CHAPTER XVI

THE END — 1894

"Brief day and bright day
And sunset red,
Early in the evening,
The stars are overhead."
R. L. S.

"*Wanted Volunteers*
To do their best for twoscore years!
A ready soldier, here I stand,
Primed for Thy command,
With burnished sword.
If this be faith, O Lord,
Help Thou mine unbelief
And be my battle brief."
Envoy to No. XXV. of *Songs of Travel.*

THE climate of Samoa had apparently answered the main purpose of preserving Stevenson from any disabling attacks of illness, and allowing him to lead a life of strenuous activity. "I do not ask for health," he had said to his stepson at Bournemouth, "but I will go anywhere and live in any place where I can enjoy the ordinary existence of a human being." And this had now been granted to him beyond his utmost hope.

In all the time he was in Samoa he had but two or three slight hemorrhages, that were cured within a very few days. The consumption in his lungs was definitely arrested, but it seems certain that a structural weakening of the arteries was slowly and inevitably going on, al-

though his general health was apparently not affected. He had influenza at least once; occasionally he was ailing, generally with some indefinite lassitude which was attributed to malaria or some other unverifiable cause. In the summer of 1892 he was threatened with writers' cramp, which had attacked him as long ago as 1884. From this time forth, however, his step-daughter wrote to his dictation nearly all his literary work and correspondence, and, thanks to her quickness and unwearying devotion, he suffered the least possible inconvenience from this restriction of his powers. He had one or two threatenings of tropical diseases, which were promptly averted; and for several periods, to his own intense disgust, he gave up even the very moderate quantity of red wine which seemed to be a necessity of life to him, and — worst deprivation of all — he abandoned at these times the cigarettes which usually he smoked all day long.[1]

But in spite of these occasional lapses, he was able to lead an active life, full of varied interests, and the amount of work which he did during this period would have been satisfactory to less careful writers, even if they had done nothing else but follow their own profession without any interruption or diversion whatever.

In this respect Samoa was an infinite gain. If the tropical climate in any degree weakened the bodily fabric that might longer have borne the strain of his impetuous life in some more bracing air, no one can for a moment doubt what choice he himself would have made had he been offered five years of activity, of

[1] *Letters*, ii. 297.

cruising and riding and adventure, against five-and-twenty or fifty of existence in the sick-room and the sanatorium.

It was his friends and his country that he missed. From the day that Mr. Colvin went down the ship's side in the Thames, or the day that Mr. Low parted from him in New York, Stevenson never again saw any one of his old and intimate companions. Fortune was against him in the matter. They were all busy people, with many engagements and many ties, and when at last Mr. Charles Baxter was able to start for Samoa, he had not yet reached Egypt before the blow fell. Nor was this perversity of fortune confined to his old friends alone; it also affected the younger writers with whom, in spite of distance, he had formed ties more numerous, and, in proportion to their number, more intimate than have ever before been established and maintained at any such distance by correspondence alone. And it was the more tantalising because the paths of several seemed likely to lead them past the very island where he lived. So he had to content himself as best he might with his mail-bag, which, especially in the answers to the *Vailima Letters*, did much to remove for him the drawbacks of his isolation and of absence from the centres of literature to which he always looked for praise and blame.

But besides the loss of intercourse, he more than most men suffered from another pang. The love of country which is in all Scots, and beyond all others lies deepest in the Celtic heart, flowed back upon him again and again with a wave of uncontrollable emotion. When the "smell of the good wet earth" came to him, it

came "with a kind of Highland touch." A tropic shower discovered in him "a frame of mind and body that belonged to Scotland, and particularly to the neighbourhood of Callander." When he turned to his grandfather's life, he was filled with this yearning, and the beautiful sentences in which he has described[1] the old man's farewell to "Sumburgh and the wild crags of Skye" were his own valediction to those shores. No more was he to "see the topaz and the ruby interchange on the summit of the Bell Rock," no more to see the castle on its hill, or "the venerable city which he must always think of as his home." As he wrote of himself, "Like Leyden I have gone into far lands to die, not stayed like Burns to mingle in the end with Scottish soil."

It is not to be wondered that his letters show moods of depression which his indomitable spirit prevented him from manifesting at the time to those around him, and which perhaps beset him most when he turned to his correspondence. As has been well said:[2] "He was an exile, and though his exile lay in pleasant places, he had an exile's thoughts, and these were bound to be uppermost when he wrote to his old intimates."

There were times when he was tempted to risk everything, and to go back to the old life and the old friends, were it only for a few weeks, or even a few days. But he resisted the temptation, and fought on manfully to the end.

For the rest the advantages and drawbacks of his position were very evenly balanced: if absence threw him out of touch with what went on at home, it also

[1] Vol. i. p. 9. [2] *Quarterly Review*, No. 381, p. 196.

kept him clear of literary cliques and coteries, and saved him from many interruptions and calls upon his time; if it hindered his personal influence, it gave, as Mr. Quiller Couch has pointed out, a greater scope and leisure for his correspondence. His earlier Scotch novels were, as we have seen, not written in Scotland, and residence in that country could hardly have bettered his latest stories. On the other hand, among the work to which Polynesia diverted his attention there is nothing, as a whole, ranking as quite first-rate except *The Beach of Falesá.*

One drawback to Samoa there certainly was, redeemed by no corresponding advantage, and that was the inevitable delay in obtaining material or information. If a book were wanted, it was usually of such a date and character that it was mere waste of time to attempt to procure it nearer than London or Edinburgh, and this meant, under the most favourable circumstances, an interval of nearly three months, even if the right book existed or could be obtained at all.

This to a man of Stevenson's temperament and fertility was most unsettling; and it involved besides great waste of labour, and the abandonment of much work that had been well begun.

The difficulty of the life in Samoa was its great expense. In 1887 Stevenson had written: "Wealth is only useful for two things — a yacht and a string quartette. Except for these, I hold that £700 a year is as much as anybody can possibly want." But though he had neither the music nor the vessel, and was now making an income of six or seven times the amount mentioned, it was no more than enough to meet the

cost of his living and the needs of his generosity, while he was occasionally haunted by a fear lest his power of earning should come to an end.[1]

During the period of his residence at Vailima he returned but twice to the world of populous cities. In the early part of 1893 he paid a visit of several weeks to Sydney, and though as usual there he was much confined to his room, he derived from the trip a good deal of enjoyment. For the first time he realised that his fame had reached the Colonies, and though no man was ever under fewer illusions upon the point, he enjoyed the opportunities it gave him of meeting all sorts of people. Artists and Presbyterian ministers alike vied in entertaining him; at Government House he was just in time to see the last of Lord and Lady Jersey; and by this time there were at Sydney a number of friends in whose company he delighted, especially Dr. Fairfax Ross and the Hon. B. R. Wise. But the event which pleased and cheered him most was his meeting at Auckland with Sir George Grey, with whom he had more than one prolonged and most inspiring discussion upon the affairs of Samoa.

In September, 1893, he came up to Honolulu for the sake of the voyage, intending to return by the next steamer. After a week spent there I left him apparently quite well, and intending to sail for Samoa the next day. But in those four-and-twenty hours he developed pneumonia, and remained ill at Waikiki until his wife's arrival, and they did not reach Apia again before November. It was thus a period of illness, for it began with Ta'alolo, who had come to take care of his master,

[1] Cf. *Letters*, ii. 284.

himself taking measles, and for a time we were in a sort of quarantine. But it was a change from the limited society of Apia: Stevenson saw something of his many friends and acquaintances in Honolulu; he was entertained by his brother Scots of the Thistle Club, and elsewhere; and I remember a most impressive interview between him and the lately deposed queen, whom he had last seen in the days of her prosperity, when her brother was upon the throne.

On his return to Samoa several events occurred which gave him great pleasure. He had never wearied in his kindness and generosity towards any of the natives who were in trouble, and he was constant in seeing to the real needs of the Mataafa chiefs who were in prison. These services he rendered to them, as he rendered all service, without thought of reward or fear of misunderstanding, and it was all the more pleasant to him when the chiefs gave him first an elaborate native feast with full honours in the jail where they were still confined; and secondly, as soon as they were released, came as a mark of gratitude, and cleared and dug and completed the roadway which thereafter led to his house—the Ala Loto Alofa, the Road of the Loving Heart. It was a task of no inconsiderable magnitude, and employed a large number of men for several weeks. The whole labour and the whole cost were borne by the chiefs; the idea was theirs alone, the unprompted and spontaneous expression of their regard, and no ulterior motive has ever, so far as I am aware, been suggested by anybody to whom the circumstances were known. When it was finished, there was a solemn returning of thanks, and Stevenson's speech, which may be found

at the end of the *Vailima Letters*, was his best and most outspoken utterance to the people of Samoa.

In his writing also he met with a mark of recognition, to which he refused to allow full significance, the inception of the Edinburgh Edition of his works. Mr. Baxter, who had already rendered him invaluable service in disposing of his new books from time to time to the best advantage, had formed and among the most contending interests had carried out a scheme which, if successful, would bring in a sum of over five thousand pounds without involving any fresh strain upon the author. A complete edition of all the writings that Stevenson wished to be preserved was to be produced in the best possible form, and limited to a thousand copies. It was, I believe, the first of its kind, and was taken up with eagerness; in November, 1894, the first volume was issued, and was everywhere hailed with unbounded applause and congratulation. "My dear fellow," he wrote to Mr. Baxter, "I wish to assure you of the greatness of the pleasure that this Edinburgh Edition gives me. I suppose it was your idea to give it that name. No other would have affected me in the same manner. Do you remember, how many years ago — I would be afraid to hazard a guess — one night when I communicated to you certain intimations of early death and aspirations after fame? I was particularly maudlin; and my remorse the next morning on a review of my folly has written the matter very deeply in my mind; from yours it may easily have fled. If any one at that moment could have shown me the Edinburgh Edition, I suppose I should have died. It is with gratitude and wonder that I consider 'the way

in which I have been led.' Could a more preposterous idea have occurred to us in those days when we used to search our pockets for coppers, too often in vain, and combine forces to produce the threepence necessary for two glasses of beer, or wandered down the Lothian Road without any, than that I should be strong and well at the age of forty-three in the island of Upolu, and that you should be at home bringing out the Edinburgh Edition?"[1]

In the end of September he wearied of *St. Ives* within sight of its conclusion, and fortunately turned again to *Weir of Hermiston*. It was the third time he had taken it in hand, for he would not work at it when he felt uncertain of himself. But his insight was at its clearest, his touch most sure, and his style, as always when he approached Scotland in his novels, was at its simplest and best. "He generally makes notes in the early morning," wrote Mrs. Strong in her diary on September 24th, "which he elaborates as he reads them aloud. In *Hermiston* he has hardly more than a line or two to keep him on the track, but he never falters for a word, but gives me the sentences with capital letters and all the stops, as clearly and steadily as though he were reading from an unseen book."

October and November passed; Stevenson remained hard at work, and to all appearance in his ordinary health. His birthday was celebrated by the usual native feast, and on Thanksgiving Day, November 29th, he gave a dinner to all his American friends. What remains to tell has been so related by Mr. Osbourne that no other account is possible or to be desired, and

[1] *Letters*, ii. 328.

although it has been already printed in the *Letters*, I must thank him for allowing it again to appear in these pages.[1]

"He wrote hard all that morning of the last day; his half-finished book, *Hermiston*, he judged the best he had ever written, and the sense of successful effort made him buoyant and happy as nothing else could. In the afternoon the mail fell to be answered; not business correspondence — for this was left till later — but replies to the long, kindly letters of distant friends, received but two days since, and still bright in memory.

"At sunset he came downstairs; rallied his wife about the forebodings she could not shake off; talked of a lecturing tour to America that he was eager to make, 'as he was now so well,' and played a game at cards with her to drive away her melancholy. He said he was hungry; begged her assistance to help him make a salad for the evening meal; and to enhance the little feast he brought up a bottle of old Burgundy from the cellar. He was helping his wife on the verandah, and gaily talking, when suddenly he put both hands to his head, and cried out, 'What 's that?' Then he asked quickly, 'Do I look strange?' Even as he did so he fell on his knees beside her. He was helped into the great hall, between his wife and his body-servant, Sosimo, losing consciousness instantly, as he lay back in the arm-chair that had once been his grandfather's. Little time was lost in bringing the

[1] I had left Samoa five weeks before for a long cruise in the Islands, and the news first reached me in the Carolines in the following March. On November 25th we had sighted the roofs of Vailima from the sea, but the future was hidden from us, and we continued on our way.

doctors — Anderson, of the man-of-war, and his friend Dr. Funk. They looked at him and shook their heads; they laboured strenuously and left nothing undone; but he had passed the bounds of human skill.

"The dying man lay back in the chair, breathing heavily, his family about him frenzied with grief as they realised all hope was past. The dozen and more Samoans that formed part of the little clan of which he was chief sat in a wide semicircle on the floor, their reverent, troubled, sorrow-stricken faces all fixed upon their dying master. Some knelt on one knee to be instantly ready for any command that might be laid upon them. A narrow bed was brought into the centre of the room; the Master was gently laid upon it, his head supported by a rest, the gift of Shelley's son. Slower and slower grew his respiration, wider the interval between the long, deep breaths. The Rev. Mr. Clarke was now come, an old and valued friend; he knelt and prayed as the life ebbed away.

"He died at ten minutes past eight on Monday evening the 3rd of December, in the forty-fifth year of his age.

"The great Union Jack that flew over the house was hauled down and laid over the body, fit shroud for a loyal Scotsman. He lay in the hall which was ever his pride, where he had passed the gayest and most delightful hours of his life, a noble room with open stairway and mullioned windows. In it were the treasures of his far-off Scottish home: the old carved furniture, the paintings and busts that had been in his father's house before him. The Samoans passed in procession beside his bed, kneeling and kissing his hand, each in

turn, before taking their places for the long night watch beside him. No entreaty could induce them to retire, to rest themselves for the painful and arduous duties of the morrow. It would show little love for Tusitala, they said, if they did not spend their last night beside him. Mournful and silent, they sat in deep dejection, poor, simple, loyal folk, fulfilling the duty they owed their chief.

"A messenger was despatched to a few chiefs connected with the family, to announce the tidings and bid them assemble their men on the morrow for the work there was to do.

"Sosimo asked on behalf of the Roman Catholics that they might be allowed to recite the prayers for the dead. Till midnight the solemn chants continued, the prolonged, sonorous prayers of the Church of Rome, in commingled Latin and Samoan. Later still, a chief arrived with his retainers, bringing a precious mat to wrap about the dead.

"He, too, knelt and kissed the hand of Tusitala, and took his place amid the sleepless watchers. Another arrived with a fine mat, a man of higher rank, whose incipient consumption had often troubled the Master.

"'*Talofa, Tusitala!*' he said, as he drew nigh and took a long, mournful look at the face he knew so well. When, later on, he was momentarily required on some business of the morrow, he bowed reverently before retiring. '*Tofa, Tusitala!*' he said, 'Sleep, Tusitala!'

"The morning of the 4th of December broke cool and sunny, a beautiful day, rare at this season of the year. More fine mats were brought, until the Union

Jack lay nigh concealed beneath them. Among the newcomers was an old Mataafa chief, one of the builders of the 'Road of the Loving Heart,' a man who had spent many days in prison for participation in the rebellion. 'I am only a poor Samoan, and ignorant,' said he, as he crouched beside the body. 'Others are rich and can give Tusitala the parting presents of rich fine mats; I am poor and can give nothing this last day he receives his friends. Yet I am not afraid to come and look the last time in my friend's face, never to see him more till we meet with God. Behold! Tusitala is dead; Mataafa is also dead to us. These two great friends have been taken by God. When Mataafa was taken, who was our support but Tusitala? We were in prison, and he cared for us. We were sick, and he made us well. We were hungry, and he fed us. The day was no longer than his kindness. You are great people and full of love. Yet who among you is so great as Tusitala? What is your love to his love? Our clan was Mataafa's clan, for whom I speak this day; therein was Tusitala also. We mourn them both.'

"A meeting of chiefs was held to apportion the work and divide the men into parties. Forty were sent with knives and axes to cut a path up the steep face of the mountain, and the writer himself led another party to the summit — men chosen from the immediate family — to dig the grave on a spot where it was Mr. Stevenson's wish that he should lie. Nothing more picturesque can be imagined than the narrow ledge that forms the summit of Vaea, a place no wider than a room, and flat as a table. On either side the land descends precipi-

tously; in front lie the vast ocean and the surf-swept reefs; to the right and left, green mountains rise, densely covered with the primeval forest. Two hundred years ago the eyes of another man turned towards that same peak of Vaea, as the spot that should ultimately receive his war-worn body: Soalu, a famous chief.

"All the morning Samoans were arriving with flowers; few of these were white, for they have not learned our foreign custom, and the room glowed with the many colours. There were no strangers on that day, no acquaintances; those only were called who would deeply feel the loss. At one o'clock a body of powerful Samoans bore away the coffin, hid beneath a tattered red ensign that had flown above his vessel in many a remote corner of the South Seas. A path so steep and rugged taxed their strength to the utmost, for not only was the journey difficult in itself, but extreme care was requisite to carry the coffin shoulder-high.

"Half an hour later the rest of his friends followed. It was a formidable ascent, and tried them hard. Nineteen Europeans and some sixty Samoans reached the summit. After a short rest the Rev. W. E. Clarke read the burial service of the Church of England, interposing a prayer that Mr. Stevenson had written and had read aloud to his family only the evening before his death:

> "We beseech Thee, Lord, to behold us with favour, folk of many families and nations gathered together in the peace of this roof, weak men and women subsisting under the covert of Thy patience.
>
> "Be patient still; suffer us yet awhile longer;—

with our broken purposes of good, with our idle endeavours against evil, suffer us awhile longer to endure, and (if it may be) help us to do better. Bless to us our extraordinary mercies; if the day come when these must be taken, brace us to play the man under affliction. Be with our friends, be with ourselves. Go with each of us to rest; if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns, return to us, our sun and comforter, and call us up with morning faces and with morning hearts — eager to labour — eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion — and if the day be marked for sorrow, strong to endure it.

"We thank Thee and praise Thee; and in the words of Him to whom this day is sacred, close our oblation.

"Another old friend, the Rev. J. E. Newell, who had risen from a sick-bed to come, made an address in the Samoan language.

"No stranger's hand touched him. It was his body-servant that interlocked his fingers and arranged his hands in the attitude of prayer. Those who loved him carried him to his last home; even the coffin was the work of an old friend. The grave was dug by his own men."

So there he was laid to rest, and in after-time a large tomb in the Samoan fashion, built of great blocks of cement, was placed upon the grave. On either side there is a bronze plate: the one bearing the words in

Samoan, "The Tomb of Tusitala," followed by the speech of Ruth to Naomi, taken from the Samoan Bible:—

"Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried."

At the sides of the inscription were placed a thistle and a hibiscus flower.

Upon the other panel, in English, is his own *Requiem:*—

A ROBERT LOUIS Ω
1850 STEVENSON. 1894

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

After his death the chiefs tabooed the use of fire-arms upon the hillside where he lies, that the birds may live there undisturbed, and raise above his grave the songs he loved so well.

The proposal that a memorial pillar should be erected on the hill to serve as a sea-mark was abandoned. Besides the difficulties of transport and of keeping the summit always clear of trees, there was the real danger of the slight but frequent shocks of earthquake by which any kind of column would sooner or later have been overthrown.

In 1897 a monument to Stevenson was erected by

public subscription in the Plaza of San Francisco. It is a granite pedestal supporting a bronze galleon, designed by Mr. Bruce Porter, who also with Mr. Gelett Burgess is responsible for the plates of the monument in Samoa.

A large and most enthusiastic meeting was held in Edinburgh in December, 1896. Committees were formed in most of the chief cities of Great Britain, and Mr. St. Gaudens was requested to produce a monument on the walls of St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, which was finally unveiled by Lord Rosebery in 1905.

R. L. S.

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion, impudence, and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

A Book of Verses, p. 41, by W. E. Henley, published by D. Nutt, 1888.

Of Stevenson's personal aspect and bodily powers it may be fitting here to make mention. Of his appearance the best portraits and photographs give a fair idea, if each be considered as the rendering of only one expression. The frontispiece of Volume I. is from a charcoal head drawn by Mrs. Stevenson at Grez as long

ago as 1877, and redrawn for this book by Mr. T. Blake Wirgman. It will be seen that the eyes were the most striking feature of the face; they were of the deepest brown in colour, set extraordinarily wide apart. At most times they had a shy, quick glance that was most attractive, but when he was moved to anger or any fierce emotion, they seemed literally to blaze and glow with a fiery light. His hair was fair and even yellow in colour until he was five-and-twenty; after that it rapidly deepened, and in later years was quite dark, but without any touch of black. When he reached the tropics, and the fear of taking cold was to some extent removed, he wore it short once more, to his own great satisfaction and comfort. His complexion was brown and always high, even in the confinement of the sick-room; the only phrase for it is the "rich-tinted" used by Mr. Henley in the spirited and vivid lines which he has kindly permitted me to quote.

In height he was about five feet ten, slender in figure, and thin to the last degree. In all his movements he was most graceful: every gesture was full of an unconscious beauty, and his restless and supple gait has been well compared to the pacing to and fro of some wild forest animal. To this unusual and most un-English grace it was principally due that he was so often taken for a foreigner. We have seen that Mr. Lang found his appearance at three-and-twenty like anything but that of a Scotsman, and the same difficulty pursued Stevenson through life, more especially on the Continent of Europe. "It is a great thing, believe me," he wrote in the *Inland Voyage*, "to present a good normal type of the nation you belong to"; and as he says in the same

chapter, "I might come from any part of the globe, it seems, except from where I do." In France he was sometimes taken for a Frenchman from some other province; he has recorded his imprisonment as a German spy; and at a later date he wrote, "I have found out what is wrong with me—I look like a Pole."

This difficulty, of course, was not smoothed by the clothes he used to wear, which often in early days were extremely unconventional, and of which he then took so little notice that at times they were even ragged. In cool climates he often used a velveteen smoking-jacket; in undress at Vailima he wore flannels or pyjamas, with sometimes a light Japanese kimono for dressing-gown. On public occasions in Samoa he used the white drill that constitutes full dress in the tropics, with perhaps light breeches and boots if he had been riding.

Considering his fragility, his muscular strength was considerable, and his constitution clearly had great powers of resistance. Perhaps what helped him as much as anything was the faculty he had under ordinary circumstances of going to sleep at a moment's notice. Thus, if he was going to have a tiring evening, he would take a quarter of an hour's sound sleep in the course of the afternoon.

His speech was distinctly marked with a Scottish intonation, that seemed to every one both pleasing and appropriate, and this, when he chose, he could broaden to the widest limits of the vernacular. His voice was always of a surprising strength and resonance, even when phthisis had laid its hand most heavily upon him. It was the one gift he really possessed for the stage, and in reading aloud he was unsurpassed. In his full rich

tones there was a sympathetic quality that seemed to play directly on the heart-strings like the notes of a violin. Mrs. Stevenson writes: "I shall never forget Louis reading Walt Whitman's *Out of the cradle endlessly rocking*, followed by *O Captain, my Captain*, to a room full of people, some of whom had said that Whitman lacked sentiment and tenderness. All alike, men and women, sat spellbound during the reading, and I have never seen any audience so deeply moved." Nor for my part shall I forget his rendering of the Duke of Wellington Ode on the evening after the news of Tennyson's death had arrived at Vailima.

When his attention was given to objects or persons, his observation was singularly keen and accurate, but for the most part his memory for the faces of his acquaintance was positively bad. In Apia he seldom could tell the name of a native, and on his last visit to Honolulu I remember that he walked the streets in dread lest he should disappoint any who expected to be remembered and to receive his greeting. In a letter speaking of the death of a lady whom he had not met probably for twenty years, he says, "I partly see her face, and entirely and perfectly hear her voice at this moment — a thing not usual with me."

His hearing was singularly acute, although the appreciation of the exact pitch of musical notes was wanting. But between delicate shades of pronunciation he could discriminate with great precision. I can give an instance in point. The vowels in Polynesian languages are pronounced as in Italian, and the diphthongs retain the sounds of the separate vowels, more or less slurred together. Thus it can be understood that the difference

between *ae* and *ai* at the end of a word in rapid conversation is of the very slightest, and in Samoa they are practically indistinguishable. In the Marquesas Stevenson was able to separate them. At Vailima one day we were making trial of these and other subtleties of sound; in almost every case his ear was exactly correct. Nothing more shook his admiration for Herman Melville than that writer's inability to approximate to the native names of the Marquesas and Tahiti, and in his own delicate hearing lay perhaps the root of his devotion to style.