

## V

# A GOSSIP ON ROMANCE

**I**N anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought. The words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story, if it be a story, repeat itself in a thousand coloured pictures to the eye. It was for this last pleasure that we read so closely, and loved our books so dearly, in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. Eloquence and thought, character and conversation, were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn where, "towards the close of the year 17—," several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. A friend of mine preferred the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to windward, and a scowling fellow of Herculean proportions striding along the beach; he, to be sure, was a pirate. This was further afield than my home-keeping fancy loved to travel, and designed alto-

gether for a larger canvas than the tales that I affected. Give me a highwayman and I was full to the brim; a Jacobite would do, but the highwayman was my favourite dish. I can still hear that merry clatter of the hoofs along the moonlit lane; night and the coming of day are still related in my mind with the doings of John Rann or Jerry Abershaw; and the words "postchaise," the "great North road," "ostler," and "nag" still sound in my ears like poetry. One and all, at least, and each with his particular fancy, we read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident. That quality was not mere bloodshed or wonder. Although each of these was welcome in its place, the charm for the sake of which we read depended on something different from either. My elders used to read novels aloud; and I can still remember four different passages which I heard, before I was ten, with the same keen and lasting pleasure. One I discovered long afterwards to be the admirable opening of *What will he Do with It?* It was no wonder I was pleased with that. The other three still remain unidentified. One is a little vague; it was about a dark, tall house at night, and people groping on the stairs by the light that escaped from the open door of a sickroom. In another, a lover left a ball, and went walking in a cool, dewy park, whence he could watch the lighted windows and the figures of the dancers as they moved. This was the most sentimental impression I think I had yet received, for a child is somewhat deaf to the sentimental. In the last, a poet, who had been tragically wrangling with his wife, walked forth on the sea-beach on a tempestuous night and

witnessed the horrors of a wreck.<sup>1</sup> Different as they are, all these early favourites have a common note—they have all a touch of the romantic.

Drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance. The pleasure that we take in life is of two sorts—the active and the passive. Now we are conscious of a great command over our destiny; anon we are lifted up by circumstance, as by a breaking wave, and dashed we know not how into the future. Now we are pleased by our conduct, anon merely pleased by our surroundings. It would be hard to say which of these modes of satisfaction is the more effective, but the latter is surely the more constant. Conduct is three parts of life, they say; but I think they put it high. There is a vast deal in life and letters both which is not immoral, but simply a-moral; which either does not regard the human will at all, or deals with it in obvious and healthy relations; where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence; in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral grounds, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build, upon this ground, the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful and buoyant tales.

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness

<sup>1</sup>Since traced by many obliging correspondents to the gallery of Charles Kingsley.

in events and places. The sight of a pleasant arbour puts it in our minds to sit there. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in this vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my race; when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny—suggestive and impenetrable, “miching mallecho.” The inn at Burford Bridge, with its arbours and green garden and silent, eddying river—though it is known already as the place where Keats wrote some of his *Endymion* and Nelson parted from his Emma—still seems to wait the coming of the appropriate legend. Within these ivied walls, behind these old green shutters, some further business smoulders, waiting for its hour. The old Hawes Inn at the Queen’s Ferry makes a similar call upon my fancy. There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland,

half marine—in front, the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guard-ship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. Americans seek it already for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of the *Antiquary*. But you need not tell me—that is not all; there is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete, which must express the meaning of that inn more fully. So it is with names and faces; so it is with incidents that are idle and inconclusive in themselves, and yet seem like the beginning of some quaint romance, which the all-careless author leaves untold. How many of these romances have we not seen determine at their birth; how many people have met us with a look of meaning in their eye, and sunk at once into trivial acquaintances; to how many places have we not drawn near, with express intimations—“here my destiny awaits me”—and we have but dined there and passed on! I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen’s Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford.<sup>1</sup>

Now, this is one of the natural appetites with

<sup>1</sup>Since the above was written I have tried to launch the boat with my own hands in *Kidnapped*. Some day, perhaps, I may try a rattle at the shutters.

which any lively literature has to count. The desire for knowledge, I had almost added the desire for meat, is not more deeply seated than this demand for fit and striking incident. The dullest of clowns tells, or tries to tell, himself a story, as the feeblest of children uses invention in his play; and even as the imaginative grown person, joining in the game, at once enriches it with many delightful circumstances, the great creative writer shows us the realisation and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream. The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears, these are each culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye forever. Other things we may forget; we may forget the words, although they are beautiful; we may forget the author's comment, although perhaps it was ingenious and true; but these epoch-making scenes, which put the last mark of truth upon a story and fill up, at one blow, our capacity for sympathetic

pleasure, we so adopt into the very bosom of our mind that neither time nor tide can efface or weaken the impression. This, then, is the plastic part of literature: to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye. This is the highest and hardest thing to do in words; the thing which, once accomplished, equally delights the schoolboy and the sage, and makes, in its own right, the quality of epics. Compared with this, all other purposes in literature, except the purely lyrical or the purely philosophic, are bastard in nature, facile of execution, and feeble in result. It is one thing to write about the inn at Burford, or to describe scenery with the word-painters; it is quite another to seize on the heart of the suggestion and make a country famous with a legend. It is one thing to remark and to dissect, with the most cutting logic, the complications of life, and of the human spirit; it is quite another to give them body and blood in the story of Ajax or of Hamlet. The first is literature, but the second is something besides, for it is likewise art.

English people of the present day<sup>1</sup> are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one. Reduced even to the lowest terms, a certain interest can be communicated by the art of narrative; a sense of human kinship stirred; and a kind of monotonous fitness, comparable to the words and air of *Sandy's Mull*, preserved

<sup>1</sup>1882.

among the infinitesimal occurrences recorded. Some people work, in this manner, with even a strong touch. Mr. Trollope's inimitable clergymen naturally arise to the mind in this connection. But even Mr. Trollope does not confine himself to chronicling small beer. Mr. Crawley's collision with the Bishop's wife, Mr. Melnetto dallying in the deserted banquet-room, are typical incidents, epically conceived, fitly embodying a crisis. Or again look at Thackeray. If Rawdon Crawley's blow were not delivered, *Vanity Fair* would cease to be a work of art. That scene is the chief ganglion of the tale; and the discharge of energy from Rawdon's fist is the reward and consolation of the reader. The end of *Esmond* is a yet wider excursion from the author's customary fields; the scene at Castlewood is pure Dumas; the great and wily English borrower has here borrowed from the great, unblushing French thief; as usual, he has borrowed admirably well, and the breaking of the sword rounds off the best of all his books with a manly, martial note. But perhaps nothing can more strongly illustrate the necessity for marking incident than to compare the living fame of *Robinson Crusoe* with the discredit of *Clarissa Harlowe*. *Clarissa* is a book of a far more startling import, worked out, on a great canvas, with inimitable courage and unflagging art. It contains wit, character, passion, plot, conversations full of spirit and insight, letters sparkling with unstrained humanity; and if the death of the heroine be somewhat frigid and artificial, the last days of the hero strike the only note of what we now call Byronism, between the Elizabethans and Byron himself. And yet a little story of a shipwrecked sailor, with not a tenth part of the style



nor a thousandth part of the wisdom, exploring none of the arcana of humanity and deprived of the perennial interest of love, goes on from edition to edition, ever young, while *Clarissa* lies upon the shelves unread. A friend of mine, a Welsh blacksmith, was twenty-five years old and could neither read nor write, when he heard a chapter of *Robinson* read aloud in a farm kitchen. Up to that moment he had sat content, huddled in his ignorance, but he left that farm another man. There were day-dreams, it appeared, divine day-dreams, written and printed and bound, and to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure. Down he sat that day, painfully learned to read Welsh, and returned to borrow the book. It had been lost, nor could he find another copy but one that was in English. Down he sat once more, learned English, and at length, and with entire delight, read *Robinson*. It is like the story of a love-chase. If he had heard a letter from *Clarissa*, would he have been fired with the same chivalrous ardour? I wonder. Yet *Clarissa* has every quality that can be shown in prose, one alone excepted—pictorial or picture-making romance. While *Robinson* depends, for the most part and with the overwhelming majority of its readers, on the charm of circumstance.

In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the

elements of truth and pleasure. Such are epics, and the few prose tales that have the epic weight. But as from a school of works, aping the creative, incident and romance are ruthlessly discarded, so may character and drama be omitted or subordinated to romance. There is one book, for example, more generally loved than Shakespeare, that captivates in childhood, and still delights in age—I mean the *Arabian Nights*—where you shall look in vain for moral or for intellectual interest. No human face or voice greets us among that wooden crowd of kings and genies, sorcerers and beggarmen. Adventure, on the most naked terms, furnishes forth the entertainment and is found enough. Dumas approaches perhaps nearest of any modern to these Arabian authors in the purely material charm of some of his romances. The early part of *Monte Cristo*, down to the finding of the treasure, is a piece of perfect story-telling; the man never breathed who shared these moving incidents without a tremor; and yet Faria is a thing of packthread and Dantès little more than a name. The sequel is one long-drawn error, gloomy, bloody, unnatural and dull; but as for these early chapters, I do not believe there is another volume extant where you can breathe the same unmingled atmosphere of romance. It is very thin and light, to be sure, as on a high mountain; but it is brisk and clear and sunny in proportion. I saw the other day, with envy, an old and a very clever lady setting forth on a second or third voyage into *Monte Cristo*. Here are stories which powerfully affect the reader, which can be reperused at any age, and where the characters are no more than puppets. The bony fist of the showman visibly

propels them; their springs are an open secret; their faces are of wood, their bellies filled with bran; and yet we thrillingly partake of their adventures. And the point may be illustrated still further. The last interview between Lucy and Richard Feveril is pure drama; more than that, it is the strongest scene, since Shakespeare, in the English tongue. Their first meeting by the river, on the other hand, is pure romance; it has nothing to do with character; it might happen to any other boy and maiden, and be none the less delightful for the change. And yet I think he would be a bold man who should choose between these passages. Thus, in the same book, we may have two scenes, each capital in its order: in the one, human passion, deep calling unto deep, shall utter its genuine voice; in the second, according circumstances, like instruments in tune, shall build up a trivial but desirable incident, such as we love to prefigure for ourselves; and in the end, in spite of the critics, we may hesitate to give the preference to either. The one may ask more genius—I do not say it does; but at least the other dwells as clearly in the memory.

True romantic art, again, makes a romance of all things. It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian realism. *Robinson Crusoe* is as realistic as it is romantic: both qualities are pushed to an extreme, and neither suffers. Nor does romance depend upon the material importance of the incidents. To deal with strong and deadly elements, banditti, pirates, war and murder, is to conjure with great names, and, in the event of failure, to double the disgrace. The arrival of Haydn and

Consuelo at the Canon's villa is a very trifling incident; yet we may read a dozen boisterous stories from beginning to end, and not receive so fresh and stirring an impression of adventure. It was the scene of Crusoe at the wreck, if I remember rightly, that so bewitched my blacksmith. Nor is the fact surprising. Every single article the castaway recovers from the hulk is "a joy for ever" to the man who reads of them. They are the things that should be found, and the bare enumeration stirs the blood. I found a glimmer of the same interest the other day in a new book, *The Sailor's Sweetheart*, by Mr. Clark Russell. The whole business of the brig *Morning Star* is very rightly felt and spiritedly written; but the clothes, the books and the money satisfy the reader's mind like things to eat. We are dealing here with the old cut-and-dry legitimate interest of treasure trove. But even treasure trove can be made dull. There are few people who have not groaned under the plethora of goods that fell to the lot of the *Swiss Family Robinson*, that dreary family. They found article after article, creature after creature, from milk kine to pieces of ordnance, a whole consignment; but no informing taste had presided over the selection, there was no smack or relish in the invoice; and these riches left the fancy cold. The box of goods in Verne's *Mysterious Island* is another case in point: there was no gusto and no glamour about that; it might have come from a shop. But the two hundred and seventy-eight Australian sovereigns on board the *Morning Star* fell upon me like a surprise that I had expected; whole vistas of secondary stories, besides the one in hand, radiated forth from that discovery, as they radiate

from a striking particular in life; and I was made for the moment as happy as a reader has the right to be.

To come at all at the nature of this quality of romance, we must bear in mind the peculiarity of our attitude to any art. No art produces illusion; in the theatre we never forget that we are in the theatre; and while we read a story, we sit wavering between two minds, now merely clapping our hands at the merit of the performance, now condescending to take an active part in fancy with the characters. This last is the triumph of romantic story-telling: when the reader consciously plays at being the hero, the scene is a good scene. Now in character-studies the pleasure that we take is critical; we watch, we approve, we smile at incongruities, we are moved to sudden heats of sympathy with courage, suffering or virtue. But the characters are still themselves. they are not us; the more clearly they are depicted, the more widely do they stand away from us, the more imperiously do they thrust us back into our place as a spectator. I cannot identify myself with Rawdon Crawley or with Eugène de Rastignac, for I have scarce a hope or fear in common with them. It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve. Something happens as we desire to have it happen to ourselves; some situation, that we have long dallied with in fancy, is realised in the story with enticing and appropriate details. Then we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience; and then, and then only, do we say we have been reading a romance. It is not only pleasurable things that we imagine

in our day-dreams; there are lights in which we are willing to contemplate even the idea of our own death; ways in which it seems as if it would amuse us to be cheated, wounded or calumniated. It is thus possible to construct a story, even of tragic import, in which every incident, detail and trick of circumstance shall be welcome to the reader's thoughts. Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life; and when the game so chimes with his fancy that he can join in it with all his heart, when it pleases him with every turn, when he loves to recall it and dwells upon its recollection with entire delight, fiction is called romance.

Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. *The Lady of the Lake* has no indisputable claim to be a poem beyond the inherent fitness and desirability of the tale. It is just such a story as a man would make up for himself, walking, in the best health and temper, through just such scenes as it is laid in. Hence it is that a charm dwells undefinable among these slovenly verses, as the unseen cuckoo fills the mountains with his note; hence, even after we have flung the book aside, the scenery and adventures remain present to the mind, a new and green possession, not unworthy of that beautiful name, *The Lady of the Lake*, or that direct, romantic opening,—one of the most spirited and poetical in literature,—“The stag at eve had drunk his fill.” The same strength and the same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels. In that ill-written, ragged book, *The Pirate*, the figure of Cleveland—cast up by the sea on the resounding foreland of Dunrossness—moving, with the blood on his hands and the

Spanish words on his tongue, among the simple islanders—singing a serenade under the window of his Shetland mistress—is conceived in the very highest manner of romantic invention. The words of his song, “Through groves of palm,” sung in such a scene and by such a lover, clench, as in a nutshell, the emphatic contrast upon which the tale is built. In *Guy Mannering*, again, every incident is delightful to the imagination; and the scene when Harry Bertram lands at Ellangowan is a model instance of romantic method.

“‘I remember the tune well,’ he says, ‘though I cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.’ He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel. . . She immediately took up the song—

“‘Are these the links of Forth, she said;  
Or are they the crooks of Dee,  
Or the bonny woods of Warroch Head  
That I so fain would see?’

“‘By heaven!’ said Bertram, ‘it is the very ballad.’”

On this quotation two remarks fall to be made. First, as an instance of modern feeling for romance, this famous touch of the flageolet and the old song is selected by Miss Braddon for omission. Miss Braddon’s idea of a story, like Mrs. Todgers’s idea of a wooden leg, were something strange to have expounded. As a matter of personal experience, Meg’s appearance to old Mr. Bertram on the road, the ruins of Derncleugh, the scene of the flageolet, and the

Dominie's recognition of Harry, are the four strong notes that continue to ring in the mind after the book is laid aside. The second point is still more curious. The reader will observe a mark of excision in the passage as quoted by me. Well, here is how it runs in the original: "a damsel, who, close behind a fine spring about half-way down the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen." A man who gave in such copy would be discharged from the staff of a daily paper. Scott has forgotten to prepare the reader for the presence of the "damsel"; he has forgotten to mention the spring and its relation to the ruin; and now, face to face with his omission, instead of trying back and starting fair, crams all this matter, tail foremost, into a single shambling sentence. It is not merely bad English, or bad style; it is abominably bad narrative besides.

Certainly the contrast is remarkable; and it is one that throws a strong light upon the subject of this paper. For here we have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story; and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of too many of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and un-



dramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot, as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic, but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manful sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic—an idle child.

## NOTES

THIS essay first appeared in *Longman's Magazine* for November 1882, Vol. I, pp. 69-79. Five years later it was published in the volume *Memories and Portraits* (1887), followed by an article called *A Humble Remonstrance*, which should really be read in connection with this essay, as it is a continuation of the same line of thought. In the eternal conflict between Romanticism and Realism, Stevenson was heart and soul with the former, and fortunately he lived long enough to see the practical effects of his own precepts and influence. When he began to write, Realism in fiction seemed to have absolute control; when he died, a tremendous reaction in favor of the historical romance had already set in, that reached its climax with the death of the century. Stevenson's share in this Romantic revival was greater than that of any other English writer, and as an English review remarked, if it had not been for him most of the new authors would have been Howells and James young men.

This paper was written at Davos in the winter of 1881-2, and in February, writing to Henley, the author said, "I have just finished a paper, 'A Gossip on Romance,' in which I have tried to do, very popularly, about one-half of the matter you wanted me to try. In a way, I have found an answer to the question. But the subject was hardly fit for so chatty a paper, and it is all loose ends. If ever I do my book on the Art of Literature, I shall gather them together and be clear." (*Letters*, I, 269). On Dec. 8, 1884—the same month in which *A Humble Remonstrance* was printed, Stevenson wrote an interesting

letter to Henry James, whose views on the art of fiction were naturally contrary to those of his friend. See *Letters*, I, 402.

Page 101. *Like a pig for truffles*. See the *Epilogue* to Browning's *Pacchiarotto etc.*, Stanza XVIII:—"Your product is—truffles, you hunt with a pig!"

Page 101. *The Malabar coast*. A part of India.

Page 102. *Jacobite*. After James II was driven from the throne in 1688, his supporters and those of his descendants were called Jacobites. *Jacobus* is the Latin for James.

Page 102. *John Rann or Jerry Abershaw*. John Rann I cannot find. Louis Jeremiah (or Jerry) Abershaw was a highway robber, who infested the roads near London; he was hung in 1795, when scarcely over twenty-one years old.

Page 102. "*Great North road*." The road that runs on the east of England up to Edinburgh. Stevenson yielded to the charm that these words had for him, for he began a romance with the title, *The Great North Road*, which however, he never finished. It was published as a fragment in *The Illustrated London News*, in 1895.

Page 102. *What will he Do with It?* One of Bulwer-Lytton's novels, published in 1858.

Page 103. *Conduct is three parts of life*. In *Literature and Dogma* (1873) Matthew Arnold asserted with great emphasis, that conduct was three-fourths of life.

Page 104. *The sight of a pleasant arbour*. Possibly a reminiscence of the arbour in *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian fell asleep, and lost his roll. "Now about the midway to the top of the hill was a pleasant arbour."

Page 104. "*Miching mallecho*." *Hamlet's* description of the meaning of the Dumb Show in the play-scene, Act III, Sc. 2. "Hidden treachery"—see any annotated edition of *Hamlet*.

Page 104. *Burford Bridge . . . Keats . . . Endymion . . . Nelson . . . Emma . . . the old Hawes Inn at the Queen's*

*Ferry.* Burford Bridge is close to Dorking in Surrey, England: in the old inn, Keats wrote a part of his poem *Endymion* (published 1818). The room where he composed is still on exhibition. Two letters by Keats, which are exceedingly important to the student of his art as a poet, were written from Burford Bridge in November 1817. See Colvin's edition of Keats's Letters, pp. 40-46. . . . "Emma" is Lady Hamilton, whom Admiral Nelson loved. . . . Queen's Ferry (properly *Queensferry*) is on the Firth of Forth, Scotland. See a few lines below in the text, where Stevenson gives the reference to the opening pages of Scott's novel the *Antiquary*, which begins in the old inn at this place. See also page 105 of the text, and Stevenson's foot note, where he declares that he did make use of Queensferry in his novel *Kidnapped* (1886) (Chapter XXVI).

Page 106. *Crusoe . . . Achilles . . . Ulysses . . . Christian.* When Robinson Crusoe saw the footprint on the sand, and realised he was not alone. . . . To a reader of to-day the great hero Achilles seems to be all bluster and selfish childishness; the true gentleman of the Iliad is *Hector*. . . . When Ulysses returned home in the *Odyssey*, he bent with ease the bow that had proved too much for all the suitors of his lonely and faithful wife Penelope. . . . Christian "had not run far from his own door when his wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears and ran on crying, 'Life! Life! eternal Life!'"—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

Page 107. *Ajax.* The Greek heavy-weight in Homer's *Iliad*.

Page 107. *English people of the present day.* This was absolutely true in 1882. But in 1892 a complete revolution in taste had set in, and many of the most hardened realists were forced to write wild romances, or lose their grip on the public. At this time, Stevenson naturally had no idea how powerfully his as yet unwritten romances were to affect the literary market.

Page 108. *Mr. Trollope's . . . chronicling small beer . . . Rawdon Crawley's blow.* Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) wrote an immense number of mildly entertaining novels concerned with the lives and ambitions of English clergymen and their satellites. His best-known book is probably *Barchester Towers* (1857). . . . *Chronicling small beer* is the "lame and impotent conclusion" with which Iago finishes his poem (*Othello*, Act II, Sc. I). . . . *Rawdon Crawley's blow* refers to the most memorable scene in Thackeray's great novel, *Vanity Fair* (1847-8), where Rawdon Crawley, the husband of Becky Sharp, strikes Lord Steyne in the face (Chap. LIII). After writing this powerful scene, Thackeray was in a state of tremendous excitement, and slapping his knee, said, "That's Genius!"

Page 108. *The end of Esmond . . . pure Dumas.* Thackeray's romance *Henry Esmond* (1852) is regarded by many critics as the greatest work of fiction in the English language; Stevenson here calls it "the best of all his books." The scene Stevenson refers to is where Henry is finally cured of his love for Beatrix, and theatrically breaks his sword in the presence of his royal admirer (Book III, Chap. 13). Alexander Dumas (1803-1870), author of *Monte Cristo* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. Stevenson playfully calls him "the great, unblushing French thief"; all he means is that Dumas never hesitated to appropriate material wherever he found it, and work it into his romances.

Page 108. *The living fame of Robinson Crusoe with the discredit of Clarissa Harlowe.* A strong contrast between the romance of incident and the analytical novel. For remarks on *Clarissa*, see our note, page 91.

Page 108. *Byronism.* About the time Lord Byron was publishing *Childe Harold* (1812-1818) a tremendous wave of romantic melancholy swept over all the countries of Europe. Innumerable poems and romances dealing with mysteriously-sad heroes were written in imitation of

Byron; and young authors wore low, rolling collars, and tried to look depressed. See Gautier's *Histoire du Romantisme*. Now the death of Lovelace (in a duel) in Richardson's *Clarissa*, was pitched in exactly the Byronic key, though at that time Byron had not been born . . . The Elizabethans were of course thoroughly romantic.

Page 110. *Faria . . . Dantès*. Characters in Dumas's *Monte Cristo* (1841-5).

Page 111. *Lucy and Richard Feveril*. Usually spelled "Feverel." Stevenson strangely enough, was always a bad speller. The reference here is to one of Stevenson's favorite novels *The Ordeal of Richard Feveril* (1859) by George Meredith. Stevenson's idolatrous praise of this particular scene in the novel is curious, for no greater contrast in English literary style can be found than that between Meredith's and his own. For another reference by Stevenson to the older novelist, see our note, page 100.

Page 111. *Robinson Crusoe is as realistic as it is romantic*. Therein lies precisely the charm of this book for boyish minds; the details are given with such candour that it seems as if they must all be true. At heart, Defoe was an intense realist, as well as the first English novelist.

Page 111. *The arrival of Haydn*. For a note on George Sand's novel *Consuelo* see page 91.

Page 112. *A joy forever*. The first line of Keats's poem *Endymion* is "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Page 112. *The Sailor's Sweetheart*. Mr. W. Clark Russell, born in New York in 1844, has written many popular tales of the sea. His first success was *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1876); *The Sailor's Sweetheart*, more properly, *A Sailor's Sweetheart*, was published in 1877.

Page 112. *Swiss Family Robinson*. A German story, *Der schweizerische Robinson* (1812) by J. D. Wyss (1743-1818). This story is not so popular as it used to be.

Page 112. *Verne's Mysterious Island*. Jules Verne, who died at Amiens, France, in 1904, wrote an immense number of romances, which, translated into many languages, have

delighted young readers all over the world. *The Mysterious Island* is a sequel to *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*.

Page 113. *Eugène de Rastignac*. A character in Balzac's novel, *Père Goriot*.

Page 114. *The Lady of the Lake*. This poem, published in 1810, is as Stevenson implies, not so much a poem as a rattling good story told in rime.

Page 114. *The Pirate*. A novel by Scott, published in 1821. It was the cause of Cooper's writing *The Pilot*. See Cooper's preface to the latter novel.

Page 115. *Guy Mannering*. Also by Scott. Published 1815.

Page 115. *Miss Braddon's idea*. Mary Elizabeth Braddon (Maxwell), born in 1837, published her first novel, *The Trail of the Serpent*, in 1860. She has written a large number of sensational works of fiction, very popular with an uncritical class of readers. Perhaps her best-known book is *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). It would be well for the student to refer to the scenes in *Guy Mannering* which Stevenson calls the "*Four strong notes*."

Page 115. *Mrs. Todgers's idea of a wooden leg*. Mrs. Todgers is a character in Dickens's novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4).

Page 117. *Elsbeth of the Craighburnfoot*. A character in the *Antiquary* (1816).