was better to concentrate their forces on people of rank than to impose such a democracy as that of some of the Protestant societies, for he felt that the salvation of Samoa lay in the chiefs, and that it was unfortunate that all white influence except that of the Catholics was in the line of diminishing their authority.

Thus the priests and the sisters from the Savalalo convent were always welcome guests, and not the less from the fact that French was the usual medium of intercourse.

Besides open house at Vailima, there also were many special entertainments, both those given in the house, and those shared with others or given by them in return in Apia. In addition to ordinary lunches or dinners, it was Stevenson's greatest delight to organise any festivity in which the natives could have a share, the

entertainment of a man-of-war's band, a feast on the completion of a Samoan house, or, above all, the great banquet given in native fashion to celebrate his own birthday. In Apia public balls were not infrequent; Stevenson became a willing pupil in the hands of his stepdaughter, and thenceforward took his part in the dances with delight.

But the balls in themselves deserve a passing word, for nowhere, since the world began, can the juxtaposition of incongruous elements have reached so high a point. Almost every one in Apia, without regard for social station, was invited, and all were welcome. Diplomatists and naval officers, traders and bar-keepers, clerks and mechanics, all came; and the residents brought their wives and daughters, white, half-caste, or whole Polynesian. On one point only was etiquette inexorable — no Samoan man could hope for admission unless some elderly and august chief were introduced as a spectator. But invitations were issued to such native girls as could dance and were otherwise suitable, and the "maid of a village" might frequently there be seen, dancing away in a native dress even more elaborate and scanty than those of her white sisters. And not only was social exclusiveness waived, but hostilities, public and private, were suspended at these remarkable entertainments. One night Stevenson found himself *vis-à-vis* with Chief-Justice Cedercrantz in a square dance, at a time when either was eagerly compassing the removal of the other from the island. "We dance here in Apia," he wrote, "a most fearful and wonderful quadrille; I don't know where the devil they fished it from, but it is rackety and prancing and

embraceatory beyond words; perhaps it is best defined in Haggard's expression of a gambado."[1] And of his rival: "We exchanged a glance and then a grin; the man took me in his confidence; and through the remainder of that prance, we pranced for each other."

Another time, during the fiercest moments of Anglo-German animosity, Mr. Osbourne, by the adroit use of a bow and arrow, secured the hand of the German Consul's wife for a cotillon; and at a Fourth of July dance given by the American Vice-Consul, all that gentleman's enemies might have been seen joining hands and dancing round him, while they sang, "For he 's a jolly good fellow." One ineffable family indeed carried out the rules of the game with so much rigour as to accept partners with whom they were not on speaking terms, and then to dance and speak not a word. But for the most part people entered readily into the spirit of the thing, and ill-will was left outside, while not only the lion and the lamb but the rival beasts of prey all frolicked happily together.

There is one difficulty to which I have not yet alluded —the question of language. Stevenson had, as he wrote, on entering the Pacific, "journeyed out of that comfortable zone of kindred languages, where the curse of Babel is so easy to be remedied," but the obstacle proved much less than he had anticipated. It is true that in Samoa few of the natives speak or really understand anything but their own tongue, but except for the fact that this has no analogies with any European speech, it is not very difficult to acquire for practical purposes. To it he soon addressed himself, and over

[1] *Vailima Letters*, 13th September, 1892.

the study of Samoan he spent a good deal of pains, even taking regular lessons from the Rev. S. J. Whitmee of the London Mission, the best Samoan scholar in the islands. His story of *The Bottle Imp* was translated by another member of the Mission for their magazine almost as soon as it was written, and has the unique distinction of having been published in Samoan before it appeared in English. Stevenson himself began as an exercise with his teacher to write in Samoan a story of Saxon times called *Eatuina* (Edwin), but only a few chapters were completed.

In Samoan there is a special vocabulary for addressing or mentioning high chiefs, which is naturally used on all solemn occasions and in all important correspondence. Stevenson mastered this sufficiently to understand it when it was spoken well, and not only to be able to write it with facility, but even to satisfy his own fastidious requirements in composing letters. The everyday speech he used for all household purposes, and could understand it himself without difficulty. But when there came a voluble rustic from a remote district, some small chief perhaps, who sat and "barked," as his unfortunate hearer said, in either dialect about matters beyond Tusitala's ken, the result was confusion. In matters of importance, where it was of the highest urgency that Stevenson should not be misunderstood, a good and really trustworthy interpreter was hardly to be procured outside the Mission, and from anything approaching politics the missionaries for the most part wisely held aloof. But this difficulty was gradually solved by Mr. Osbourne, who learned both usages very thoroughly, and spoke them in the end with fluency and ease.

There are few matters in which English readers have taken less interest than the political history of Samoa, even when it was written by Stevenson himself. Nevertheless, if I were to omit all reference to these affairs and the criticisms which Stevenson passed upon them, it would be supposed that I was letting judgment go against him by default. I propose therefore to give the briefest possible description of the government as it was from 1889 to 1894, relegating to the Appendix [1] a brief summary of the details, and the evidence for my assertions. Those who wish to find the matter treated most brilliantly, but at greater length, will find it in *A Foot-note to History* and Stevenson's letters to the *Times*.

Throughout his residence in Samoa, the government of the islands was controlled by a Treaty entered into at Berlin in 1889 between America, England, and Germany. Under this the native king was recognised by these three Great Powers, by whom two new white officials were also appointed — a Chief-Justice, receiving £1200 a year out of the Samoan treasury, and a President of the Municipal Council, who was to be paid £1000 a year by the Municipality and also act as adviser to the king. The Neutral Territory of the Municipality of Apia, in which most of the white population resided, was managed by a Council of six residents elected by the ratepayers, with the President as Chairman. A Land Commission of three representatives, one appointed by each of the three Powers, was to investigate all equitable claims of foreigners to the ownership of land in Samoa, and after the registration of such titles as were

[1] Appendix D, vol. ii. p. 237.

valid, none but a native might acquire the freehold of any part of Samoan territory.

The American and German Consuls-General and the British Consul retained their jurisdiction, and preserved much of the prestige they had enjoyed in the days before the Berlin Treaty, when the Consular Board had been the chief controlling power in Samoa. The British Consul also, as a Deputy Commissioner for the Western Pacific, had very despotic powers over all British subjects under the Orders in Council issued under the Pacific Islanders' Protection Act of 1875.

The principal white officials in Samoa were thus:—

The Chief-Justice.
The President of the Municipal Council.
The Three Consuls.
The Three Land Commissioners.

It is impossible to say whether the system thus founded could ever have worked satisfactorily among so many contending interests and at so great a distance from the paramount Governments, seated as these were at Berlin, London, and Washington, even if two competent Treaty officials possessed of experience and common sense had been promptly sent out to the scene of their duties. But there was undue delay, the wrong men were chosen, and the system was doomed.

The Chief-Justiceship was, failing the unanimous choice of the three Powers, given by the King of Sweden to a Swedish Assistant-Judge, Mr. Conrad Cedercrantz, while Baron Senfft von Pilsach, a German Regierungs-Assessor, was appointed by the Powers to be President of the Municipal Council.

For more than two years the pair drew their salaries and discharged what they conceived to be their duties in a fashion which is perfectly incredible until it is studied by the "cold light of consular reports." Stevenson was finally kindled to indignation by the outrage of the dynamite—a proposal to blow up some Samoan chiefs imprisoned for a political offence of no great gravity, if any attempt were made by their people to rescue them from jail. He wrote to the *Times* a series of letters which at first were generally disbelieved, but were afterwards confirmed in every important detail that was made known. It was a real bitterness to him to see fading away before his eyes perhaps the last opportunity for the restoration of order and prosperity to an independent Samoa, as the natives watched the gambadoes of this extraordinary couple and the second-rate diplomacy or tardy and futile action of the three Great Powers.

The fight was keen, for the two Treaty officials did their best, as Stevenson believed, to have him deported; but the end was certain, whether it was due to the diplomatists or the *Times*, and the pair departed for other scenes of activity. But the evil had been done, and such opportunity as their successors had was frustrated by the arbitrary and vacillating interference of the consuls. On this subject Stevenson wrote three more letters dealing with the outrages which went on under the very noses of the consuls and the guns of the warships, with the weakness and the favouritism of the Government and the farce of disarming. But everything showed that the failure of the Berlin Treaty was complete, and that the only chance for Samoa was to abolish the triple control.

Stevenson took the chair at one public meeting in Apia, and apart from this his local interference in politics was limited to a few formal visits to native chiefs.[1] Once, however, by an accident it nearly took the most startling form of intervention possible. The king was all but shot dead in the large hall at Vailima by Mrs. Stevenson in her husband's presence. Suddenly one day in 1894 Malietoa came up without warning to pay a secret visit of reconciliation to Tusitala, attended only by a black-boy interpreter. In the course of the visit he happened to mention his wish for a revolver; Stevenson immediately went to the big safe in the corner of the room and produced one which he emptied of the cartridges and handed to his wife. Mrs. Stevenson found that there was something wrong with the trigger and tried it several times. Four times it clicked, the king leaned over in front to examine it, and then some unaccountable impulse made her inspect the pistol again. In the next chamber lay a cartridge which would inevitably have sent its charge into the king's brain. The smile and wave of the hand with which Malietoa greeted and dismissed the discovery were worthy of a stronger monarch and of a far greater kingdom. Had the bullet gone to its mark, it is idle to speculate on what would have happened, but it is clear at any rate that Stevenson could no longer have found a home in Samoa.

On most occasions he confined himself to giving his advice when it was asked, or when he saw any reasonable chance of its being accepted. I need hardly say that he never contributed one farthing or one farthing's

[1] Appendix D, vol. ii. p. 242.

worth towards any arming or provisioning of the natives, nor did he ever take any step or give any counsel or hint whatsoever that could possibly have increased the danger of war or diminished the hopes of a peaceful settlement.

If he had been asked what concern he had in the affairs of Samoa, or why he did not leave them in the hands of the consuls whose business they were, he would probably have answered that it *was* his business to vindicate the truth and to check misgovernment and oppression wherever he found them; that he had good reason to distrust the consuls; that Samoa was a remote spot where public opinion was helpless; and that the trustworthy means of publishing the real state of its affairs to the civilised world were few. And in support of this he would have instanced the case of the dynamite, the very name of which has been suppressed in all the blue-books and white-books of the three Powers; and the fact that the only newspaper in the island had been secretly purchased with the public money, printing-press, type and all, for the benefit of his opponents. Finally, that which he would never have pleaded for his own advantage may be urged for him in a disinterested sense: he had adopted Samoa as his country, and her enemies were his enemies, and he made her cause his own. It is difficult for people reading their newspapers at home to realise the entire difference of circumstances and conduct, and I freely confess that until I arrived in Samoa and saw the conditions for myself, I favoured the easier course of *laissez faire*.

It would give a false impression, however, if I neglected to mention the excitement of politics, which in

Europe is denied to all but the few diplomatists behind the scenes. In Apia every one knew the chief persons involved, both white and Samoan, and knew all, and much more than all, that was passing between them. As a young Irishman quoted by Stevenson said: "I never saw so good a place as this Apia; you can be in a new conspiracy every day." And to Stevenson himself at first the interest was absorbing: "You don't know what news is, nor what politics, nor what the life of man, till you see it on so small a scale and with your liberty on the board for stake."[1] But so futile and so harassing were these concerns, that before long he was glad to leave them on one side as far as he could, and devote himself once more to literature. He soon found politics "the dirtiest, the most foolish, and the most random of human employments":[2] and for the diplomatists—"You know what a French post-office or railway official is? That is the diplomatic card to the life. Dickens is not in it; caricature fails."[3]

Of the exact amount of influence that Stevenson possessed with the natives, it is hard to speak with any certainty. From what I have said of his stationary life it will be evident that there were many Samoans who had no opportunity of coming into contact with him at all; but in spite of this drawback his prestige and authority were gradually spreading, and his kindness and fidelity in misfortune produced a real effect upon the native mind. His influence was probably as great as that of any white resident in the islands, with the possible exception of two or three who had married native wives. But this, after all, did not amount to very

[1] *Letters*, ii. 276. [2] *Ibid.*, 295. [3] *Ibid.*, 334.

much; the Samoans, in common with other native races who have not been too well treated by the whites, had learned to protect themselves by an armour of reserve and diplomacy, and they seldom accepted any foreigner's advice unless it recommended to them the course which they were already disposed to follow. As Mr. Whitmee, who knew the islands well, said: "There have been paragraphs in British papers representing Mr. Stevenson as being something like a king in Samoa. I believe I have seen it stated that he might have been king of the islands had he wished. That was simple nonsense." (And, I may add, nonsense which irritated Stevenson more than almost any other idle rumour.) "But he was respected by the natives as a whole, and by many he was beloved."

His work was given at first entirely to the "letters" which were constructed out of the notes and journals of his voyages, and were themselves in turn the rough material of which he intended to compose his great book on the South Seas. "To get this stuff jointed and moving" was his first aim, but never did he labour to so little purpose. Some seventy "letters" in all were written, and his contract with Messrs. M'Clure was fulfilled; but the strain of production was excessive, and the result satisfied neither the author nor the public. The "bargain was quite unsuitable to his methods," for one thing;[1] for another, the material was unlimited and his knowledge was always increasing. Instead of the entertaining book of travels, full of personal interest and excitement, and abounding in picturesque descrip-

[1] *Vailima Letters*, p. 55.

tions of the scenery and manners of the South Seas, for which his readers so eagerly looked, they found a series of disconnected chapters on native beliefs with all or nearly all the sense of adventure left out, and but scanty information as to the details of travel upon which the public so dearly loves to be informed. That the *Voyage in the Sunbeam* should be a popular work and Stevenson's South Sea letters a failure is one of the tragedies of literature, but if any one will compare the letters from the Paumotus with the letter to R. A. M. Stevenson,[1] he will see that it was due to Stevenson's deliberate judgment, which in this instance for once was entirely mistaken. The experience he enjoyed most—the visit to Tahiti—remained unwritten; the part which the public awaited perhaps with most interest—the visit to Molokai—was not seriously attempted; and by the time the best letters were reached, those in which he describes his unique experiences in Apemama, his readers had lost heart; indeed I believe the Tembinok' chapters never appeared in England at all. Thus he was well advised when in June 1891 he abandoned the task, and cast about for some fresh work to take in hand.

First, for the sake of change, he began the history of his family, which he had contemplated for some time as the frame in which to include the long-projected memorial of his father. The greater part of his grandfather's life was ultimately finished, and now forms the *Family of Engineers*. He did not even begin the account of his uncle Alan, the builder of Skerryvore lighthouse, a man of extraordinary ability, who retired

[1] *Letters*, ii. 135.

from practice at an early age; and his father's life, except for the sketch of his boyhood already quoted, was likewise untouched. For the present little more than Chapter I. was written, and the book was taken up from time to time only as a relaxation from creative work.

The Wrecker, which had been left half finished since a month after his arrival in Samoa, was now taken in hand again on the return of his collaborator, and carried to a conclusion. It was written on the same plan as before, the first drafts of the San Francisco parts being written by Mr. Osbourne, who had no hand at all in the Paris days, or the scene at Barbizon.[1] The book perhaps appealed to too many interests to receive its due from any one class of readers. The following letter from the late Lord Pembroke is a testimonial to its accuracy, coming from one of the authors of *South Sea Bubbles*, who have done more almost than any one to make the Pacific familiar ground to the English reader:—

"I am afraid only a small minority in England can be really capable of appreciating *The Wrecker*. The majority don't know enough of the real big World to know how true it is, and they will infinitely prefer that most delightful story, *Treasure Island*. Perhaps it *is* a better story than *The Wrecker*, but to me there is the difference that *Treasure Island* might have been written by a man who had no knowledge of such matters but what he had got from books and a powerful imagination, while *The Wrecker* has the indefinite smack of reality, of real knowledge of what men and ships do in

[1] *Letters*, ii. 356.

that wild and beautiful world beyond the American continent."

In the meantime Stevenson's expeditions into the solitudes of the forest above his home led not only to the set of verses called *The Woodman*, written, as he says most of his verses were,[1] "at the autumnal equinox," but also to the beginning of the story which at first, as *The High Woods of Ulufanua*, turned on a supernatural element, and then came down to earth in its final form as *The Beach of Falesá*. To the style of this admirable story justice has been done by Professor Raleigh,[2] doubtless to the entire bewilderment of those people who could see nothing in it but a farrago of slang; but the astonishing merits of the tale and its setting can hardly be appreciated by any but those who have lived in "The Islands." Stevenson himself is as usual his own best critic, and though he gives it high praise, he says not a word too much: "It is the first realistic South Sea story; I mean with real South Sea character and details of life. Everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance, and ended in a kind of sugar-candy sham epic, and the whole effect was lost — there was no etching, no human grip, consequently no conviction. Now I have got the smell and look of the thing a good deal. You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale than if you had read a library."[3] It is not a picture of any one island, though most of it would

[1] *Vailima Letters*, p. 245.

[2] *Robert Louis Stevenson*, by Walter Raleigh, p. 37. Edward Arnold, 1896.

[3] *Vailima Letters*, p. 88.

have been applicable at the time to any place in Samoa, if Apia had not existed. The darker features of the story, however, as I have said, were taken chiefly from some of the people then living in the Gilberts.

The Shovels of Newton French was the next long work which he planned, a chronicle of seven generations of a family, in which two other stories were to be embodied. In much the same way the chief story intended for a South Sea volume became absorbed in *Sophia Scarlet*,[1] and neither of the projects was ever realised.

The state of affairs in Samoa was becoming serious. As early as August of 1891 Stevenson had written to Mr. Baxter, "We sit and pipe upon a volcano, which is being stoked by bland, incompetent amateurs"; and he now determined that if the constitution should again go into the melting-pot, at least those who recast it should not be obliged to do their work in ignorance of the past. The material he had collected for his "letters" and the subsequent unwritten book was lying ready to hand with the first few chapters even drafted, and he began the *Foot-note to History*, worked at it under pressure, and had it finished in the following May.

The evidence he brought forward has never been met, the conclusion reached—that the Berlin Treaty was wholly unworkable—has long since been recognised by everybody concerned; but for the time the only result achieved was that the edition of the *Foot-note to History* which Baron Tauchnitz prepared to issue for the Continent of Europe was burned by order of the German Government, and the publishers only escaped from further penalties by payment of a large sum to a charity

[1] 17th May, 1892, *Vailima Letters*, p. 161.

selected by the authorities. But in 1893 Chief-justice Cedercrantz and President von Pilsach were superseded, and the Germans, from being the bitter enemies of Stevenson's friend Mataafa, had by 1899 become his champions and the chief supporters of his claim.

Stevenson now turned again to Scotland for subjects, for the first time since he had finished *The Master*, and his power of reproducing the Scottish life and atmosphere among alien scenes and under widely different influences was shown once more in a no less remarkable degree. The *Foot-note* was but partly engaging his attention in January, 1892, when he received fresh material from Mr. Andrew Lang for a story dealing with the private adventures of the Young Chevalier. Its introduction was written in May, but in the meantime Stevenson took up the story of David Balfour at the point where he had left it six years before, and he now carried it on concurrently with the *Foot-note*, so that in spite of endless interruptions it was actually finished by the end of September. It was the first of his works that was completed while I was at Vailima, and I well remember the agitation and stress with which it was brought to a close. It lends no support to the theory that the continuation of a story is doomed to fail. If *Catriona* lacks unity of plot and that splendid swiftness of action which marked the best part of *Kidnapped*, it contains the story of Tod Lapraik, and in none of Stevenson's books save the last is there such wealth of character. We have David Balfour himself, strengthened and matured; Lord Prestongrange; Stewart the writer and his colleagues; Mrs. Allardyce; Barbara Grant, that most bewildering and charming of women,

who rendered even her creator disloyal to Catriona; and the two best Highlandmen in fiction, the incomparable Alan Breck again, and his foil, James Mohr. Of the original of the latter Mr. Andrew Lang says: "From first to last, James was a valiant, plausible, conscienceless, heartless liar, with a keen feeling for the point of honour, and a truly Celtic passion of affection for his native land. . . . Though unacquainted with the documents that we shall cite, Mr. Stevenson divined James Mohr with the assured certainty of genius." [1]

Catriona is perhaps the best example of the rule to which it was apparently an exception, that all its author's more considerable stories were done at two breaks. "I have to leave off," he wrote to Mr. Iles in 1887, "and forget a tale for a little; then I can return upon it fresh and with interest revived." During the composition of *Catriona* there was no long pause, but it had been "simmering" since 1886, and surely we may see no more than the two volumes of one book in the completed *Adventures of David Balfour.*

Again there was the question of what should be taken next. It so happened one afternoon at Vailima that I was the only person available, and Louis carried me off to debate the claims of two stories which he then unfolded—*Sophia Scarlet,* and what afterwards became *Weir of Hermiston.* Either on that day or about that time I remember very distinctly his saying to me: "There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three ways only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and

[1] *Pickle, the Spy,* by Andrew Lang, p. 231, 2nd edition 1897. There is much about James Mohr in the introduction to *Rob Roy.*

choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly — you must bear with me while I try to make this clear" — (here he made a gesture with his hand as if he were trying to shape something and give it outline and form) — "you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realise it. I 'll give you an example — *The Merry Men.* There I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me."

It was on this last scheme that *Sophia Scarlet* had been conceived, the atmosphere being that of a large plantation in Tahiti, such as Mr. Stewart's had been at Atimono twenty years before.[1] It may be that the method did not lend itself readily to an effective sketch of the plot; the draft of the beginning of the story seems to me better than I thought the outline at the time. But in any case there could be no hesitation in the choice. *Weir of Hermiston* was begun, and for three or four days Stevenson was in such a seventh heaven as he has described:[2] he worked all day and all evening, writing or talking, debating points, devising characters and incidents, ablaze with enthusiasm, and abounding with energy. No finished story was, or ever will be, so good as *Weir of Hermiston* shone to us in those days by the light of its author's first ardour of creation.

Then he settled down, and a few days later read aloud to the family, as was his custom, the first draft of the opening chapters. After that but little progress was made, and in January, 1893, *St. Ives* was begun as a short story, the visit of the ladies to the prisoners in

[1] *South Sea Bubbles*, 24th August, 1870. [2] See vol. ii. p. 38.

Edinburgh being introduced at first as a mere episode without result. Stevenson was then attacked by hemorrhage: silence was imposed, and for several days he continued his work only by dictating to his stepdaughter on his fingers in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. In this fashion he achieved from five to seven pages of manuscript a day. Before long, however, he left home with his wife and Mrs. Strong upon his last visit to Sydney, all work was stopped, and on his return in six weeks' time he began a short story for the *Illustrated London News*. He had lately been reading again Barbey d'Aurévilly, and his mind had turned to Brittany. The new tale dealt with the Chouans in 1793, and was to be called *The Owl*. But it did not prosper; the writer was not well, and he was anxious about his wife's health, and when one chapter had been written, he gave up the attempt and took up a half-finished piece of work, which afterwards became *The Ebb Tide*.

This was a story begun with Mr. Osbourne in Honolulu just after their return from Tahiti, and known at that time as *The Pearl Fisher* and later as *The Schooner Farallone*. Mr. Osbourne had drafted the opening chapters, and no work of his had ever earned more praise from his stepfather. But at that moment an area of several acres behind the house was being cleared of forest and planted with pineapples for exportation — a scheme which it was hoped would make the plantation pay, and for the time being this engaged all Mr. Osbourne's energies. Stevenson, talking to me one day, produced the unfinished draft of the story, which at this time included only the first ten or eleven chapters, and debated what course he should pursue.

The fragment was originally intended as a prologue; Attwater was to be blinded with vitriol and then return to England. The remainder of the action of the book was to take place in England, and chiefly in Bloomsbury, where the Herricks lived. Stevenson now reconsidered the whole question, accepted a shorter ending, and grew more and more interested in the character of Attwater, as he worked it out. It is perhaps worth remarking that the picture of the arrival of the schooner at the new island gives better than anything else some of the charm of such cruises as those which delighted its author, who found no experience more exhilarating than "when you sight an island and drop anchor in a new world."[1]

The fables begun before he had left England and promised to Messrs. Longmans, he attacked again, and from time to time added to their number. The reference to Odin perhaps is due to his reading of the Sagas, which led him to attempt a tale in the same style, called "The Waif Woman." But I find no clue to any fresh study of Celtic legends that could have suggested the last and most beautiful fable of all, called "The Song of the Morrow," which dealt with the king's daughter of Duntrine, who "had no care for the morrow and no power upon the hour," and is like nothing else that Stevenson ever wrote.

Besides all these and the letters to the *Times*, as well as his private correspondence, there were endless other schemes, for the most part projected and perhaps not even begun, never certainly brought near to completion. He wrote to Mr. Charles Baxter: "My schemes

[1] *Letters*, ii. 120.

are all in the air, and vanish and reappear again like shapes in the clouds." So likewise to Miss Boodle: "I have a projected, entirely planned love-story — everybody will think it dreadfully improper, I 'm afraid — called *Cannonmills.* And I 've a vague, rosy haze before me — a love-story too, but not improper — called *The Rising Sun.* It 's the name of the wayside inn where the story, or much of the story, runs; but it 's a kind of a pun: it means the stirring up of a boy by falling in love, and how he rises in the estimation of a girl who despised him, though she liked him and had befriended him. I really scarce see beyond their childhood yet, but I want to go beyond, and make each out-top the other by successions: it should be pretty and true if I could do it."

Neither of these was ever written. There was also a play for home representation, showing the adventures of an English tourist in Samoa; and I can remember two more serious schemes which were likewise without result. In the August before he died, he drew up with Mr. Osbourne the outline of a history, or of a series of the most striking episodes, of the Indian Mutiny, to be written for boys, and sent home for the books necessary for its execution. Another day he sketched the plan of an English grammar, to be illustrated by examples from the English classics. These are but a few, the many are unremembered; but all alike belong, not to the fleet of masterpieces unlaunched, but the larger and more inglorious squadron whose keels were never even laid down.