

VIII

ISLAND DAYS

TO TUSITALA IN VAILIMA¹

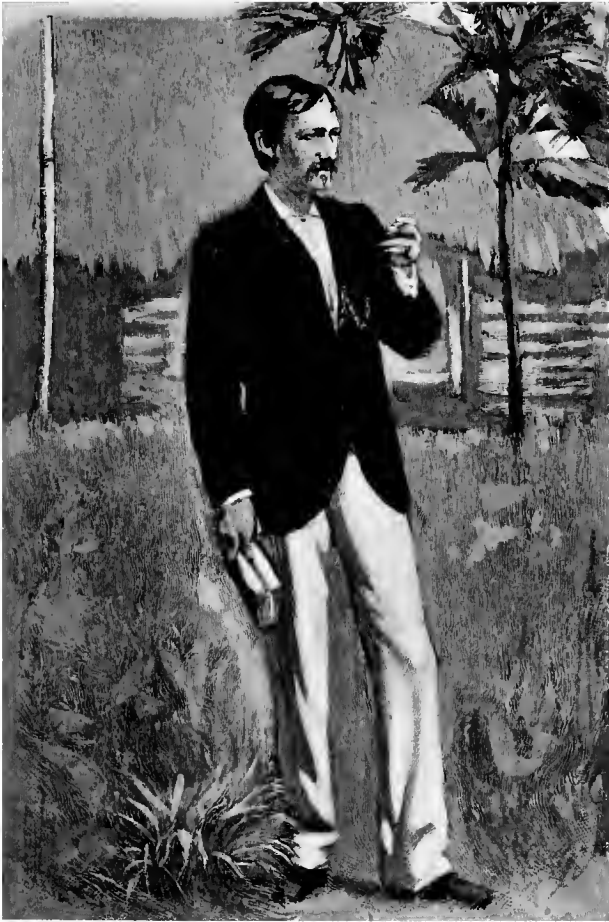
I

Clearest voice in Britain's chorus,
Tusitala!
 Years ago, years four-and-twenty,
 Grey the cloudland drifted o'er us,
 When these ears first heard you talking,
 When these eyes first saw you smiling.
 Years of famine, years of plenty,
 Years of beckoning and beguiling,
 Years of yielding, shifting, baulking,—
 When the good ship 'Clansman' bore us
 Round the spits of Tobermory,
 Glens of Voulin like a vision,
 Crag of Knoidart, huge and hoary,—
 We had laughed in light derision,
 Had they told us, told the daring
Tusitala,
 What the years' pale hands were bearing,—
 Years in stately dim division.

II

Now the skies are pure above you,
Tusitala;
 Feather'd trees bow down to love you;

¹ This poem, addressed to Robert Louis Stevenson, reached him at Vailima three days before his death. It was the last piece of verse read by Stevenson, and it is the subject of the last letter he wrote on the last day of his life. The poem was read by Mr. Lloyd Osbourne at the funeral. It is here printed, by kind permission of the author, from Mr. Edmund Gosse's 'In Russet and Silver,' 1894, of which it was the dedication.



After the Photo by]

STEVENSON AT VAILIMA

[J. Davis, Apia, Samoa

[To face page 92

Perfum'd winds from shining waters
 Stir the sanguine-leav'd hibiscus
 That your kingdom's dusk-ey'd daughters
 Weave about their shining tresses ;
 Dew-fed guavas drop their viscous
 Honey at the sun's caresses,
 Where eternal summer blesses
 Your ethereal musky highlands ;—
 Ah ! but does your heart remember,

Tusitala,

Westward in our Scotch September,
 Blue against the pale sun's ember,—
 That low rim of faint long islands,
 Barren, granite-snouted nesses,
 Plunging in the dull'd Atlantic,
 Where beyond Tíree one guesses
 At the full tide, loud and frantic ?

III

By strange pathways God hath brought you,

Tusitala,

In strange webs of fortune caught you,
 Led you by strange moods and measures
 To this paradise of pleasures !
 And the body-guard that sought you
 To conduct you home to glory,—
 Dark the oriflammes they carried,
 In the mist their cohort tarried,—
 They were Languor, Pain, and Sorrow,

Tusitala !

Scarcely we endured their story
 Trailing on from morn to morrow,
 Such the devious roads they led you,
 Such the error, such the vastness,
 Such the cloud that overspread you,
 Under exile bow'd and banish'd,
 Lost, like Moses in the fastness,
 Till we almost deem'd you vanished.

IV

Vanish'd? Ay, that's still the trouble,

Tusitala

Though your tropic isle rejoices,
 'Tis to us an Isle of Voices
 Hollow like the elfin double
 Cry of disembodied echoes,
 Or an owlet's wicked laughter,
 Or the cold and hornèd gecko's
 Croaking from a ruined rafter,—
 Voices these of things existing,
 Yet incessantly resisting
 Eyes and hands that follow after;
 You are circled, as by magic,
 In a surf-built palmy bubble,

Tusitala;

Fate hath chosen, but the choice is
 Half delectable, half tragic,
 For we hear you speak, like Moses,
 And we greet you back, enchanted,
 But reply's no sooner granted,
 Than the rifted cloudland closes.

September 1894.

EDMUND GOSSE.

*'For three years . . . Stevenson wandered up and down the face of the Pacific, spending most of his time in the Hawaiian Islands and the Gilberts, in Tahiti, and in Samoa, his future home. During this period he visited, however cursorily, almost every group of importance in the Eastern and Central Pacific.'*¹ *Early in 1890 he purchased some three hundred acres of land two miles from the town of Apia, in Samoa, with the idea of building a house and settling there; but it was not until early in the succeeding year that his house, Vailima, had been completed and he*

¹ Mr. Graham Balfour in the 'Life.'

was at rest from his voyaging. In May his family circle was increased by the arrival of his mother and Mrs. Isobel Strong, his step-daughter, with her son. In December of 1892 his mountain dwelling was considerably increased in size. He was called *Tusitala* by his native retainers, the name being Samoan for the 'Teller of Tales.' On December 3, 1894, he died suddenly, having been engaged that forenoon on his half-finished book, 'Weir of Hermiston.'

Very little has been published about Stevenson's visits to the Hawaiian Islands, beyond what he himself wrote of these episodes in his wander-years, so that the following pages quoted from the *Scots Pictorial*, July 3, 1897, possess considerable value as a link in the chain of Stevenson's history. The writer is Mr. W. F. Wilson of Honolulu:

Stevenson
in Hawaii.

A few stray jottings regarding Robert Louis Stevenson's connection with the Hawaiian Islands will, it is to be hoped, prove acceptable to the many admirers of that gifted and genial author. It is true that most of the time spent by 'Tusitala' in the isles of the great Pacific was passed at his mountain retreat at Vailima, Samoa, yet on two different occasions he stayed a considerable period at the Hawaiian Islands. The first time was in 1889. He arrived at Honolulu on 24th January on the yacht *Casco* from Tahiti, accompanied by his wife, mother, and a party of friends. He stayed for a time at the Hawaiian hotel, but later on took up his quarters at a cottage at Waikiki, a seaside resort distant about three miles from Honolulu. Here he led a life of *dolce far niente*. He had not long escaped from the 'glorious climate of California,' as it is exemplified in foggy, windy San Francisco, and doubtless he enjoyed the change to the warm, sunny island shores of *Hawaii nei*.

He lived six months in Honolulu while on this visit, but the fact of his having come south to recuperate, and the indifferent state of his health while here, probably explains why he has not written more about Hawaii in his stories, or has not employed

the old Hawaiian myths and folk-lore as the foundation of some of his sketches. For not only is there a wealth of old 'meles' or chants and legends from which to pick and choose, but the beauty of the country itself is such as would naturally inspire the pen of a poet and lover of nature like Stevenson. His health, however, was so bad that he did not even get the length of the Kilauea volcano. He once started to visit it, but got off the steamer half-way, at Hookena, a native village in the district of South Kona, Island of Hawaii, and there he remained until the rest of his party returned. Hookena lies seven miles south from Kealakekua Bay, the scene of Captain Cook's death; and about half-way between the two places is Honaunau, where still stand the remains of the black lava walls of the 'Puuhonua' or Hawaiian City of Refuge. This was a sort of walled enclosure used in times of war as a place of safety for the women and children, and for any warriors defeated in battle. Once within the walls of the enclosure, the fugitives were 'kapu' or sacred, and could not be touched.

It was whilst waiting for the return of his party of friends from their visit to Kilauea volcano that Stevenson must have composed his tale of the 'Bottle Imp.' The sole occupation of the Hawaiians living on the beach at Hookena is fishing in their slender outrigger canoes, and occasionally surf-swimming in the bay. The late D. H. Nahinu's house at Hookena, where Stevenson lived during his sojourn, is close to the beach, immediately in front of the spot where the semi-naked fishermen are wont to launch their long narrow canoes; and it was very likely when seated on the verandah in the cool of the evening and watching the different crews paddling to land with their loads of 'opelu' or 'akule,' that the idea of the 'Bottle Imp' came into his head.

Apart from the occupation of watching the young men and children amusing themselves by swimming in the breakers on the top of their surf boards, there is little to interest the visitor to Hookena. Certainly the view just before sunset looking towards the palm-trees of Kalahiki and the slopes of the huge snow-capped Maunaloa, where the coffee and awa grow, is enchanting; but unless one can live on fish and poi, or rice and eggs (it is difficult to get anything else to eat there), one soon tires

of Hookena and is glad to get a change to fresh fields and pastures new.

During his stay in Honolulu, Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson attended a grand 'luau' or feast given in the old Hawaiian style. King Kalakaua was present, and Mrs. Stevenson presented the King with a rare pearl from the Paumotus, the presentation being accompanied with the following lines by Mr. Stevenson which he read himself :—

The silver ship, my King—that was her name
 In the bright islands whence your fathers came—
 The silver ship at rest from wind and tides
 Below your palace, in your harbour rides ;
 And the sea fairies, sitting safe on shore,
 Like eager merchants, count their treasures o'er,
 One gift they find, one strange and lovely thing,
 Now doubly precious, since it pleased a King.
 The right, my liege, is ancient as the lyre,
 For hard to give to Kings what Kings admire ;
 'Tis mine to offer for Apollo's sake,
 And since the gift is fitting, yours to take,
 To golden hands the golden pearl I bring,—
 The ocean jewel to the Island King.

The Stevenson party left Honolulu for a cruise among the South Sea Islands on the schooner *Equator* in June 1889. They visited several of the groups south of the line, and from time to time R. L. S. related his experiences in a series of letters published in *Black and White* and the *New York Sun*, and afterwards reprinted in book-form under the title of 'In the South Seas.' As we all know, Stevenson finally pitched his tent at Samoa, and how he spent his days there is well told in the Vailima letters.

In September 1893 'Tusitala' paid his second and last visit to Honolulu. Needing a change, he fled from the feverish political atmosphere of Apia and came to dwell in our midst once more. He was accompanied by a Samoan youth who acted as his henchman. No sooner had they landed than the boy caught the measles, and both master and servant were quarantined at Sans Souci Hotel, Waikiki, until the recovery of the boy. Stevenson, as on his former visit, preferred the quiet sandy beach of Waikiki to the stir and cackle of Honolulu.

This is how he speaks of Sans Souci, the hostelry in question—
'If any one desires such old-fashioned things as lovely scenery, quiet, pure air, clear sea water, good food, and heavenly sunsets hung out before his eyes every evening over the Pacific and the distant hills of Waianae, I recommend him cordially to the Sans Souci.'

There are a number of Scotsmen in the Hawaiian Islands, many of them being managers of sugar plantations, engineers, mechanics, or engaged in mercantile pursuits. The Scottish Thistle Club, a social organisation having its headquarters in Honolulu, sent a deputation of its members to ask Stevenson if he would favour the Club with a short talk or lecture on any subject. The Committee found the object of their search seated on the broad 'lanai' or verandah in front of the hotel, which is situated close to the blue waters of the bay, and from which is to be had an extensive view of cocoa-nut groves and the distant Waianae range of mountains. Stevenson was dressed as usual in his brown velveteen jacket and *négligé* shirt, and during the interview kept continually rolling and smoking cigarettes. The committee spent a delightful couple of hours or so in his company, the talk ranging over a variety of topics, from Polynesian mythology to Scottish genealogy and history. He cordially consented to give the lecture, and it took place in the hall of the Club, which had been suitably decorated for the occasion with tartan plaids, wreaths of flowers and heather, and pictures of scenes in Bonnie Scotland.

Addressing his audience as 'Brither Scots,' Stevenson gave a brilliant and humorous talk on Scottish history, which he described as 'one long brawl.' His talk was quite impromptu, and was interspersed with humorous Scottish anecdotes. He wound up by saying, 'I received a book the other day called "The Stickit Minister," with a dedication to myself, which affected me strangely, so that I cannot read it without a gulp. It was addressed to me in the third person, and bade me remember those places "where, about the graves of the Martyrs, the whaups are crying—his heart remembers how." Now when I think on my latter end, as I do sometimes—especially of late years when it seems less imminent—I feel that when I shall come to die out here among these beautiful

islands, I shall have lost something that had been my due, my predestinate but forfeited grave among honest Scots sods; and I feel that I shall never quite attain to what Patrick Walker calls, in one of those pathetic touches of which I have already spoken, my "resting grave," unless it were to be in one of our purple hillsides, under one of our old, quaint, and half obliterated table-tombstones slanting down the brae, and "where, about the graves of the Martyrs, the whaups are crying, my heart remembers how."

On the following week Stevenson kindly offered to give another lecture to be open to the general public, and at which a small admission fee was to have been charged for the benefit of the reading-room and library connected with the Scottish Thistle Club. A large hall was engaged and the tickets all sold, but at the last moment he was taken ill and his doctor forbade him the platform. As Stevenson himself said, with a twinkle in his eye, 'It would never do to kill myself in giving a two-bob lecture.'

Before he left Honolulu, he was elected to be one of the Honorary Chieftains of the Thistle Club, and in a letter written to the Club Secretary on 18th October 1893, he said, 'Kindly inform the Scottish Thistle Club that I have the honour of accepting their proposal to name me Honorary Chieftain of the Society. It would be idle for me to try to express the sentiments with which I accept this office. Wherever two or three Brither Scots are gathered together, they will be understood.' The Thistle Club also presented him with one of the small silver badges which are worn in the coat lapel by the members of the Society. How well he appreciated this small token of love on the part of his fellow-countrymen living in the middle of the Pacific may be gleaned from the following lines recently penned by Mrs. Stevenson to the Messrs. Scribner, New York, when acknowledging the receipt from that publishing firm of the gift of a copy of the Thistle Edition of Stevenson's works. She says—'I wish to convey my appreciation of the artistic merits and exquisite workmanship of the Thistle Edition of Mr. Stevenson's works. I wonder if you know that my husband always wore, pinned to his breast, a small silver thistle, the badge of a Scots Society to which he belonged in Honolulu?

Certainly the title of the edition is a very happy one.' Stevenson was buried with this badge on his coat.

During his stay in Honolulu he gave sittings to a clever English sculptor, Allen Hutchinson. The result was a life-size bust in clay, which was exhibited in the New Gallery, London, in 1895. This is believed to be the only study of Stevenson in clay done from life.¹ Mr. Hutchinson has in his possession a very fine cast of Stevenson's right hand and wrist. Every line in the thin taper fingers of the author is shown to perfection.

'One Who Knows Him,' wrote an account of Stevenson in his Samoan home for the *Woman at Home*, February 1894. From that article the following passages are selected :

I first saw Vailima on the day after the Queen's birthday, and I overtook some members of the family who were returning from the British Consul's party at Apia. 'We call these our marble halls,' said Mr. Osbourne, 'because they cost so much.' And there before us stood the homestead that represented so much wealth that its proprietor has got the name among the natives of '*le ona*'—'the man who owns' great possessions.

Besides being costly, the work has been prolonged, and Mr. Stevenson's library is only now receiving its permanent fittings and furniture; and the spacious grounds continue to find employment for Samoans who wish to make money to meet the demands which 'civilisation' makes upon them.

But here we are at Vailima, and the master himself is looking out from that charming balcony in his mother's rooms in the part of the villa latest built. He returns the shout of greeting with which Mrs. Strong and Mr. Osbourne announced their approach, and shortly he descends to extend a genial welcome to his visitor.

This is no 'interview,' but a friendly call, and the conversation quickly turns on topics of mutual interest. But whatever the subject, you are soon under the spell of his fascinating

¹ This is an error; Mr. Augustus St. Gaudens modelled him from life.—ED.



STEVENSON'S HOUSE AT VAILIMA

[To face page 100

earnestness and clear-cut sincerity of thought and speech. You may disagree with him, and find yourself unable to share his moral antipathies—or, more probably, find that he does not quite share yours; you may wonder at the influence he has to modify your thought and feeling, but you feel that he stands revealed before you as a man of wide and generous sympathies, and you shall say to yourself as you share his confidences: 'This man is fighting a good fight of faith in human kind and the truth of God in a world of disguises and of shams.'

We walk together through some of the rooms, and he shows me what will interest me as being the fulfilment of hopes expressed in reference to this place. Then the sight of his writing-table arrests him, and he hands me over to Mrs. Stevenson. For myself I am half reproaching myself for keeping him from his 'Brownie' for so long, and all the stronger is the feeling as Mrs. Stevenson explains that as there is an epidemic in the air he must keep apart from others at present, and cannot lunch with us.

We have left Mr. Stevenson in his mother's rooms, and we enter the library, which is not yet his workshop.

Long ago, in conversation with Mr. Stevenson, I heard with incredulity that South Sea Islanders in ancient days knew something of navigation, and marked their courses on the sea by means of charts. Here over the doorway is *the* most interesting chart I have ever seen, brought (I think) from the Gilberts. It consists of small twigs fastened together and intersecting each other from purpose and design. Will it now, I wonder, be used to adorn a tale of adventure? The fact of the chart is stranger than fiction.

There is a model of an elaborately constructed canoe from the Marshall Islands, and there are other reminiscences of the various South Sea Island homes of this remarkable family.

Old engravings and some portraits hang upon the walls of the library. Mrs. Stevenson points out the portrait of Gosse the poet, and of Mrs. Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote on the rights of women long before that was a subject of discussion. The giver of the portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft was a lady who believed herself to be Mr. Stevenson's grandmother, or thought that it was a freak of nature or the spirits that he was not actually

her grandson, and accordingly there is on the back of the portrait the curious inscription, 'To Robert Louis Stevenson, from his grandmother.' . . .

I may be doing an unconscious injustice to some, but it seemed to me that, for the first time outside the circle where you ought and expect to meet them, I had met a man who, having no choice but to make his home in Samoa, was asking, 'How can I in my own special way help the work of making the people happy amongst whom I am to live?' He had written a tale; it seemed likely to interest and please a Polynesian audience. Should he tell it me? It was then that I heard with wonder and delight the story of 'The Bottle Imp.'

I have recently seen that tale in English, and the memories of that hour when I heard the author tell it have come back to me full and fresh and strong as ever. Ah me! if he had been the listener, how he could have reproduced the scene.

The sincerity and candour of the man as he prefaced the story by the remark that the idea upon which the tale was built was not his own; the alarming expenditure of nervous force as the story-teller paced the room; my own breathless interest in the man and in the weird and wonderful drama; and the question at the close—the *motif* of that labour of love, 'Would it translate?' All this is a memory to be cherished.

'Mr. R. L. Stevenson as a Samoan Chief' was the style of an article by Mr. W. H. Triggs (Editor of *The Press*, Christchurch, N.Z.) in *Cassell's Family Magazine*, 'As a Samoan Chief.' February 1895. Although appearing after the death of R. L. S., a footnote explained that the paper had been written before that event. It need scarcely be premised that the writer of the article was one of the few who visited Stevenson in his island home. Touching the reason for Tusitala's settling at Vailima, Mr. Triggs says:

If you question him on the subject, he will tell you that, as regards health, Honolulu suited him equally well; the Alps probably better. The very reason that would make most

literary men avoid Samoa caused the author of 'Treasure Island' to select it.

'I chose Samoa instead of Honolulu, for instance,' he informed the present writer, 'for the simple and eminently satisfactory reason that it is less civilised. Can you not conceive that it is awful fun?'

To the nineteenth-century Philistine fresh from the luxury and excitement of a bustling civilisation, this is at first a hard saying.

When we have seen Mr. Stevenson at home, however, entering into the simple joys and sorrows of the interesting natives among whom he has cast his lot, living for the world's benefit, and yet himself keeping apart from its feverish allurements, we begin to understand the secret of his content.

After describing the surroundings of Vailima, the writer goes on to sketch out the daily life which the Stevenson family lived there. He mentions especially Mrs. Stevenson's success as gardener, saying that she 'has shown that even in the tropics, where white men shirk labour in the fields, and their wives usually lead the lives of valetudinarians, a good deal of hard physical work in the open air can be successfully accomplished by a lady of culture and refinement.'

She is in correspondence with Kew Gardens, Honolulu, Brisbane, Florida, etc., and is general referee on all matters of science. In addition to special charge of her own two experimental gardens, she has general supervision of all the additions and improvements. For example, she has just engineered a court of cement between the house and kitchen, working with her hands when her tongue failed her. Finally, this talented and energetic lady acts as doctor to the establishment should any of its members fall ill.

In his conversation with Stevenson, Mr. Triggs elicited an explanation of the curious fact that the Samoans would remain in the service of Tusitala while other

Europeans in the island found great difficulty in getting a native to work with any regularity or application. Stevenson said :

‘ The reason of this is neither high wages nor indulgent treatment. Samoans rather enjoy discipline ; they like, however, to be used as gentlefolk. They like to be used with scrupulous justice ; they like a service of which they can be proud. This we endeavour to give them by “ trying ” all cases of misdemeanour in the most serious manner with interpreters, forms of oath, etc., and by giving them a particular dress on great occasions. If, when you were in Apia, you saw a few handsome smart fellows in a striped jacket and a Royal Stuart tartan, they were Vai Lima boys. We have a tree at Christmas for all hands, a great native feast upon my birthday, and try in other ways to make them feel themselves of the family. Of course, no Samoan works except for his family. The chief is the master ; to serve another clan may be possible for a short time, and to get money for a specific purpose. Accordingly, to ensure permanent service in Samoa, I have tried to play the native chief with necessary European variations. Just now it looks as if I was succeeding.

‘ Our last triumph,’ the popular author continued, ‘ was at the annual missionary feast. Up to now our boys had always gone home and marched into the show with their own individual villages. This time, of their own accord, they marched in a body by themselves into the meeting, clad in the Vai Lima uniform, and on their entrance were saluted as “ *Tama Ona*,” which may be literally translated into Scotch, “ MacRichies ” (children of the rich man).’

Mr. Triggs then tells how Stevenson had to administer justice among his retainers, meting out fines and punishments, always, apparently, with the result that judge and judged remained on excellent terms. ‘ Lawn tennis was the favourite game with the “ MacRichies,” the servitors joining heartily with the family, nor did Mr. Osbourne or Mrs. Strong always win, for the natives became excellent players.’

The following very interesting conversation with Stevenson is recorded, the subject under discussion having been the last birthday feast of the master of Vailima :

‘You must know,’ he said, ‘that every chief who respects himself in Samoa must have an officer called a *Tulafale*—usually Englished “speaking man.” It is a part, and perhaps the most momentous, of this officer’s attributions to cry out the names at the *ava*-drinking. This is done in a peculiar howl or song very difficult to acquire, and, I may say, to understand. He must also be fairly well versed in the true science of Samoan names, as no chief above a certain rank is ever “called” under his own name. He has another, an *ava* name for the purpose. Well, I had no *Tulafale*, and Mr. Osbourne held a competition, in which three or four of our boys howled against each other. The judgment of Apollo fell upon one boy, who was instantly a foot taller.

‘I am sorry to make such confession of my disrespectability, but I must continue. I had not only no *Tulafale*—I had no *ava* name. I was called plain, bald “*Tusitala*” or “*Ona*,” which is only a sobriquet at the best. On this coming to the knowledge of a high chief who was present, he paid me the graceful attention of giving me one of his own, and I was hurriedly warned before the event that I must look out and recognise the new name, Au-Mai-Taau-Ma-Le-Manuvao. The feast was laid on the floor of the hall—fifty feet by about eight of solid provisions. Fifteen pigs cooked whole, underground; two hundred pounds of beef, ditto of pork, two hundred pineapples, over four hundred head of taro, together with fish, chickens, Samoan prepared dishes, shrimps, oranges, sugar-cane, bananas, biscuit, and tinned salmon in proportion. The biscuit and tinned salmon, though not exactly to *our* taste, are a favourite luxury of the Samoans. By night—and we sat down at 4 P.M.—there was nothing left beyond a few oranges and a single bunch of bananas. This is not to say, of course, that it was all eaten—the Samoans are comparatively dainty at a feast; but so soon as we rose the arduous and difficult task of dividing what remained between the different guests was at once entered into,

and the retainers of our guests, white and Samoan, departed, laden, to the sea. The wretched giver of a feast thus wakens on the morrow with a clean house. But it is not all loss. All gifts or favours in Samoa are to be repaid in kind and in a proportion, and to my feast nobody had come empty-handed. It was rather strange to look out next morning and see my courtyard alive with cocks, hens, and chickens.'

Mr. Triggs concludes with the reflection that in the foregoing we can see why the Samoans remained faithful and loving towards Tusitala, and why he himself so keenly enjoyed his island life.

Not many 'interviews' with Stevenson were ever published—that is to say, personal articles of the type with which modern journalism has made us familiar. During the most interesting period of his life he was far beyond the range of the ordinary interviewer. Among the few records of this kind which exist, that contributed anonymously by Miss Marie Fraser, the well-known actress, to the *English Illustrated Magazine* in May 1894, is perhaps the most noteworthy. It was copiously illustrated. Miss Fraser writes :

A Talk with
Tusitala.

Robert Louis Stevenson came to Samoa about four years ago. Weary with long wanderings among the islands of the Pacific, he determined to settle down and make for himself a permanent abiding-place. Samoa appeared to him as the Promised Land, and it at once took the fancy of the great writer. This is hardly to be wondered at, for the climate approaches perfection, and the scenery is lovely beyond description. The inhabitants have always possessed a certain civilisation and are a fine race, with graceful manners and amiable dispositions. Apia, the chief town, has the necessary postal facilities, being a port of call for the mail steamers running between Australia and San Francisco. These advantages, with the possibility of acquiring a large tract of land (a thing quite unattainable in other islands of the Pacific), determined

Mr. Stevenson to choose Samoa as a place for permanent residence, and led to the purchase of some four hundred acres of forest-land situated about three miles from Apia at an elevation ranging from six hundred to fifteen hundred feet.

The next step was to clear the land, and this, in the absence of roads and any organised labour, was a task of no small difficulty, but it was at last successfully accomplished, and the building of the house was commenced ; but before this could proceed far it was absolutely necessary to make a road to the port of Apia, where a ship was discharging her cargo of American red wood, imported for the work.

A track through the forest with infinite trouble was at last made, and drays and horses having been brought from New Zealand, the work of hauling the timber and other materials up the mountain proceeded.

These once on the land the chief difficulties were over, and under the watchful eye of the master the work drew to a successful conclusion.

The house was designed by Mr. Stevenson, and with the additions lately made is a two-story building about one hundred feet in length and fifty feet in depth. It is surrounded by a very deep verandah, and is painted a peculiar shade of green, with a red roof. It is by far the largest building on the island, and from its elevated position, being six hundred feet above sea-level, it commands superb views over the forest and the ocean beyond. As before said, it is approached through a park. At a short distance stands a two-storied cottage, at present occupied by Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, Mr. Stevenson's stepson. A very large Samoan house stands at the back for the use of servants, who are all natives. Stables and native houses occupied by the field hands are a distinctive feature of this part of the estate. The kitchen garden is immediately at the back of the house, and is superintended by Mrs. Stevenson, who cultivates successfully many rare and curious plants. Beyond, stretching into the forest, are the plantations, where, under the care of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, everything that can be grown in the tropics flourishes abundantly. A complete list would be out of place, so I will only mention the bread-fruit, pineapples, bananas, cacao, India rubber, sugar-cane, ginger, kava, taro, grenadillas, oranges,

limes, citrons, cocoa-nuts, mangoes, vanilla, coffee, cinnamon, and guava. . . .

After a chat, 'tiffin' was announced, and we all adjourned to the great dark panelled hall, in the new wing which had been recently added to the house. As the guests were numerous it was rather a tight pack round the table; however, at last all were settled, and the bright-eyed native boys, clad in Stuart tartan lavalavas, handed round a quaint but delightful selection of American and native dishes. I sat next our host, and in the course of conversation the papers in different parts of the world that had more than suggested obituary notices of the novelist were mentioned.

'Yes,' he said, 'they have a curious partiality for ending my days. I hear of it months after the event has happened; but this climate is glorious and suits me admirably, so they are likely to have more copy for a considerable time to come.' . . .

After lunch we returned to the verandah, the tobacco and cigarette papers were passed round, and a 'boy' brought a burning coal for us to light up by. I noticed that the members of the household, who all smoke perpetually, take infinite pains to light their cigarettes any way but with matches. They will walk the whole length of the verandah to get a light from some one else, or send for a coal! While we were having our coffee and chatting, some emissaries arrived from a distant village chief to ask 'Tusitala' (the teller of stories), as they call Louis Stevenson, his opinion on some question of taxes. He gave the matter his profound consideration, and the two natives his opinion, which seemed quite to coincide with their own, for after a drink of kava, they departed evidently thoroughly satisfied with the result of their errand. Mr. Stevenson takes the greatest interest in all things connected with the natives and their politics, and will spare no trouble to help them in any way.

After settling this little affair of state, we went up the outside wooden staircase of the old part of the house to the upper verandah, from which a magnificent view is to be had—first across the lawn, then over the top of feathery branched palms—the blue Pacific sparkling under the glorious tropic sun. Opening a glass door, my host ushered me into the library, a



DINING AND RECEPTION HALL AT VAILIMA

[To face page 108

delightful room full of curios, pictures, arms, and books. Not only were the walls lined with well-stocked shelves, but all the chairs and tables were covered with books, and piles were lying everywhere on the floor. Mr. Stevenson explained the disorder by saying—

‘My cousin has been staying with us, and this was his room—he sometimes had difficulty in finding things, so he broke those chairs and flung the books about—wasting much profanity in the process! But it’s much better to leave them alone—things are more easily found when they are lying about.’

Volumes which were often referred to were some bound-up numbers of the *National Observer*, the then editor—Mr. Henley, whose portrait graces the dining-room—being a much appreciated friend. After inspecting many interesting old volumes and newspapers, of which there is a wonderful collection, we tore ourselves from the fascinations of the books, and crossing a sort of flying bridge, entered the new section again, and found ourselves in Mr. Stevenson’s own room, a barely furnished apartment where he does most of his writing.

‘I can’t write in that library,’ continued the novelist; ‘it’s all so suitable for a literary man—it puts every idea out of my head. I like a little den like this with nothing in it to distract me—a deal kitchen table and a couple of chairs—but the latter are really mere luxuries—quite unnecessary. I have lived in every sort of place, and find that a mat on the ground is as comfortable as anything, as long as we have our own special brand of tobacco—we are slaves to that: we have allowed Three Castles to insinuate itself into our lives! Breakfast is brought to me here every morning at five, but I have often done an hour’s work before that.’ . . .

In a room on the ground floor, sacred to his mother, a shrewd, delightful old Scotch lady, were several volumes of cuttings she had collected—all the criticisms of her son’s work both from American and European papers. ‘Yes,’ continued the son, ‘the pictures they publish of me vary considerably. They represent every type from the most godlike creatures to the criminal classes; and their descriptions of me vary in proportion—from a man with a “noble bearing” to a “blighted boy.” I don’t mind what they say as a general rule, only I did object

when somewhere in the States an interviewer wrote, "A tall willowy column supported his classic head, from which proceeded a hacking cough." I could not forgive that !'

Miss Fraser then goes on to say how anxious Samoans of 'good family' were to get themselves or their relatives into the service of Tusitala, and describes an incident of which she was a witness, when an old man appeared at Vailima with his son, and made a request that the latter, 'a fine stalwart fellow,' might be taken into the family as a house-boy. Miss Fraser continues :

While the discussion was going on Mrs. R. L. Stevenson told an amusing story about a 'house-boy' they had got from some remote village, who had never seen a two-storied house before and was lost in awe and admiration of the lofty magnificence of their mansion. On the morning of his arrival his education was commenced, and he was given a large bucket of water, and told to take it to the bed-rooms up above. He looked up, and, pointing, asked if it was there? On being answered in the affirmative, he seized the bucket in his teeth, and before any one could remonstrate, he had rushed up one of the posts of the verandah. The whole family ran up the staircase, and when they showed him that that was the usual mode of getting to those rooms, he was overpowered with delight, and for two or three days could do absolutely nothing but race up and down stairs chuckling and crowing in an ecstasy of joy. And when detachments of his friends came to visit him they were always taken to see the stairs the first thing !

Miss Fraser's leave-taking was unwilling, as we can well imagine it would be, and her final impression is thus recorded :

My host made the time fly. Everything interested him—simple little anecdotes—stories of people or animals—nothing seemed slow or boring. All too soon the sun crept towards the horizon, and tea was announced—a stirrup-cup to the globe-trotter

before her horse was brought round, for it was necessary to start in good time to get out of the mountain forest before dark, as there was no moon that night. . . . Soon my horse, with hibiscus blossoms stuck in his forehead-band, was brought round; most of the retainers came to wish the traveller God-speed, and after a hearty hand-shake from my host and hostess and their 'Toofaa! Soi fua!' ringing in my ears, I rode off towards the beach. It was worth missing the mail-boat, and having to spend weeks on board a schooner, to have the memory of such a visit.

From a typical journalistic sketch—slangy and slovenly—published in the San Francisco *Examiner* in December 1893, describing a visit to Stevenson at Vailima, these items are selected:

'Well, no; I'm not passionately fond of reporters, particularly the American variety; but come on in, and I'll have a go with you, anyhow.'

Such was the greeting with which Robert Louis Stevenson received the announcement of my name and business as we met on the broad verandah of his island home, far back in the hills of Upolu, the land of the southern cross and the sacred hen. There was a dim suspicion of a smile in the depths of his big black eyes as he extended his hand—a long, thin, cool, patrician hand, which fluttered for a moment in the palm of my large, moist paw. Then he withdrew a step, hitched up his trousers, and eyed me with the air of a man who could read the thoughts of another better than he could express them himself. I started in to explain that my business was not to misrepresent or garble the statements of earth's greatest living novelist.

An American 'Interviewer' at Vailima.

'That's all right,' he said, laughing. 'Come in and see what there is to be seen, and ask us all sorts of questions. Then run riot with your pen, and when the paper comes, I'll read the article, damn till the air is blue, and everything will be all right.'

Reassured by this cheerful view of the future, I followed the marvellous man of letters into the house, where I had what

I've since tried to persuade myself was an interview with him. But, after carefully reviewing the hour we spent together, I am impressed with a vague, uneasy suspicion that he interviewed me. However, we exchanged large quantities of words of an uncompromising nature, interspersed with beer and anecdote. While extremely cordial in his manner, the novelist talked guardedly, and was careful not to commit himself on any vital point. He steered wide of politics and all other matters pertaining to the situation in the islands.

He sat directly in front of me, viewing the ceiling in a retrospective manner, and holding a home-made cigarette in his right hand. On the table within easy reach stood a can of tobacco, from which he rolled a fresh smoke as soon as the old one gave out. His attire consisted simply of a tight-fitting, sleeveless undershirt, cut *décolleté*, which set off his sparsely settled figure in startling relief. A pair of black trousers, rolled up half-way to the knees, completed the toilet of this eccentric genius of the South Seas. His feet were bare. While talking he rested his right foot across his left knee. It was a symmetrical foot, long and slender, and beautifully arched, and as he talked he gently toyed among his shapely toes with his disengaged hand. Somehow it occurred to me while noticing these peculiarities that any man who would describe Robert Louis Stevenson as half-clad when he was fully two-thirds covered, was taking a mean advantage of the author's hospitality.

In stature Stevenson is a little above the medium, but woefully thin and pale. His face is gaunt and haggard, and wears an expression of continual weariness. In fact, he is ill most of the time, but is uniformly good-natured in spite of his afflictions. Callers are numerous at the big house in the hills, dropping in at all hours of the day and on all kinds of business, but the novelist is always ready to meet these social obligations.

He rises at six o'clock in the morning, eats breakfast shortly after, and works till noon. At two o'clock in the afternoon he takes up his pen again and labours diligently till five o'clock. Sometimes he works too hard, and nervous prostration follows. It is then he seeks rest and recreation in a sea voyage, generally to Sydney and back, and the journey does him good.

This description of Stevenson's library appeared in the first edition of 'Stevensoniana' without an author's name. The editor has since learned that it is from a letter to *The Spectator* by Mr. Arthur Mahaffy :

The room was walled from floor to ceiling with books, and I began to inspect them. To the left of the door were some 'yellow-backs,' but few, nor did I see in his library much trash of any description. Next came books of travel in almost every country in the world, the bulk of them, however, dealing with the Pacific. From Captain **The Library at Vailima.** Cook down, it would be hard to name a Pacific travel book that has not found itself on the shelves at Vailima. Next, I am bound to say, came my first disappointment. I had always thought that Stevenson must have been a good classical scholar. . . . I found classics, indeed, but, alas! in Mr. Bohn's edition, while on the shelf beneath lay the originals uncut. It came to me as a positive blow to find the pages of the 'Odyssey' uncared for and unread, save in some translation. Of Horace he had many and good editions, and they seemed read and used; but of the Greek tragedians I found only 'Sophocles' in Professor Campbell's translation, and no edition of his plays save a small 'Œdipus the King.' . . .

Turning with regret from this shelf, I came next upon a fine collection of French works, beginning with a complete edition of Balzac, which had evidently been read with care. Much French fiction was here—Daudet's 'Tartarin,' 'Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné,' 'Les Rois en Exil,' Guy de Maupassant, Prosper Mérimée, and the complete Victor Hugo, besides a swarm of the more ephemeral novels. Here, too, was a fine and complete edition of 'Wellington's Despatches' and several military treatises. Next to these came a good collection (be it always remembered that I speak of Samoa in Samoa, and fourteen thousand miles from the home of English and French publishing and printing) of historical works: Gibbon, of course; Milman, Von Ranke, and many of the old French chroniclers—Philippe de Comines especially—read and marked, no doubt, when Stevenson was writing 'The Black Arrow.' . . . There was a very complete collection of modern poets, hardly any of note being omitted.

I even saw a copy of 'J. K. S.'s' 'Lapsus Calami,' which surprised me, for Stevenson was neither a Cambridge nor a public school man.

Although so many reminiscences of Stevenson's life in Samoa have been given, the description of the feast held in honour of his forty-second birthday at Vailima in 1892, contained in a short anonymous contribution to the *Cornhill Magazine* of July 1894, is worthy of inclusion, as it gives a clear little word-picture of the unique and picturesque scene :

When all was ready there was some debate in the household as to the correct procedure, according to the native courtesy, for the guests to go in to the feast, spread in a large native house which had just been completed. At last the intricacies of the Samoan etiquette were solved, and away we all trooped, Mr. Stevenson leading the way with his wife. Coming out of the darkness into the blaze of torchlight, a quaintly fantastic sight met our eyes. A native house thatched with branches of cocoa-nut palms, layers of palm leaves on the floor, and those again covered by many finely-woven tawny-coloured mats. It was difficult to believe that the mass of colouring which lay from five to six feet wide on the ground, and stretched from end to end of the house, was the feast ; and it was only when we had arranged ourselves cross-legged on mats and our eyes became accustomed to the light that we realised the gigantic quantity of food thus spread out. It was entirely a native banquet, everything cooked and eaten 'faa Samoa' (*à la Samoan*), and all the eatables laid on banana leaves. There were dozens of pigs, varying in size from a rabbit to a sofa, the latter being the centre-piece ; quantities of chickens and ducks, every kind of native fruit and vegetable, and before each guest a leaf of large pink prawns, which are plentiful in the waters from which Vailima takes its name. Scattered about everywhere were clusters of scarlet and cream-coloured hibiscus blossom, yellow allamanda, and fragrant, sweet-scented ginger ; the posts of the house even being decorated with hibiscus and frangipani, with an art of which the Samoan is master.

**Tusitala's
Birthday
Feast.**

After having enjoyed the prawns, and, in the absence of serviettes, were wondering what was to happen next, we were quite reassured by the appearance of the boys, who knelt with a basin of water and napkin beside each guest. Then the feast proceeded right merrily. Every one talked, and the pretty vivacious native girls laughed at the ignorance displayed by the few strangers in their lack of knowledge of what was good to eat and how to do it, and they spared no pains in instructing them. It was our first acquaintance with the versatile taro. There was taro-root baked like potatoes, taro-root minced and beaten up with cocoanut milk, and palousame, a great delicacy, made from the taro leaves and cocoa-nut cream. Then a mysterious dish, or rather leaf, was handed round, which the Europeans treated coldly, but which was received with marked distinction by the natives. It was a sad-coloured filmy mass, and was considered a great treat, as it consisted of green worms (*palolo*) that appear in the sea at certain intervals according to the state of the moon. From time to time cocoa-nuts with the tops knocked off were presented, and we drank out of them and passed them on. At intervals fresh banana leaves were handed to the guests, and by the time the banquet was half completed it was found how unnecessary plates were, and there might not be a knife or fork in creation for all any one cared! As for the French *chefs*—well, nobody ever enjoyed a dinner more than the strangers from far-away 'Peretania' appreciated the pleasure of being made welcome at such a delightful feast. . . .

At Vailima all are inveterate smokers, and all scorn to smoke anything but cigarettes made by themselves of their own American tobacco; and, as Louis Stevenson remarked, 'We are slaves to our own special brand.' They had a terrible reminiscence of having run out of their tobacco for, I think, two days, while cruising on board their yacht the *Casco*. The beef might 'give out' or the flour might 'give out,' but—their tobacco!

Sir Berry Cusack-Smith, K.C.M.G., who was Judge of the British Court at Samoa during Stevenson's life there, supplied to the *British Weekly* of October 20, 1898, some interesting reminiscences of the novelist, from which the following passages are quoted:

Much has been written about the barbaric splendour of Vailima. People who wrote such rubbish had either never seen Vailima, or had seen it after dinner when it appeared double. Its original charm lay in its situation—
A Samoan Resident's Reminiscences. away from the haunts of men, three miles up a mountain track, set down right in the virgin forest, amid every luxuriance of tropical scenery, nestling under the shadow of Apia mountain, which rises sheer and grand from the very garden itself, and having a peep at the azure sea with the white foam dancing upon the distant coral reefs. Barbaric splendour if you will—but such as is to be met with in greater abandon, wilder richness, sweeter beauty, in a thousand other places close to the town of Apia.

The house was at best a ramshackle wooden bungalow, no better than other bungalows in Samoa, beyond that it contained two nice rooms—one the library, and the other a sort of parody upon an old English oaken hall. It had one great peculiarity, and that was that it possessed two fireplaces. But though I have enjoyed sitting over the embers of my camp fire some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, I cannot think that the chilliest of mortals could endure the heat of a fire within a house in Samoa. Nowadays a good carriage road leads all the way to Vailima, the bush is cleared, and villas are close around it on every side but one.

Sir Berry mentions that he had both R. L. S. and Mrs. Stevenson before him as plaintiffs, but at different times:

In 1891, I think it was, Stevenson had a quarrel with Mr. Hay, who was then acting as his master of the horse and general carrier. Mr. Hay has for some years been the justly respected and popular collector of customs. Vailima was nearly three miles from Apia, and the only approach was by a mere bush-path, rocky, muddy, and at times almost impassable, but always picturesque and beautiful. Carriages and carts were then almost unknown in Samoa, and even Jehu, the son of Nimshi, would have found it impossible to get a cart up to Vailima. So all the lumber, luggage, and luxuries required at Vailima had to be carted up on the backs of horses. Stevenson imported two fine grey carthorses, and in charge of Mr. Hay

these beasts carried up many a heavy load through the tropical bush. A dispute arose as to the amount of food which these grey *Bucephaluses* consumed, and there was angry recrimination over a load of limes which Mr. Hay carried to Apia for his own benefit. It was agreed to submit the matter to me, acting as arbitrator. I can see Stevenson now sitting at one side of the lawyer's table, with Mr. Hay opposite to him. Robert Louis got so excited that I had to stop the case while he got water to drink to cool his agitation. He lost his case, though he got some satisfaction, if I remember correctly, over the limes which Mr. Hay had carried contrary to orders. . . .

A circus came to Samoa, a circus with good horses, and a by no means bad entertainment. But as it had to wait in Samoa four weeks until the next steamer arrived, it had soon raked in all the available dollars, and ruin stared it in the face. To raise the passage-money to leave Samoa, the great tent and one of the horses had to be sold. Stevenson bought the horse, a big piebald steed, and on this he used to ride into town, looking in his velvet coat, his long locks, and his quaint yachting-cap, that had long lost all semblance of its original shape, like the circus impersonator of Dick Turpin's ride to York. Many a time have I met him on this circus horse until it tried the tight-rope trick on its own account, and strangled itself with the rope by which it was tethered. . . .

Like all great men, Stevenson had his idiosyncrasies. One was that he endeavoured to make to each person whom he met some remark which they would remember and quote as a saying of Stevenson's. I have had many of these remarks quoted to me, and I cannot honestly say that any of them were brilliant or worthy of the great novelist. I was up at Vailima one afternoon talking to Stevenson on business, when I noticed that he was no longer paying any attention to what I was saying. He was quite evidently preparing a remark, a remark that I was to remember and quote. I'll quote it now. 'I've been weeding the lawn,' he said to me. 'I think there is no occupation so engrossing as weeding. I get so enthralled by it, weeding out each tiny weed, that I cannot tear myself away. They have to come out and literally drag me in to my meals. I could weed all day.' I replied frivolously that I personally preferred to pay

a native a dollar to weed for me, especially under a tropical sun, and that I did not require much dragging in to my meals.

An interesting reminiscence of Stevenson as a Sunday-school teacher was given by Miss Large at the annual meeting of the Huddersfield Auxiliary on the 16th instant. Miss Large was an L. M. S. educational missionary on Stevenson's island of Samoa. A friend told the novelist of a state of things in which the lady missionary was both superintendent and teacher. The result was that R. L. Stevenson agreed to help in the school. The lessons just then were on the life of Moses.

As a Sunday-school Teacher.

'But,' said he, 'I am quite sure I cannot tell them of Moses. Can I speak about the pyramids?'

Miss Large replied that he could tell them anything of interest in the life of Moses.

After the first experience in school the novelist found the continual humming noise unbearable. But this difficulty was overcome by the superintendent allowing the use of her sitting-room.

One day he said: 'I cannot get the boys to ask a question; what must I do?'

'Do your own way,' Miss Large wisely answered.

On the third Sunday he had removed the difficulty. 'I have offered sixpence to any boy who will ask a question.' But not until half a crown had been offered was the question asked. However, R. L. Stevenson was not long a teacher. His friend, Lloyd Osbourne, assured Miss Large that the strain was too great for so weak a man, and he could not possibly go on teaching. Mrs. Stevenson objected too.

The end was that the novelist was obliged to give up his work in the school, but this may be remembered as just like his noble mind. 'He had so high an ideal of Sunday-school work that he would not give up without obtaining an honourable release.'—*British Weekly*, September 19, 1902.

Mrs. E. H. Strain, the author of 'A Man's Foes' and other novels, met R. L. Stevenson at Apia during a holiday cruise in the South Seas in the spring of 1894. Her notes of the meeting—one of the last in which

the exile was fated to grasp the hand of a visitor from over seas, and especially from his 'ain countree'—have never been published. Mrs. Strain has kindly transcribed from her diary of the cruise the pages which touch upon this meeting with the novelist, and they are here printed for the first time :

April 25th.—A day to remember! On it, if one may indulge in a paradox which states a simple fact, we have made the personal acquaintance of an old friend. We have been to Samoa, and have met Robert Louis Stevenson.

There must be many people who feel as we do, that a man who has translated into the soul's vernacular thoughts which come to most of us in hieroglyph—who has caught and delineated some of the visions which touch all humanity with a flying wing and escape—has vindicated his right to the title of Friend. It is not only as the writer of entrancing stories told in a 'style' which has fascination almost greater than the matter that we and other discerning critics regard Mr. Stevenson. That mastery of language which induces words to do just exactly what is required of them, so that a single one may take the place of a whole illustrative metaphor or descriptive paragraph, is the badge of one guild only—the Guild of the Poets. But, of course, much of Stevenson's work has been of a kind to make this manifest even to eyes incapable of recognising a poet's prose.

Meeting
with a
Fellow-
Novelist at
Apia.

Poets, nevertheless, have as good a right to their privacy as the least articulate of their pensioners; nor should we have intruded on Stevenson's had our sole claim to his acquaintance been our appreciation of his work. Fortunately for ourselves, we had a better title; one which we thought justified us in writing to ask him, if he had time and the inclination, to meet us on the arrival of the SS. *Alameda* at the port of Apia.

The whole experience has been as much like a fairy-tale as anything we are likely ever to bear part in. The island itself, solid and actual as it is—a greener and glorified Arran—belongs by virtue of his residence there to 'the realms of gold.' It is undeniably part of his fief from Apollo. Who ever thinks of it, now, save as the dwelling-place of 'R. L. S.'? And in his

presence it would seem out of keeping to maintain too conscious a grip of reality. He looks as if he might himself be made of the right dream-stuff, so fragile, so transparently thin is he. The hands especially are fined away to such a degree of tenuity as to suggest an 'astral' rather than a corporeal body; yet there is a true mundane touch upon the pointed finger-tips, stained as they are with the perpetual rolling of cigarettes.

Was he always so thin, one wonders?—or is it his residence in this Enchanted Isle which has transformed him into another Prospero,¹ with Ariel added and weight subtracted? One knows, presently, that one should have expected to find him so. The pelican mother-bird must be lean, lean, lean in her nursing-time; so too must it be with your intensely imaginative artist, in whatever kind; for not only what he gives to the world, but what he lives by, must be drawn from his own mind and heart. Dante, as we know, was 'kept lean for many years' by his Divine Comedy. It is hard upon the Pelican! and why, *why* cannot we, the callow nurseling, give back something more helpful than inarticulate gratitude?

For the rest, despite the dimness of eyesight caused by this predominant perception, we have carried away a mental portrait which may paddle the *Cigarette* of the 'Inland Voyage'; may lie in the sleeping sack (the flap-eared cap well drawn down over the ears) upon the hill-sides of the Cevennes—the donkey cropping gently near by; may move as 'Amateur Emigrant' among the other steerage passengers, endeavouring to get down to the essential ground of common human gentlehood. Hair thin and dark; eyes dark, set far apart, less keen than penetrating, less alert than receptive; large forehead, neither too high for its breadth nor too broad for its height; complexion weather-stained, particularly upon the lips. Altogether a face more suggestive of power and insight than of imagination; which strikes one as strange in one whose differentia is the last quality, until one remembers Ruskin's theory that the essence of the imaginative faculty is its power to pierce to the heart of things and see them as they are.

It seemed at first like a disappointment to find that there was

¹ This comparison was written before the writer had heard of Henley's sonnet.—E. H. S.

not time to visit Vailima. Now, however, that things have begun to fall into perspective, I am not sure but it was an express device of the propitious Fates, to steer us clear of the rocks of commonplace and bathos. For it set R. L. S. to work to think of some other thing which he might do to entertain us. As was to be expected, he hit upon something in keeping with himself; upon something, consequently, which makes an appropriate background to the whole picture. Imagine us all led through a shady taro-swamp to the abode of a great Samoan chief and warrior, a man handsomely decorated with scars of combat, which scars he is pleased to exhibit at 'Tusitala's' request to Tusitala's friends. His house is rather like the epidermis of a haystack, supposing that a haystack could be flayed and that the skin should afterwards retain its shape and shagginess; the perpendicular part is, however, much lower in proportion, and consists of wall and doorway alternated all round in nearly equal parts. The furniture consists chiefly of a carpeting of fine matting; there are also a number of palm-leaf baskets suspended from the roof, evidently to hold provisions, as well as a couple of bird cages with pet birds in them. The master of the house was lying on a mattress when Stevenson, conducted by an attendant, entered a step or two in advance of the rest of us. There was an exclamation—'Tusitala! Alofa,' or some such word, from the gladiator, who rose to his feet, courteously, if artlessly, giving his simple couch a kick which sent it into the background. We were then introduced to him, and a general shaking of hands ensued, after which we were invited to seat ourselves like so many tailors on the matted floor. We took our places, which were ceremonially indicated to us in order of dignity, with a degree of ease and grace inversely proportioned to our age and solidity.

A black-eyed little son came and placed himself at one side of our host, a black-eyed little daughter at the other; the wives in the background began to prepare 'kava' for our refreshment. We felt that the time had arrived for small-talk, but the small-talk somehow was not forthcoming. One's eyes, one's brain, were too well occupied with better things. I looked from our ethereal Prospero-Ariel to his muscular friend (that chief is really the very model of the ideal gladiator, scarred as aforesaid), and then

pulled myself together with a horrid fear that I had been staring, and begged R. L. S. to ask our host what he thought of the prospects of the copra-crop?

The brewing of the kava was, however, part of the entertainment; it would have been bad manners *not* to have stared at that. In absolute correctness the root¹ should have been chewed in our presence by the 'Maid of the Village,' but I am thankful to say that this pedantry of etiquette was for once dispensed with. Perhaps R. L. S. explained that our time was limited; anyhow the root was pounded instead, in a sort of quern, by the woman who had ushered us into the presence of the chief. I am not sure whether she was or wasn't one of his wives. The woman who performed the other part of the brewing certainly was. Both of them wore much the same sort and quantity of garments as Europeans do, but the chief and his children wore an airy costume, consisting of a long towel arranged as skirt (or kilt) and cape. After being pounded, the kava-root was placed in a flattish wooden dish on three feet—a cross between bowl and platter—and drenched with water. Then the woman who had been looking on took water and ostentatiously washed her hands; after which she proceeded to squeeze and knead the root in water, with great energy and thoroughness. Next she gathered a good handful of it into a fibrous wisp which served as filter, and wrung it out into a beautiful bowl, as thin as china, of cocoa-nut shell, held for her by the other woman. We looked on with respectful interest, clapping our hands slightly and seriously at Stevenson's instigation and example, by way of congratulation on the completion of the work. Then she who held the cup brought it and presented it with a bow and a Samoan salutation to me; I, duly instructed, responded with the proper answer, bowed to the company *seriatim*, and drank!—an act not far removed from heroism, since it is obligatory to finish what is given one, and is the height of bad manners to leave any in the cup. If one can manage it at one draught, the compliment is so much the greater. Not having had the advantage of a German university training, I could not manage the one-draught feat, but I did it in two, and the audience was kind enough to

¹ Of the *Piper Methysticum*.—E. H. S.

applaud me cordially. R. L. S. was next helped, and after him the rest of the party, in the same order as the assignment of places, all of us acquitting ourselves to the apparent satisfaction of the entertainers. 'Kava' is really not bad, even on a first acquaintance: it reminds one of Gregory's mixture, but the nasty taste is somehow left out. I am credibly informed that one gets even passionately fond of it, after an interval of suspense (caused possibly by the ceremonial preparation of the root). After the kava episode, pretty speeches and handshakes were exchanged, and we took leave of our Samoan entertainers.

There is nothing else fit to be put second to this; it is our 'Eclipse.' It is the climax of our journey. It is true that Stevenson took us for a walk to the town or village of Apia, during which expedition (such is the malignity of life!) a remark which was honestly meant by one of us to be friendly and sympathetic got transformed by mere awe into something closely resembling mere insult. It is true that he saw us in safety on board the *Alameda*; that he sat in the saloon with us and talked a little good-bye talk. But the culminating scene of the whole series is that in the Samoan warrior's home, East and West brought together by 'Tusitala's' central presence.

The natives—fine-looking people—swarmed round the big ship, plying their favourite industry of diving for coins in deep water; but they failed to distract our minds even for a moment from the brown-suited, flat-capped figure in the stern of a boat which was being rowed to the landing-place. We threw them small change; we admired the dexterity with which they caught the coins before they had sunk many yards. But all the same we saw them 'with half an eye'—and perhaps that half-eye *was* someone else's! For when the figure in the boat turned back to us, before disappearing round the stern of the *Curaçoa*, every right hand in our party was raised in instantaneous response to the parting wave of his.

With half an eye, too, we looked at the beautiful island, green to its topmost peak; at the calm lagoon, azure fringed with white, from which it rises; at the crimson sunset glory which presently enveloped them. R. L. S. came between us and all that; it derived the best of its charm to the mind from its fitness to be a poet's dwelling.

I do not say his home—for home, we know, is where the heart is, and his heart is with us in Scotland. Numberless trifles, inconsiderable enough in themselves, show that clearly. ‘You’re not making use of your opportunities!’ he said to one of us just before he left the ship; ‘you haven’t asked me something that young ladies always ask.’ Her eyes lighted up. ‘Oh, will you?’ said she, and ran for pen and paper. ‘A condemned man wishes all good things to Miss H—— M—— S——,’¹ he put, and signed it. ‘Why *condemned*?’ she asked. ‘Isn’t perpetual exile enough,’ he asked, ‘even without sentence of death hanging over one’s head?’ That this invigorating Pacific climate may one day reverse both sentences cannot be more his own wish than it is ours.

On the occasion of the annual banquet of the Stevenson Fellowship at San Francisco in 1904, the High Chief of Samoa, Mataafa was invited to attend, but being unable to do so, he sent an interesting letter, written in Samoan, from a translation of R. L. S. which the following passage is taken :

‘I would have very much liked to be present and meet you all on this fitting occasion, but the fact is, my health and old age will not permit me to cross the vast waters over to America. So I send you many greetings, wishing the “Stevenson Fellowship” every success on the 13th November next. And whilst you are celebrating this memorable day in America, we shall even celebrate it in Samoa. It is true that I, like yourselves, revere the memory of Tusitala. Though the strong hand of Death has removed him from our midst, yet the remembrance of his many humane acts, let alone his literary career, will never be forgotten. That household name, Tusitala, is as euphonious to our Samoan ears as much as the name Stevenson is pleasing to all European friends and admirers. Tusitala was born a hero, and he died a hero among men. He was a man of his word, but a man of deeds not words. When first I saw Tusitala he addressed me and said: “Samoa is a beautiful country. I like its people and clime, and shall write in my books accordingly. The Samoan Chiefs may be compared to our Scotch Chiefs at home in regard to their clans.” “Then stay here with me,” I said, “and make

¹ Quoted from memory.—E. H. S.



THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART, SAMOA

[To face page 124

Samoa your home altogether." "That I will, and even if the Lord calls me," was the reply. Tusitala—story-writer, spoke the truth, for even now he is still with me in Samoa. Truth is great and must endure. Tusitala's religion and motto was: "Do ye to others as ye would have them do unto you." Hence this noble, illustrious man has won my love and admiration, as well as the esteem and respect of all who knew him. My God is the same God who called away Tusitala, and when it has pleased Him for my appointed time to come, then I will gladly join T. in that eternal home where we meet to part no more.'

In *M'Clure's Magazine*, July 1895, a *verbatim* account was given of Stevenson's address to a large company of Samoan chiefs on a notable occasion. The circumstances are thus explained :

A few months before the death of the late Robert Louis Stevenson, certain Samoan chiefs whom he had befriended while they were under imprisonment for political causes, and whose release he had been instrumental in effecting, 'The Road testified their gratitude by building an important piece of road leading to Mr. Stevenson's Samoan country house, Vailima. At a corner of the road there was erected a notice, prepared by the chiefs and bearing their names, which reads :

‘THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART.

‘Remembering the great love of his highness, Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever.’

On the completion of the road Mr. Stevenson entertained the chiefs and other guests at a native feast, wherein the food was spread upon the ground, on a tablecloth of green banana leaves ; and at the close of the repast, Mr. Stevenson delivered [his] address.

The speech dealt mainly with island politics, an ever-changing theme, and for that reason the only passages chosen for reproduction refer to the personal and romantic side of the celebration. After touching on the imprisonment of the chiefs and their expression of gratitude in offering to make the road, Stevenson went on :

I was tempted at first to refuse this offer. I knew the country to be poor ; I knew famine threatening ; I knew their families long disorganised for want of supervision. Yet I accepted, because I thought the lesson of that road might be more useful to Samoa than a thousand bread-fruit trees, and because to myself it was an exquisite pleasure to receive that which was so handsomely offered. It is now done ; you have trod it to-day in coming hither. It has been made for me by chiefs—some of them old, some sick, all newly delivered from a harassing confinement, and in spite of weather unusually hot and insalubrious. I have seen these chiefs labour valiantly with their own hands upon the work, and I have set up over it, now that it is finished, the name of ‘The Road of Gratitude’ (the road of loving hearts), and the names of those that built it. *In perpetuam memoriam*, we say, and speak idly. At least so long as my own life shall be spared, it shall be here perpetuated ; partly for my pleasure and in my gratitude, partly for others, to continually publish the lesson of this road.

His address was concluded in these words :

Chiefs, on this road that you have made, many feet shall follow. The Romans were the bravest and greatest of people ; mighty men of their hands, glorious fighters and conquerors. To this day in Europe you may go through parts of the country where all is marsh and bush, and perhaps after struggling through a thicket you shall come forth upon an ancient road, solid and useful as the day it was made. You shall see men and women bearing their burdens along that even way, and you may tell yourself that it was built for them perhaps fifteen hundred years before—perhaps before the coming of Christ—by the Romans. And the people still remember and bless them for that convenience, and say to one another, that as the Romans were the bravest to fight, so they were the best at building roads.

Chiefs, our road is not built to last a thousand years, yet in a sense it is. When a road is once built it is a strange thing how it collects traffic ; how every year, as it goes on, more and more people are found to walk thereon, and others are raised up to repair and perpetuate it and keep it alive ; so that perhaps even this road of ours may, from reparation to reparation, continue



KAVA FEAST GIVEN TO THE CHIEFS ON COMPLETION OF THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART

to exist and be useful hundreds and hundreds of years after we are mingled in the dust. And it is my hope that our far-away descendants may remember and bless those who laboured for them to-day.

In a letter to Mr. Sidney Colvin, published in the *Times*, January 7, 1895, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne states that on the day he died Stevenson had said he felt so strong and well that if the worst came to the worst in Samoa, with Germany intriguing for possession of the islands, he would go to America and try to raise public opinion by a course of lectures. Mr. Osbourne's letter is dated December 3, 1894, and reads :

Stevenson's
Death.

When we returned from summoning the doctor it was dark, the lights were lit in the great room, and Louis was lying on a chair, breathing very labouredly. He was unconscious from the beginning, and for about an hour we waited about him seeing his life ebb away. He was dressed in his sailor's jumper and trousers, and kept his high colour to the last. When he passed away we lowered the great union jack we fly over the house and covered the body with the flag he loved. It is a cause of thankfulness that death came suddenly, finding him busy and happy. It was just at sunset and time for dinner, and he and my mother were preparing some little delicacy together, a salad for the evening meal. He got up a bottle of extra wine, too, for this little feast, some old Burgundy that he prized. My mother caught him as he suddenly seemed to turn faint and giddy, and asked her, 'Do I look strange?' and she tried to reassure him. As she managed to get him into the great room and into a chair, he showed her where the pain was in his head, and this was his last consciousness. There he lies now, in the big room with the flag cast over him, his hands joined together across his breast, and our poor people showing the last signs of respect within their power by watching the night out where he lies.

Under date of December 5, 1894, Mr. Osbourne continues :

My previous letter was interrupted by the arrival of several of

our truest Samoan chiefs with their last presents for Louis, the fine mats that the body of a great man must be wrapped in. All night they sat around his body, in company with every one of our people, in stolid silence. It was in vain that I attempted to get them away. 'This is the Samoan way,' they said, and that ended the matter. They kissed his hand one by one as they came in. It was a most touching sight. You cannot realise what giving these mats means. They are the Samoan's fortune. It takes a woman a year to make one, and these people of ours were of the poorest. It was always his wish to be buried on the top of the mountain that bounds Vailima. He even had a window cut in his study so that he could always see the place. I was determined that his wishes should be followed out, so I sent that night to our best friends to bring in their men. Forty came with their chiefs, and several of Mataafa's chiefs came too. [The letter concludes with a description of the funeral.]

A writer in *Harper's Weekly* gave a description of Stevenson's tomb on Mount Vaea as he saw it in 1897, shortly after it had been completed. The memorial was built chiefly by the loyal devotion of the natives, without whose active assistance the carrying out of such a work in so inaccessible a place would have been quite impossible. The writer says :

The tomb rises in the middle of a small plateau on the summit of the mountain. A few trees were cut away to let the sunshine filter in ; beyond the branches, framed like a picture in festoons of creepers and orchids, lies the district of A'ana on the one hand, Atua on the other, with their rolling green hills and distant mountains touched here and there by the silver gleam of waterfall and river ; and further off, and through the trees in front, spreads the Pacific Ocean, the coral reef skirting the shore marked by curling lines of foam. At the foot of the spur of Vaea lies Vailima, with the red roofs, lawns, and hedges of hibiscus flowers—small from that distance, like a toy farm in a child's game.



THE TOMB OF R. L. STEVENSON, MOUNT VAEA, SAMOA

[To face page 128

The tomb is an exact copy of those used for Samoan chiefs—merely a block of concrete, shaped like a sarcophagus, resting on a huge square solid block made of the same material. Mr. Graham Balfour gives the following particulars of the last resting-place of R. L. S.: ‘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’

‘Since his death the chiefs have tabooed the use of firearms upon the hillside where he lies, that the birds may live there undisturbed, and raise about his grave the songs he loved so well.’

Can I close these reminiscences more fitly than by taking you in imagination to Stevenson’s grave? It was a favourite expedition of mine, and I have seen it in all its aspects. I have been there when it lay bathed in the golden sunshine, recalling the brilliancy of the successes of the great dead. I have seen it in those exquisite moments when the day is merging into the tropical night. There is no twilight. One minute it is day, a few minutes later you

realise that it is night. All looks ghostly and indistinct, and the dying of those glorious South Sea days never failed to fill one's heart with a tinge of sadness, a sense of the immensity of the oceans that separated us from the Old Country, a wistful longing to see faces and forms that we might never see again. And in this aspect the tomb appealed to one's sympathies; one recalled the failing health, the cutting short of that brilliant career, the separation from all that England would have lavished on him of hero-worship, of society, of encouragement. And I have seen that tomb gleaming white and pure in the sweet moonlight, as our hope is that this our brother doth in the light of the all-merciful Reviewer.—SIR B. CUSACK-SMITH in the *British Weekly*, October 20, 1898.

To the *British Weekly*, June 27, 1901, Miss Bessie S. Robertson contributed a sketch entitled 'A Visit to Stevenson's Grave.' After observing how greatly changed
A Later is Vailima since the death of its owner, his
Visit to house having been entirely demolished in the
Vaea. Samoan war, though rebuilt on the original
 plan by the present owner of the estate, the writer goes
 on to describe her difficult climb up to the grave :

For the first hundred yards the track was fairly well marked, and I followed with ease my guide—a young half-caste girl who had known Stevenson well. Then the bush grew denser and darker; the track disappeared from time to time; the soil was wet and slippery, and steamed under our feet in the hot air. Still higher, there was hardly foothold on the steep face of the hill. Sometimes a rock blocked the zigzag path, sometimes a treacherous vine caught the foot, and at all times mosquitos hummed dangerously near. A sound as of voices above us, where I knew no human foot had trod for months, recalled to me Stevenson's mention of his astonishment and perplexity the first time he heard similar sounds when clearing the bush. By the way, the bush in which he was accustomed to work, and of which he has given such vivid pictures in his letters, lies away inland behind the house, and it is believed that Stevenson himself never climbed the mountain on whose top he wished to

be laid. Had he done so, he might possibly have chosen some other spot more easy of access, for the task which his loyal, devoted Samoan friends so willingly undertook, of carrying the coffin up the face of this precipitous mountain, is almost inconceivable. Thrice my heart nearly failed me, and thrice I looked at the top of the bush-covered wall which seemed to overhang me; then I grasped my stick and toiled upwards again.

How soon was the climb forgotten when I reached the clear plateau on the top, and saw before me that lonely grave, sacred to Scotchmen all the world over, which thousands have pictured in fancy, and so few have ever seen! It is covered by a large cement slab, about a foot and a half high, with a smaller oblong one on the top, both of which were made on the spot. They were strewn over with dead leaves, which my first impulse was to sweep off, but my second thought was restraining, if somewhat whimsical. Why should I, a newcomer, a pilgrim of an hour, brush away those leaves which had all their lifetime watched over the grave of a hero, had sheltered it from rain and wind, and smiled upon it in sunshine, and which now, even when dead, were its only watchers? Near the grave were a few ante-bushes, bearing a rich flower like a deep crimson rose. I gathered a handful and laid them on the stone among the withered leaves, and thought of the boy who had roamed the streets of Edinburgh forty years ago, and climbed the green Pentlands near his much-loved childhood's home, and whose life and death on this remote island have linked Samoa for all time with our fair northern city and the quaint little hamlet of Swanston.

IX

STEVENSON THE MAN

APPARITION

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.—

W. E. HENLEY,
 'A Book of Verses,' 1888.

The selections which follow refer to the personal appearance and traits of character exhibited by Stevenson to those who enjoyed his friendship or acquaintance. In other sections of the work personal touches are given, but it has been thought best not to detach these from their context, even at the risk of making the present chapter seem meagre and incomplete.

From the remarkable paper by Mr. W. E. Henley,

called forth by the publication of Mr. Graham Balfour's 'Life' of Stevenson, and published in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, December 1901, the author has kindly permitted the copious excerpts which follow. 'The Two Stevensons,' Although one of the paragraphs refers to Stevenson the artist, the editor has preferred to retain it in its present relationship. It is to be understood that the footnotes are those appended to the article when it first appeared :

For me there were two Stevensons : the Stevenson who went to America in '87 ; and the Stevenson who never came back. The first I knew, and loved ; the other I lost touch with, and, though I admired him, did not greatly esteem. My relation to him was that of a man with a grievance ; and for that reason, perhaps—that reason and others—I am by no means disposed to take all Mr. Balfour says for gospel, nor willing to forget, on the showing of what is after all an official statement, the knowledge gained in an absolute intimacy of give-and-take which lasted for thirteen years, and includes so many of the circumstances of those thirteen years that, as I believe, none living now can pretend to speak of them with any such authority as mine. This, however, is not to say that Mr. Balfour's view of his famous cousin is not warranted to the letter, so far as he saw and knew. I mean no more than that the Stevenson he knew was not the Stevenson who came to me (that good angel, Mr. Leslie Stephen, aiding) in the old Edinburgh Infirmary ; nor the Stevenson I nursed in secret, hard by the old Bristo Port, till he could make shift to paddle the *Arethusa* ; nor the Stevenson who stayed with me at Acton after selling Modestine,¹ nor even the Stevenson who booked a steerage berth to New York, and thence trained it 'across the plains,' and ended for the time being as a married man and a Silverado squatter ; though I confess that in this last avatar the Stevenson of Mr. Balfour's dream had begun, however

¹ It was now, I think, that he made the immense discovery that a girl on a certain level of life has eyes for nothing masculine a plane or two below that level. At all events, he wore his tourist's raiment, and was infinitely gratified to be able to report, after one of his rambles, that a casual wayfarer had asked him for a fill of tobacco, and had called him 'Sir.'

faintly and vaguely, to adumbrate himself, and might have been looked for as a certainty by persons less affectionate and uninquiring than those by whom he was then approached. Mr. Balfour does me the honour of quoting the sonnet into which I crammed my impressions of my companion and friend; and, since he has done so, I may as well own that 'the Shorter Catechist' of the last verse was an afterthought. In those days he was in abeyance, to say the least; and if, even then, *il allait poindre à l'horizon* (as the composition, in secret and as if ashamed, of 'Lay Morals' persuades me to believe he did), I, at any rate, was too short-sighted to suspect his whereabouts. When I realised it, I completed my sonnet; but this was not till years had come and gone, and the Shorter Catechist, already detected by more than one, was fully revealed to me. . . .

At bottom Stevenson was an excellent fellow. But he was of his essence what the French call *personnel*. He was, that is, incessantly and passionately interested in Stevenson. He could not be in the same room with a mirror but he must invite its confidences every time he passed it; to him there was nothing obvious in time and eternity, and the smallest of his discoveries, his most trivial apprehensions, were all by way of being revelations, and as revelations must be thrust upon the world; he was never so much in earnest, never so well pleased (this were he happy or wretched), never so irresistible, as when he wrote about himself. Withal, if he wanted a thing, he went after it with an entire contempt for consequences. For these, indeed, the Shorter Catechist was ever prepared to answer; so that, whether he did well or ill, he was safe to come out unabashed and cheerful. He detested Mr. Gladstone, I am pleased to say; but his gift of self-persuasion was scarce second to that statesman's own.¹ He gave himself out for the most open-minded of men: to him one point of view was as good as another; Age's was respectable, but so was Youth's; the Fox that had a tail was no whit more considerable than the Fox whose tail was lost. *Et patati, et patata.*

¹ Mr. Balfour again reminds us of what he thought of Gordon, and how he would fain have joined the Curtins, and fought with them the obscure and bloody tyranny which then lay over Ireland. 'Tis at least as pleasant to recall that once, after a certain famous victory, he would not allow himself to be addressed, for days, except as 'Mr. Peiwar Kotal Stevenson.'

'Twas all 'as easy as lying' to him, for 'twas all in the run of his humanity. But in the event it was academic; for where he was grossly interested, he could see but one side of the debate. . . . No better histrion ever lived. But in the South Seas the mask got set, the 'lines' became a little stereotyped. Plainly the Shorter Catechist was what was wanted. And here we are: with Stevenson's later letters and Mr. Graham Balfour's estimate.

'Tis as that of an angel clean from heaven, and I for my part flatly refuse to recognise it. Not, if I can help it, shall this faultless, or very nearly faultless, monster go down to after years as the Lewis I knew, and loved, and laboured with and for, with all my heart and strength and understanding. In days to come I may write as much as can be told of him. Till those days come, this protest must suffice. If it convey the impression that I take a view of Stevenson which is my own, and which declines to be concerned with this Seraph in Chocolate, this barley-sugar effigy of a real man; that the best and most interesting part of Stevenson's life will never get written—even by me; and that the Shorter Catechist of Vailima, however brilliant and distinguished as a writer of stories, however authorised and acceptable as an artist in morals, is not my old, riotous, intrepid, scornful Stevenson at all—suffice it will.

For the rest, I think he has written himself down in terms that may not be mistaken, nor improved, in a fragment of an essay on morals printed in the Appendix to the 'Edinburgh Edition.' 'An unconscious, easy, selfish person,' he remarks, 'shocks less, and is more easily loved, than one who is laboriously and egotistically unselfish. There is at least no fuss about the first; but the other parades his sacrifices, and so sells his favours too dear. Selfishness is calm, a force of nature: you might say the trees are selfish. But egoism is a piece of vanity; it must always take you into its confidence; it is uneasy, troublesome, searching; it can do good, but not handsomely; it is uglier, because less dignified than selfishness itself. But here,' he goes on, with that careful candour which he so often has, 'here I perhaps exaggerate to myself, because I am the one more than the other, and feel it like a hook in my mouth at every step I take. *Do what I will, this seems to spoil all.*' This, as it seems to me, describes him so exactly that, if you allow for histrionics

(no inconsiderable thing, remember !), you need no more description. It was said of him, once, that when he wrote of anything, he wrote with such an implacable lucidity as left it beggared of mystery. This is what he has done in this passage ; and who runs may read him in it as he was.' . . .

Further on in his paper Mr. Henley recalls some of the nicknames applied by him and other friends to Stevenson. One of these 'came from Parliament House':

'Here,' quoth the jolly creature who invented it (he was afterwards, and perhaps still is, a sheriff-substitute somewhere or other)—'here comes the Gifted Boy.' Thus, and not otherwise, Peter Robertson took on, as they say, 'Peveril of the Peak,' and was instantly retorted upon as 'Peter of the Painch.' In Stevenson's case there was no response. The nickname troubled him for a moment ; but he had nothing to say to it. In truth, he loved not to be thus attacked, and was in such cases sometimes at a loss for words. He shone in debate, and he excelled in talk. But in both talk and debate he was strung to his highest pitch—alert, daring, of an inextinguishable gaiety, quick and resourceful to the n^{th} degree ; and to try a fall with him then was to get badly handled, if not utterly suppressed. But he was not averse from monologue—far from it ; and I have sometimes thought that he ran his temperament too hard.¹ Also, was he what the world calls 'a wit'? I do not think he was. After all, a wit is a man of phrases: consciously, sometimes, he waits, he thinks, he condenses his thought, and out comes his witticism ; or he waits not, nor thinks, nor condenses, but says something, and by no sort of effort he retorts in the only possible way. Mr. Thackeray has noted the difference between old Mr. Congreve, inventing his epigrams in a corner, and young Mr. Harry Fielding, who pours out everything he has in his heart,

¹ I mean that, on occasion, he would play the fool (none ever did it better), when his audience was tired of laughter. Then he became a buffoon, and a buffoon to whom you could not show the door. At these times, I think, he got down to hysteria. In any case his temperament was amazingly fresh, vigorous, and assertive: and to have him in the house 'When doleful Dumps his heart did wound, And griping Griefs,' etc., was no light infliction.

and is, in effect, as brilliant, as engaging, and as arresting a talker as Colonel Esmond has known. In print Stevenson was now and then witty enough for seven; but in talk his way was, not Congreve's but, Harry Fielding's. No; he was certainly not a wit, in the sense that Congreve was a wit. Perhaps he was nearer than he knew to that Jack Fletcher—(he talked comedies, his printer says)—for whom, having begun his later life, and being somewhat stricken with respectability, he could find no better description to me than 'a dirty dog'; perhaps (of the Samoan Stevenson I will say at once that I do not for one moment think so) he would have relished Fielding, and found himself, so to speak, in that most gallant, cheerful practical-artist soul. But Fielding and Fletcher certainly, and Congreve probably, would have had a retort, or courteous or the other thing, for the author of that rather marking phrase—'The Gifted Boy.' And Stevenson, who was not a wit, but something a thousand times better, had none. No 'Peter of the Painch' occurred to this new Peveril of the Peak; and that was Lewis's way. Give him all that Mrs. Battle asked, and he was almost inimitable. Come to him suddenly: 'prop him on the nose,' as it were: and he was tame. And so much now for that far-glancing, variously coloured, intensely romantic and flagrantly humorous expression of life—the talk of R. L. S. . . .

Lewis the musician, too—how much I saw of him! how often have I ministered to his artless and homely needs! Like his cousin, Stevenson had no ear for intervals: his one tune for many years was 'Auld Lang Syne,' which he sang, in the belief that it was a genuine Scots melody, to all manner of verses, decent sometimes, improvised or recalled as occasion or inspiration served.¹ Yet had he an æry and delicate sense of rhythm; and I have ever regretted that he did not study music from the first. Not, of course, for creation's sake; for at the best he could never have been anything but what his cousin used to call a Mus. Doc.—a plodder equally uninspired, uninteresting, and superfluous: not, I say, for music's sake, but for that of his own vigilant, inquiring, far-wandering, extremely technical mind,

¹ A special favourite (on the tin whistle) was the melody of 'The Thorn'; but in this case he was overcome by the humour of the words. Had he—had we—but known that they are the work of Robert Burns!

which might often and for long spaces of time have found in Bach and Beethoven, or even in Purcell and Lulli and Couperin, the refreshment it had to seek, and did, in Xavier de Montépin and Fortuné du Boisgobey.

I have said nothing of Stevenson the artist. . . . To tell the truth, his books are none of mine: I mean, that if I want reading, I do not go for it to the 'Edinburgh Edition.' I am not interested in remarks about morals; in and out of letters I have lived a full and varied life, and my opinions are my own. So, if I crave the enchantment of romance, I ask it of bigger men than he, and of bigger books than his: of 'Esmond' (say) and 'Great Expectations,' of 'Redgauntlet' and 'Old Mortality,' of 'la Reine Margot' and 'Bragelonne,' of 'David Copperfield' and 'A Tale of Two Cities': while, if good writing and some other things be in my appetite, are there not always Hazlitt and Lamb—to say nothing of that 'globe of miraculous continents' which is known to us as Shakespeare? There is his style, you will say; and it is a fact that it is rare, and in the last times better, because much simpler, than in the first. But after all, his style is so perfectly achieved that the achievement gets obvious: and when achievement gets obvious, is it not by way of becoming uninteresting? And is there not something to be said for the person who wrote that Stevenson always reminded him of a young man dressed the best he ever saw for the Burlington Arcade? Stevenson's work in letters does not now take me much, and I decline to enter on the question of its immortality; since that, despite what any can say, will get itself settled, soon or late, for all time. No; when I care to think of Stevenson it is not of 'R. L. S.': R. L. S. 'the renowned, the accomplished, Executing his difficult solo': but of the 'Lewis' that I knew, and loved, and wrought for, and worked with for so long. The successful man of letters does not greatly interest me: I read his careful prayers, and pass on, with the certainty that, well as they read, they were not written for print; I learn of his nameless prodigalities—and recall some instances of conduct in another vein. I remember, rather, the unmarried and irresponsible Lewis: the friend, the comrade, the *charmeur*. Truly, that last word, French as it is, is the only one that is worthy of him. I shall ever remember him as that. The

impression of his writings disappears ; the impression of himself and his talk is ever a possession. . . . Forasmuch as he was primarily a talker, his printed works, like those of others after his kind, are but a sop for posterity :—‘A last dying speech and confession (as it were) to show that not for nothing were they held rare fellows in their day.’

A last word. I have everywhere read that we must praise him now and always for that, being a stricken man, he would live out his life. Are we not all stricken men, and do we not all do that? And why, because he wrote better than any one, should he have praise and fame for doing that which many a poor, consumptive sempstress does ; cheerfully, faithfully, with no eloquent appeals to God, nor so much as a paragraph in the evening papers? That a man writes well at death’s door is sure no reason for making him a hero ; for, after all, there is as much virtue in making a shirt, or finishing a gross of match-boxes, in the very act of mortality, as there is in polishing a verse, or completing a chapter in a novel. As much, I say ; but is there not an immense deal more? In the one case, the sufferer does the thing he loves best in life. In the other, well—who that has not made shirts, or finished match-boxes, shall speak? Stevenson, for all his vocalisings, was a brave man, with a fine, buoyant spirit ; and he took the mystery of life and time and death as seemed best to him. But we are mortals all ; and, so far as I have seen, there are few of us but strive to keep a decent face for the Arch-Discomforter. There is no wonder that Stevenson wrote his best in the shadow of the Shade ; for writing his best was very life to him. Why, then, all this crawling astonishment—this voluble admiration? If it meant anything, it would mean that we have forgotten how to live, and that none of us is prepared to die ; and that were an outrage on the innumerable unstoried martyrdoms of humanity. Let this be said of him, once for all : ‘He was a good man, good at many things, and now this also he has attained to, to be at rest.’ That covers Sophocles and Shakespeare, Marlborough and Bonaparte. Let it serve for Stevenson ; and, for ourselves, let us live and die un insulted, as we lived and died before his books began to sell and his personality was a marketable thing.

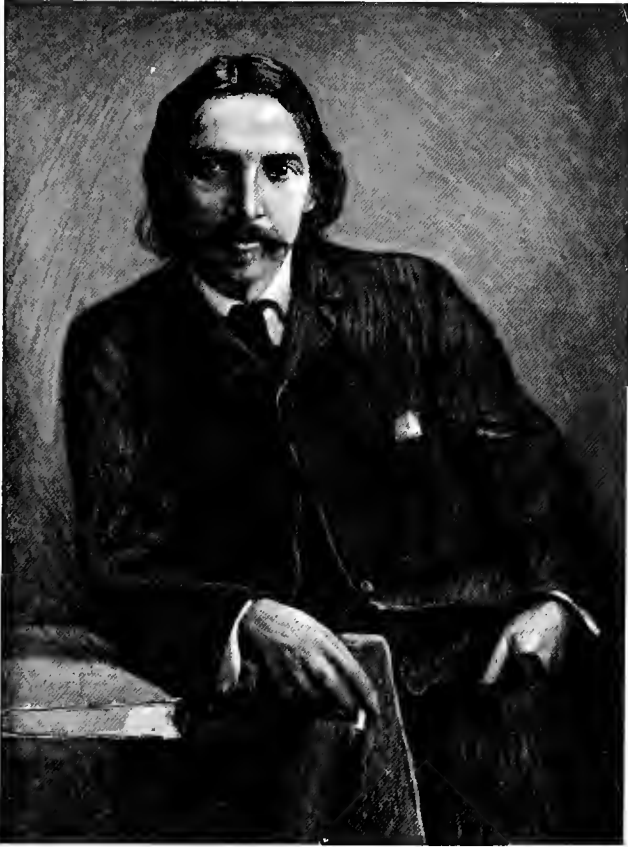
Stevenson was one of the thinnest persons I ever met, fragile-looking and effeminate in appearance, with long black hair coming down to his shoulders, a face that in repose gave one the impression of weariness and discontent, while the mouth was perhaps suggestive of a vindictive temper if roused. But the face—and it was a very clever face—when lighted up by smiles could be very attractive, though it often betrayed a consciousness that he was playing down to the level of his audience, and that he wished his audience to recognise the fact.—SIR BERRY CUSACK-SMITH in the *British Weekly*, October 20, 1898.

This peculiarly American description of Stevenson's personal appearance was printed anonymously in the *New York Sun* in 1887 :

Robert Louis Stevenson, the author, really does look like the water-melon portrait of him in one of the magazines. He sat in a Long Branch car on Tuesday on his way from Manasquan to New York.

He has a long, narrow face, and wears his long brown hair parted in the middle and combed back. . . . Stevenson sat in a forward corner of the car, with his hat off, and the cape of his coat up behind his head like a monk's cowl. His black velvet coat and vest showed plainly, and over his legs he wore a black and white checked shawl. His Byronic collar was soft and untidy, and his shirt was unlaundered, but his clothes were scrupulously clean. On the long, thin, white fingers of his left hand he wore two rings, and he kept these fingers busy constantly pulling his drooping moustache. His face is slightly freckled and a little hollow at the cheek, but it has a good bit of Scotch colour in it.

Mr. Stevenson presented such an odd figure that all in the car stared at him, particularly when a rumour of who he was ran among the people. But he seemed unconscious of the interest he aroused. He was reading a book, and every now and then he would fix a sentence in his mind, close the book on one finger, look at the ceiling and muse. When a sentence



A FAVOURITE PORTRAIT OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

[To face page 140

pleased him he smiled at it, and then read it again. At the Jersey City depôt he threw off his shawl and stood up, and then the figure he cut was extraordinary, for his coat proved to be merely a large cape, with a small one above it, and under both came his extra long legs, or, rather, his long lavender trousers, for they appeared to have no legs within them.

'One Who Knew Him' wrote as follows to the *Westminster Budget* a few days after the announcement of his death :

Stevenson was Stevenson, and there one is inclined to leave it, in despair of saying more. He was 'all for *Heiterkeit*,' brilliant, gay, buoyant, witty, though worn with illness, and, as his friends thought, in the shadow of death. All the world knows his portraits, and in feature and face he closely resembles the best of them ; but no portrait ever gave the light and shade, the infinitely noble expression of his face, the tall, slim figure, all wires and springs. He was all action ; and like a Southerner, or the Celt which he discovered in himself, he talked with his whole body. Now he would be balancing himself on the edge of the fender with his back to the fire, the next moment across the room and poised on the corner of the table, in hot chase of some brilliant fancy.

'Talked
with his
whole
body.'

A rare story-teller in all kinds, he especially delighted in ghost stories, told them with immense solemnity, and, I think, firmly believed in many of them. His flashing brown eyes, long black hair and velvet coat specially suited him to this part. He talked as he wrote, with a fine instinct for the *bizarre* and the curious, but as his conversation was without the elaboration of his writing, so it gained something in *finesse* and dash. He was a part, not only of all he had written, but of all he had read, and to listen to him was to gain some hint of his secret. Shakespeare, Meredith, Montaigne, he not only read but absorbed ; the Bible he always declared to be the best of all books. The literary reminiscence was not hunted up to fill the place, but came at call, and his felicity in the use of it was as apt when he talked as when he wrote.

Added to all this was a delightful gay humour, a sort of coyness and archness which reminds me of nothing so much as Miss Grant in his own 'Catriona.' Indeed, I seem to see more of the real Stevenson in that lady than in any male character in his books. His was just that quality of wit, that fine manner and great gentleness under a surface of polished raillery. For there was about him an extraordinary kindness and tenderness. No man was so deferential, so encouraging, so much interested in the homely affairs of another. His compliments were things to remember for a lifetime, so deftly were they conveyed and so charmingly turned. Mr. Stevenson's return from exile had been one of the things to look forward to in life, and though at times it seemed remote, all his friends had cherished the idea.

All comment on the Stevenson letters made by the near friends of the author centred, sooner or later, in the statement that they were, though incomparable as letters, no better than his talk; that they, indeed, represented just his talk. **The Delight of his Talk.** And when we are told that that talk was the delight of his intimates, we can believe it without difficulty. It might, in fact, be said that, among the thinking, the sum of the effect produced by these letters, and their chief value, was to draw attention to how very good a thing good talk is, and also to bring about a realisation of how rare, in our English-speaking world, such talk is getting to be. If Mr. Stevenson had been a Frenchman, and if the public to which his letters were ultimately given had been French, the discovery, by that public, that he was wont so spontaneously to pour himself forth in his friendships, reserving himself so little, touching so fearlessly upon all things of life that are near the quick, would probably have caused little surprise. But with the appreciation of the English-reading world, a certain surprise has undoubtedly been mingled. We have had other letters of eminent writers given to us in recent years, but they contained no intimations of an ability or a willingness to communicate thought on all subjects, personal or universal, with anything approaching Mr. Stevenson's abundance.—From 'The Point of View' in *Scribner's Magazine*.

The title of an article—'The Author of "Dr. Jekyll"'—which appeared in the *New York Bookbuyer*, March 1888, indicated how R. L. S. was regarded at that time in America. The contribution in question was initialed 'H.,' and contains several passages of value, since the writer was apparently on terms of some intimacy with his subject:

A Fireside
Impression.

Fortunately for the fancy of his readers, Mr. Stevenson bears the test of personal contact with something more than success; he interprets his work and gives new ground for impressions already formed. Slender in person, nervous in movement, his face is singularly sensitive to emotion and thought. His manner is gracious and free, without either self-consciousness or the affectation of indifference to the interest which brings people to him. Standing before the open fire in the quaint, low room of the old house in which he is passing the winter, he delights his visitor by the freshness and charm of his manner and talk. He speaks not with his lips only, often the usual Anglo-Saxon manner, but with his whole person. His large luminous eyes suggest the depths of experience and thought out of which his psychological romances and studies have issued, and his constant changes of attitude, as he loses himself in the conversation, disclose the dominance of the mind over the physique. His thought is made more eloquent by this unconscious sympathy of the whole person.

Mr. Stevenson's talk is very like his writing; it is fresh, racy, redolent of the soil out of which he has grown. His phrases have not been worn smooth by use; they are full of sharp outlines. To recall his own characteristic description of a talker of his acquaintance, 'he must have worn the words next to his skin and slept with them.' He sees everything from his own point of view, and puts his case, not dogmatically, but pictorially, graphically, with pith and force of a perfectly direct and sincere nature. As he talks, one of those quaint and racy essays in 'Memories and Portraits' seems to be precipitating itself; observation, comment, criticism, keen perception of character and fact long held in the solution of thought, swiftly

crystallise into memorable phrase. Mr. Stevenson does not indulge in monologue; he can supply his own cues, but he is quite ready to take them from others, and he touches subject after subject lightly, effectively, with a brilliant distinctness, both of perception and impression. So active is his mind, so alert his imagination, that he needs but a hint, and your tentative inquiry draws forth a series of observations full of pith and graphic force. There is nothing commonplace in Mr. Stevenson; he uses none of the well-worn conventions, fences himself with none of the customary reserves. He gives himself as readily in his speech as in his books; he scorns to do less, and he could not do more.

Such a man is well worth hearing discourse at ease before his fire. Without, the snow lies deep on the hills, and the river runs dark among its spruces and firs, to lose itself in the hollow of the mountains. A few books are scattered about, the companions of a man who evidently reads into books as well as through them. Above all, the man himself holds you by his simple earnestness and the fresh and penetrating charm of his quality; a something purely individual and temperamental. You rejoice in his apparent vigour, in the nervous force of his attitude and voice, in the clear health of his wonderful eye, in the promise of years of life and work that are in him.

To the *Academy*, December 19, 1896, 'W. M.' contributed an article styled 'R. L. S.: An Anniversary Chapter.' The initials, of course, were those of Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, from whose recollections this memory portrait of Stevenson is taken:

Many are the portraits of Mr. Stevenson, but I must say at once that in a very few of these—and the portrait of Mr. Richmond's at the National Portrait Gallery, reproduced as our supplement, is not among them—do I recognise Stevenson as I knew him. True, Mr. Strang is at one with Mr. Richmond, and indeed with some of the photographs, in giving us this fixed, plethoric version of a face which, as I saw it, was buoyant and lightly carried off, despite its large bones and its angularity. The

**A Memory
Portrait.**

portraits by his friend Mr. Sargent are more the man to me, though I remember exclaiming 'Queer!' when I first saw the picture in which Stevenson walks the room with a cigarette—a picture now hanging over the dining-room mantelpiece at Vailima. No doubt Stevenson was a restless sitter, as Mr. Sargent indicates by painting him in the act of walking. Eager above all and in everything, he was not a man to repose or to pose. Signor Nerli, an Italian artist, who painted him at Vailima in the autumn of 1892, must have found that; but Stevenson worked off some of his restlessness by writing doggerel as he sat:

'Did ever mortal man hear tell o' sae singular a ferlie
As the coming to Apia here of the painter Mr. Nerli?

He cam'; and O, for a' human friends o' a' he was the pearlie—
The pearl o' a' the painter folk was surely Mr. Nerli.

He took a thraw to paint mysel'; he painted late and early;
O wow! the many a yawn I've yawned in the beard o' Mr. Nerli.

Whiles I would sleep an' whiles would wake, an' whiles was mair than
surly,

I wondered sair as I sat there fornent the eyes o' Nerli,

"O will he paint me the way I want, as honny as a girlie?
Or will he paint me an ugly tyke?—an' be damned to Mr. Nerli!"

But still an' on whichever it be, he is a canty kerlie.
The Lord protect the back an' neck o' honest Mr. Nerli.'

What struck me at once on seeing Stevenson, was that the eyes were singularly far apart for so narrow a head. But it is not the structure of his face that is most in my memory when I think of the afternoon when I first met him in 1884. It was the mobility of his features, the volatility of his whole bearing. 'Valiant in velvet' he was that afternoon, as he sat on the arm of a chair in the Savile Club smoking-room, and read out a set of verses of which I have not a word to keep, so much was my mind drawn into my eyes. If artists fail to bring back that face, perhaps literature will supply it. What report does he himself make? Readers of 'The Epilogue to An Inland Voyage' will recall the charming chapter on the author's capture and imprisonment by the civic vigilance of Châtillon-

sur-Loire. He owed, he says, his disastrous luck to his appearance: 'His face is not, like those of happier mortals, a certificate. For years he could not pass a frontier or visit a bank without suspicion.' That is for laughter. Not so is the amazing sketch of Mr. Henley.¹

Was there ever such an inventory of a man? That unspeakable slightness we must conclude is unpaintable too, since that is the very quality some of these portraits lack. Not that Stevenson changed; for 'M. R.,' one of the last visitors to see him in Samoa, says:

'He was almost a skeleton, and wasted to a mere shadow, like a dead leaf. His hands were, indeed, scarcely wider than their framework; his limbs were painfully thin; he seemed light enough to lift with one finger; a blow would have killed him.'

This witness passed Stevenson on the road at first without recognition. 'So different,' he too says, 'was the man from his portraits.' And yet a likeness was there, and the visitor awoke suddenly to the recognition of 'this thin, brown ghost, in peaked hat and white clothes.' Speech followed, and then he recognised also 'the infinite charm of manner, half virile, half feminine,' a true touch. 'His eyes,' adds this writer, 'were soft and luminous, and so shone out through that thin, dark mask of a face, that for a little while I could discern nothing else but their beauty.' Then there are the words of Mrs. Van Rensselaer, who found Stevenson ill, in 1888, in a dismal room of a dismal New York hotel. She saw 'sensitiveness and refinement of a virile sort in the general cast of the face and head, sagacity in the long but not prominent nose, and poetic feeling in the contour of the brow.' That was in view of the profile. Of the full view she says: 'The upper part was deer-like in its gentle serenity, but the lower part was almost fox-like in its keen alertness; and the mobility of the mouth hardly seemed to fit with the intentness of the wide dark eyes.' That is recognisable; so is the word 'eager' which this lady well applies to the appearance as much as to the manner of Stevenson, even when bed-ridden. Eager is the word, she says, which remains with her. And what is that but to say that he was still upon the

¹ See 'Apparition,' page 132 of this volume.

road?—making tracks, as of old, in all that he did; dying at the last with more haste than Emily Brontë died: eager and glad to be gone—even on his last flitting.

Mr. Charles D. Lanier wrote of Stevenson as follows in the *American Review of Reviews*, February 1895:

He was an out-and-out gipsy in temperament. A Scotchman to the backbone, he was a South Sea Islander much more than skin deep, a good deal of a cowboy, and quite half a Frenchman. The Romany spirit was always with him. In person Stevenson was 'unspeakably slight,' thin chested, yet of agile and pleasing figure, with a massive head, fullish lips, bordered by a moustache and small imperial, and large, full, dark brown eyes, whose glowing eagerness, though seen only in a poor picture, can never be forgotten. His fingers were singularly long, taper, and expressive. His dark hair was generally quite long, though this was less an artistic affectation than an added defence against cold. So curiously sensitive was he to atmospheric influences that sometimes he would have a trifle clipped from this mane each day, until the desired contour was attained—fearing that a too sudden shearing might bring on an illness. He could not permit the approach of a person who was under the influence of a very trifling 'cold in the head'—so delicately did his physical nature respond to the most subtle impressions.

Traits of
Character.

He was a confirmed smoker, and in 'Virginibus' he pronounces a reasonable acquaintance with the weed to be one of the essential attributes of a husband. You may be sure that whatever hardships he imposes on his marooned sailors, he has not the heart to sail the ship away without leaving a handsome supply of tobacco on the desert island. The good things of this world in general he had the acutest sympathy for, though his illness shut him from them through the latter part of his life. This constantly recurring weakness kept him from nearly all the out-of-door activities in which he would have delighted to join. His openly expressed ideal was to be a man of action, for whom literature should be a solace, a luxury and a means of giving pleasure to others. But this was doubtless a mere hobby,

born of his frequent helplessness ; it is inconceivable that the artist in the man should not have always dominated him.

Perhaps no one was ever quicker to make deep friends when the true metal was found, or surer to grapple them 'with hooks of steel.' A witty, ever-ready talker, a charmingly responsive listener, he was the best of company, even when he was in his bed-prison. His eager vivacity seemed to show no abatement save in the total eclipses of health. From Apia to Saranac Lake, from the Sierra Nevada to Skerryvore Light, he left here and there, in his nomadic wake, devoted hearts that had become irresistibly fascinated by this bright, graceful humanist and artist, who was dying.

Several of these life-long friendships were sealed many years before there was any actual meeting. So completely did the romancer reveal himself in his books that, apart from the strong attraction which grew between him and his editors through constant correspondence, other admirers appeared whom he had never even heard of, to offer their sympathy and active aid when his struggle for life was at its height.

Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll wrote a short paper on Stevenson's personal and literary characteristics in the *Bookman*, October 1901 (reprinted in 'The Bookman Booklet' on R. L. S., 1902), from which these paragraphs are culled :

He was simply the bravest of men. Now and then, as in his letter to George Meredith, he lets us see under what disabling conditions he fought his battle. Human beings in a world like this are naturally drawn to one who suffers, and will not let himself be mastered or corrupted by suffering. They do not care for the prosperous, dominant, athletic, rich, and long-lived man. They may conjecture, indeed, that behind all the bravery there is much hidden pain, but if it is not revealed to them they cannot be sure. They love Charles Lamb for the manner in which he went through his trial, and they love him none the less because he was sometimes overborne, because on occasions he stumbled and fell. Charlotte Brontë was an example of fortitude as remarkable as Stevenson, but she was not brave after the

'The
Bravest of
Men.'

same manner. She allowed the clouds to thicken over her life and make it grey. Stevenson sometimes found himself in the dust, but he recovered and rose up to speak fresh words of cheer. He took thankfully and eagerly whatever life had to offer him in the way of affection, of kindness, of admiration. Nor did he ever in any trouble lose his belief that the Heart of things was kind. In the face of all obstacles he went steadily on with his work, nor did he ever allow himself to fall below the best that he could do. An example so touching, so rare, so admirable, is a reinforcement which weary humanity cannot spare.

With these qualities, and, indeed, as their natural result, Stevenson had a rare courtesy. He was, in the words of the old Hebrew song, 'lovely and pleasant,' or rather, as Robertson Smith translated it, 'lovely and winsome,' in all his bearings to men of all kinds, so long as they did not fall under the condemnation of his moral judgment. With a personality so rich, Stevenson had the power of communicating himself. He could reveal his personality without egotism, without offence. Many writers of charming individuality cannot show themselves in their books. There is as little of themselves in their novels as there would be in a treatise on mathematics, if they could write it. Perhaps less. There have been mathematicians like Augustus de Morgan, who could put humour and personality into a book on geometry.

In his essay on the 'Life' of Stevenson which Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton contributed to the *Daily News* of 18th October 1901, that critic wrote :

Such a statement, for example, as the statement that Stevenson was a 'faddling hedonist,' ought to have aroused any friend of Stevenson's to an access of the most creditable bad temper. To say that Stevenson was a 'faddling hedonist' is like saying that Schopenhauer was a cheap optimist, or that Mr. Keir Hardie is weighed down by a superstitious reverence for the powers that be. Let us consider for a moment what were the facts.

A certain human being, no matter who, was so heavily stricken with a deadly danger of the lungs that he had to lie in bed day

**'Enormous
Capacity
for Joy.'**

and night, and was permitted neither to move nor to speak. On the top of this his right arm was put into a sling to prevent hæmorrhage. When the joys of this condition were but half exhausted, it was discovered that his eyesight was endangered by ophthalmia from the dust, and he was consequently condemned in addition to lie in complete darkness. In this state of things his 'faddling hedonism' led him to compose the greater part of 'A Child's Garden of Verses.' Out of that horrible darkness and silence and immobility comes a voice that says :

'The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.'

To read of such a thing is like hearing a corpse speak suddenly of birds and sunshine. It is the sublimest testimony to creation that the Creator himself could ask, the testimony of one who had lost all. Let any one who thinks little of it smash his own lungs, disable his own arm, gag his own mouth, blind his own eyes, and then resign himself with a self-indulgent gaiety to being a faddling hedonist. Is it possible that even the seven-fold stupidity of the critical spirit does not see that gaiety was valuable to Stevenson precisely because it is the most difficult of all the virtues? As most men have triumphantly maintained some level of sobriety he triumphantly maintained a level of exhilaration. He discovered the new asceticism of cheerfulness, which will prove a hundred times harder than the old asceticism of despair. It is an idle thing, comparatively speaking, to remind the world that, gay as Stevenson was, he was only a Puritan in fancy dress. It is futile to say that, although he was hilarious, he was serious. For, as a matter of fact, no man can be merry unless he is serious. Happiness is as grave and practical as sorrow, if not more so. We might as well imagine that a man could carve a cardboard chicken or live on imitation loaves of bread, as suppose that any man could get happiness out of things that are merely light or laughable. The really frivolous man, not unknown in fashionable circles, is the man who is too frivolous to enjoy himself. Stevenson's enormous capacity for joy flowed directly out of his profoundly religious temperament. He conceived himself as an unimportant guest at one eternal and uproarious banquet, and, instead of grumbling at the soup,

he accepted it with that careless gratitude which marks the baby and the real man of the world. He rode on the great galloping gift-horse of existence, with the joy of a horseman at once dexterous and reckless, and did not, like so many more ambitious philosophers, nearly fall off in his desperate efforts to look the gift-horse in the mouth. His gaiety was neither the gaiety of the Pagan nor the gaiety of the bon vivant. It was the greater gaiety of the mystic. He could enjoy trifles, because to him there was no such thing as a trifle. He was a child who respected his dolls because they were the images of the image of God, portraits at only two removes. He was a boy who thought his fireworks were as splendid as the stars, but it was only because he thought the stars were as youthful and as festive as the fireworks.

Mr. Frederick Greenwood wrote as follows in the *Sphere* of December 7, 1901, his remarks being called forth by Mr. W. E. Henley's *Pall Mall Magazine* article :

I am of Stevenson's admirers, and resentful of the critics (amongst whom I do not include Mr. Henley) who began to find out when Stevenson died that after all he was no considerable writer, and particularly that his style was bad. Whether they would have discovered that so readily if he had not told them of his extraordinary pains in youth to acquire a style I doubt; at the same time doubting not at all that he had a good style that was his own much more than anybody else's, and that in certain variations of this style he wrote many excellent and some deep and truly beautiful pages. For one, therefore, I am in no fear that Stevenson's reputation as a writer will be taken from him by the criticism of the day, and am in no way uneasy save when I look at his portraits. There are many of them—at least, enough. They have their variations as a matter of course, but all have the same strange stamp of something more than personal singularity. His genius was by no means of an uncommon kind. He might have been a sort of Paganini among novel writers, but he was not. So far as we are able to judge, there are thousands of Sandy Smiths and John Joneses entirely

'That
Kobold
Look.'

like him in character and conduct ; but the face of him in these portraits is the face of a man from another and not a superior world. It fascinates, yet not with a pleased, embracing fascination, but with a curiosity that stands off on guard while it inquires. Whether few or many others are impressed by it in the same way, of course I do not know, but to me it is the most threateningly elfish face that I have ever seen in print or paint. As I look I feel as Mr. Kipling felt when he was 'afraid,' though not in exactly the same way. Now I should like to know, as some others must, whether Stevenson had that kobold look in life, and whether more or less when young, or than appears in his pictures ; and perhaps Mr. Henley or some other friend of Stevenson's will say whether he ever heard of an ancestor of his changed in the cradle, as sometimes happened with the Highland Scotch. To do so will be to satisfy a poignant but a legitimate and even a philosophical curiosity.

From an unsigned article on the 'Life' in *Blackwood's Magazine*, November 1901 :

About his school-days Mr. Stevenson was less communicative than about the period preceding his exit from the nursery, and his biographer has not been able to add very much to what is already known. He has left no lasting tradition behind him at the Edinburgh Academy, though we **'Not a True Bohemian.'** have heard a vague story that instead of spending his daily penny for luncheon he used to save it up, with a view to an expedition on Saturday to Leith, where the company of seafaring men was to be readily obtained. He spent only two years at that famous school, and we have it on good authority that in the printed school-list for 1862, his name appears among the 'gytes' as Stevenson, Robert, while in the list for 1863 it is rendered as Stevenson, Lewis R. This is the sort of vital fact which will be greedily seized upon by those whose amusement it is to 'thrash out' the lives of great men, and we are happy to make them a present of the information. It was certainly a strange freak, at the age of eighteen, to alter the spelling of his second name merely because he had taken a dislike to a prominent fellow-townsmen who employed the ordinary Scotch mode of spelling that, his own, patronymic. What Mr. Stevenson

would have done had his baptismal names chanced to be William Ewart, we scarcely like to think. . . .

To refer to his eccentricity in dress—reassumed, after a temporary suspension, when he was old enough to know better—is to adduce sufficient proof of the predominance in him of this fatal quality. We think none the worse of a young fellow for being a bit of a dandy: it indicates an abhorrence of those slovenly habits, those ‘dressing-gown and slipper-tricks,’ which, if not sternly checked in youth, will assuredly obtain the mastery in middle age. But grossly to violate the ordinary conventions of dress, whether a sense of comfort or of artistic effect be made the excuse—still more to wear long hair and even *seem* to be the reverse of *soigné* in the matters which concern the adornment of the person—indicates a frame of mind which must seriously obstruct the operation of the better qualities which lie beneath. The truth is that Stevenson was not a Bohemian of the true breed. He was essentially the burgess masquerading as the Bohemian; and that was just the difference between him and his no less brilliant though less celebrated cousin, ‘Bob.’ How could it be otherwise, understanding his pedigree, into which even the ingenuity of antiquaries could not contrive to interpolate James Mohr? The velvet coat, the black shirt, all the other items of the panoply of eccentricity, were donned, whether in Princes Street or in Piccadilly, not as a matter of course and in the ordinary nature of things, but for the sake of being odd; with an eye on the *digito monstrari*; and by way of protest and defiance to the world which went on its own way, not much concerning itself with youthful genius and its obtrusive manifestations.

The handwriting of Mr. Stevenson was a horror to compositors, and the anxiety of the printers was by no means abated when they succeeded in getting the proofs despatched to the novelist, as it was his not infrequent habit to signify his displeasure at any slip from accuracy in strong terms on the margin of his proof-sheets; and in the matter of punctuation he was extremely fastidious.—*Edinburgh Dispatch*, December 19, 1894.

Stevenson's
Hand-
writing.

Mr. Edmund Gosse wrote an article on 'Stevenson's Relations with Children' which appeared concurrently in *Chambers's Journal* and the *Youth's Companion of His Relations with Children*. Boston, in July 1899, and has not been printed in any of Mr. Gosse's books. He begins by mentioning that it was 'a terrible disappointment' to him when Mr. Swinburne confessed, after reading 'A Child's Garden of Verses' at his suggestion, that he could see nothing in it that showed any appreciation of childhood. Proceeding to discuss Stevenson's own childhood, Mr. Gosse writes :

He was still a rather little boy when, in the summer holidays, having been reading a number of 'detective' novels of a bad kind, he was passing one Sunday afternoon along a road which led through one of the suburbs of Edinburgh, and saw a deserted house, left furnished, but without, apparently, a caretaker. It suddenly struck Stevenson that it would be a very gallant thing to break into this house. No one was in sight, and, stealing round, he found it possible to open a window at the back, and so climb in. It really was unoccupied, and he prowled from room to room, looking at the books and pictures, in a great excitement of spirit, until he heard, as he thought, a noise in the garden. This sent him immediately, in an instant collapse of courage, under a bed, and then terror seized him. He imagined himself pounced upon, charged with robbery, marched home with gyves upon his wrists, and arriving just as the family were assembling to attend evening service. He burst out crying, and could not stop, and his sobs echoed in the empty house.

He crept out where he had crept in, having done no harm to anything except his little tender Scottish conscience. But the spirit of adventure, which was native to him, is exemplified in the story, and also a sort of solitude, as of a boy obliged to play by himself for want of other pirates and burglars to combine with.

The writer then goes on to mention Stevenson's visits to Mr. Gosse's home and his interest in his friend's

children, and suggests that Stevenson's interest lay chiefly in discussing the child mind with grown-up people :

About 1878, I find (continues Mr. Gosse) in looking over old letters, Stevenson telling me, 'I envy you your wife, your home, your child'; and this would be enough for a constructive biographer to build up a theory of Stevenson's domestic aspirations upon, were it not that, unfortunately, the sentence proceeds, and ends with 'your cat.' Now, Stevenson's relations to cats were absolutely cold; and if we had to argue that he loved children on the basis of this declaration, it would go ill with us. But, as all the world has been informed, he eventually married a lady who brought with her a young son by a former marriage.

I am not going to intrude on the province of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, who is thoroughly capable of telling us what his communications with his stepfather were; but I think he will not be angry with me if I say that the new relation, almost that of a father, and quite that of a play-fellow, made an instant change in Louis Stevenson's attitude towards children. He began to see in them all variations of this intelligent and sympathetic little stepson of his own.

Mr. Gosse then refers to the curious little booklets produced by Stevenson and his stepson at Davos in 1881, and says :

It is a temptation to make some extracts from these diverting little books; but as I look through my own set of them for this purpose, I am bound to admit that, although they are full of fun, it is the fun of a grown-up person reflecting on his own little-childishness, and not of a child among children.

We come, therefore, to 'A Child's Garden of Verses,' which first made Stevenson known to the world as a poet and as a student of childhood. It is necessary to remind ourselves that twelve years ago Stevenson's name was not one to conjure with, as it is now. His friends were as timid as hens about this new experiment of their duckling's; they hesitated and doubted to the last. Nor was it only they who doubted. The poet himself had fearful qualms. He wrote to me about the proofs of 'A Child's Garden of Verses,' March 12, 1885: 'They look ghastly

in the cold light of print; but there is something nice in the little ragged regiment after all; the blackguards seem to me to smile, to have a kind of childish, treble note that sounds in my ears freshly; no song, if you will, but a child's voice.'

The book, therefore, was somewhat timidly published; but there was no doubt about the authenticity of the voice, and Stevenson was accepted at once as one of the rare writers of genius about childhood. . . .

He retained, in extraordinary freshness, the memory of himself as a child. Most persons have a very vague recollection of what they themselves really felt and hoped for at the age of eight; they try to reproduce their impressions, and the experience of five mingles with that of fifteen. But Stevenson had no cloudiness of memory; he knew exactly what he had gone through. 'I remember,' he said, 'as though it were yesterday, the expansion of spirit, the dignity and self-reliance that came with a pair of moustachios in burnt cork, even when there was none to see.' He himself, as we soon divined, was the child whose emotions and adventures were described in 'A Child's Garden of Verses.' . . .

To the very close of Stevenson's life, he was accustomed to make up adventures as he lay in bed very still, forbidden to speak or move, propped up on pillows, with the world of fancy before him. He had retained a great deal of the temperament of a child, and it was his philosophy to encourage it. In his dreary passages of bed, when his illness was more than commonly heavy upon him, he used to contrive little amusements for himself. He played on the flute, or he modelled little figures and groups in clay. But he could not always be doing this; and when his fingers were tired he lay gazing down on the white world which covered him, and imagined that armies were marching over the hills of his knees, or ships coming to anchor between the blanket and the sheet.

Mr. Gosse arrives at the conclusion that :

In the years I knew him, if Stevenson expressed much interest in children, it was mainly for the sake of their fathers and mothers; but after a while he began to take a very great delight in summoning back to his clear recollection the panic

fears and adventurous pleasures of his own early youth, thus becoming, in his portraiture of himself, the consummate painter of one species of child. But his relation to other children was shy and gently defiant: it would have exhausted him to play with them; but he looked forward to a time when they should be old enough to talk to him.

Mr. J. Cuthbert Hadden, the well-known Scots *littérateur* and musician, whose home, 'Allermuir,' on the Braid Hills, looks across the vale to the hill of that name beloved of Stevenson, contributed to the *Glasgow Herald*, April 21, 1900, a study of Stevenson from a musician's view-point, under the title of 'R. L. S. and Music.' The paper is reprinted here with the exception of the opening paragraph:

That he was musical at all will probably be regarded as a revelation to most people; and indeed it is only since the recent publication of his correspondence that even the elect have realised the full extent of his musical tastes and accomplishments. That he took at least a mild interest in music might have been inferred from various allusions to the art in his tales and essays. In 'The Wrong Box,' for example, we have the humorous situation where the young barrister pretends that he is engaged on the composition of an imaginary comic opera. It is in the same story, again, that there occurs a veritable 'locus classicus' on the art of playing the penny whistle, and the difference between the amateur and the professional performer. Stevenson, as we shall see, was himself devoted to the penny whistle, and in view of that devotion it is curious to remark the observation in this story that one seldom, if ever, encounters a person learning to play that instrument. 'The young of the penny whistler,' as he puts it, 'like those of the salmon, are occult from observation.' He endows David, his forebear at Pilrig, with the musical ear, for the Laird received David Balfour 'in the midst of learned works and musical instruments, for he was not only a deep philosopher, but much of a musician.'

It is, however, needless to dwell upon these vague impersonal

**His Love
of Music.**

references to music when so much that is directly explicit on the subject is to be found both in the Vailima letters and in the later correspondence. Miss Blantyre Simpson, who knew Stevenson in his early days, says that he had not much of a musical ear, and had only a 'rudimentary acquaintance' with 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'The Wearing of the Green.' It is clear that he improved as the years went on, but his family seem always to have regarded his musical accomplishments with something like scorn. In 1874, when he was twenty-four, he was at Chester with his father, and the verger was taking the visitors round the cathedral.

'We got into a little side chapel, whence we could hear the choir children at practice, and I stopped a moment listening to them with, I dare say, a very bright face, for the sound was delightful to me. "Ah," says he (the verger), "you're very fond of music." I said I was. "Yes, I could tell that by your head," he answered. Then my father cut in brutally, said anyway I had no ear, and left the verger so distressed and shaken in the foundation of his creed that, I hear, he got my father aside afterwards and said he was sure there was something in my face, and wanted to know what it was if not music.'

The elder Stevenson very likely failed to distinguish between the love of music and the possession of an ear for music. The two things are totally different, as Coleridge once pointed out in regard to his own particular case. 'I have,' he said, 'no ear whatever, I could not sing an air to save my life, but I have the intensest delight in music, and can detect good from bad.' Stevenson probably had no such gift of discrimination, but that he had at least the faculty of musical appreciativeness seems perfectly clear. He mentions it as one of his characteristic failings that he never could remember the name of an air, no matter how familiar it was to him; but he was able to say of some engrossing pursuit that it 'fascinates me like a tune.' Wealth, he remarked once, evidently in all seriousness, is 'useful for only two things—a yacht and a string quartette.' In his younger days he seems to have been as much devoted to the opera as ever De Quincey was. At Frankfort, in 1872, he reports that he goes to the theatre every night, except when there is no opera. One night he was 'terribly excited' over

Halévy's 'La Juive,' so much so indeed that he had to 'slope' in the middle of the fifth act. It was raining and cold outside, so he went into a 'Bierhalle' and brooded for nearly an hour over his glass. 'An opera,' he mused, 'is far more real than real life to me. It seems as if a stage illusion, and particularly this hardest to swallow and most conventional illusion of them all—an opera—would never stale upon me. I wish that life was an opera. I should like to live in one; but I don't know in what quarter of the globe I shall find a society so constituted. Besides, it would soon pall—imagine asking for three-kreuzer cigars in recitative, or giving the washerwoman the inventory of your dirty clothes in a sustained and flourished aria!' Here, as some one has remarked, we see the wide-eyed innocence of the man—the tinsel and the humbug so apparent, and yet the vague longing so real.

That Stevenson should make attempts to play the piano was only natural, but in that accomplishment he does not seem to have proceeded very far. When he was at Bournemouth in 1886, he tells Mrs. Fleeming Jenkin that 'I write all the morning, come down, and never leave the piano till five; write letters, dine, get down again about eight, and never leave the piano until I go to bed.' At this time the whistle was Osbourne's instrument. 'You should hear Lloyd on the penny whistle and me on the piano!' Stevenson exclaimed to his father, 'Dear powers, what a concerto! I now live entirely for the piano; he for the whistle; the neighbours in a radius of a furlong and a half are packing up in quest of better climes.' By his own confession, it was a case of picking out the melody with one finger! In the matter of musical arrangement he proclaimed himself a purist, and yet, with charming inconsistency, announces that he is arranging certain numbers of the 'Magic Flute' for 'two melodious forefingers.' Clearly, it does not say much for Mr. Henley's powers as a virtuoso that Stevenson should have 'counterfeited his playing on the piano.'

But Stevenson's particular instrument was the flageolet, the same that Johnson once bought. Miss Simpson says that his flageolet-playing was merely one of his impulsive whims, an experiment undertaken to see if he liked making music. However this may have been, there can be no doubt about his

assiduity in practice ; indeed, the earlier Vailima letters are full of references which show his devotion to the now somewhat despised instrument. 'Played on my pipe,' 'took to tootling on the flageolet,' are entries which constantly occur, the context always making it clear that 'pipe' is synonymous with flageolet. 'If I take to my pipe,' he writes on one occasion, 'I know myself all is over for the morning.' Writing to Mr. Colvin in June 1891, he says:—'Tell Mrs. S. I have been playing "Le Chant d'Amour" lately, and have arranged it, after awful trouble, rather prettily for two pipes ; and it brought her before me with an effect scarce short of hallucination. I could hear her voice in every note ; yet I had forgot the air entirely, and began to pipe it from notes as something new, when I was brought up with a round turn by this reminiscence.' Generally speaking, Stevenson 'tootled' by himself ; but now and again he took part in concerted music with Osbourne and Mrs. Strong. One day he makes music 'furiously' with these two. A day or two later he writes:—'Woke at the usual time, very little work, for I was tired, and had a job for the evening—to write parts for a new instrument, a violin. Lunch, chat, and up to my place to practise ; but there was no practising for me—my flageolet was gone wrong, and I had to take it all to pieces, clean it, and put it up again. As this is a most intricate job—the thing dissolves into seventeen separate members ; most of these have to be fitted on their individual springs as fine as needles, and sometimes two at once with the springs shoving different ways—it took me till two.' However, he got over his difficulty, and was ready for the performance. 'In the evening our violinist arrived, no great virtuoso truly, but plucky, industrious, and a good reader ; and we played five pieces with huge amusement, and broke up at nine.' It goes without saying that, notwithstanding all this practice, Stevenson was exceedingly modest about his accomplishments. 'Even my clumsinesses are my joy,' he said, 'my woodcuts, my stumbling on the pipe.'

But we must not forget the penny whistle. That instrument seems to have at one time quite ousted the flageolet. 'I am a great performer before the Lord on the penny whistle,' he writes to Miss Boodle from Saranac in 1888. 'We now perform duets on two D tin whistles ; it is no joke to make the bass ; I think



STEVENSON PLAYING ON HIS FLAGELOT

[To face page 160

I must really send you one, which I wish you would correct. I may be said to live for these instrumental labours now; but I have always some childishness on hand.' To play a bass of any kind on a tin whistle must indeed have been 'no joke.' But the instrument appears to have had quite a fascination for Stevenson at the time. He even proposed to associate it with the title of what he ultimately called 'A Child's Garden of Verses.' When he sent the manuscript for publication he could not decide about the title, but after some banter on the subject, he tentatively fixed on 'The Penny Whistle: Nursery Verses, etc.' Then he thought of a variation—'Penny Whistles for Small Whistlers,' and directed that the title-page should be embellished with crossed penny whistles, 'or a sheaf of 'em.'

But Stevenson was more than a player of music: he actually tried his hand at composition! In one letter of the year 1886 he sets down in musical notation from memory a part of a dance air of Lully's. About the harmony, which he has evidently made himself, he talks quite learnedly. 'Where I have put an A,' he says, 'is that a dominant eleventh or what? or just a seventh on the D? and if the latter, is that allowed? It sounds very funny. Never mind all my questions; if I begin about music (which is my leading ignorance and curiosity) I have always to babble questions; all my friends know me now, and take no notice whatever.' A few months later and he had composed his Opus 1. He called it a Threnody, and he sent it for criticism to his cousin, Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, who was better versed in the art. Some plain talk on the part of the cousin apparently followed, for we find the composer urging certain points in self-justification. 'There may be hidden fifths in it,' he says, 'and if there are it shows how damn spontaneous the thing was. I could tinker and tic-tac-toe on a piece of paper, but scorned the act with a Threnody which was poured forth like blood and water on the groaning organ.' There was the true composer, putting down his inspiration as it came to him, and allowing it to stand as it was in defiance of all rule! Nothing daunted, he made another attempt. 'Herewith another shy,' he said, 'more melancholy than before, but I think not so abjectly idiotic. The musical terms seem to be as good as in Beethoven, and that, after all, is the great affair. Bar the damn

bareness of the bass, it looks like a real piece of music from a distance. I am proud to say it was not made one hand at a time. The bass was of synchronous birth with the treble; they are of the same age, and may God have mercy on their souls.' That is too characteristically charming to be spoiled by comment.

On the publication in 1894 of the Biography of John Addington Symonds, William Sharp, writing in the *Academy*, gave this bit of Stevensoniana: 'When he (Symonds) was visited at Davos by

Robert Louis Stevenson, he asked his guest what
On 'Mount Ego.' was the dizziest height he had ever climbed to;

what, in all his experience, had made him most fearful. Stevenson replied (I quote only from tradition): 'The giddiest height I ever climbed was Mount Ego. I reached the summit and looked down. I have never got over that dismal purview. I scrambled down again ignominiously, and went and idled in a sunny place, and swore that, except as a sleepwalker, I would never again peer over that crest.' Then, after a silence, he added significantly: 'I wouldn't advise *anybody* to do it. Some day one would overreach one's self, and topple in.' 'And then?' asked Symonds eagerly. 'Oh, then there would be the devil to pay.'



Copyright photos by]



[H. Walter Barnett, 12 Knightsbridge

TWO INTERESTING PORTRAITS OF R. L. STEVENSON, TAKEN IN AUSTRALIA IN 1893

X

STEVENSON THE ARTIST

In the following pages we have a collection of passages from the writings of literary critics touching the artistic side of Stevenson, together with extracts from ephemeral literature which are thought to throw some beams of light on Stevenson the artist.

Although the editor has endeavoured to avoid as far as possible any comment on the respective value of the articles quoted, leaving the selections to speak for themselves, he cannot refrain from expressing his admiration for the study of Stevenson's work which Mr. C. T. Copeland, Lecturer on English Literature to Harvard University, contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1895. For sympathetic knowledge, just appreciation, insight, literary style, this essay is certainly unexcelled. Any selections from a piece of writing so deftly composed, so closely reasoned, cannot give an adequate idea of the singular merit of the whole; but the editor hopes that he may have succeeded in choosing from Mr. Copeland's article those passages which, while representative of the whole, best fit into the scheme of the present work :

Critical
Estimate.

That Stevenson was gay and resolute enough to found a school of romance in the midst of opposing tendencies is, of course, the chief quality of all. He loves the past for the courageous picture of it which survives. He blows his wild war-note, unfurls his banner to the breeze of long ago, and

goes forth always to the motto, '*Esperance* and set on.' This watchword, indeed, might be set above essay as well as story, travels and verse as well as essay, for in almost all the extraordinary variety of his writing Robert Louis Stevenson is the consistent preacher of courage and cheer. The writer's own brave and most pathetic life was, as the world knows, a consistent practising of what he preached. In most of his published words, optimism is at the height of the Selkirk grace, or of Happy Thought in 'A Child's Garden of Verses':

'The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.'

And never, even in 'A Christmas Sermon' or 'Pulvis et Umbra,' does he decline farther into the vale of pessimism than the stage once dubbed meliorism by a great novelist whom he did not love. . . .

Next in importance, perhaps, to the cardinal trait of Mr. Stevenson's career, that he was a romantic in an age of realism, come the facts that he was a Scotchman, born within the frown of Edinburgh Castle, and that his father and grandfather were engineers to the Board of Northern Lights. This sounds like a business connection with the Aurora Borealis, but it means merely that the lives of the Stevensons had the relish both of salvation and of adventure, because they were the builders of Skerryvore, the Bell Rock, and other great sea-lights along the northern coast of Britain. Much of the best writing of the author of 'David Balfour'—can any one forget the dedication of that book?—thrills and tingles with the feeling of race and native land. I have in mind at this moment the 'Foreigner at Home,' a page or two of the 'Silverado Squatters,' and portions of the paper entitled 'The Manse,' ending with the triumphant picture of ascent from the writer, through engineers, Picts, and what-not clans and tribes, to Probably Arboreal chattering in the top of the family tree. Less often, yet again and again, both in verse and in prose, does Stevenson dwell proudly upon the exploits and the hardy lives of his forebears, and mourn the degeneracy in bodily frame and strength of their hearth-keeping descendant. His whole feeling about all this is

in some enchanting lines written at Bournemouth, in a house named after the chief memorial of his family:—

‘ Say not of me that weakly I declined
 The labours of my sires, and fled the sea,
 The towers we founded and the lamps we
 To play at home with paper like a child.
 But rather say: *In the afternoon of time
 A strenuous family dusted from its hands
 The sand of granite, and beholding far
 Along the sounding coast its pyramids
 And tall memorials catch the dying sun,
 Smiled well content, and to this childish task
 Around the fire addressed its evening hours.*’

It never occurred to him that he was the brightest of all the lamps they lit, but many men, even of the not inhuman, would be content to see Skerryvore itself quenched in the ocean, if by that extinction the light might shine again on Pala mountain. . . .

Mr. Henry James has said, in words which none may hope to better, that Mr. Stevenson is a Scotchman of the world. So, indeed, he is; and so, without doubt, was the man as well as the writer. But this Bohemian, this gypsy, this cosmopolite, had, after all his travels—thus I have been told by one who knew him—a slight burr remaining in his speech. And he has a much stronger Doric accent of the mind. England seems to him in many ways an alien land, and the ‘ Foreigner at Home ’ is a resonant statement of differences that lie at the very root of things between the sister kingdoms. The Scot, travelling southward from his grey hills and rocks and mists, marvels—however much he may have read in books—at the rich fields, the quiet rivers, the stolid and sodden peasant, the windmills, and the chimes of bells. The accent of the people sounds pertly in his ear, just as Davie Balfour ‘ was amazed at the clipping tones and the odd sing-song ’ of ‘ the right English speech ’; and to his eye, familiar with thick-walled houses built of stone, the thin, flat-chested edifices of England seem no more than ‘ rickles ’ of brick. The northerner may even be a householder in the south, and his door-key be burnished from long use; but still ‘ the house is no his ain house, he kens by the biggin ’ o’t.’

But Mr. Stevenson is not least attractive when he is of his nation without knowing, or at least without remembering it; when not only, cosmic Scot though he be, he keeps the colour of his nativity, but also, highly secularised Calvinist though he as surely is, he unwittingly suggests the bleak pulpit of the northern kingdom. In 'Father Damien, an Open Letter,' in the 'Samoan Footnote to History,' none but the blind can fail to see a kind of religious heat of argument; and 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' approached at the angle not of art, but of ethics, is the fascinating, hideous result of generations of pondering over the eternal problem of predestination and free will. . . .

If zest in discussion, not to say argument, is a frequent trait of Stevenson's countrymen, why, then, a good amount of buckram is equally apparent in their moral texture. It makes them stiff in judgment, and from this rigidity Stevenson himself was by no means exempt. No one, in these days, except a Scotchman or a New Englander, we must believe, could be so exquisite an artist and have at the same time so large a fund of ethical attention. The incongruity of the union in Stevenson, the like and unlike incongruity of Hawthorne, are to be explained, in the slight and tentative degree to which such mysteries can ever be shown, by the long persistence of the straiter sort of Puritanism in the two countries. Some one exclaims that I am mistaken, that Stevenson is no Puritan. Let me hasten to add that Stevenson is usually un-Scotch in his standards—although he has often expressed his admiration for frugality, and calls it somewhere the artist's armour—but that in stiff adherence to his standards he is valiantly Puritan and Scotch. Of himself he required much; the sum of his moral impost upon others appears to be that they should be brave, honest, cheerful, kind, and that, without seeking their own happiness, they should strive to bring happiness to their fellowmen. Not the *credo* of the unco' guid, this, in Scotland or anywhere else; but it is Stevenson's wherever he is. . . .

It is through Stevenson's knowledge of his country and his sympathy with its people—a quality in him which has all the fervour of a clan, all the geniality of a larger world—that his Scottish tales are his best. 'Treasure Island' for its twenty-one deaths, its buccaneers and stockade, its one most hideous

murder, and, above all, for its 'seafaring man with one leg,' I admire with my brain as an inimitably clever imitation of eminent and well-known models. The style is a little miracle of the direct and the appropriate, and as for the conduct of the fable, that might be taken as a breathing example of the Athenian's formula for oratory,—'Action, action, action.' But in 'Kidnapped'—alas for the inefficient title!—the imitator becomes himself a model; we step at once into an air which, if not more lively, is more alive and more authentic, and the characters, Alan and David, of course, more than any, are felt to be less symbolical and more individual. In their long flight together, the wind seems to turn the pages of that swift record, and the smell of the heather comes with it. The spirit of the nation is dominant. . . .

As the best of the fiction is of that country (Scotland), so likewise some of the shrewdest and most piquant things in the essays are born to the same native manner. 'Memories and Portraits,' by common consent the best *in toto* of the three volumes, is by subject four-fifths Scotch; 'Child's Play,' in 'Virginibus Puerisque,' is in all its origin Scotch; Scotch also in more than that sense the ingenious and eloquent plea for romance, so finely entitled the 'Lantern-Bearers.' Dost remember the minister and the dying gravedigger in 'Old Mortality'? 'The gravedigger heard him out; then he raised himself upon one elbow, and with the other hand pointed through the window to the scene of his lifelong labours. "Doctor," he said, "I hae laid three hunner and fower score in that kirkyaird; and it had been His wull," indicating Heaven, "I would hae likit weel to hae made out the fower hunner!"' Or the 'Old Scotch Gardener'? He would thank you bravely if you praised one of his plants, 'all credit in the matter falling to him. If, on the other hand, you called his attention to some back-going vegetable, he would quote Scripture: "*Paul may plant and Apollus may water*"; all blame being left to Providence, on the score of deficient rain or untimely frosts.'

Of Scotland and the north, also, was Mr. Hunter—but we must leave this too captivating part of our theme with only a final illustration, from the 'Silverado Squatters,' of how one true-born Scotchman feels when he meets another in foreign lands.

The sentiment lifts the young writer not so much into maturity of style, for that was surprisingly his already, as into that stronger and fuller tide of feeling which one encounters in general only in Stevenson's later writing. The twain, says he, may be rivals, almost foreigners, at home; but when they meet abroad, they are joined at once by 'some ready-made affection.' . . .

That Mr. Stevenson is a sworn romantic, and that he is so much a Scot as to keep a strong flavour of the wilding, in spite of each exotic graft, are truths no less conspicuous than that he is an exquisite and a secure artist in prose narrative, in verse, the essay, and the sketch. So perfectly indeed does he write that the Philistines—and not the mere *bourgeois* citizens of the country, but the first families of Philistia—are often heard to accuse him of having naught to say. To them, it is more than probable, he has nothing at all to say, unless they first master certain remarks once made by Mr. Joseph Addison on the subject of Literary Taste. But to the minds of men who have a humble and hearty admiration for good writing, Stevenson's tales of adventure gain much from his care about form; and his kind and sagacious thoughts gain very much indeed from the 'continual slight novelty' of his style. This loved and lost storyteller of ours could no more content himself with the construction used by Dumas in his gay and ragged volumes than with the disposition and English of the scene in 'Guy Mannering' which jars on him like a false note in music or colour. Yet he had read 'Le Vicomte de Bragelonne' five times, and hoped—let us trust the hope was realised—to read it once again before he died. And the jarring scene—which happens, by the way, to have been that of Harry Bertram's landing at Ellangowan—he respects as being in general 'a model instance of the romantic method.' The Meredith jargon Mr. Stevenson would no more think of putting into the mouths of his own people than he would that uttered by the purely symbolic young men and maidens whom Scott fobs off upon us as heroes and heroines. Mr. Meredith is nevertheless the breath of life to him, and Sir Walter 'out and away the king of the romantics.'

In these references to Stevenson's art and the frequent artlessness of Scott and Dumas, there is no slightest intention of

matching him with them. He would not, if he could, have written like them; he could not, if he would, have imagined and invented and swung the whole thing along as they did. They, with all their faults, are great romantics; he, with all his gifts and graces, is a little romantic; and the many well-meaning persons who range him persistently with Scott do him nothing but disservice. . . .

Sir Walter's books seem to me like a large symphony which has many discords; Mr. Stevenson's, like a discreet yet moving theme, perfectly played on fewer instruments. Perhaps we are hasty, the many of us who hold this opinion together. If Scott had died at the age when Stevenson was taken from us, the world would have lacked the 'Waverley Novels'; if a like fate had overtaken Dickens, we should not have had 'A Tale of Two Cities'; and under a similar stroke, Goldsmith could not have written 'Retaliation,' or tasted the bitter-sweet first night of 'She Stoops to Conquer.' At the age of forty-four Mr. Thomas Hardy had probably not dreamed of 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' But what a man has already done at forty year is likely, I am afraid, to be a gauge as well as a promise of what he will do in the future; and from Stevenson we were entitled to expect perfect form and continued variety of subject, rather than a measurable dynamic gain.

Stevenson himself, it would appear, clearly saw the limits within which his talent would best exhibit itself. He never, for a good example, attempted the historical novel, so favourite a field with most romancers. . . . And it would have been as much out of him, I think, to essay a portrait in the grand style, of some bygone king or statesman, as to flash such an Aristophanic ray as Caleb Balderstone across a tragedy in the key of the 'Bride of Lammermoor.' . . .

Several London critics, in the attempt, perhaps, to avenge certain 'bards' upon their 'reviewers,' have spoken grudgingly of his wonderful skill, because, forsooth, he learned to write before he wrote for publication. The offence was deeper dyed because the young Scot sought aid from France, the ancient ally of Scotland, and scrupled not to avow that his sojourn in Paris and the study of French writers had taught him secrets of technique. Even British critics allow a painter to study

pigments before he exhibits a picture, a sculptor to model in clay before he carves the nation's heroes in marble; but, in the face of repeated blows, the fine old superstition dies hard, that ill-regulated impulse is an important element in the 'inspiration' of an art more subtle than either painting or sculpture. Stevenson chose to reduce this element to a minimum, and to make himself the most faithful of apprentices. He became at last the most impeccable of artists; and although the ardent study of an extraordinary variety of masters did not dull his keen, original gift,—as if, indeed, the right use of even the one talent ever failed to multiply it,—he yet keeps in his most ornate pages the good tradition of the language, the classic note of the best English prose. Stevenson loves and practises the *belle phrase*, the harmonious sentence; but scarce ever does he descend to the indolent *cheville*. Never, to the best of my memory, does he make the Wegg-like change,—so often made by Wegg's creator, that great, imperfect genius,—the change from rhythm to metre. In few, he nicely observes the adjective in Dryden's saying, 'that *other* harmony of prose.'

Stevenson's prose, then, discourses eloquent music; and its diversity is no less remarkable than its eloquence. If, like the banker poet, he had elected to read only his own works, he might have found his author always entertaining by frequent recourse from one self to another. He never lacks precision, clearness, proportion,—the classic qualities; but, outside of these, the variety of his masters helped him to be various. . . .

It is not the least of his achievements that, after his death, he should have received the following appreciation from the *Temps* newspaper: 'No one better knew how to construct a phrase, a sentence, a chapter; and by this we mean, not the laborious artifice of a pedant, but that native harmony of a born artist who gives to rhythm the part due to it in the symphony of the words.' And in the same article he is called 'the most classic man of letters, in the favourable sense of the word, of contemporary England.'

In the *Edinburgh Review* of July 1895 there appeared a long critical paper on 'The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson,' a passage from which, relating to his Edin-

burgh days, has already been quoted. The following excerpts from the same source deal with the artistic side of Stevenson's character :

No author need desire a more gratifying tribute than to be mourned and missed as a personal friend by a multitude who only knew him through his books. Nor should Stevenson have deemed it a misfortune that he perhaps took a higher rank among men of letters during his life than may be assigned him by the dispassionate judgment of posterity. He was at the height of his fame when he was with us to enjoy it, and he made no secret of having staked much of his earthly happiness on the endurance of his popularity. Had it been otherwise he would never have made so great a name. For it was his especial charm that he kept himself always in closest touch with the ever-extending circle of his admirers, and to him was given the very rare gift of awakening and intensifying feelings of warm and almost passionate attachment. In fact, with his sensitive and self-revealing versatility he had made friends among all sorts and conditions of men, by taking each or any of them to his innermost confidence.

There was irresistible fascination in what it would be unfair to characterise as egotism, for it came naturally to him to talk frankly and easily himself. No man who was not touchingly free from self-consciousness would have published 'A Child's Garden of Verses.' He cannot address a friend in his melodious rhyming without inviting sympathy and interest by reviving associations and memories. He could never have dreamed, like Pepys, of locking up his confidences in a diary. From first to last, in inconsecutive essays, in the records of sentimental touring, in fiction, and in verse, he has embodied the outer and the inner autobiography. He discourses—he prattles—he almost babbles about himself. He seems to have taken minute and habitual introspection for the chief study in his analysis of human nature, as a subject which was immediately in his reach, and would most surely serve his purposes. We suspect much of the success of his novels was due to the fact that as he seized for a substructure on the scenery and situations which had

'Austere
Self-Train-
ing.'

impressed him forcibly, so in the characters of very different types there was always more or less of self-portraiture. The subtle touch, eminently and unmistakably realistic, gave life to what might otherwise have seemed a lay figure. For the shrewd, though romantic and imaginative, young Scot had a practical side to his genius. The writer of the 'New Arabian Nights' and 'Dr. Jekyll' had no ill-disciplined mind. He could indulge that soaring fancy of his in extravagant flights, and would embody some morbid day-dream or nightmare in strangely sensational fiction. He soon came to understand what 'fetched' the public, and his ambition was set upon fame with its substantial fruits. But he constrained himself from the beginning to a severe and austere course of self-training. He always had attached extreme importance to style, and it was the finish and ultra-refinement of his style which first conciliated and then almost terrorised the critics. In some of the leading reviews, the 'Travels in the Cevennes' and the 'Inland Voyage' were welcomed with almost rapturous admiration. Thenceforward it had become the fashion to admire, and he made the most of an unusually favourable start. It is too often the case that injudicious or exaggerated praise blights the fair prospects of a promising young writer. It lulls him into carelessness, and excites him to short-sighted over-production. On Stevenson the effect was altogether the reverse. Up to a certain point, with the success of each succeeding book he became more thoughtful and more conscientious. He nursed his growing popularity by guarding his fame, and till health had failed, and he fell back on the collaborative system, each volume from Stevenson's pen was assured of a welcome, and not only numbered its eager readers by the ten thousand, but invariably commanded the consideration or adulation of the reviewers. . . .

It seems strange that the praises lavished upon 'Treasure Island' did not satisfy the writer as to his vocation for fiction. We might have fancied that the mere pleasure of doing brilliant work—of conjuring up, at the touch of his pen, the picturesque characters who lived and breathed—would have encouraged and, indeed, constrained him to persevere in story-telling. On the contrary, he hesitated again, and had anxious consultations with candid friends, who expressed very opposite opinions. One of

the ablest of them assured him, with friendly conviction, that his real calling was essay-writing, and that he would do well to confine himself to that. Fortunately for the many to whom he has given infinite pleasure, Stevenson was guided by more judicious counsels. We venture to think that, with his love of intellectual self-indulgence, had he found novel-writing really enjoyable, he would never have doubted at all. But there comes in the difference between him and Scott, whom he condemns for the slovenliness of hasty workmanship. Scott, in his best days, sat down to his desk, and let the swift pen take its course in inspiration that seemed to come without an effort. Even when racked with pains and groaning in agony the intellectual machinery was still driven at a high pressure by something that resembled an irrepressible instinct. Stevenson can have had little or nothing of that inspiring inflatus. He did his painstaking work conscientiously, thoughtfully; he erased, he revised, and he was hard to satisfy. In short, it was his weird—and he could not resist it—to set style and form before fire and spirit.

From a critical essay by an anonymous hand in the *Critic* (New York), December 1894:

To be many-sided, but not to be symmetrical, that, we are told, is the way for an author to take with these times. People must be amused; but they must also have some profit to show for their reading. They like the grotesque; but it must be highly wrought and polished, more Chinese **His Manifold Nature.** than Gothic. They like to study the present with an eye to the future, and to speculate about the future in order to affect the present. Their trust is in the unknown, and their hope is that the known may mould it. Robert Louis Stevenson had, in a remarkable measure, that combination of qualities which the times required. He was a Bohemian, but a Scotch one; he scamped his plots, but not his sentences; he was fascinated by the new and attached to the old. Commissioned from both the peaks of Parnassus, he wore indifferently the bays or the ivy; but he was oftener to be found in the train of the vagabond god than in that of Apollo. He is most enjoyable

when he has some episode of his Bohemian life in view. There is no question that he had an excellent time trudging with the Cigarette far in the rear and Charles of Orleans in his knapsack by the Loire, dining at the art students' long deal table at Grätz, or sampling a certain barrel of piquette, by which there hangs a tale not to be desecrated by print; camping out with his donkey under the stars in the Cevennes, knocking about among South Sea Islands in the *Casco*, exploring the wynds of Edinburgh and the sand-lots of San Francisco. In such scenes he gave way to his secret inclinations; rushed into dangers, and found how safe a place the world is. He had spasms of fear with little risk, and sympathised at a distance with rogues and wrecks, big and little. That sort of thing might not have satisfied him, if he had not been weak of body and strong of imagination.

There is no better land to vagabondise in than the land of dreams. One may meet with sorry adventures there, but they have no consequences. Most of the thrilling experiences to be found in Stevenson's books were undergone there. Did the bank-account run low, he set to and dreamt a new novel. There appears to have been little difference between his sleeping and his waking labours, except that in doing the former he was free from interruption. The dreams that he records are almost all reasonable. At first he read stories—a common experience. Then he began to live them, with a view to making copy. No particular faculty, he found, was unwilling or unable to do its share of the work. Invention, reason, judgment would all be hard at it, and the book, in all its essential parts, would be conceived and thought out in the morning. But the other side of Stevenson's genius—the law-abiding, artistic side—is almost as important as the inventive. From the very first he has surprised us by the extreme finish of his style. We can fancy him, like Flaubert, trying every possible arrangement of the parts of a sentence, and noting carefully the shades of meaning. The strict discipline to which he must have subjected himself in his art had a strong attraction for him (as it has for all true Bohemians) in real life. If he could not have been a wandering romancer, he would willingly have been a Trappist monk.

A few days after the news of Stevenson's death was confirmed, Mr. William Archer wrote for the *New Review*, then edited by Mr. W. E. Henley, a paper entitled 'In Memoriam: R. L. S.' It appeared in the issue for January 1895, and was dated 18-19 December 1894. The pages here selected contain an estimate of Stevenson as a writer of prose and poetry:

The Artist's
Progress.

His earliest writings, descriptive and critical, are astonishingly mature; yet it seems to me that an increasing seriousness, a deepening tenderness, can be traced in the sequence of his works. At first he gloried in his mere strength, he took the athlete's delight in achieving feats of invention and expression. He has told us how imitative was the training to which he subjected himself in boyhood; and he is still, in his first books of travel, criticisms, and stories, 'playing the sedulous ape,' as he phrased it—imitating very eclectically and originally, but still imitating. It is noteworthy that in the Edinburgh Edition of the 'Travels with a Donkey' (how good that he lived to enjoy the homage implied in the instant success of this edition!) we no longer find the italicised proper names, which gave a pretty but somewhat mechanical touch of quaintness to the original copies. He never wrote anything more consummate in their kind than the 'New Arabian Nights'; yet one is glad to think that these exercises in blood-curdling humour came at the beginning of his career as a story-teller, and the Dutch scenes of 'Catriona' near the close. In 'Treasure Island,' masterpiece though it be, he is still imitating, parodying, pouring his genius into a ready-made form. In 'Kidnapped' he breaks away, half unwittingly perhaps, from the boy's-book convention. The 'Master of Ballantrae' is an independent, self-sufficing romance, no more imitative than the 'Bride of Lammermoor' or 'Esmond'; and 'Catriona,' imperfect though it be in structure, carries the boy's book projected in 'Kidnapped' into the higher region of serious character-study and exquisite emotion. Not even Catriona—that pearl of maidenhood, whom Viola and Perdita would hail as their very sister—not even Catriona has succeeded in dissipating the illusion that Robert Louis Stevenson could not draw

a woman. This very day I have seen the dreary old stereotype rearing its undiminished head in more quarters than one. And Catriona does not stand alone. She has on one hand the Princess Seraphina, on the other the woman who loved the Master of Ballantrae, and became his brother's wife. Nay, more—even a half share in Beau Austin's Dorothy Musgrave should be enough to acquit a man of incompetence in the matter of female character-drawing.

To some of us, perhaps—it is entirely a matter of taste or even of mood—Stevenson, the essayist and traveller, is even more unfailingly delightful than Stevenson the story-teller. But the story-teller, or at least the character-drawer, permeates almost all his work. For grace and tact of reminiscence, where shall we look for his equal? What invaluable characters has he not touched off in a few happy strokes! The dear old Sheriff of Dumbarton who had never been able to read 'Othello' ('That noble gentleman and that noble lady—h'm—too painful for me'); the gardener, who took to himself all the credit for a flourishing plant, but left the blame of failure to Providence, saying, 'Paul may plant and Apollos may water'; John Todd, the stentorian shepherd of the Pentlands; the dying gravedigger who said, 'I hae laid three hunner and fower score in that kirkyard; an' it had been His wull I would hae likit weel to hae made out the fower hunner'—these are only a few of the types he has etched for us in Scotland alone, to say nothing of France and America. Even of four-footed animals he has quite a little gallery, from the immortal Modestine down to the intelligent and gentlemanly 'Woggs.' As a nature-painter, to my thinking, he excelled in sky and atmosphere, in effects of night and early morning. Clear air, blue smoke, and 'caller' waters, or dim woods with throbbing stars above—for such subjects as these he had an incomparable touch. . . .

For my own part, I believe that Stevenson's greatness in prose has unduly overshadowed the rare and quite individual charm of his verse. It is true that verse was not his predestinate medium, that he wrote it rather as a man of consummate literary accomplishment than as a born poet, who 'did but sing because he must.' But, on the other hand, he never wrote save from a genuine poetic impulse; he never lashed himself into a metric

frenzy merely because it was his trade. Therefore all his verse is alive with spontaneous feeling ; and so unflinching was his mastery of words, that he succeeded in striking a clear, true note that was all his own.

M. Marcel Schwob is one of the few foreign critics who have thoroughly understood and appreciated Stevenson. His essay, 'R. L. S.,' in the *New Review*, February 1895, must rank with the best ever written on Stevenson and his work. M. Schwob sets out by telling us how he first came under the spell of Stevenson by reading 'Treasure Island' during a long railway journey. It was the old story, he says in effect, but told in a style that was new. He considers that Stevenson stands in direct succession to Daniel Defoe and Edgar Allan Poe in the possession of that secret of riveting the attention of his readers by the intense mystery behind his narrative—a power of which Dickens shows some glimmerings in 'Two Ghost Stories.' All these writers display the same capacity for endowing the most ordinary things with extraordinary significance ; for arriving at startling results by the simplest of means. M. Schwob goes on to say :

A French
Critic's Ap-
preciation.

Deux des incidents les plus terrifiants en littérature sont la découverte par Robinson de l'empreinte d'un pied inconnu dans le sable de son île, et la stupeur du Dr. Jekyll, reconnaissant, à son réveil, que sa propre main, étendue sur le drap de son lit, est devenue la main velue de Mr. Hyde. Le sentiment du mystère dans ces deux événements est insurmontable. Et pourtant aucune force psychique n'y paraît intervenir : l'île de Robinson est inhabitée—il ne devrait y avoir là d'empreinte d'autre pied que du sien ; le Docteur Jekyll n'a pas au bout du bras, dans l'ordre naturel des choses, la main velue de Mr. Hyde. Ce sont de simples oppositions de fait.

Je voudrais en arriver maintenant à ce que cette faculté a de spécial chez Stevenson. Si je ne me trompe elle est plus saisiss-

sante et plus magique chez lui que chez tous les autres. La raison m'en paraît être dans le romantisme de son réalisme. Autant vaudrait écrire que le réalisme de Stevenson est parfaitement irréel, et que c'est pour cela qu'il est tout puissant. Stevenson n'a jamais regardé les choses qu'avec les yeux de son imagination. Aucun homme n'a la figure comme un jambon; l'étincellement des boutons d'argent d'Alan Breck, lorsqu'il saute sur le vaisseau de David Balfour, est hautement improbable; la rigidité de la ligne de lumière et de fumée des flammes de chandelles dans le duel du *Master of Ballantrae* ne pourrait s'obtenir dans une chambre d'expériences; jamais la lèpre n'a ressemblé à la tache de lichen que Keawe découvre sur sa chair; quelqu'un croira-t-il que Cassilis, dans *The Pavilion on the Links*, ait pu voir luire dans les prunelles d'un homme la clarté de la lune, *though he was a good many yards distant?* Je ne parle point d'une erreur que Stevenson avait reconnue lui-même, et par laquelle il fait accomplir à Alison une chose impraticable: *'She spied the sword, picked it up . . . and thrust it to the hilt into the frozen ground.'*

Mais ce ne sont pas là, en vérité, des erreurs: ce sont des images plus fortes que les images réelles. Nous avons trouvé chez bien des écrivains le pouvoir de hausser la réalité par la couleur des mots; je ne sais pas si on trouverait ailleurs des images qui, sans l'aide des mots, sont plus violentes que les images réelles. Ce sont des images romantiques, puisqu'elles sont destinées à accroître l'éclat de l'action par le décor; ce sont des images irréelles, puisqu'aucun œil humain ne saurait les voir dans le monde que nous connaissons. Et cependant elles sont, à proprement parler, la quintessence de la réalité.

En effet, ce qui reste en nous d'Alan Breck, de Keawe, de Thevenin Pensete, de John Silver, c'est ce pourpoint aux boutons d'argent, cette tache irrégulière de lichen, stigmaté de la lèpre, ce crâne chauve avec sa double touffe de cheveux rouges, cette face large comme un jambon, avec les yeux scintillants comme des éclats de verre. N'est-ce pas là ce qui les dénote dans notre mémoire? ce qui leur donne cette vie factice qu'ont les êtres littéraires, cette vie qui dépasse tellement en énergie la vie que nous percevons avec nos yeux corporels qu'elle anime les personnes qui nous entourent?

M. Schwob then essays to show how essential to and inalienable from the characters they describe are the words wherewith the true artist builds up his fictional beings before our eyes. After relating how unreal a real sheep's heart looked when introduced on the end of Giovanni's dagger in a French performance of John Ford's 'Annabella and Giovanni,' and how at the next performance the audience was duly thrilled when Annabella's bleeding heart, made of a bit of red flannel, was borne upon the stage, he observes :

Il me semble que les personnages de Stevenson ont justement cette espèce de réalisme irréel. La large figure luisante de Long John, la couleur blême du crâne de Thevenin Pensete s'attachent à la mémoire de nos yeux en vertu de leur irréalité même. Ce sont des fantômes de la vérité, hallucinants comme de vrais fantômes. Notez en passant que les traits de John Silver hallucinent Jim Hawkins, et que François Villon est hanté par l'aspect de Thevenin Pensete.

M. Schwob's final paragraph is an eloquent lament for the gifted writer of romance whose death had only been reported a few weeks before this notable study appeared in the *New Review* :

Hélas ! nous ne verrons plus rien avec *his mind's eye*. Toutes les belles fantasmagories qu'il avait encore en puissance sommeillent dans un étroit tombeau polynésien, non loin d'une frange étincelante d'écume : dernière imagination, peut-être aussi irréaliste, d'une vie douce et tragique. '*I do not see much chance of our meeting in the flesh,*' m'écrivait-il. C'était tristement vrai. Il reste entouré pour moi d'une auréole de rêve. Et ces quelques pages ne sont que l'essai d'explication que je me suis donnée des rêves que m'inspirèrent les images de *Treasure Island* par une radieuse nuit d'été.

An article marked by much charm of style, and certainly one of the ablest studies of Stevenson, man and artist, that have appeared, was Mrs. M. G. Van Rens-

selaer's paper on 'Robert Louis Stevenson and his Writings,' in the *Century Magazine*, November 1895. The writer points out that, in the fullest sense, only His Mastery of Style. those who have tried to please with their pens can appreciate the work of the rare artist who succeeds. She mentions Stevenson's own confessions as to the infinite pains with which he formed his style, and advises every young writer to place that chapter and also the 'Letter to a Young Gentleman' beneath his pillow :

And there is another chapter of Stevenson's that ought to lie with them. I have forgotten its name, and have not chanced upon it among his collected essays. I read it long ago in a magazine, and I lent it to a friend (until then my friend), who carried it off to Europe and never brought it back. It analysed the riches, poverties, and peculiarities of the English tongue from the technical point of view ; and it must have come with a sort of blinding light, as of a revelation from the mount of art, to many a man who had long believed that he knew how to use his tongue. It showed that mere sound helps or hinders sense, and that all sounds must be considered even apart from sense. It showed that a right respect for them means a delicate regard, not merely for constructions and conspicuous cadences, but also for words and syllables as such, for slightest accentuations, for individual letters, their contrasts and harmonies, and the curious meanings they somehow bear irrespective of the sense to which, in this word or in that, man has forced them to contribute. It showed that an artist does not simply set out the broad pattern of his verbal mosaic with care, and carefully proportion its main parts, but thinks of every sentence as a work of art in itself, of every word and letter as a possible jewel or blot, sure to enhance the effect of the finished work if selected rightly, to mar it if chosen by a listless ear.

In short, this chapter explained an art so difficult, and set a task so subtle, endless, and complex (like the task of the fairy-tale princess who was told to sort the feathers pulled from a thousand different birds), that in reading it one might easily have exclaimed, 'No man can write well,' but for the cheerful

fact that its own words had been set in array by Stevenson. Revealing his attitude towards his art, his persistently beheld ideals, it proved that the attitude was not overstrained, that the ideals might be achieved. Perfectly achieved? Constantly, consistently achieved? Stevenson may answer. Perfect sentences, he says, have often been written, perfect paragraphs at times—never a perfect page. . . .

Perfect accord between sense and sound, perfect beauty of sound, and a perfect avoidance of palpable artifice—these, with freshness and a very masculine vigour, are the qualities of Stevenson's prose style.

But the main fact which entitled it to be called a perfect style is its constancy in excellence and charm. It is always firm and complete in texture, and uniform in the sense that, while it varies in spirit to suit the subject in hand, it does not vary in quality from line to line, from page to page. I think that Stevenson himself has really written perfect pages; and, at all events, his style delights us more as a whole than in any of its parts, striking or exquisite though many of these may still appear when torn away from their context. If you like best to be surprised by independent epigrams, by unexpected bursts of eloquence, by sudden marvels of expressional felicity, turn to some other writer. Stevenson will not amaze you thus. But, except very slightly now and then in his earliest efforts, he will never disappoint you or let you down. And this experience ought to seem more amazing than any other could. To do things flawlessly from end to end is a rarer and more satisfying merit than to do portions of them magnificently well.

Mrs. Van Rensselaer is careful to point out, however, that to the making of real literature personality as well as the gift of art is essential:

Really to serve the world as a great artist serves it, really to attain to beautiful, individual, and immortal words, you must have much to say, and things which no one else has perceived and felt in quite the same fashion. You must be a person as well as an artist. And this truth, too, Stevenson's work supports. Within and beyond the technical perfection of his

style, inspiring and infusing it, and to a great degree creating it, lies the strong and charming personality of the man.

I have received a very interesting pamphlet entitled 'Charakteristische Eigenschaften von R. L. Stevenson's Stil.' The writer is Mr. William P. Chalmers, of Arbroath, and the essay attained for him the doctor's degree from Marburg University. The essay is a valuable and learned contribution to the study of Stevenson. The brightness and grace of Mr. Chalmers's German is particularly noticeable. It almost seems as if he had transferred into the German language some of the beauties of his master's style. His readers will be delighted with some of Mr. Chalmers's renderings of Stevensonian phrases and sentences. 'The wide rustle of the winds' loses nothing as 'der Winde weithin wallendes Rauschen,' and such phrases as 'den grünlichen Schimmer eines winterlichen Sonnenunterganges,' 'das blaue Dunkel der Waldlichtung,' are happy instances of the translator's art. The second portion of the 'Inaugural Dissertation' is a laborious investigation, by words and sentences, of the characteristics of Stevenson's style. A page is given to Stevenson's use of the prefix 'be,' another to his avoidance of relative pronouns, and there is a very admirable selection from his metaphors and similes.—*British Weekly*, October 20, 1902.

While on a visit to Auckland, N.Z., Stevenson allowed himself to be 'interviewed' by a representative of one of the local papers on the best course of study for one with literary aspirations. Thus, the following *obiter dicta*:

'If a young man wishes to learn to write English,' said Mr. Stevenson, 'he should read everything. I qualify that by excluding the whole of the present century in a body. People will read all that is worth reading out of that for their own fun. If they read the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century; if they read Shakespeare and Thomas Browne, and Jeremy Taylor and Dryden's prose, and Samuel Johnson—and, I suppose, Addison, though I never read him myself—and browse

**His Own
Hints on
Style.**

about in all the authors of those two centuries, they will get the finest course of literature there is. Those are the two extremes. What we have tried to do in this century is to find a middle road between the two extremes, mostly and usually by being more slovenly. I have only one feather in my cap, and that is I am not a sloven.'

Asked his opinion of Carlyle, Mr. Stevenson replied: 'I should be frightened to tell any young man to read Carlyle. I was afraid to read him when I was young, because I felt he cast a sort of spell upon me that might be called possession, and I was afraid of becoming a mere echo. Your students should certainly read Ruskin—for choice I would have them read "Arrows of the Chace." I would have them read Scott—but I wish you could put down my expression when I say this; it would save a good deal of explanation. He was undoubtedly slovenly. He makes me long to box his ears—God bless him!—but to a luminous and striking degree, he is free from all the faults that many of us possess. I would also like them to read Hazlitt—there's a lot of style in Hazlitt. I would like them—it is curious how I come round to people who are not particularly stylists—I think it is very well worth while to read Napier. His "History of the Peninsular War" seems to me a fine solid piece of work. I suppose it might do them good to read Pater's "Studies of the Renaissance." It is an extreme of a kind, and had a huge influence on me when it was first published. I think it is always wholesome to read Leslie Stephen. I would recommend them to read George Saintsbury. These two last writers would give them short cuts, but they must read the books they read about.'

As to the manner in which reading ought to be done, Mr. Stevenson would make the student read almost everything aloud. 'Too many of us read by the eye,' he said, 'but the man who means to write, must, whether he articulates or not, read everything by the ear. In short, as a musician reads score and can hear harmony, so the literary man, even when skimming with the eye, must be able to hear all the uttered words.'

The author of 'Kidnapped' declared himself a tremendous believer in the classics. 'I have the more cause to be so,' he went on, 'because although I am in the position of Shakespeare

—I have little Latin and less Greek—yet the benefit which I owe to my little Latin is inconceivable. It not only helps one to arrive at the value of words, but you must remember that we are only the decayed fragments of the Roman Empire from which we have all that we value ourselves upon, and I always believe that we can never be so well employed as in endeavouring to understand as well as we can the original meaning of that system of things in whose ruins we live. In the second place, the Latin Language, of which I profess myself a devotee, is so extraordinarily different from our own, and is capable of suggesting such extraordinary and enchanting effects, that it gives a man spur and wings to his fancy.'

From 'Robert Louis Stevenson: A Character Sketch,' by the Rev. W. J. Dawson, in *The Young Man*, July 1893:

There are many writers who produce excellent and even memorable books, who nevertheless fail to quicken in us any slightest ripple of interest as regards themselves. There are other writers whose most careless page is steeped in so keen a personal element that our admiration for their work is from the first curiously intermingled with affection for themselves. It is to the latter class that Mr. Stevenson belongs. He has the secret of charm. He admits us to the intimacies of his soul. He explains with the alluring frankness of a child his motives, recapitulates his errors, registers his fluctuations of health, of feeling, of opinion, discloses his methods of thought or labour, and altogether interests us in the problem of himself quite as much as in the story he tells or the plot he weaves. He is a bland and genial egoist, but without a trace of vanity; it is the egoism of the child. We read his books with the curious sense of a haunting presence, as of some light-footed Ariel, or, in more solemn moments, of a spiritual form hovering near us. There is a body terrestrial and a body celestial: the celestial body floats very near us in the liquid atmosphere of Mr. Stevenson's best work. It is given to few authors to produce this effect. We feel it in the work of Carlyle, of Ruskin, of Charles Lamb, and it is safe

to say that it is an effect which only genius can produce. Perhaps we can best measure by such a test the long-debated differentiation of talent and genius; the man of talent interests us in his work, the man of genius makes his work the medium through which we are interested in himself.

Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, reviewing 'Across the Plains' in the *Academy*, May 14, 1892, wrote:

Mr. Stevenson's final fame will be that of an essayist, nearest and dearest fame of the prose-writer. Nearest and dearest, because the largest amount of selfish pleasure enters into the writing of essays, approaching, as it does, as nearly as possible to writing merely for writing's sake—as the lyric poet just sings for singing's sake: the joy in the mere exercise of a faculty. In the essay no

The Fame
of an Essay-
ist.

octave-spanning architecture has to be considered, with a half-heart that would fain be at the floriation of niche and capital. Such *magnum opus* is, one supposes, the greater work, certainly it is the bigger; but the essayist cannot but feel the essential and somewhat jeering limitation of the greatest monuments of art, monuments which attain their art of majestic completion, simply by a roof, which shuts out the stars. The essayist is essentially a son of Shem, and his method is the wayward travel of a gypsy. He builds not, but he pitches his tent, lights his fire of sticks, and invites you to smoke a pipe with him over their crackling. While he dreamily chats, now here, now there, of his discursive way of life, the sun has gone down, and you begin to feel the sweet influences of Pleiades.

At least, so it is with Mr. Stevenson, the Stevenson we care for most. And it seems certain that it is so he would be remembered by us: for this new volume of essays abounds in continual allusions to the joyous practice of the literary craft, plainly confiding to us that the pleasure of the reader and the writer in their 'Stevenson' is mutual.

The following suggestive passage occurs in a review of 'Weir of Hermiston' by Mr. E. Purcell in the *Academy*, June 27, 1896:

Rich as it is in those perfections of which Stevenson was a supreme master, 'Weir of Hermiston' would never have been a great novel, for a great novel he could never have written. Many years ago I pointed that out in these columns, and his knowledge of his limitations hinted at the reason. A stranger, he wrote to tell me that I had divined his secret. We discussed at some length this and kindred matters. He knew, he owned, success was impossible, but he *must* go on trying. In the only letter I have preserved I find one sentence which to those who have deeply studied him means everything; to others it is but a phrase. 'Ethics,' he wrote, 'have ever been my veiled mistress.' He could see that without a firm, strong, undoubting (albeit ignorant or insolent) moral standpoint, no great, grasping novel could be achieved. What he would not see was that great literature is not all great novels; that though the stately galleon, with its noble lines and steady stride, is indeed admirable, the graceful shallop, the saucy frigate, and the storm-loving Greenlander are equally in their way masterpieces. To the end he fought against conviction—'Mind you,' he says, 'I expect my "Justice Clerk" to be my masterpiece.' Yet, I doubt if he was ever deceived as to the result. The great novel never emerged, but in its stead what a roll of successes, and in such various styles! Why complain? Great novelists we have had, but only one man who could give us the 'Isle of Voices,' of all his gems the fairest, rarest, most imperishable. His fame must not be hurt by hysterical patriots; some one should protest, and distasteful as it is, I claim to do so, and for this reason. When I had reviewed 'Virginibus Puerisque' in the *Academy*, Mark Pattison, who had reviewed it, I think, in the *Athenæum*, as we talked it over, approved my youthful enthusiasm, and surprised me by the immense importance he attached to the book and the new author. My faith in Stevenson was primitive, was spontaneous, and has never wavered. Not all his present idolaters can say as much.

In her privately printed 'Study' of Stevenson (Copeland and Day, Boston, U.S.A., May 1895) Miss Alice Brown writes as follows on the women-folk of his romance:

The world 'will still be talking' because Stevenson so rigorously excluded women-folk from his tales. Even when he admits them, it is apparently from a species of courtesy, a deference to tradition. One looks to see them humiliatingly conscious that he could have set his scene without their bungling aid. Quite evidently he is a boy who has no mind to play with girls. They are somewhat in the way. He is absorbingly satisfied with games made up of guns and boats, and in such matters girls may not meddle too boldly, lest they unsex them quite. Though love be supremest factor of deeds, he needs it not. He finds dragon-killing sufficiently exhilarating, though Andromeda sit at home, safe at her tambour-frame. But reasons multiply; suggestions grow in clouds. He is too critically wise not to realise that when his puppets do up their hair and put on petticoats, the wires work rustily.

His Heroines.

The Lady of Ballantrae is pure feminine as Lady Esmond, patient and uncomplaining, but she is an abstract of virtue and not its living body. Joanna Sedley's sole touch of nature lies in that one frank outburst when she repudiates her boy's clothes because they did not fit, and Otto's Princess belongs rather to the romance of fairydom than the courts of this civilised world. Catriona does, at times, promise to show herself a real girl, warmly human when she creeps under your plaidie, and with much heroic metal in her; but even she's scarce 'remembered on warm and cold days.' Only Barbara Grant quite rouses the heart, but she is no more than a gallant lad born for the Forest of Arden or some merry outlawry, 'chasing the red deer and following the roe.'

No, it is useless to turn the fact, or mouth it in the telling; from that rich and magic scrip of his, the gods omitted the one little key to the feminine heart. Possibly he fails to emulate Meredith's portraiture, because he lacks Meredith's partisanship. The feminine spirit, fostering, intuitive in sympathy, draws and holds him; he dreams of womanly comradeship, even in wood-solitude, its welcome at his journey's end; but the very complexity of the nature for whose rich dowry he longed, might, when it came to portrayal, have warded away his own too-similar spirit. Praise becomes golden when crowning a manly man

with the highest attributes among those broadly classified as feminine ; as the tenderest woman becomes all the rarer having drunk in manly virtues. When each partakes of the other's best, then are both nearer God's image than any creature yet conceived.

Stevenson had all the complexity of make-up ordinarily accorded womankind, her special lustre superadded to his own birthright of courage, honour, and truth ; and in style, plot, character-drawing, even in formulated religion, he took refuge, through the attraction of difference, in the simple and the free. Moreover, woman is not only complex, but she is more artificial than man, more closely fettered by the restraints of traditionary law. More dramatic than he, she not only becomes what nature made her, and what she would fain make herself, but also what man expects her to be. But Stevenson loved to paint souls that live near the heart of things, and who, bad or good, are governed, not by acquired morality but by the great primal springs of action. He had no space for her who veers and tacks with wandering breezes ; his ship must sail straight on under the sweeping wind of elemental passion though to the gulf beneath.

In his study of R. L. S. which he contributed to the *American Review of Reviews*, February 1895, Mr. Charles D. Lanier tells this story :

During his stay in the Adirondacks, an American lady asked Stevenson why women did not play a more important rôle in his stories. At that time there had been love-making in none of his books except 'Prince Otto'; and that exquisitely poetic, but utterly unhuman, tale scarcely counts among the records of flesh and blood. The novelist replied, with an engaging frankness, that the particular virtue which appealed to him most strongly, and which he loved to celebrate in fancy, was physical courage of the adventurous variety ; and that women were wholly lacking in that. The story goes that his fair *tête-à-tête* spent the succeeding half-hour in heaping on him instance after instance of womanly daring. This incident surely had nothing to do with Catriona,

Lack of
'Feminine
Interest.'

but she came to the world shortly after, in 'David Balfour,' and a very fine figure of a maiden she is. There is, however, no real sweethearting between her and David. In all his score or more of volumes, Stevenson has not a touch of white muslin and blue ribbon, of the pretty sentimental. He reluctantly gives us a passion here and there, but it would be a sad misnomer to call it a tender passion. His men see the maidens of their destiny in a turbulent street, or as they pace some weird, solitary links. An eyeflash, and the thing is done. They love at once like strong men and passionate women, with never a spoony couple among them; and the wooing is done to an accompaniment of sword-play and the angry bark of horse-pistols.

The *Spectator* thus condenses the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde from the pages of Mr. Graham Balfour's 'Life':

The story of Jekyll and Hyde, its inception and execution, is one of the romances of the profession. Conceived in an ecstasy of excitement, it was entirely recast by the author on a hint from his most tried and trusted critic, and Mrs. Stevenson came upstairs to find her invalid in bed with a pile of ashes beside him. Recognising the justice of her criticism that the work should be an allegory, while he had made it a story, he had burned the entire work in the original draft, lest he should be tempted to use too much of it in rewriting. It was an act of heroism, for the story as he first wrote it—more on the line of Markheim—had taken the strongest hold of him. Yet, what with writing and rewriting, it was rough hewn into its present shape within three days.

An Artist's
Heroism.

Interviewed by the *Sydney Presbyterian* during his visit to the capital of New South Wales, in March 1893, Stevenson smiled when the interviewer compared his mastery of English to Ruskin's.

'Read "Arrows of the Chace," and see if I can write as well as he,' was the rejoinder.

His Favour-
ite Story.

He went on to say that he had deliberately tried to form a good style. He wrote 'The Wreckers' in collaboration with Mr. Osbourne. They talked over the plot and the characters,

and Mr. Osbourne wrote the first copy of the book. Then he himself worked it all over again, rewriting every line. He spent a whole month in rewriting one of the chapters. In answer to a straight question, Mr. Stevenson said that his favourite among his books was 'Kidnapped.' Mrs. Stevenson, who had just entered the room, said that she liked best his 'Life of Fleeming Jenkin.' 'I cried over that book, and never over anything else of his,' she added. Mr. Stevenson said that he believed, as a piece of literature, 'Thrawn Janet' was the best piece of work he had done.

These notes on the novelist's literary ideals and methods of work are taken from Mr. Charles D. Lanier's article in the *American Review of Reviews*, February 1895, which has been quoted already :

Stevenson was brimming with startling literary projects and bizarre schemes. Letters to his friends would schedule a dozen more or less astounding tasks he had set himself, though but few of them were ever carried out. The plots of his stories were carefully outlined in his teeming imagination, then he bent himself, regardless of all obstacles, to obtain the exact local colour which would enable him to 'tell the story just as it happened.' Nothing short of actual prostration could daunt him in the pursuit of the truths he deemed essential for a setting. He sailed to meet his wedding-day on an emigrant ship, in disguise, with the idea of gathering special material, and arrived in New York desperately ill; he boarded an emigrant train with the uncleanly crew he had voyaged with, and suffered a two weeks' journey across the continent to his bride. Needless to say, there was a deal of nursing to do before any marrying could be thought of, nor does he seem in this instance to have found literary availability in the rough experience.

The first draft of a story Stevenson wrote out roughly, or dictated to Lloyd Osbourne. When all the colours were in hand for the complete picture, he invariably penned it himself, with exceeding care, writing in the easy, upright, compact style characteristic of the man of letters. If the first copy did not please

him, he patiently made a second or a third draft. In his stern, self-imposed apprenticeship of phrase-making he had prepared himself for these workmanlike methods by the practice of rewriting his trial stories into dramas, and then reworking them into stories again. Mr. Burlingame, editor of *Scribner's* and a long-time friend of the novelist, tells me that when Stevenson was writing the little speculative essays entitled 'End Papers' in that magazine, he was known to make so many as seven drafts of a particular flight before he was willing to let it go forth to the world.

Mr. Stephen Gwynn wrote an article on 'The Posthumous Works of Robert Louis Stevenson' for the *Fortnightly Review*, April 1898. Mr. Gwynn began by saying:

In the common work of the world men drop and disappear; they pass out of the ranks and another fills the gap; worse men may succeed better, better men may succeed worse, but no place remains vacant, for the world's work must go on, and the sad proverb says there is no man indispensable. But with great artists the case is otherwise. They furnish something which, for ordinary uses, is wholly superfluous; or, to put it more truly, they create a need which no one but themselves can supply. Living, they give something inseparable from themselves, something which they alone have the secret of making; and dying, they leave nothing for others to succeed to but their example. And for that reason the death of a great artist before his work has been completed brings to those who value the work of artists the most intimate sense of personal loss. We lament the untimely death of Keats and Shelley as we do not lament for Pitt and Fox cut off in their prime; presumably because we cannot figure distinctly in our minds the work which those statesmen might have done in shaping the course of events, or in moulding the nation's character, but we know absolutely that another ten years added to the life of Keats or Shelley would have endowed us with many imperishable possessions. It is for this reason that hardly any

Posthumous
Works.

death within a young man's memory has left such a blank as Stevenson's.

It was the light thrown upon the romancer's method of working by the 'Vailima Letters' which apparently suggested to Mr. Gwynn his study of Stevenson's post-humous books, or rather fragments. He points out the great change which came over the author's life after settling in Samoa, illustrating this by apt quotations from the 'Letters':

Here you had a man with the keenest desire to keep his flow of impressions bright and changing; infinitely preferring death to stagnation; and now by a kind of reprieve, sent out from his sick-room, where he was merely a looker-on and a hearer of second-hand recitals, to play his part on a stage, small indeed, but strangely picturesque, and amply furnished with a display of the elemental passions. It was a complete release from literaryisms, and, as a release, Stevenson welcomed it for the good of his art. 'When I was filling baskets all Saturday in my dull, mulish way, perhaps the slowest worker there, surely the most particular and the only one that never looked up or knocked off, I could not but think I should have been sent on exhibition as an example of young literary men.' Here is how to learn to write, might be the motto. . . .

Life about him was more varied and more emotional than it could well be in a civilised country. He saw islanders in revolt, sitting with Winchester rifles on their knees, and at the sight the aboriginal in him 'knickered like a stallion.' One feels in his letters almost a plethora of new impressions; his brain was overloaded with all this strangeness, and could not readily assimilate it. Give to a man so keenly participant in all the life about him a scene, so varied, so beautiful and so exciting, in exchange for the monotony of a sick-room; add health and vigour restored instead of a cripple's existence; and the strange thing would be if there were not a transformation. Stevenson was conscious of it himself, and even in the heavy depression which settled down on him before the end, he writes in the last of all these letters: 'I look forward confidently to an aftermath;

math; I do not think my health can be so hugely improved without some subsequent improvement in my brains. Though, of course, there is the possibility that literature is a morbid secretion, and abhors health!

Health, unhappily, was as illusory as his dread of an exhausted vein. Three months after he wrote these words he died, while engaged upon 'Weir of Hermiston,' having gone back for the greatest efforts of his art to the scenes of his boyhood, but with a manner entirely altered. It is curious to note how gradual was the change in his style. The new world about him he first attempted to utilise for literature in a book of descriptive letters, which, after an incredible deal of hard labour, proved a failure and disappointment. But as he worked on it, there flashed into his head one day a story which, he says, 'shot through me like a bullet in one of my moments of awe, alone in that tragic jungle.' It was not the descriptive writer nor the essayist who could give the soul of that strange island life, with its mixture of gentle savagery and buccaneering commerce; it was the writer of tales. This first story was the 'Beach of Falesà,' which marks a new development in his work. But the change was not complete. In 'Catriona' Stevenson went back to his old style and old subjects. 'The Wreckers' was a sort of compromise between the old and the new, and finally, in the 'Ebb-Tide,' the new material found for itself a new manner. Stevenson was doubtful at first of this 'forced, violent, alembicated style'; the story was finished in bitterness of heart. 'There it is, and about as grim a tale as was ever written, and as grimy and as hateful.' But when the proofs came back he was of another mind. 'I did not dream it was near as good; I am afraid I think it excellent. It gives me great hope, as I see I *can* work with that constipated mosaic manner, which is what I have to do just now with 'Weir of Hermiston.'

'St. Ives' is again a compromise. But 'Weir' and what remains of the 'Young Chevalier' and 'Heathercat,' are kindred in style to the 'Ebb-Tide'—a style perfectly distinct from that of his earlier and lighter romances. Thus it would appear that the new way of life and new surroundings produced in him a new manner, which first formed itself in treatment of the new material, but received its highest and, unhappily, its latest

expression in what remains of the great story that went back across many thousand miles of ocean to that confused huddle of grey familiar hills. . . .

The love scenes in 'Weir of Hermiston' are almost unsurpassable, but the central interest of the story lies elsewhere—in the relations between father and son. Whatever the cause, the fact is clear that in the last years of his life Stevenson recognised in himself an ability to treat subjects which he had hitherto avoided, and was thus no longer under the necessity of detaching fragments from life. Before this, he had largely confined himself to the adventures of roving men where women make no entrance; or if he treated of a settled family group, the result was what we see in the 'Master of Ballantrae,' which, as he observes, 'lacked all pleasurable, and hence was imperfect in essence.' . . .

The world which does not care about fragments, will not often read 'Weir of Hermiston,' but for artists it will remain a monument. Some have said that Stevenson was too much of an artist—too studious of form, too neglectful of the matter; desiring rather to express something perfectly than to attempt what might baffle expression. I, on the other hand, believe that he was studiously schooling his faculties with a modesty surely to be commended, till he should feel them equal to the full organ. And at least in this story there is no shirking of the universal interests, no avoidance of the common driving motives of existence at their highest tension. Here you have certainly—for Stevenson never neglected the appeal to the aboriginal fighter in man—the wild tale of the 'Four Black Brothers'—that sudden outburst of savagery, over which the crust of respectable church-going existence had settled down and hardened, but which spoke of violent possibilities. But the essential and the strongest scenes of the book were not to depend on the rough and tumble of incident, or on any melodramatic surroundings. Here, for the first time in Stevenson, you really have the bewildering atmosphere of woman, the glamour of sex, not only in the younger Kirstie, but in her elder of the same name—a far more wonderful and difficult piece of portraiture—who pours out to Archie a heart that has not known how to grow old. And poetry or adventure apart,

are there not tragic issues enough in the grim prose of Her-
miston's dealings with his son?

Mr. Gwynn then ventures upon some speculations as to how Stevenson would have finished 'Weir of Her-
miston,' and concludes his able study with these words :

However, these are idle speculations ; the story will never be told us now. Only this is to be said : that enough of it is left to be a high example—enough to prove that Stevenson's life-long devotion to his art was on the point of being rewarded by such a success as he had always dreamed of ; that in the man's nature there was power to conceive scenes of a tragic beauty and intensity unsurpassed in our prose literature, and to create characters not unworthy of his greatest predecessor. The blind stroke of fate had nothing to say to the lesson of his life ; here was a man who went the right way to work ; and though we deplore that he never completed his masterpieces, we may at least be thankful that time enough was given him to prove to his fellow-craftsmen that such labour for the sake of art is not without Art's peculiar reward—the triumph of successful execution.

The writer of the article on Stevenson in the *Quarterly Review*, April 1895, pictures the 'arctic season' of Calvinism which Scotland suffered before Burns arose with his warm breath of passion and revolt to thaw it away. He then proceeds :

When the nineteenth century was young, if Europeans of culture were asked to name the glories of Scotland, they passed by its theologians, and gave Ossian, Burns, Hume, and Scott as the summits visible to every seaman passing along the Caledonian shores. *Ludens in orbe terrarum!* Was ever so astonishing a transformation witnessed? The systematic divine had changed to scepticism ; the Puritan was a dreamer with open eyes, the bloodless ascetic an artist.

Scott and
Stevenson.

Nevertheless, Scott, although instinct with creative fire, was

earthborn and solid, moving over the ground with thundering hoofs and to the clash of martial music, yet scarcely ambitious to mount into the air of artistic inspiration. As Stevenson judges, 'he was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly in the manful sense, an artist at all.' He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. With an unconscious and innate love of the romantic—that antipodes to Calvin's 'Institutes'—he went gathering stories from old time. But a scholar in any deep sense he was not; a deliberate artist the extempore and commercial haste of his never-wearied pen forbade him to be. This one crowning touch, the unpardonable sin against austere tradition, it was left for Stevenson to attempt. And he has succeeded. Spurning the fields of dreary fact, and striking out sparks of fire from his heels when condemned to encounter them, he has sprung up like the winged Greek horse into the azure; he has flown away across the Ægean and the Tyrrhene Sea to the islands where the golden apples are ripening, to the Hesperides and the world of divine fable, his inheritance by nature, his prize and booty, thanks to favouring fortune.

The antithesis between philosophy, carried in the form of religion to its extreme point, and art made an end in itself, could not be more sharply stated. Stevenson is the successor of Scott; and, wielding the golden sceptre of style which brings long renown, he must share with that immortal the fame—so brilliant and yet so unexpected—that Scottish romance has won for itself.

Writing in the *Bookman*, February 1895, 'Ian Maclaren' submitted this estimate of Stevenson's literary qualities:

Fourteen years ago our author laid down in the *Fortnightly Review* the two duties incumbent on any man who enters on the business of writing—'truth to the fact and a good spirit in the treatment.' One dares to say without rebate to-day, that he fulfilled his own conditions, for he saw life whole and he wrote of it with sympathy. He brought also to his task a singular genius, which gave him an almost solitary place. It was difficult to name a living artist in words that could be compared with him who reminded us at every turn of Charles Lamb and William

Compared
with
Shake-
speare.

Hazlitt. There are certain who compel words to serve them, and never travel without an imperial bodyguard; but words waited on Stevenson like 'humble servitors,' and he went where he pleased in his simplicity, because every one flew to anticipate his wishes. His style had the thread of gold, and he was the perfect type of the man of letters—a humanist whose great joy in the beautiful was annealed to a fine purity by his Scottish faith; whose kinship was not with Boccaccio and Rabelais, but with Dante and Spenser. His was the magical touch that no man can explain or acquire; it belongs to those only who have drunk at the Pierian spring. There is a place at the marriage feast for every honest writer, but we judge that our master will go to the high table and sit down with Virgil and Shakespeare and Goethe and Scott.

Mr. Edmund Gosse wrote in *Longman's Magazine*, October 1887, a study of Stevenson's poetry. The essay is reprinted in revised form in Mr. Gosse's book 'Questions at Issue,' published in 1893, from which the quotations below are taken by permission. Stevenson
as a Poet. Mr. Gosse commences with a reference to the authors who have only 'swept with hurried hands the strings'; authors with whom poetry has been an incident of their literary nature rather than a ruling passion. 'Though Stevenson had been essentially a prose writer,' says Mr. Gosse, 'the ivory shoulder of the lyre has peeped out now and then.' He proceeds:

'A Child's Garden of Verses' has now been published long enough to enable us to make a calm consideration of its merits. When it was fresh, opinion was divided, as it always is about a new strong thing—between those who, in Mr. Longfellow's phrase about the little girl, think it very, very good, and those who think it is horrid. After reading the new book, the 'Underwoods,' we come back to 'A Child's Garden,' with a clearer sense of the writer's intention, and a wider experience of his poetical outlook upon life. The later book helps us to comprehend the former; there is the same sincerity, the same buoyant simplicity, the same curiously candid and confidential attitude of mind.

If any one doubted that Mr. Stevenson was putting his own childish memories into verse in the first book, all doubt must cease in reading the second book, where the experiences, although those of an adult, have exactly the same convincing air of candour. . . .

The various attitudes of literary persons to the child are very interesting. There are, for instance, poets like Victor Hugo and Mr. Swinburne who come to admire, who stay to adore, and who do not disdain to throw their purple over any humble article of nursery use. They are so magnificent in their address to infancy, they say so many brilliant and unexpected things, that the mother is almost as much dazzled as she is gratified. We stand round, with our hats off, and admire the poet as much as he admires the child; but we experience no regret when he presently turns away to a discussion of grown-up things. We have an ill-defined notion that he reconnoitres infancy from the outside, and has not taken the pains to reach the secret mind of childhood. It is to be noted, and this is a suspicious circumstance, that Mr. Swinburne and Victor Hugo like the child better the younger it is.

‘What likeness may define, and stray not
From truth’s exactest way,
A baby’s beauty? Love can say not,
What likeness may.’

This is charming; but the address is to the mother, is to the grown-up reflective person. To the real student of child-life the baby contains possibilities, but is at present an uninteresting chrysalis. It cannot carry a gun through the forest, behind the sofa-back; it is hardly so useful as a cushion to represent a passenger in a railway-train of inverted chairs.

Still more remote than the dithyrambic poets are those writers about children—and they are legion—who have ever the eye fixed upon morality, and carry the didactic tongue thrust in the cheek of fable. The late Charles Kingsley, who might have made so perfect a book of his ‘Water Babies,’ sins notoriously in this respect. The moment a wise child perceives the presence of allegory, or moral instruction, all the charm of a book is gone. Parable is the very antipodes of childish ‘make-believe,’ into

which the element of ulterior motive or secondary moral meaning never enters for an instant. . . .

It would be easy, by multiplying examples, to drive home my contention that only two out of the very numerous authors who have written successfully on or for children have shown a clear recollection of the mind of healthy childhood itself. Many authors have achieved brilliant success in describing children, in verbally caressing them, in amusing, in instructing them ; but only two, Mrs. Ewing in prose, and Mr. Stevenson in verse, have sat down with them without disturbing their fancies, and have looked into the world of 'make-believe' with the children's own eyes. If Victor Hugo should visit the nursery, every head of hair ought to be brushed, every pinafore be clean, and nurse must certainly be present, as well as mamma. But Mrs. Ewing or Mr. Stevenson might lead a long romp in the attic when nurse was out shopping, and not a child in the house should know that a grown-up person had been there. There are at least a dozen pieces in the 'Child's Garden' which might be quoted to show what is meant. 'The Lamplighter' will serve our purpose as well as any other :

' My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky ;
It's time to take the window to see Learie go by ;
For every night at tea-time, and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be ;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Learie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you !

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Learie stops to light it as he lights so many more.
And O ! before you hurry by with ladder and with light,
O Learie, see a little child, and nod to him to-night.'

In publishing this autumn a second volume, this time of grown-up verses, Mr. Stevenson has ventured on a bolder experiment. His 'Underwoods,' with its title openly borrowed from Ben Jonson, is an easy book to appreciate and enjoy, but not to review. In many respects it is plainly the work of the same

fancy that described the Country of Counterpane and the Land of Story-books, but it has grown a little sadder, and a great deal older. There is the same delicate sincerity, the same candour and simplicity, the same artless dependence on the good faith of the public. The ordinary themes of the poets are untouched; there is not one piece from cover to cover which deals with the passion of love. The book is occupied with friendship, with nature, with the honourable instincts of man's moral machinery. Above all, it enters with great minuteness, and in a very confidential spirit, into the theories and moods of the writer himself. It will be to many readers a revelation of the everyday life of an author whose impersonal writings have given them so much and so varied pleasure. Not a dozen ordinary interviewers could have extracted so much of the character of the man himself as he gives us in these one hundred and twenty pages. . . .

It would be arrogant in the extreme to decide whether or no Mr. R. L. Stevenson's poems will be read in the future. They are, however, so full of character, so redolent of his own fascinating temperament, that it is not too bold to suppose that so long as his prose is appreciated those who love that will turn to this. There have been prose writers whose verse has not lacked accomplishment of merit, but has been so far from interpreting their prose that it rather disturbed its effect and weakened its influence. Cowley is an example of this, whose ingenious and dryly intellectual poetry positively terrifies the reader away from his eminently suave and human essays. Neither of Mr. Stevenson's volumes of poetry will thus disturb his prose. Opinions may be divided as to their positive value, but no one will doubt that the same characteristics are displayed in the poems, the same suspicion of 'the abhorred pedantic sanhedrim,' the same fulness of life and tenderness of hope, the same bright felicity of epithet as in the essays and romances. The belief, however, may be expressed without fear of contradiction that Mr. Stevenson's fame will rest mainly upon his verse and not upon his prose, only in that dim future when Mr. Matthew Arnold's prophecy shall be fulfilled, and Shelley's letters shall be preferred to his lyrical poems. It is saying a great deal to acknowledge that the author of 'Kidnapped' is scarcely less readable in verse than he is in prose.

Mr. A. W. Pinero delivered a lecture on 'Robert Louis Stevenson: the Dramatist,' to the members of the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh at the Music Hall, Edinburgh, on Tuesday, February 24, 1903.

The abridgment of Mr. Pinero's lecture given below is made by permission from the copy-right version printed at the Chiswick Press.

'Stevenson
the Drama-
tist.'

Mr. Pinero began with a reference to the slender popularity of Stevenson's plays, and excluded from his criticism 'The Hanging Judge,' as that has never been published, and 'Macaire,' which 'does not profess to be an original work, except in details of dialogue.' His consideration was, therefore, limited to the three plays written in collaboration with Mr. Henley: 'Deacon Brodie,' 'Beau Austin,' and 'Admiral Guinea':

Now, I wish to inquire why it is that these two men, both, in their different ways, of distinguished talent, combining, with great gusto and hopefulness, to produce acting dramas, should have made such small mark with them, either on or off the stage. 'Deacon Brodie' was acted a good many times in America, but only once, I believe, in Great Britain. 'Beau Austin' has been publicly presented some score of times; 'Admiral Guinea' has enjoyed but a single performance. Nor have these pieces produced a much greater effect in the study, as the phrase goes. They have their admirers, of whom, in many respects, I am one. . . . But no one, I think, gives even 'Beau Austin' a very high place among Stevenson's works as a whole; and many people who have probably read every other line that Stevenson wrote, have, as I say, scarcely realised the existence of his dramas. Why should Stevenson the dramatist take such a back seat, if you will pardon the expression, in comparison with Stevenson the novelist, the essayist, the poet?

This question seems to me all the more worth asking because Stevenson's case is by no means a singular one. There is hardly a novelist or poet of the whole nineteenth century who does not stand in exactly the same position. They have one and all attempted to write for the stage, and it is scarcely too much

to say that they have one and all failed, not only to achieve theatrical success but even, in any appreciable degree, to enrich our dramatic literature.

Mr. Pinero proceeded to cite examples from Shelley, Browning, Scott, Coleridge, Byron, Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, and other writers of genius, and expressed the opinion that, one and all, they imitated outworn models, 'instead of discovering for themselves, and if necessary ennobling, the style of drama really adapted to the dramatist's one great end—that of showing the age and body of the time his form and pressure.' With this difference, 'that while Stevenson imitated the transportive plays of the early nineteenth century, most of the other writers I have named imitated the Elizabethan dramatists.' Mr. Pinero continued :

Some of the great men I have mentioned were debarred from success for a reason which is still more simple and obvious—namely, that they had no dramatic talent. But this was not Stevenson's case. No one can doubt that he had in him the ingredients of a dramatist. What is dramatic talent? Is it not the power to project characters, and to cause them to tell an interesting story through the medium of dialogue? This is *dramatic* talent; and dramatic talent, if I may so express it, is the raw material of *theatrical* talent. Dramatic, like poetic, talent is born, not made; if it is to achieve success on the stage, it must be developed into theatrical talent by hard study, and generally by long practice. For theatrical talent consists in the power of making your characters not only tell a story by means of dialogue, but tell it in such skilfully-devised form and order as shall, within the limits of an ordinary theatrical representation, give rise to the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great function of the theatre. Now, dramatic talent Stevenson undoubtedly possessed in abundance; and I am convinced that theatrical talent was well within his reach, if only he had put himself to the pains of evolving it.

The lecturer then read from Stevenson's 'Chapter on Dreams' the outline of a tragedy which the author credited to 'the Brownies of the brain.' Mr. Pinero described it as 'an intensely dramatic tale,' which proved 'beyond all question that Stevenson had in him a large measure of dramatic talent—what I have called the ingredients, the makings of a dramatist.' From this he turned to the delightful essay called 'A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured,' to illustrate his early taste for drama, his love of the toy-theatre.

The unfortunate thing is that even to his dying day he continued to regard the actual theatre as only an enlarged form of the toy-theatres which had fascinated his childhood—he continued to use in his dramatic colouring the crimson lake and Prussian blue of transpontine romance—he considered his function as a dramatist very little more serious than that child's-play with paint-box and pasteboard on which his memory dwelt so fondly. He played at being a playwright; and he was fundamentally in error in regarding the drama as a matter of child's-play.

Observe, too, that these dramas of the toy-theatre were, before they reached the toy-theatre, designed for almost the lowest class of theatrical audiences. They were stark and staring melodramas. Most of them were transpontine in the literal sense of the word—that is to say, they had originally seen the light at the humbler theatres beyond the bridges—the Surrey and the Coburg. Many of them were unacknowledged adaptations from the French—for in the early years of the nineteenth century the English dramatist had not acquired that nice conscientiousness which he has since displayed. Yet a drama which was sufficiently popular to be transferred to the toy-theatres was almost certain to have a sort of rude merit in its construction. The characterisation would be hopelessly conventional, the dialogue bald and despicable—but the situations would be artfully arranged, the story told adroitly and with spirit. Unfortunately these merits did not come within Stevenson's ken. . . . But in tactics, in the art of getting their characters on and off the stage, of conveying information to the audience, and so forth,

they [the melodramatists of that time] were almost incredibly careless and conventional. They would make a man, as in the Chinese theatre, tell the whole story of his life in a soliloquy; or they would expound their plot to the audience in pages of conversation between characters who acquaint each other with nothing that is not already perfectly well known to both. Well, his childish studies accustomed Stevenson to the miserable tactics of these plays. Keenly as he afterwards realised their absurdities, he had nevertheless in a measure become inured to them. For the merits of their strategy, on the other hand, he had naturally, as a mere child, no eye whatever. And one main reason of his inadequate success as a dramatist was that he never either unlearned their tactics or learned their strategy. Had he ever thoroughly understood what was good in them, I have no doubt that, on the basis of this rough-and-ready melodramatic technique, he would have developed a technique of his own as admirable as that which he ultimately achieved in fiction.

When he first attempts drama, what is the theme he chooses? A story of crime, a story of housebreaking, dark lanterns, jemmies, centre-bits, masks, detectives, boozing-kens—in short a melodrama of the deepest dye, exactly after the Surrey, the Coburg, the toy-theatre type. It evidently pleased him to think that he could put fresh life into this old and puerile form, as he had put, or was soon to put, fresh life into the boy's tale of adventure. And he did, indeed, write a good deal of vivacious dialogue—the literary quality of the play, though poor in comparison with Stevenson's best work, is of course incomparably better than that of the models on which he was founding. But, unfortunately, it shows no glimmer of their stagecraft. The drama is entitled, you remember, 'Deacon Brodie, or The Double Life.' Its hero is a historical character who held a position of high respectability in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, while he devoted his leisure moments to the science and art of burglary. Here was a theme in which Fitzball, or any of the Coburg melodramatists, would indeed have revelled, a theme almost as fertile of melodramatic possibilities as that of 'Sweeny Todd, the Barber of Fleet Street.' And one would have thought that the future author of 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' was precisely the man to get its full effect out of the 'double life' of his burglar

hero. But not a bit of it. From sheer lack of stagecraft, the effect of the 'double life' is wholly lost. Brodie is a patent, almost undisguised, scoundrel throughout. There is no contrast between the respectable and the criminal sides to his life, no gradual unmasking of his depravity, no piling up, atom by atom, of evidence against him. Our wonder from the first is that any one should ever have regarded him as anything else than the poor, blustering, blundering villain he is. From the total ineffectiveness of the character, one cannot but imagine that Stevenson was hampered by the idea of representing strictly the historical personage. In this, for aught I know, he may have succeeded; but he has certainly not succeeded in making his protagonist interesting in the theatre, or in telling the story so as to extract one tithe of its possibilities of dramatic effect. . . . But it is needless to dwell long on 'Deacon Brodie'—ripeness of stagecraft is not to be looked for in a first attempt, a 'prentice piece. The play is chiefly interesting as exemplifying the boyish spirit of gleeful bravado in which Stevenson approached the stage. . . .

In 'Admiral Guinea'—a much better drama—the influence of his penny-plain-twopence-coloured studies is, if possible, still more apparent. 'Deacon Brodie' was the melodrama of crime; this was to be the nautical melodrama. As the one belonged to the school of 'Sweeny Todd,' so the other was to follow in the wake of 'Black Ey'd Susan,' 'The Red Rover,' 'Ben Backstay,' and those other romances of the briny deep in which that celebrated impersonator of seafaring types, T. P. Cooke, had made his fame. If you require a proof of the intimate relation between 'Admiral Guinea' and 'Skelton's Juvenile Drama,' as the toy-theatre plays were called, let me draw your attention to this little coincidence. In his essay on the Juvenile Drama, Stevenson enlarges not only on the sheets of characters, but also on the scenery which accompanied them. 'Here is the cottage interior,' he writes, 'the usual first flat, with the cloak upon the nail, the rosaries of onions, the gun and powder-horn and corner cupboard; here is the inn—(this drama must be nautical, I foresee Captain Luff and Bold Bob Bowsprit)—here is the inn with the red curtains, pipes, spittoons, and eight-day clock.' Well now, the two scenes of 'Admiral Guinea' reproduce, with

a little elaboration, exactly the two scenes here sketched. The first is the cottage interior with the corner cupboard; the second is thus described: 'the stage represents the parlour of the Admiral Benbow inn. Fireplace right, with high-backed settles on each side. . . . Tables left, with glasses, pipes, etc. . . . window with red half-curtains; spittoons; candles on both the front tables.' Here, you see, he draws in every detail upon his memories of the toy-theatre. And in writing the play his effort was constantly, and one may almost say confessedly, to reproduce the atmosphere of conventional nautical melodrama—to rehandle its material, while replacing its bald language with dialogue of high literary merit. And of course he succeeded in writing many speeches of great beauty.

Mr. Pinero then read a scene from the first act of the play, introducing John Gaunt, Kit French, and Arethusa.

The play is full of speeches as beautiful as those I have just read you of Gaunt's; and if beautiful speeches, and even beautiful passages of dialogue, made a good drama, 'Admiral Guinea' would indeed be a great success. But what chiefly strikes one after seeing or reading the play is that Stevenson's idea of dramatic writing was that fine speeches, and fine speeches alone, would carry everything before them. I can picture the collaborators sitting together and discussing the composition of their work, and saying to each other 'This position, or that, will furnish a capital opportunity for a good speech'; I can imagine Stevenson subsequently telling his friend what a splendid 'speech' he had just written. In short, 'Admiral Guinea' is mainly rhetoric, beautifully done, but with no blood in it. The second act—the inn scene—is a monument of long-windedness; while the situation of Gaunt's walking in his sleep—by which Stevenson's friends and admirers, on the occasion of the production of the play in London, set such store—could be cut out of the drama bodily for any bearing it has upon the development of the story or the bringing about of the *dénouement*. I was a witness of the single performance of this piece in London, and can testify to the ineffectiveness of its representation.

In 'Beau Austin' we have certainly Stevenson's nearest approach to an effective drama. In spite of its unacceptable theme, it is a charming play and really interesting on the stage. A little more careful handling of the last act might have rendered it wholly successful. But still we see traces of the old crudity of technique of the toy-theatre, and still the author evidently conceived that the essence of the drama resides in rhetoric, in fine speeches. How artless, for instance, is the scene of exposition, between the heroine's aunt, Miss Foster, and the maid, Barbara, in which half the time Miss Foster is telling Barbara things she knows perfectly well already, and the other half saying things she would never have said to a maid. Then, when it comes to revealing to us the recesses of Dorothy's heart, what do the authors do? They make her speak a solid page and a half of soliloquy—exquisitely composed, but again how rhetorical, how undramatic. . . .

I ask you to turn, at your leisure, to 'Beau Austin' and to study the play for yourselves. I ask you to read the passages—some of them great passages—of dialogue between Dorothy and Fenwick, between Fenwick and Beau Austin, between the Beau and Dorothy; and I submit to you that while there is much in these passages that is beautiful, much that is true and subtle, there is very little that is truly and subtly expressed. The beauty the authors aimed at was, I believe you will agree with me, the absolute beauty of words, such beauty as Ruskin or Pater or Newman might achieve in an eloquent passage, not the beauty of dramatic fitness to the character and the situation. . . .

The dramatist is bound to select his particular form of technique, master, and stick to it. He must not jumble up two styles and jump from one to the other. This is what the authors of 'Beau Austin' have not realised. Their technique is neither ancient nor modern; their language is neither poetry nor prose—the prose, that is to say, of conceivable human life. The period has nothing to do with it. People spoke, no doubt, a little more formally in 1820 than they do to-day; but neither then nor at any time was the business of life, even in its most passionate moments, conducted in pure oratory. I say, then, that even in 'Beau Austin,' far superior though it be to his other plays, Stevenson shows that he had not studied and realised

the conditions of the problem he was handling—the problem of how to tell a dramatic story truly, convincingly and effectively on the modern stage—the problem of disclosing the workings of the human heart by methods which shall not destroy the illusion which a modern audience expects to enjoy in the modern theatre. . . .

Many authors, of course, have deliberately written plays ‘for the study,’ ignoring—or more often, perhaps, affecting to ignore—the possibility of stage presentation. But this was not Stevenson’s case; nor did he pretend that it was. . . .

When Stevenson says ‘The theatre is the gold mine,’ and when Mr. Graham Balfour tells us that Stevenson felt that ‘the prizes of the dramatist are out of all proportion to the payment of the man of letters,’ the implication obviously is that the gold mine can be easily worked, that the prizes are disproportionate to the small amount of pains necessary in order to grasp them. That was evidently the belief of these two men of distinguished talent; and that was precisely where they made the mistake. The art of drama, in its higher forms, is not, and can never be, easy; nor are such rewards as fall to it in any way out of proportion to the sheer mental stress it involves. No amount of talent, of genius, will, under modern conditions at any rate, enable the dramatist to dispense with a concentration of thought, a sustained intensity of mental effort, very different, if I may venture to say so, from the exertion demanded in turning out an ordinary novel. Stevenson’s novels were not ordinary, and I do not for a moment imply that the amount of mental effort which produced, say, ‘The Master of Ballantrae,’ might not, if well directed, have produced a play of equal value. But Stevenson was never at the trouble of learning how to direct it well. On the contrary, he wholly ignored the necessity for so doing. What attracted him to the drama was precisely the belief that he could turn out a good play with far less mental effort than it cost him to write a good novel; and here he was radically, wofully in error. And the inadequate success of his plays, instead of bringing his mistake home to him, merely led him, I am afraid, to condemn the artistic medium which he had failed to acquire.

Towards the end of his life, while he was in Samoa, and years

after his collaboration with Mr. Henley had come to a close, it seems to have been suggested by his friends at home that he should once more try his hand at drama; for we find him writing to Mr. Colvin: 'No, I will not write a play for Irving, nor for the devil. Can you not see that the work of *falsification* which a play demands is of all tasks the most ungrateful? And I have done it a long while—and nothing ever came of it.' It is true—it is fatally true—that he had devoted himself in his dramatic ventures to 'the work of falsification'; but that was, I repeat, because he misconceived entirely the problem before him. The art—the great and fascinating and most difficult art—of the modern dramatist is nothing else than to achieve that *compression* of life which the stage undoubtedly demands *without* falsification. If Stevenson had ever mastered that art—and I do not question that if he had properly conceived it, he had it in him to master it—he might have found the stage a gold mine, but he would have found, too, that it is a gold mine which cannot be worked in a smiling, sportive, half-contemptuous spirit, but only in the sweat of the brain, and with every mental nerve and sinew strained to its uttermost. . . . Stevenson, with all his genius, made the mistake of approaching the theatre as a toy to be played with. The facts of the case were against him, for the theatre is not a toy; and, facts being stubborn things, he ran his head against them in vain. Had he only studied the conditions, or in other words got into a proper relation to the facts, with what joy should we have acclaimed him among the masters of the modern stage!

So far as the editor can discover, the only published article in which Stevenson's qualities as an exponent of natural science are discussed is the short note on 'Stevenson and Science,' which appeared in *Natural Science*, February 1895. It is obviously from the pen of a scholar, and as it possesses a certain unique value, it is here reprinted:

Stevenson
and
Science.

The art of letters has no content of its own and stands in no contrast to science. All of us, in attempting to describe a

fossil or to narrate the life-history of a fern, are engaged in the same pursuit as is the man of letters. The distinction, between him and ourselves, too often is this: we are incompetent craftsmen, and we are persuaded of the untruth that if you have something to say it does not matter how you say it. Men of letters are not a class by themselves; not mere conjurors with words, amusing the rest of the world with the grace and ingenuity of their antics, by their skilful poise of the adjective and clever balancing of the phrase. They are historians, dramatists, novelists, poets, or, sometimes, parsons and men of science who have conquered not only ideas, but the expression of them. This salutary truth, which should be a truism, may serve as an excuse for reference in these pages to Robert Louis Stevenson, who, since last we wrote, has become but a memory.

In our poor opinion there is much of moment to scientific writers in the art of Stevenson. First, there is the method. Steep yourself in your subject, says the common adviser, then sit down and write quickly. But so doing, your matter will ooze out from you in the flamboyant periods of, say, the late Professor Kitchen Parker, or in the more distasteful prolixity of the average German. Not so does the expression of scientific fact take its appropriate place in the art of letters. The most careful selection and arrangement of the facts are needed, so that the salient points may be thrust into prominence, the subsidiary facts restrained into a decent subordination, and vain repetition suppressed. If one but consider; an account of the morphology of the tadpole's skull is as difficult to set forth well as the creature of a boy's story. Yet you read 'Treasure Island' between London and York after a nice decision between it and the current *Truth*, and Long John Silver sticks in your mind, not to be rid of, a permanent possession. Yesterday you read a description, many pages long, of a new genus, anxious on the details, comparing and weighing: to-day you are running round to the library to read again an important point that failed to impress itself. This happy art of presentment comes not by grace or by knowledge; but by patience and labour.

Next, from the words and phrasing much also may be learned. To those unversed in the analysis of sentences, many lines of Stevenson seem whimsically peculiar, full of deliberate abnor-

mality. But let such examine the easy transition from idea to idea, the orderly progression of the exposition, and they shall see how the words and phrases are chosen and arranged for the simple purpose of presenting the ideas in the directest and shortest fashion, which also is the intention, although not the achievement, of scientific writing.

For the mention of Stevenson a sturdier excuse than our need of the qualities of his style may be found in his excursions into the province of natural science. Of these, two are memorable; the essay 'Pulvis et Umbra' in 'Across the Plains,' and a poem entitled 'The Woodman' in the *New Review* for January.

The essay—and we commend it to all readers who do not know their Stevenson—is an attempt with a strongly ethical basis to express a monistic idea of man's relation to the universe, and to contrast with it his kinship to the dust, his thought of duty, and his ineffectual effort to do well. The essay is so short and so well-knit that quotation from it is not advisable. It is however interesting to note that while Professor Huxley in his Romanes lecture laid down that the cosmic process was not only non-moral but immoral, Stevenson reads in it 'a bracing gospel.'

The poem, published last month, is practically an account of the struggle for existence among plants in the tropics, and much of it might be a paraphrase of Dr. Rodway's essay on the struggle for life in a Guiana forest that appeared in our columns. We quote a few lines :

' I saw the wood for what it was—
 The lost and the victorious cause ;
 The deadly battle pitched in line,
 Saw silent weapons cross and shine ;
 Silent defeat, silent assault—
 A battle and a burial vault.
 Thick round me, in the teeming mud,
 Briar and fern strove to the blood.
 The hooked liana in his gin
 Noosed his reluctant neighbours in ;
 There the green murderer threw and spread,
 Upon his smothering victims fed,
 And wantoned on his climbing coil.
 Contending roots fought for the soil

Like frightened demons ; with despair
 Competing branches pushed for air.
 Green conquerors from overhead
 Bestrode the bodies of their dead ;
 The Cæsars of the sylvan field,
 Unused to fail, foredoomed to yield ;
 For in the groins of branches, lo !
 The cancers of the orchid grow.

The following notes from the pen of Mr. Clement K. Shorter were drawn forth by Mr. Henley's notable contribution to the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and appeared in the *Sphere*, December 7, 1901 :

It is curious, indeed, that the commencement of the inevitable reaction against Stevenson should come from one of his most intimate friends. That is a side of the subject that I would rather leave alone ; I feel very little concerned with the personal side of the Stevenson-Henley controversy. I am interested, however, in the attempts to 'place' Stevenson in literature, and in the reaction that too extravagant laudation has naturally produced—rather earlier than one might have expected.

Mr. Millar, in *Blackwood*, gave the first sign of the coming storm, but Mr. Henley writes on this aspect of the subject, at least, with graciousness and benignity as a friend of Stevenson—one who loved him in his years of struggle before wealth and recognition came to him. A greater than Stevenson could not have borne the ecstatic shout and have remained secure on his pedestal. Books about Stevenson have come fast and furious. There is Mr. Cope Cornford's, Miss Simpson's, Mr. Baildon's, 'The Vailima Letters' and the 'Letters to Friends,' and finally, Mr. Graham Balfour's 'Life.' What a flood of books there has been !

The fact is that Stevenson had so many generous impulses—to him so many geese were swans. He wrote so cordially to every poor Grub Street hack who sent him his volume that they all pronounced him great in order to magnify themselves, or believed him great because he had the genius to appreciate them. Then his life had really so much of the pathetic. His search for health at Bournemouth, Davos, and Vailima was so sad, and

his good humour, as we see it in print, was so pronounced the while; who could fail to love the man and his books? And those books; how good they were for their decade—admirable stories for the boys, genial fooling in the best of style, excellent essays inculcating the obvious. He gave a great deal of pleasure to his contemporaries and they were not ungrateful, and for our day his work is enshrined in thirty or more fine volumes called 'The Edinburgh Edition'—in my judgment, the handsomest and most perfect example of combined printing and binding that has been seen in our time.

But the too extravagant laudation of 'R. L. S.' has brought its nemesis. First editions of his books went to extravagant prices. His little pamphlet, 'The Pentland Rising,' sold for ten pounds and more, and it was the same with other even more unconsidered trifles. But 'The Pentland Rising' is now worth only two guineas—I would not sell mine, which was the gift of kindly Mr. Charles Baxter, for fifty—and the other booklets and pamphlets are sinking to a more natural and intelligent value. Thanks to Mr. Henley's candour, Stevenson's place in letters will soon fall in the same way to a natural level. . . .

Of course there is really no great harm in the extravagant laudation of a really healthy writer as Stevenson undoubtedly was; it is not given to everybody to know the difference between the very best and the second-best among books. On the other hand, the impulse to put down extravagant laudation is a very natural and a very human one; we remember that the Athenians grew tired of hearing Aristides always called 'the Just.' Robert Louis Stevenson was not an epoch-making writer; he has no place with the very greatest masters in fiction or in thoughtful essay-writing. Any one of his good stories is really not one whit better in style and in vigour than some of the novels that are published to-day—take Mr. Stanley Weyman's 'Count Hannibal,' for example. None of his essays are one whit better than the essays of many of our best latter-day essayists; but, after all, what does it matter? Time is the best antidote.

XI

HIS RELIGION

Naturally this subject is touched incidentally in many other passages quoted elsewhere. The few selections here appended happen to stand alone and to refer directly to the religious side of the novelist. For that reason they are brought together under this heading.

A very able review of Stevenson's work, with especial attention to his philosophy of life, appeared in the *London Quarterly*, October 1895. The concluding paragraphs are chosen for quotation :

If we wish to learn what our writer thought of man's life in relation to the Hereafter, what faith upheld him in face of the mysteries of existence, on what foundation he based the moral code that he enforced, we must seek it elsewhere than in his romances, healthy and bracing as is their teaching in regard to the conduct of life. In 'The Rule of Christ' indeed the part of *deus ex machinâ* is given to a certain 'dark apostle' and autocratic ruler of men, strong in fatalistic faith, who recognises no living and real force in the world but the Grace of God—'we walk upon it, we breathe it; we live and die by it; it makes the nails and axles of the universe'; and who can passionately urge on a despairing, self-ruined sceptical sinner to 'cast his sins and sorrows on his Maker and Redeemer—He who died for you, He who upholds you, He whom you daily crucify afresh'; but 'The Ebb-Tide' is one of the stories of mixed origin; and were it not, we might reasonably doubt how much of his personal opinion Stevenson

chose to express through this enigmatic Attwater, to whom the author has been pleased to assign some of the sterner, without any of the more endearing traits, that marked the extraordinary character of General Gordon.

There is clearer speech in some of those scattered essays, which contain much of Stevenson's gravest thought and many of his most delightful fancies. Of these one, aptly named 'Pulvis et Umbra,' startles and shocks at first by the concentrated vigour with which it states the extreme pessimistic view. No Buddhist, aspiring to be rid of the abhorred burden of conscious being, and regarding annihilation as the supreme good, could have found stronger terms to express his repulsion for all the phenomena of Life, represented as a 'malady of something we call Matter'; but from a beginning so unpromising the essayist advances by a way of his own to conclusions nowise pessimistic. It is as though he said, 'Take, if you will, the most humiliating view not only of human existence, but of all animated existence; admit no outward beauty or splendour in it; shut your eyes to everything but repulsiveness in its physical manifestations; yet I require you to recognise an inner force acting through it everywhere, that is mysteriously pure, and noble, and powerful'; and this is the sovereign thought of Duty, the pursuit of an ideal of well-doing, which he bids us observe, as an animating principle in the humblest creatures over whom man is dominant, and which is the very heart of man's mystery. Even the spectacle of man's repeated and pathetic failure to live up to his own ideal is 'inspiring and consoling' to this onlooker, since, in spite of long ages of ill-success, the race is not discouraged, but continues to strive as if for assured victory, rendering obedience, however imperfect, to the inner voice that speaks of duty owed to ourselves, to our neighbour, to our God; and it is 'inspiring and consoling' that traces of the same struggle can be discerned in the poor sentient beings, our inferiors. 'Let it be enough for faith that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: Surely not all in vain.'

Thus a meaning full of hope is wrung from even the gloomiest thoughts that can beset the soul in its hours of darkness. Brighter passages from the same hand breathe the same spirit of solemn trustfulness. Edinburgh, well known and loved by our author

in the days when, on his own showing, he was but a wayward student in its University, sedulously perfecting himself in the right art of literary expression, but often playing truant to class and lecture—Edinburgh taught him unforgotten lessons by its cherishing of the memory of the dead who died for conscience sake; he found ‘the martyrs’ monument a wholesome, heart-some spot in the field of the dead’; though the special point of conscience for which this martyr or that despised death might not seem momentous to-day, their brave example assured him that for men who do their duty, even under a misapprehension, there will be ‘a safe haven somewhere in the Providence of God.’ Those student days brought to him a finer lesson in the fall and rising again of a nobly gifted comrade, who through vainglorious self-confidence made shipwreck of his fortunes, and who in the Valley of Humiliation and under the shadow of imminent death learned such patience, such self-abnegation, such love and consideration for others, as had never been his ere he lost ‘the strength that had betrayed him.’ His memory, though not his name, is tenderly embalmed in the pages of the friend who from his example learned how ‘to lose oneself is to be a gainer, to forget oneself is to be happy’; and who in later years, looking on the ways of men with eyes thus opened, could understand much of the inner meaning of the Great Master’s words, and could expose the futility of the complaint that ‘Christ did not leave us a rule that was proper and sufficient for this world’; a complaint that could only be made by one who had failed ‘to conceive the nature of the rule that was laid down.’

If there be meaning in words, we must take it that Stevenson gladly received for himself the rule of Christ, hard though it be to accept, understanding it to be right that ‘in our own person and fortune we should be ready to accept and to pardon all’; yet not to stand by passive and see another injured. With reserve, with reverence, with such guards and limitations as become a worker in fiction, he has made his opinion on these great matters clear enough practically; and one may say that his work will thus have not impossibly a wider potency for good than if he had alienated one class of readers and conciliated another by more accurately and avowedly defining his position. This is matter on which each reader must pronounce for him-

self; happily there can be no doubt of the robust, wholesome, and health-breathing tendency of Stevenson's work on the whole, though it deal often with matters of broil and battle, and the wilder possibilities of mortal life.

The Rev. W. J. Dawson contributed to the *Young Man* during 1896 a series of papers on 'The Gospel According to the Novelists.' Among the authors thus treated was Robert Louis Stevenson, and the article which Mr. Dawson devoted to him appeared in the September number of that year. It will, therefore, be understood that in the following passages from Mr. Dawson's paper, it is of Stevenson the novelist, not of the essayist, he writes:

A Minister's
View.

Any good writer could describe a duel or a murder with some degree of power and accuracy; but there are few writers who can make us feel that Death and Eternity surround the scene. Stevenson does this. He has a powerful and persistent sense of the spiritual forces which move behind the painted shows of life. He writes not only as a realist, but as a prophet. His meanest stage is set with Eternity as a background.

Take, for example, the astonishing subtlety and truth of the scene in which he pictures Herrick as attempting suicide by drowning, in 'The Ebb-Tide.' The moment the wretched man takes the water, he begins to swim by a sort of instinct. He is about to 'lie down with all races and generations of men in the house of sleep': there will be plenty of time to stop swimming presently. But could he stop swimming? He knew at once that he could not. 'He was aware instantly of an opposition in his members, unanimous and invincible, clinging to life with a single and fixed resolve, finger by finger, sinew by sinew; something that was at once he and not he—at once within and without him; the shutting of some miniature valve within his brain, which a single manly thought should suffice to open—and the grasp of an external fate ineluctable as gravity. . . . There were men who could commit suicide; there were men who could not: and he was one who could not.' There is not a hint here of the sort of imagination which a commonplace novelist would indulge

in—the marching before the mind of the drowning man of his past life, and so forth ; but there is something infinitely more terrible. Stevenson admits us into the very soul of the miserable man. He makes us partners in his extreme self-contempt, the utter self-loathing which makes him feel ‘ he could have spat upon himself.’ He gives us a momentary glimpse of far-off powers that watch the spectacle: a city ‘ along whose distant terraces there walked men and women of awful and benignant features, who viewed him with distant commiseration.’ This is one of the greatest pieces of imaginative writing in our literature, but it is much more than this. It is the work of a man profoundly impressed by spiritual realities, and only such a man could have produced it. . . .

The Scot can rarely escape the pressure of those profound and serious thoughts which constitute religion ; and Stevenson carried religion in his very bones and marrow. That which gives his great scenes their most impressive element is not merely their force of imagination or of truth ; it is this subtle element of religion which colours them. The awful, the distant, the eternal, mix themselves in all his thoughts. The difference between a great scene of Scott and a great scene of Stevenson is that the first impresses us, but the second awes us. Words, phrases, sudden flashes of insight, linger in the mind and solemnise it. We feel that there is something we have not quite fathomed in the passage, and we return to it again to find it still unfathomable. Light of heart and brilliant as he can be, yet not Carlyle himself moved more indubitably in the presence of the immensities and eternities. Wonder and astonishment sit throned among his thoughts, the wonder of the awestruck child at divine mysteries, the enduring astonishment of the man who moves about in worlds not recognised. It is this intense religious sense of Stevenson which sets him in a place apart among his contemporaries: it is, to use his own phrase, a force that grasps him ‘ ineluctable as gravity.’

Sometimes, though but rarely, he permits himself a wider latitude. Thus he puts into the lips of Attwater thoughts which no doubt had moved his own heart deeply. Attwater is very far from being a perfectly conceived or rendered character ; indeed, he must stand among Stevenson’s failures. But he is useful in

showing us the mysticism of his creator's mind. He is a man who walks awestruck through the labyrinth of life. He hears across the desolate lagoon eternity ringing like a bell. He ponders life and death with insistence, with passion and absorption. He preaches to the wretched fugitives who are his guests; he uses the very words which might express Stevenson's own sense of the unseen—'We sit on this verandah on a lighted stage with all heaven for spectators. And you call that solitude.' To Herrick, who has implied his total disbelief in God, he replies that it is by the grace of God we live at all: 'the grace of your Maker and Redeemer, He who died for you, He who upholds you, He whom you daily crucify afresh. . . . Nothing but God's Grace! We walk upon it; we breathe it; we live and die by it; it makes the nails and axles of the universe: and a puppy in pyjamas prefers self-conceit!' A trifle grandiloquent, perhaps, but then Attwater is meant to be a grandiloquent personage, a half-barbarous and half-evangelical South Sea Hercules. Yet surely these words of his are a deep cry out of Stevenson's own heart. A man whose daily breath was a sort of miracle, and who felt that every hour he lived he was cheating the grave of its proper prey, might well feel that he lived literally by the grace of God.

Nowhere does the spiritual genius of Stevenson express itself with such force and fulness as in his 'Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.' . . . Here again we come upon that profound seriousness of soul that underlies all Stevenson's best work; the questioning and philosophic mind groping at the intricate coil of things; the intense imagination of the Celt, fascinated by the grim and subtle mysteries of human nature. The seed-thought of this appalling fable of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is familiar enough: it is the ancient Pauline description of a war in our members, so that the thing we would, that we do not; and the thing we would not, that we do. The summary of the whole—it might well form the inscription for the title-page—is that great cry wrung out of the very agonised heart of this internecine conflict, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' We have heard the words many times on the lips of preachers and theologians, but one would certainly have doubted if they were capable of being vitalised by the art

of the novelist. . . . A piece of writing like this is a unique achievement in the art of letters. It is really comparable with nothing else; it stands alone. And it is conclusive evidence of that subtlety and force of spiritual genius which gives Stevenson a place apart, and high above all contemporaries, as an interpreter of the deepest things of the human soul. . . .

Stevenson was too modest a man to pose as a thinker; yet a thinker he was, and of great originality and insight. And in the truest sense of the word he was an entirely pious man. He knew what it meant, as he has put it, to go up 'the great bare staircase of his duty, uncheered and undepressed.' In the trials of a life unusually difficult, and pierced by the spear's points of the sharpest limitations, he preserved a splendid and unbroken fortitude. No man ever met life with a higher courage; it is safe to say that a man less courageous would not have lived nearly so long. There are few things more wonderful and admirable than the persistence of his energy; ill and compelled to silence, he still dictates his story in the dumb alphabet, and at his lowest ebb of health makes no complaint. And through all there runs a piety as invincible as his fortitude; a certain gaiety of soul that never deserts him; a faith in the ultimate rightness of destiny which holds him serene amid a sea of troubles.

Miss Alice Brown, whose privately circulated 'Study' has been quoted in our preceding chapter, writes thus of Stevenson's ethical principles as disclosed by his personal confessions:

What did Stevenson believe? So simple a system of morals was never more simply set forth. To owe no man anything, paying scot as you go; to consider your neighbour's happiness; to live cleanly and honest; to do no scamp work; to sing loud at your task, and moan, if you must, under cover; and above all, *to obey*: the creed of the soldier and the gentleman. To him, life was evidently, in the noblest sense, a great game of make-believe, the heroic blazonry of the captain who stands unblenching on the bridge, knowing the fire smoulders below, and inwardly sworn to ward off panic till the hour of help. It is impossible to believe

that a creature so exquisitely organised as Robert Louis Stevenson was not sore beset by the nightmare horrors of life; the shapeless fears that rise at our side and clutch at us with impotent though terrifying hands. But with knapsack on his back, he marched with jocund step straight through this shadowy valley, his eyes ever seeking, though no star lit up the dark, his purpose fixed in noble acquiescence on that unseen goal whither we all are thrust although we choose it not. Some of us go stumbling, pushed neck and crop into the unknown; he walked erect and proud, singing the song of joyance as he strode. In the light of such persistent cheer, 'Pulvis et Umbra,' the one dark confession of his life, girds us anew for the fray. For through its very gloom, he proves himself a man like as we are, a man who shrank and then trod firmer yet. No such picture exists of world-making and destruction, of the things that breed and die, of hand-to-hand conflict doomed always to end in dissolution. The strangeness of it all, and stranger still that man should strive! That he should live even spasmodically for others, should struggle to be cleanly, make laws, forego delight! Seen in despairing mood, the whole scheme becomes a hideous, swarming phantasm of life, breaking every instant into rotting death. Then having made that most tragic avowal, he can add:

'Let it be enough for faith that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: *surely not all in vain.*'

It is a shallow hopefulness that would escape the vision of decay. 'If life be hard for such resolute and pious spirits, it is harder still for us, had we the wit to understand it.' But though we join the cry of lamentation, we must in honour swell the response of hope. That Stevenson could hold up his head and troll his careless ditties to the sun, after that *Miserere* of the soul, opens the mind like a flower to the possibilities of human regnancy. One man has looked hell in the face and stayed undaunted. One man has peered over the gulf where suns are swinging and unmade stars light up the dusk, and yet retained the happy sanity of our common life. He returned from his Tartarean journey lifting to the unseen heaven the great glad cry of ultimate obedience. Therefore will we not despair, nor wish one thorn the less had sprung before his feet. We are the

stronger for his pain ; his long conflict helps to make our calm. For very shame, we dare not sulk nor loiter now ; and whither Stevenson has gone, there do we in our poor, halting fashion seek the way.

In *Munsey's Magazine*, November 1901, Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, writing on 'The Ethics of R. L. Stevenson,' says that much of Stevenson's philosophy was somewhat strong meat for babes, and alarming results might follow the introduction of its precepts into our nurseries, instead of the more orthodox sentiments. The chief doctrine of the gospel according to Stevenson was the duty of happiness—'be happy and you will be good':

'By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits,' he has said ; and again, 'A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. . . . Their entrance into a room is as The Apostle though another candle had been lighted. . . . of Happi- They practically demonstrate the great theorem of ness. the liveableness of life.' . . .

'There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.' The pious man 'is he who has a military joy in duty—not he who weeps over the wounded.' The pleasures of life, simple, bodily pleasures, he believed in so thoroughly that he could say, 'No woman should marry a teetotaller, or a man who does not smoke'—a half humorous expression of his antagonism to the denial of small joys.

In 'The Amateur Emigrant' he sets boldly forth his belief that happiness 'is the whole of culture, and perhaps two-thirds of morality. Can it be that the Puritan school,' he added, 'by divorcing a man from nature, by thinning out his instincts, and setting a stamp of its disapproval on whole fields of human activity and interest, leads at last directly to material greed?'—a suggestive question, which he does not attempt to answer.

There might be a certain danger in taking his sayings without their context, and without a wide appreciation of the man's uprightness and restraint. One could not pin on the wall of every nursery such alluring statements as this: 'Pleasures are more

beneficial than duties, because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and are twice blessed'; or as this: 'Nature is a good guide through life, and the love of simple pleasures next, if not superior, to virtue.' These can be trusted only to him who has learned to separate true pleasures from false, who can decipher nature's fingerposts more accurately than hot-headed youth is apt to. . . .

A certain austerity and religious gloominess in his father was the subject of earnest protest in many of Stevenson's letters, for to the son there was no true piety without cheerfulness. 'To fret and fume is undignified, suicidally foolish, and theologically unpardonable,' he writes. . . .

No 'bed of resignation' should find a place in Stevenson's garden; 'in its stead put Laughter and a Good Conceit . . . and a bush of Flowering Piety—but see it be the flowering sort; the other species is no ornament to any gentleman's back garden.' Kindness, 'not only in act, in speech also, that so much more important part,' was another sedulously preached and practised doctrine of his. Truth he interpreted as 'not to state the true facts, but to convey a true impression.' He believed, for instance, that we owe it to truth to be articulate in emotions, to express our affections and sympathies, in defiance of the false shame that makes so much good feeling go down to the grave unknown:

He prescribed this cheerfulness for books as well as for people: 'As I live, I feel more and more that literature should be cheerful and brave-spirited, even if it cannot be made beautiful and pious and heroic. The Bible, in most parts, is a cheerful book; it is our little piping theologies, tracts, and sermons that are dull and dowie.' And all this was not the easy overflow of health and animal spirits, bidding other people be gay because the mantle of gaiety clung without effort to his own shoulders. It was the sturdy creed of a harassed, suffering invalid, with death constantly at his elbow; a body hampered and restricted, denied what it most coveted, kept in a subjection that at moments bent

the spirit, but never broke it. No one ever had more obstacles between him and his ideal, or brought a more unfaltering courage to surmount them; or could say with a greater sincerity, 'Sick or well, I have had a splendid life of it, grudge nothing, regret very little.'

Stevenson's charity and tolerance will never be disputed, the writer adds. It was these characteristics which led him to write to a prospective missionary words which, if remembered, might have saved us many a complication:

'You cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without what is practically soul murder. Barbarous as the customs may seem, always hear them with patience, always judge them with gentleness, always find in them some seed of good; see that you always develop them; remember that all you can do is to civilise the man in the line of his own civilisation. And never expect, never believe in, thaumaturgic conversions. What you have to do is to teach the parents in the interests of their great-grandchildren.'

According to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Samoa, Robert Louis Stevenson would, had he lived a little longer, have become a convert to the Roman Catholic faith. 'The novelist thought deeply on religious matters,' says the bishop, 'and showed a leaning towards Catholicism.' Happily it is impossible to tell from Stevenson's romances what his faith was or might become, just as it is impossible to tell from Shakespeare's plays what his faith was.—*Publishers' Circular.*