

The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson for Boys and Girls eBook

The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson for Boys and Girls

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Robert Louis Stevenson *Frontispiece*
From a photograph by Mr. Lloyd Osbourne

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The life of

Robert Louis Stevenson

For boys and girls

"Write me as one who loves his fellowmen."
—*Hunt.*



CHAPTER I

THE LIGHTHOUSE BUILDERS

“... For the sake Of these, my kinsmen and my countrymen, Who early and late in the windy ocean toiled To plant a star for seamen.”

The pirate, Ralph the Rover, so legend tells, while cruising off the coast of Scotland searching for booty or sport, sank the warning bell on one of the great rocks, to plague the good Abbot of Arbroath who had put it there. The following year the Rover returned and perished himself on the same rock.

In the life of one of Scotland’s great men, Robert Louis Stevenson, we find proud record of his grandfather, Robert Stevenson, having built Bell Rock Lighthouse on this same spot years afterward.

No story of Robert Louis Stevenson’s life would be complete that failed to mention the work done for Scotland and the world at large by the two men he held most dear, the engineers, his father and grandfather.

When Robert Stevenson, his grandfather, received his appointment on the Board of Northern Lights the art of lighthouse building in Scotland had just begun. Its bleak, rocky shores were world-famous for their danger, and few mariners cared to venture around them. At that time the coast “was lighted at a single point, the Isle of May, in the jaws of the Firth of Forth, where, on a tower already a hundred and fifty years old, an open coal-fire blazed in an open chauffer. The whole archipelago thus nightly plunged in darkness was shunned by seagoing vessels.” [Footnote: Stevenson, “Family of Engineers.”]



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The board at first proposed building four new lights, but afterward built many more, so that to-day Scotland stands foremost among the nations for the number and splendor of her coast lights.

Their construction in those early days meant working against tremendous obstacles and dangers, and the life of the engineer was a hazardous one.

“The seas into which his labors carried him were still scarce charted, the coasts still dark; his way on shore was often far beyond the convenience of any road; the isles in which he must sojourn were still partly savage. He must toss much in boats; he must often adventure much on horseback by dubious bridle-track through unfrequented wildernesses; he must sometimes plant his lighthouses in the very camp of wreckers.

“The aid of steam was not yet. At first in random coasting sloop, and afterwards in the cutter belonging to the service, the engineer must ply and run amongst these multiplied dangers and sometimes late into the stormy autumn.”

All of which failed to daunt Robert Stevenson who loved action and adventure and the scent of things romantic.

“Not only had towers to be built and apparatus transplanted, the supply of oil must be maintained and the men fed, in the same inaccessible and distant scenes, a whole service with its routine ... had to be called out of nothing; and a new trade (that of light-keeper) to be taught, recruited and organized.”

Bell Rock was only one of twenty lighthouses Robert Stevenson helped to build, but it was by far the most difficult one ... and even to-day, after it has been lighted for more than a hundred years, it still remains unique—a monument to his skill.

Bell Rock was practically a reef completely submerged at full tide and only a few feet of its crest visible at low water. To raise a tower on it meant placing a foundation under water, a new and perilous experiment.

“Work upon the rock in the earliest stages was confined to the calmest days of the summer season, when the tides were lowest, the water smoothest, and the wind in its calmest mood. Under such conditions the men were able to stay on the site for about five hours....

“One distinct drawback was the necessity to establish a depot some distance from the erecting site. Those were the days before steam navigation, and the capricious sailing craft offered the only means of maintaining communication between rock and shore, and for the conveyance of men and materials to and fro....

“A temporary beacon was placed on the reef, while adjacent to the site selected for the tower a smith’s forge was made fast, so as to withstand the dragging motion of the



waves when the rock was submerged. The men were housed on the *Smeaton*, which, during the spells of work on the rock, rode at anchor a short distance away in deep water.” [Footnote: Talbot, “Lightships and Lighthouses.”]

Once the engineers were all but lost when the *Smeaton* slipped her moorings and left them stranded on the rock.

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In spite of all the obstacles, the work was completed at the end of two years and the light was shown for the first time February 1, 1811.

“I found Robert Stevenson an appreciative and intelligent companion,” writes Sir Walter Scott in his journal, speaking of a cruise he made among the islands of Scotland with a party of engineers. The notes made by him on this trip were used afterward in his two stories, “The Pirate” and “Lord of the Isles.”

“My grandfather was king in the service to his finger-tips,” wrote Louis Stevenson. “All should go his way, from the principal light-keeper’s coat to the assistant’s fender, from the gravel in the garden walks to the bad smell in the kitchen, or the oil spots on the storeroom floor. It might be thought there was nothing more calculated to awaken men’s resentment, and yet his rule was not more thorough than it was beneficent. His thought for the keepers was continual.... When a keeper was sick, he lent him his horse and sent him mutton and brandy from the ship.... They dwelt, many of them, in uninhabited isles or desert forelands, totally cut off from shops.

“No servant of the Northern Lights came to Edinburgh but he was entertained at Baxter Place. There at his own table my grandfather sat down delightedly with his broad-spoken, homespun officers.”

As he grew old his “medicine and delight” was his annual trip among his lighthouses, but at length there came a time when this joy was taken away from him and there came “the end of all his cruising; the knowledge that he had looked the last on Sunburgh, and the wild crags of Skye, and the Sound of Mull; that he was never again to hear the surf break in Clashcarnock; never again to see lighthouse after lighthouse (all younger than himself, and the more, part of his own device) open in the hour of dusk their flower of fire, or the topaz and ruby interchange on the summit of Bell Rock.”

Throughout the rank and file of his men he was adored. “I have spoken with many who knew him; I was his grandson, and their words may very well have been words of flattery; but there was one thing that could not be affected, and that was the look that came over their faces at the name of Robert Stevenson.”

Of his family of thirteen children, three of his sons became engineers. Thomas Stevenson, the father of Robert Louis, like the others of his family, contributed largely to lighthouse building and harbor improvement, serving under his older brother, Allen, in building the Skerryvore, one of the most famous deep-sea lights erected on a treacherous reef off the west coast where, for more than forty years, one wreck after another had occurred.

“From the navigator’s point of view, the danger of this spot lay chiefly in the fact that it was so widely scattered. The ridge runs like a broken backbone for a distance of some

eight miles.... In rough weather the whole of the rocks are covered, and the waves, beating heavily on the mass, convert the scene into one of indescribable tumult....



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“There was only one point where a tower could be placed, and this was so exposed that the safe handling of men and material constituted a grave responsibility.”

It was necessary to erect a tower one hundred and thirty feet high; “the loftiest and weightiest work of its character that had ever been contemplated up to this time....

“The Atlantic swell, which rendered landing on the ridge precarious and hazardous, did not permit the men to be housed upon a floating home, as had been the practice in the early days of the Bell Rock tower. In order to permit the work to go forward as uninterruptedly as the sea would allow, a peculiar barrack was erected. It was a house on stilts, the legs being sunk firmly into the rock, with the living quarters perched some fifty feet up in the air.

“Residence in this tower was eerie. The men climbed the ladder and entered a small room, which served the purposes of kitchen, living-room, and parlor....

“When a storm was raging, the waves, as they combed over the rock, shook the legs violently and scurried under the floor in seething foam. Now and again a roller, rising higher than its fellows, broke upon the rock and sent a mass of water against the flooring to hammer at the door. Above the living-room were the sleeping quarters, high and dry, save when a shower of spray fell upon the roof and walls like heavy hail.... The men, however, were not perturbed. Sleeping, even under such conditions, was far preferable to doubtful rest in a bunk upon an attendant vessel, rolling and pitching with the motion of the sea. They had had a surfeit of such experience ... while the barrack was under erection.

“For two years it withstood the seas without incident, and the engineer and men came to regard the eyrie as safe as a house on shore. But one night the little colony received a shock. The angry Atlantic got one or two of its trip-hammer blows well home, and smashed the structure to fragments. Fortunately, at the time it was untenanted.”

No time was lost in rebuilding the barrack and this time it withstood all tests until it was torn down after Skerryvore was finished.

“While the foundations were being prepared, and until the barrack was constructed, the men ran other terrible risks every morning and night landing upon and leaving the polished surface of the reef. Five months during the summer was the working season, but even then many days and weeks were often lost owing to the swell being too great to permit the rowing boat to come alongside. The engineer relates that the work was ‘a good lesson in the school of patience,’ because the delays were frequent and galling, while every storm which got up and expended its rage upon the reef left its mark indelibly among the engineer’s stock in trade. Cranes and other materials were swept away as if they were corks; lashings, no matter how strong, were snapped like pack-threads.



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“Probably the worst experience was when the men on the rock were weather-bound for seven weeks during one season.... Their provisions sank to a very low level, they ran short of fuel, their sodden clothing was worn to rags....

“Six years were occupied in the completion of the work, and, as may be imagined, the final touches were welcomed with thankfulness by those who had been concerned in the enterprise.”

It was in meteorological researches and illumination of lighthouses, however, that Thomas Stevenson did his greatest work. It was he who brought to perfection the revolving light now so generally used.

In spite of this and other valuable inventions his name has remained little known, owing to the fact that none of his inventions were ever patented. The Stevensons believed that, holding government appointments, any original work they did belonged to the nation. “A patent not only brings in money but spreads reputation,” writes his son, “and my father’s instruments enter anonymously into a hundred light rooms and are passed anonymously over in a hundred reports, where the least considerable patent would stand out and tell its author’s story.”

He was beloved among a wide circle of friends and the esteem of those in his profession was shown when in 1884 they chose him for president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. To the general public, however, he remained unknown in spite of the fact that “His lights were in all parts of the world guiding the mariners.”

CHAPTER II

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

“As from the house your mother sees
You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you will look
Through the window of this book,
Another child, far, far away,
And in another garden, play.”

—“Child’s Garden of Verses.”

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson was born at No. 8 Howard Place, Edinburgh, Scotland, November 13, 1850.

In 1852 the family moved from Howard Place to Inverleith Terrace, and two years later to No. 17 Heriot Row, which remained their home for many years.



As a child Louis was very delicate and often ill, for years hardly a winter passed that he did not spend many days in bed.

Edinburgh in winter is extremely damp and he tells us: “Many winters I never crossed the threshold, but used to lie on my face on the nursery floor, chalking or painting in water-colors the pictures in the illustrated newspapers; or sit up in bed with a little shawl pinned about my shoulders, to play with bricks or what not.”

The diverting history of “Hop-O’-My-Thumb” and the “Seven-League Boots,” “Little Arthur’s History of England,” “Peter Parley’s Historical Tales,” and “Harry’s Ladder to Learning” were books which he delighted to pore over and their pages bore many traces of his skill with the pencil and paint-brush.



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Those who have read the “Child’s Garden of Verses” already know the doings of his childish days, for although those rhymes were not written until he was a grown man he was “one of the few who do not forget their own lives” and “through the windows of this book” gives us a vivid and living picture of the boy who dwelt so much in a world of his own with his quaint thoughts.

If his body was frail his spirit was strong and his power of imagination so great that he cheered himself through many a weary day by playing he was “captain of a tidy little ship,” a soldier, a fierce pirate, an Indian chief, or an explorer in foreign lands. Miles he travelled in his little bed.

“I have just to shut my eyes,
To go sailing through the skies—
To go sailing far away
To the pleasant Land of Play”

he says.

[Illustration: No. 8 Howard Place, Edinburgh, Stevenson’s birthplace]

In spite of his power for amusing himself, days like these would have gone far harder had it not been for two devoted people, his mother and his nurse, Alison Cunningham or “Cummie” as he called her. His mother was devoted to him in every way and encouraged his love for reading and story-making. She kept a diary of his progress from day to day, and treasured every picture he drew or scrap he wrote. Cummie came to him as a Torryburn lassie when he was eighteen months old and was like a second mother to him. She not only cared for his bodily comforts but was his friend and comrade as well. She sang for him, danced for him, spun fine tales of pirates and smugglers, and read to him so dramatically that his mind was fired then and there with a longing for travel and adventure which he never lost. When they took their walks through the streets together Cummie had many stories to tell him of Scotland and Edinburgh in the old days. For Edinburgh is a wonderful old city with a wonderful history full of tales of stirring adventure and romance. “For centuries it was a capitol thatched with heather and more than once, in the evil days of English invasion, it has gone up in flames to Heaven, a beacon to ships at sea.... It was the jousting-ground of jealous nobles, not only on Greenside or by the King’s Stables, where set tournaments were fought to the sound of trumpets and under the authority of the royal presence, but in every alley where there was room to cross swords.... In the town, in one of those little shops plastered like so many swallows’ nests among the buttresses of the old Cathedral, that familiar autocrat James VI. would gladly share a bottle of wine with George Heriot the goldsmith. Up on the Pentland Hills, that so quietly look down on the castle with the city lying in waves around it, those mad and dismal fanatics, the Sweet Singers, haggard from long exposure on the moors, sat day and night ‘with tearful

psalms.'... In the Grassmarket, stiff-necked covenanting heroes offered up the often unnecessary, but not less honorable,



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sacrifice of their lives, and bade eloquent farewell to sun, moon and stars and earthly friendships, or died silent to the roll of the drums. Down by yon outlet rode Grahame of Claverhouse and his thirty dragoons, with the town beating to arms behind their horses' tails—a sorry handful thus riding for their lives, but with a man at their head who was to return in a different temper, make a bold dash that staggered Scotland, and die happily in the thick of the fight....

“The palace of Holyrood is a house of many memories.... Great people of yore, kings and queens, buffoons and grave ambassadors played their stately farce for centuries in Holyrood. Wars have been plotted, dancing has lasted deep into the night, murder has been done in its chambers. There Prince Charlie held his phantom levees and in a very gallant manner represented a fallen dynasty for some hours....

“There is an old story of the subterranean passage between the castle and Holyrood and a bold Highland piper who volunteered to explore its windings. He made his entrance by the upper end, playing a strathspey; the curious footed it after him down the street, following his descent by the sound of the chanter from below; until all of a sudden, about the level of St. Giles the music came abruptly to an end, and the people in the street stood at fault with hands uplifted. Whether he choked with gases, or perished in a quag, or was removed bodily by the Evil One, remains a point of doubt, but the piper has never again been seen or heard of from that day to this. Perhaps he wandered down into the land of Thomas the Rhymer, and some day, when it is least expected, may take a thought to revisit the sunlit upper world. That will be a strange moment for the cabmen on the stands beside St. Giles, when they hear the crone of his pipes reascending from the earth below their horses' feet.”

In Edinburgh to-day there are armed men and cannon in the castle high up on the great rock above you: “You may see the troops marshalled on the high parade, and at night after the early winter evenfall and in the morning before the laggard winter dawn, the wind carries abroad over Edinburgh the sounds of drums and bugles.” (Stevenson, “Essay on Edinburgh.”)

Long before Louis could write he made up verses and stories for himself, and Cummie wrote them down for him. “I thought they were rare nonsense then,” she said, little dreaming that these same bits of “rare nonsense” were the beginnings of what was to make “her boy” famous across two seas in years to come.

He writes of her when speaking of long nights he lay awake unable to sleep because of a troublesome cough: “How well I remember her lifting me out of bed, carrying me to the window and showing me one or two lit windows up in Queen Street across the dark belt of garden, where also, we told each other, there might be sick little boys and their nurses waiting, like us, for the morning.”

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Her devotion to him had its reward in the love he gave her all his life. One of his early essays written when he was twenty and published in the *Juvenilia* was called “Nurses.” Fifteen years later came the publication of the “Child’s Garden of Verses” with a splendid tribute to her as a dedication. He sent her copies of all his books, wrote letters to her, and invited her to visit him. She herself tells that the last time she ever saw him he said to her, “before a room full of people, ‘It’s *you* that gave me a passion for the drama, Cummie,’ ‘Me, Master Lou,’ I said, ‘I never put foot inside a playhouse in my life.’ ‘Ay, woman,’ said he, ‘but it was the good dramatic way ye had of reciting the hymns.’”

When he was six years old his Uncle David offered a Bible picture-book as a prize to the nephews who could write the best history of Moses.

This was Louis’s first real literary attempt. He was not able to write himself, but dictated to his mother and illustrated the story and its cover with pictures which he designed and painted himself.

He won the prize and from that time, his mother says, “it was the desire of his heart to be an author.”

During the winter of 1856-57 his favorite cousin, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson, usually called Bob, visited them; a great treat for Louis, not only because his ill health kept him from making many companions of his own age, but because Bob loved many of the same things he did and to “make believe” was as much a part of his life as Louis’s. Many fine games they had together; built toy theatres, the scenery and characters for which they bought for a “penny plain and twopence colored,” and were never tired of dressing up. One of their chief delights, he says, was in “rival kingdoms of our own invention—Nosingtonia and Encyclopaedia, of which we were perpetually drawing maps.” Even the eating of porridge at breakfast became a game. Bob ate his with sugar and said it was an island covered with snow with here a mountain and there a valley; while Louis’s was an island flooded by milk which gradually disappeared bit by bit.

In the spring and summer his mother took him for short trips to the watering-places near Edinburgh. But the spot unlike all others for a real visit was at Colinton Manse, the home of his grandfather, the Reverend Lewis Balfour, at Colinton, on the Water of Leith, five miles southwest of Edinburgh. Here he spent glorious days. Not only was there the house and garden, both rare spots for one of an exploring turn of mind, but, best of all, there were the numerous cousins of his own age sent out from India, where their parents were, to be nursed and educated under the loving eye of Aunt Jane Balfour, for whom he wrote:

“Chief of our aunts—not only I,
But all the dozen nurslings cry—

What did the other children do?
And what was childhood, wanting you?"

[Illustration: Colinton Manse]



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If Louis lacked brothers and sisters he had no dearth of cousins, fifty in all they numbered, many of them near his own age. Alan Stevenson, Henrietta and Willie Traquair seem to have been his favorite chums at Colinton.

Of his grandfather Balfour he says: "We children admired him, partly for his beautiful face and silver hair ... partly for the solemn light in which we beheld him once a week, the observed of all observers in the pulpit. But his strictness and distance, the effect, I now fancy, of old age, slow blood, and settled habits, oppressed us with a kind of terror. When not abroad, he sat much alone writing sermons or letters to his scattered family.... The study had a redeeming grace in many Indian pictures gaudily colored and dear to young eyes.... When I was once sent in to say a psalm to my grandfather, I went, quaking indeed with fear, but at the same time glowing with hope that, if I said it well, he might reward me with an Indian picture."

"There were two ways of entering the Manse garden," he says, "one the two-winged gate that admitted the old phaeton and the other a door for pedestrians on the side next the kirk.... On the left hand were the stables, coach-houses and washing houses, clustered around a small, paved court.... Once past the stable you were fairly within the garden. On summer afternoons the sloping lawn was literally *steeped* in sunshine....

"The wall of the church faces the manse, but the church yard is on a level with the top of the wall ... and the tombstones are visible from the enclosure of the manse.... Under the retaining wall was a somewhat dark pathway, extending from the stable to the far end of the garden, and called the 'witches' walk' from a game we used to play in it.... Even out of the 'witches' walk' you saw the Manse facing toward you, with its back to the river and the wooded bank, and the bright flower-plots and stretches of comfortable vegetables in front and on each side of it; flower plots and vegetable borders, by the way, on which it was almost death to set foot, and about which we held a curious belief, —namely, that my grandfather went round and measured any footprints that he saw, to compare the measurement at night with the boots put out for brushing; to avoid which we were accustomed, by a strategic movement of the foot to make the mark longer....

"So much for the garden; now follow me into the house. On entering the door you had before you a stone paved lobby.... There stood a case of foreign birds, two or three marble deities from India and a lily of the Nile in a pot, and at the far end the stairs shut in the view. With how many games of 'tig' or brick-building in the forenoon is the long low dining room connected in my mind! The storeroom was a most voluptuous place, with its piles of biscuit boxes and spice tins, the rack for buttered eggs, the little window that let in the sunshine and the flickering shadows of leaves, and the strong sweet odor of everything that pleaseth the taste of men....

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“Opposite the study was the parlor, a small room crammed full of furniture and covered with portraits, with a cabinet at the side full of foreign curiosities, and a sort of anatomical trophy on the top. During a grand cleaning of the apartment I remember all the furniture was ranged on a circular grass plot between the churchyard and the house. It was a lovely still summer evening, and I stayed out, climbing among the chairs and sofas. Falling on a large bone or skull, I asked what it was. Part of an albatross, auntie told me. ‘What is an albatross?’ I asked, and then she described to me this great bird nearly as big as a house, that you saw out miles away from any land, sleeping above the vast and desolate ocean. She told me that the *Ancient Mariner* was all about one; and quoted with great *verve* (she had a duster in her hand, I recollect)—

‘With my crossbow
I shot the albatross.’

... Willie had a crossbow, but up to this date I had never envied him its possession. After this, however, it became one of the objects of my life.”

With many playmates, free to roam and romp as he chose, his illness forgotten, it is no wonder he says he felt as if he led two lives, one belonging to Edinburgh and one to the country, and that Colinton ever remained an enchanted spot to which it was always hard to say good-by.

CHAPTER III

THE LANTERN BEARER

“Perhaps there lives some dreamy boy, untaught
In school, some graduate of the field or street,
Who shall become a master of the art,
An admiral sailing the high seas of thought,
Fearless and first, and steering with his fleet
For lands not yet laid down on any chart.”

—*Longfellow*.

School days began for Louis in 1859, but were continually interrupted by illness, travel, and change of school. His father did not believe in forcing him to study; so he roamed through school according to his own sweet will, attending classes where he cared to, interesting himself in the subjects that appealed to him—Latin, French, and mathematics—neglecting the others and bringing home no prizes, to Cummie’s distress.

Certain books were his prime favorites at this time. “Robinson Crusoe,” he says, “and some of the books of Mayne Reid and a book called Paul Blake—Swiss Family



Robinson also. At these I played, conjured up their scenes and delighted to hear them rehearsed to seventy times seven.

“My father’s library was a spot of some austerity; the proceedings of learned societies, cyclopaedias, physical science and above all, optics held the chief place upon the shelves, and it was only in holes and corners that anything legible existed as if by accident. Parents’ Assistant, Rob Roy, Waverley and Guy Mannering, Pilgrim’s Progress, Voyages of Capt. Woods Rogers, Ainsworth’s Tower of London and four old volumes of Punch—these were among the chief exceptions.



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“In these latter which made for years the chief of my diet, I very early fell in love (almost as soon as I could spell) with the Snob Papers. I knew them almost by heart ... and I remember my surprise when I found long afterward that they were famous, and signed with a famous name; to me, as I read and admired them, they were the works of Mr. Punch.”

Two old Bibles interested him particularly. They had belonged to his grandfather Stevenson and contained many marked passages and notes telling how they had been read aboard lighthouse tenders and on tours of inspection among the islands.

After he was thirteen his health was greatly improved and he was able to enjoy the comradeship of other lads, though he never cared greatly for sports. He was the leader of a number of boys who used to go about playing tricks on the neighbors—“tapping on their windows after nightfall, and all manner of wild freaks.”

“Crusing” was a favorite game and its name stood for all picnicking in the open air, building bonfires and cooking apples, but the crowning sport of all was “Lantern Bearing,” a game invented by himself and shared by a dozen of his cronies.

“Toward the end of September,” he says, “when school time was drawing near and the nights were already black, we would begin to sally from our respective villas, each equipped with a tin bull’s-eye lantern.... We wore them buckled to the waist upon a cricket belt, and over them, such was the rigor of the game, a buttoned top-coat. They smelled noxiously of blistered tin; they never burned aright, though they would always burn our fingers; their use was naught; the pleasure of them merely fanciful; and yet a boy with a bull’s-eye under his top-coat asked for nothing more.

“When two of these asses met there would be an anxious, ‘Have you your lantern?’ and a gratified ‘Yes,’ That was the shibboleth, and a very needful one too; for as it was the rule to keep our glory contained, none could recognize a lantern-bearer, unless like a polecat, by the smell.

“The essence of this bliss was to walk by yourself in the black night, the slide shut, the top-coat buttoned, not a ray escaping whether to conduct your footsteps or make your glory public, a mere pillar of darkness in the dark, and all the while, deep down in the privacy of your fool’s heart, to know you had a bull’s-eye at your belt and exult and sing over the knowledge.”

In later years one of the Lantern Bearers describes Louis as he was then. “A slender, long legged boy in pepper and salt tweeds, with an undescrivable influence that forced us to include him in our play as a looker on, critic and slave driver.... No one had the remotest intention of competing with R.L.S. in story making, and his tales, had we known it, were such as the world would listen to in silence and wonder.”

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At home and at his last school he was always starting magazines. The stories were illustrated with much color and the magazines circulated among the boys for a penny a reading. One was called *The Sunbeam Magazine*, an illustrated miscellany of fact, fiction, and fun, and another *The School Boy Magazine*. The latter contained four stories and its readers must have been hard to satisfy if they did not have their fill of horrors—"regular crawlers," Louis called them. In the first tale, "The Adventures of Jan Van Steen," the hero is left hidden in a boiler under which a fire is lit. The second is a "Ghost Story" of robbers in a deserted castle.... The third is called, "by curious anticipation of a story he was to write later on, 'The Wreckers.'"

Numerous plays and novels he began but they eventually found their fate in the trash basket. An exception to this was a small green pamphlet of twenty pages called "The Pentland Rising, a page of history, 1666." It was published through his father's interest on the two-hundredth anniversary of the fight at Rullion Green. This event in Scotland's history had been impressed on his mind by the numerous stories. Cummie had told him of the Covenanters and the fact that they had spent the night before their defeat in the town of Colinton.

From the time he was a little chap, balancing on the limb of an apple-tree in the Colinton garden trying to see what kind of a world lay beyond the garden wall, Louis had had a longing to travel and see sights. This began to find satisfaction now.

His father took him on a trip around the coast of Fife, visiting the harbor lights. The little towns along the coast were already familiar to him by the stories of the past. Dunfermline, where, according to the ballad, Scotland's king once "sat in his tower drinking blood-red wine"; Kerkcaldy, where the witches used to sink "tall ships and honest mariners in the North Sea"; and "Wemyss with its bat-haunted caves, where the Chevalier Johnstone on his flight from Colloden passed a night of superstitious terrors."

Later the family made a trip to the English Lakes and in the winter of the same year to the south of France, where they stayed two months, then making a tour through Italy and Switzerland. The following Christmas found Louis and his mother again in Mentone, where they stayed until spring.

French was one of his favorite studies at school, and now after a few months among French people he was able to speak fluently. Indeed, in after life he was often mistaken for a Frenchman.

His French teacher on his second visit to Mentone gave him no regular lessons, but "merely talked to him in French, teaching him piquet and card tricks, introducing him to various French people and taking him to concerts and other places; so, his mother remarks, like Louis' other teachers at home I think they found it pleasanter to talk to him than to teach him."

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After their return to Edinburgh came the time when, his school days finished, Louis must make up his mind what his career is to be and train himself for it.

Even then he knew what he wanted to do was to write. He had fitted up a room on the top floor at Heriot Row as a study and spent hours there covering paper with stories or trying to describe in the very best way scenes which had impressed him. Most of these were discarded when finished. "I liked doing them indeed," he said, "but when done I could see they were rubbish." He never doubted, however, that some day his attempts would prove worth while, if he could only devote his time to learning to write and write well.

His father, he knew, had different plans for him, however. Of course, Louis would follow in his footsteps and be the sixth Stevenson to hold a place on the Board of Northern Lights. So, although he had little heart in the work, he entered the University of Edinburgh and spent the next three and a half years studying for a science degree.

The summer of 1868 he was sent with an engineering party to Anstruther, on the coast, where a breakwater was being built. There he had his first opportunity of seeing some of the practical side of engineering. It was rough work, but he enjoyed it. Later he spent three weeks on Earraid Island, off Mull, a place which left a strong impression on his mind and figured afterward as the spot where David Balfour was shipwrecked.

Among the experiences at that time which pleased him most was a chance to descend in a diver's dress to the foundation of the harbor they were building. In his essays, "Random Memories," he tells of the "dizzy muddleheaded joy" he had in his surroundings, swaying like a reed, and grabbing at the fish which darted past him.

In writing afterward of these years he says: "What I gleaned I am sure I do not know, but indeed I had already my own private determination to be an author ... though I haunted the breakwater by day, and even loved the place for the sake of the sunshine, the thrilling sea-side air, the wash of the waves on the sea face, the green glimmer of the diver's helmets far below.... My own genuine occupation lay elsewhere and my only industry was in the hours when I was not on duty. I lodged with a certain Bailie Brown, a carpenter by trade, and there as soon as dinner was despatched ... drew my chair to the table and proceeded to pour forth literature.

"I wish to speak with sympathy of my education as an engineer. It takes a man into the open air; keeps him hanging about harbor sides, the richest form of idling; it carries him to wild islands; it gives him a taste of the genial danger of the sea ... and when it has done so it carries him back and shuts him in an office. From the roaring skerry and the wet thwart of the tossing boat, he passes to the stool and desk, and with a memory full of ships and seas and perilous headlands and shining pharos, he must apply his long-sighted eyes to the pretty niceties of drawing or measure his inaccurate mind with several pages of consecutive figures."



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“The roaring skerry and the tossing boat,” appealed to him as they had to his grandfather before him, but they did not balance his dislike for the “office and the stool” or make him willing to devote his time and energy to working for them, so his university record was very poor. “No one ever played the truant with more deliberate care,” he says, “and no one ever had more certificates (of attendance) for less education.”

One thing that he gained from his days at the university was the friendship of Professor Fleeming Jenkin. He was fifteen years older than Louis, but they had many common interests and the professor had much good influence over him. He was one of the first to see promise in his writing and encouraged him to go on with it.

Both the professor and Mrs. Jenkin were much interested in dramatics and each year brought a group of friends together at their house for private theatricals. Stevenson was a constant visitor at their home, joining heartily in these plays and looking forward to them, although he never took any very important part.

After Professor Jenkin’s death Stevenson wrote his biography, and says it was a “mingled pain and pleasure to dig into the past of a dead friend, and find him, at every spadeful, shine brighter.”

About this time Thomas Stevenson bought Swanston Cottage in the Pentland Hills, about five miles from Edinburgh, and for the next fourteen years the family spent their summers there, and Louis often went out in winter as well. It ever remained one of his favorite spots and with Colinton stood out as a place that meant much in his life.

[Illustration: Swanston Cottage]

These years saw great change in him; from a frank and happy child he had grown into a lonely, moody boy making few friends and shunning the social life that his father’s position in Edinburgh offered him. He describes himself as a “lean, ugly, unpopular student,” but those who knew him never applied the term “ugly” to him at any time.

At Swanston he explored the hills alone and grew to know them so well that the Pentland country ever remained vividly in his memory and found its way into many of his stories, notably “St. Ives,” where he describes Swanston as it was when they first made it their summer home.

Many solitary winter evenings he spent there rereading his favorite novels, particularly Dumas’s “Vicomte de Bragelonne,” which always pleased him. “Shakespeare has served me best,” he said. “Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is D’Artagnan, the elderly D’Artagnan of the ‘Vicomte de Bragelonne.’”



“I would return in the early night from one of my patrols with the shepherd, a friendly face would meet me in the door, a friendly retriever scurry up stairs to fetch my slippers, and I would sit down with the Vicomte for a long, silent, solitary lamp-lit evening by the fire.”

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At Swanston he first began to really write, “bad poetry,” he says, and during his solitary rambles fought with certain problems that perplexed him.

Here he made the acquaintance of the Scotch gardener, Robert Young, and John Todd, the “Roaring Shepherd, the oldest herd on the Pentlands,” whom he accompanied on his rounds with the sheep, listening to his tales told in broad Scotch of the highland shepherds in the old days when “he himself often marched flocks into England, sleeping on the hillsides with his caravan; and by his account it was rough business not without danger. The drove roads lay apart from habitation; the drivers met in the wilderness, as to-day the deep sea fishers meet off the banks in the solitude of the Atlantic.”

All this time Louis was idling through the university, knowing that in the end he would make nothing of himself as an engineer and dreading to confess it to his father. At length, however, his failure in his studies came to Thomas Stevenson’s attention, and, on being questioned about it “one dreadful day” as they were walking together, the boy frankly admitted that his heart was not with the work and he cared for nothing but to be able to write.

While at school his father had encouraged him to follow his own bent in his studies and reading, but when it came to the point of choosing his life-work, there ought to be no question of doubt. The only natural thing for Louis to do was to carry on the great and splendid work that he himself had helped to build up. That the boy should have other plans of his own surprised and troubled him. Literature, he said, was no profession, and thus far Louis had not done enough to prove he had a claim for making it his career.

After much debate it was finally decided that he should give up engineering, but should enter the law school and study to be admitted to the bar. This would not only give him an established profession, but leave him a little time to write as well.

CHAPTER IV

EDINBURGH DAYS

“I am fevered with the sunset,
I am fretful with the bay,
For the wander-thirst is on me
And my soul is in Cathay.“There’s a schooner in the offing,
With her topsails shot with fire,
And my heart has gone aboard her
For the island of Desire.”

—*Richard Hovey.*



In spite of the fact that his law studies now left him an opportunity for the work he wanted so much to do, Louis was far from happy, for between his parents and himself, who had always been the best of friends, there were many misunderstandings.

Thomas Stevenson was bitterly disappointed that his only son should choose to be what he called “an idler”—generous to a fault and always out of money, dressing in a careless and eccentric way, which both amused and annoyed his friends and caused him to be ridiculed by strangers, preferring to roam the streets of old Edinburgh scraping acquaintance with the fishwives and dock hands, rather than staying at home and mingling in the social circle to which his parents belonged. But his father was still more troubled by certain independent religious opinions, far different from those in which he had been reared, that Louis adopted at this time.



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How any good result could come from all this neither his father nor mother could see, and with the loss of their sympathy he was thrown upon himself and was lonely and rebellious.

He longed to get away from it all, to quit Edinburgh with its harsh climate, and often on his walks he leaned over the great bridge that joins the New Town with the Old “and watched the trains smoking out from under, and vanishing into the tunnel on a voyage to brighter skies.” He longed to go with them “to that Somewhere-else of the imagination where all troubles are supposed to end.”

It was a comfort to him at this time to remember other Scotchmen, Jeffries, Burns, Fergusson, Scott, Carlyle, and others, who had roamed these same streets before him, not a few of them fighting with the same problems he faced in their struggle to win their ideal.

This unhappy time, this “Greensickness,” as he called it, came to an end, however, through the help of what Louis had always secretly longed for—friends. Several whom he met at this time influenced him, but first of them all he put his cousin Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson (Bob), who returned to Edinburgh about this time from Paris, where he had been studying art.

Louis says: “The mere return of Bob changed at once and forever the course of my life; I can give you an idea of my relief only by saying that I was at last able to breathe.... I was done with the sullens for good.... I had got a friend to laugh with.”

Here at last was a companion who understood him and sympathized with what he was trying to do. Since as children they had made believe together in their rival kingdoms of “Nosingtonia” and “Encyclopaedia” they had had many traits and tastes in common. They now began where they had left off and proceeded to enjoy themselves once more by all sorts of wild pranks and gay expeditions.

The Speculative Society became another great source of pleasure. It was an old society and had numbered among its members such men of note as Scott, Jeffrey, Robert Emmet, and others. Once a week from November to March the “Spec,” as it was called, met in rooms in the University of Edinburgh. An essay was read and debates followed with much hot discussion, which delighted Stevenson. “Oh, I do think the Spec is about the best thing in Edinburgh,” he said enthusiastically.

Sir Walter Simpson, son of the famous doctor, Sir James Simpson, who discovered chloroform, became another chum about this time, and for the next ten years they were much together. He likewise was studying law and was a near neighbor. The Simpsons kept open house, and it was the custom for a group of cronies to drop in at all hours of day and night. Louis was among those who came oftenest, and Sir Walter’s sister writes: “He would frequently drop in to dinner with us, and of an evening he had the run

of the smoking room. After ten p.m. the 'open sesame' to our door was a rattle on the letter box and Louis' fancy for the mysterious was whetted by this admittance by secret sign, and we liked his special rat-a-tat for it was the forerunner of an hour or two of talk."



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They teased him about his queer clothes and laughed at some of his wild ideas, but he seldom was angry at them for it and never stayed away very long.

With them he often skated on Duddington Loch or canoed on the Firth of Forth. One summer he and Sir Walter yachted off the west coast of Scotland, and still another year, when longing for further wandering possessed them, they made a trip in canoes through the inland waters of Belgium from Antwerp to Brussels, and then into France and by the rivers Sambre and Oise nearly to Paris.

In the "Inland Voyage," where Stevenson describes this trip, he calls Sir Walter and his canoe "Cigarette" while he was "Arethusa." Adventures were plentiful, and they aroused much curiosity among the dwellers on the banks, with whom they made friends as they went along.

Once Arethusa was all but drowned, when his canoe was overturned by the rapids; and on several occasions, when they applied for a night's lodging, they were suspected of being tramps or peddlers because of their bedraggled appearance.

One evening after a hard day's paddling in the rain they landed tired, wet, and hungry at the little town of La Fere. "The Cigarette and I could not sufficiently congratulate each other on the prospect," says the Arethusa, "for we had been told there was a capital inn at La Fere. Such a dinner as we were going to eat. Such beds as we were going to sleep in, and all the while the rain raining on homeless folk over all the poplared country-side. It made our mouths water. The inn bore the name of some woodland animal, stag, or hart, or hind, I forget which. But I shall never forget how spacious and how eminently comfortable it looked as we drew near.... A rattle of many dishes came to our ears; we sighted a great field of tablecloth; the kitchen glowed like a forge and smelt like a garden of things to eat.

"Into this ... you are now to suppose us making our triumphal entry, a pair of damp rag-and-bone men, each with a limp india-rubber bag upon his arm. I do not believe I have a sound view of that kitchen; I saw it through a sort of glory, but it seemed to me crowded with the snowy caps of cook-men, who all turned round from their saucepans and looked at us with surprise. There was no doubt about the landlady however; there she was, heading her army, a flushed, angry woman, full of affairs. Her I asked politely—too politely, thinks the Cigarette—if we could have beds, she surveying us coldly from head to foot.

"'You will find beds in the suburb,' she remarked. 'We are too busy for the like of you.'

"If we could make an entrance, change our clothes, and order a bottle of wine I felt sure we could put things right, so I said, 'If we can not sleep, we may at least dine,' and was for depositing my bag.



“What a terrible convulsion of nature was that which followed in the landlady’s face!
She made a run at us and stamped her foot.



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“Out with you—out of the door!” she screeched.

“I do not know how it happened, but the next moment we were out in the rain and darkness. This was not the first time that I have been refused a lodging. Often and often I have planned what I would do if such a misadventure happened to me again, and nothing is easier to plan. But to put in execution, with a heart boiling at the indignity? Try it, try it only once, and tell me what you did.”

Frequently on this trip the Arethusa’s odd dress and foreign looks led him to be taken for a spy. It was not long after the Franco-Prussian war, and all sorts of rumors of suspicious characters were afloat. Once he was actually arrested and thrown into a dungeon because he could show no passport, and the commissary refused to believe he was English and puzzled his head over the scraps of notes and verses found in his knapsack.

He was rescued by the faithful Cigarette, who finally convinced the officials that they were British gentlemen travelling in this odd way for pleasure, and the things in his friend’s bag were not plans against the government, but merely scraps of poetry and notes on their travels that he liked to amuse himself by making as they went along. [Footnote: This incident is told in the “Epilogue to An Inland Voyage.”]

The canoe trips ended in a visit to the artists’ colony at Fontainebleau, where Bob Stevenson and a brother of Sir Walter’s were spending their summer. This place always had a particular attraction for Louis and he spent many weeks both there and at Grez near by during the next few years.

The free and easy life led by the artists suited him exactly, although he found it hard to accomplish any work of his own, but dreamed and planned all sorts of essays, verses, and tales which he never wrote, while the others put their pictures on canvas.

“I kept always two books in my pocket,” he says, “one to read and one to write in. As I walked my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words; when I sat by the roadside I would either read, or a pencil and penny version-book would be in my hand, to note down the features of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words.”

If there was little work, to show after a stop at Fontainebleau he had many memories of good-fellowship and some of the friends he met there were to be the first to greet him when he came to live on this side of the water.

While on their “Inland Voyage” the two canoemen had decided that the most perfect mode of travel was by canal-boat. What could be more delightful? “The chimney smokes for dinner as you go along; the banks of the canal slowly unroll their scenery to contemplative eyes; the barge floats by great forests and through great cities with their



public buildings and their lamps at night; and for the bargee, in his floating home, 'travelling abed,' it is merely as if he were listening to another man's story or turning the leaves of a picture book in which he had no concern. He may take his afternoon walk in some foreign country on the banks of the canal, and then come home to dinner at his own fireside."



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They grew most enthusiastic over the idea and told one another how they would furnish their “water villa” with easy chairs, pipes, and tobacco, and the bird and the dog should go along too.

By the time Fontainebleau was reached they had planned trips through all the canals of Europe. The idea took the artists’ fancy also, and a group of them actually purchased a canal-boat called *The Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne*. Furnishing a water villa, however, was more expensive than they had foreseen, and she came to a sad end. “The Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne’ rotted in the stream where she was beautified ... she was never harnessed to the patient track-horse. And when at length she was sold, by the indignant carpenter of Moret, there was sold along with her the *Arethusa* and the *Cigarette* ... now these historic vessels fly the tricolor and are known by new and alien names.”

In 1873 Stevenson planned to try for admission to the English bar instead of the Scottish and went to London to take the examination. But his health, which had been rather poor, became worse, and on reaching London the doctor ordered him to Mentone in the south of France, where he had been before as a boy.

There he spent his days principally lying on his back in the sun reading and playing with a little Russian girl with whom he struck up a great friendship. His letters to his mother were full of her sayings and doings. He was too ill to write much, although one essay, “Ordered South,” was the outcome of this trip, the only piece of writing in which he ever posed as an invalid or talked of his ill health.

At the end of two months he improved enough to return to Edinburgh, but gave up the idea of the English bar. His illness and absence seemed to have smoothed out some of the difficulties at home, and after he returned things went happier in every way.

On July 14, 1875, he passed his final law examinations, and was admitted to the Scottish bar. He was now entitled to wear a wig and gown, place a brass plate with his name upon the door of 17 Heriot Row, and “have the fourth or fifth share of the services of a clerk” whom it is said he didn’t even know by sight. For a few months he made some sort of a pretense at practising, but it amounted to very little. Gradually he ceased paying daily visits to the Parliament House to wait for a case, but settled himself instead in the room on the top floor at home and began to write, seriously this time—it was to be his life-work from now on—and the law was forgotten.

His first essays were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* and *The Portfolio* under the initials R.L.S., which signature in time grew so familiar to his friends and to those who admired his writings it became a second name for him, and as R.L.S. he is often referred to.



He was free now to roam as he chose and spent much time in Paris with Bob. The life there in the artists' quarter suited him as well as it had at Fontainebleau. There, among other American artists, he was associated with Mr. Will Low, a painter, whom he saw much of when he came to New York.

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One September he took a walking trip in the Cevenne Mountains with no other companion than a little gray donkey, Modestine, who carried his pack and tried his patience by turns with her pace, which was “as much slower than a walk as a walk is slower than a run,” as he tells in the chronicle of the trip.

A visit at Grez in 1876 was to mark a point in his life. Heretofore the artists' colony had been composed only of men. This year there were three new arrivals, Americans, a Mrs. Osbourne and her young son and daughter. Their home in California had been broken up and the mother had come to Grez to paint for the summer.

Those who had been there for a number of years, R.L.S. among them, looked on the newcomers as intruders and did not hesitate to say so among themselves. Before the summer was over, however, they were obliged to confess that the newcomers had added to the charms of Grez, and Louis found in Mrs. Osbourne another companion to add to his rapidly growing list.

When the artists scattered in the autumn and he returned to Edinburgh and Mrs. Osbourne to California, he carried with him the hope that some time in the future they should be married.

For the next three years he worked hard. He published numerous essays in the *Cornhill Magazine* and his first short stories, “A Lodging for the Night,” “Will O’ the Mill,” and the “New Arabian Nights.” These were followed by his first books of travel, “An Inland Voyage,” giving a faithful account of the adventures of the *Arethusa* and the *Cigarette*, and “Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes.”

When the latter was published, Mr. Walter Crane made an illustration for it showing R.L.S. under a tree in the foreground in his sleeping-bag, smoking, while Modestine contentedly crops grass by his side. Above him winds the path he is to take on his journey, encouraging Modestine with her burden to a livelier pace with his goad; receiving the blessing of the good monks at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Snows; stopping for a bite and sup at a wayside tavern; conversing with a fellow traveller by the way; and finally disappearing with the sunset over the brow of the hill.

Some time previous to all this he had written in a letter: “Leslie Stephen, who was down here to lecture, called on me, and took me up to see a poor fellow, a poet who writes for him, and who has been eighteen months in our Infirmary, and may be for all I know eighteen months more. Stephen and I sat on a couple of chairs, and the poor fellow sat up in his bed with his hair and beard all tangled, and talked as cheerfully as if he had been in a king’s palace of blue air.”

This was William Ernest Henley, and his brave determination to live and work, though he knew he must ever remain in a maimed condition, roused Stevenson’s sincere admiration. With his usual impetuous generosity, he brought him books and other

comforts to make his prolonged stay in the infirmary less wearisome and a warm friendship sprang up between them.

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As Henley grew stronger they planned to work together and write plays. Stevenson had done nothing of the kind since he was nineteen. Now they chose to use the same plot that he had experimented with at that time. It was the story of the notorious Deacon Brodie of Edinburgh, which both considered contained good material for a play.

“A great man in his day was the Deacon; well seen in good society, crafty with his hands as a cabinet-maker, and one who could sing a song with taste. Many a citizen was proud to welcome the Deacon to supper, and dismiss him with regret ... who would have been vastly disconcerted had he known how soon, and in what guise his visitor returned. Many stories are told of this redoubtable Edinburgh burgher.... A friend of Brodie’s ... told him of a projected visit to the country, and afterwards detained by some affairs, put it off and stayed the night in town. The good man had lain some time awake; it was far on in the small hours by the Tron bell; when suddenly there came a crack, a jar, a faint light. Softly he clambered out of bed and up to a false window which looked upon another room, and there, by the glimmer of a thieves’ lantern, was his good friend the Deacon in a mask.”

At length after a certain robbery in one of the government offices the Deacon was suspected. He escaped to Holland, but was arrested in Amsterdam as he was about to start for America. He was brought back to Edinburgh, was tried and convicted and hanged on the second of October, 1788, at the west end of the Tolbooth, which was the famous old Edinburgh prison known as the Heart of Midlothian.

[Illustration: Edinburgh Castle]

This story of Brodie had always interested Stevenson since he had heard it as a child, and a cabinet made by the clever Deacon himself formed part of the furniture of his nursery.

“Deacon Brodie” and other plays were finished and produced, but never proved successful. Indeed, the money came in but slowly from any of his writings and, aside from the critics, it was many a long day before he was appreciated by the people of his own city and country. They refused to believe that “that daft laddie Stevenson,” who had so often shocked them by his eccentric ways and scorn of conventions, could do anything worth while. So by far his happiest times were spent out of Scotland, principally in London, where a membership in the Savile Club added to his enjoyment. Here he met several interesting men, among them Edmund William Gosse and Sidney Colvin, both writers and literary critics, with whom he became very intimate.

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“My experience of Stevenson,” writes Mr. Gosse, “during these first years was confined to London upon which he would make sudden piratical descents, staying a few days or weeks and melting into thin air again. He was much at my house, and it must be told that my wife and I, as young married people, had possessed ourselves of a house too large for our slender means immediately to furnish. The one person who thoroughly approved of our great bare absurd drawing room was Louis, who very earnestly dealt with us on the immorality of chairs and tables, and desired us to sit always, as he delighted to sit, upon hassocks on the floor. Nevertheless, as armchairs and settees straggled into existence, he handsomely consented to use them, although never in the usual way, but with his legs thrown sidewise over the arms of them, or the head of a sofa treated as a perch. In particular, a certain shelf with cupboards below, attached to a bookcase, is worn with the person of Stevenson, who would spend half an evening, while passionately discussing some question ... leaping sidewise in a seated posture to the length of this shelf and back again.

“... These were the days when he most frequented the Savile Club, and the lightest and most vivacious part of him there came to the surface. He might spend the morning in work or business, and would then come to the club for luncheon. If he were so fortunate as to find a congenial companion disengaged, or to induce them to throw over their engagements, he would lead him off to the smoking-room, and there spend an afternoon in the highest spirits and the most brilliant and audacious talk.

“He was simply bubbling with quips and jests. I am anxious that his laughter-loving mood should not be forgotten, because later on it was partly, but I think never wholly quenched, by ill health, responsibility and advance of years.

“His private thoughts and prospects must often have been of the gloomiest, but he seems to have borne his unhappiness with a courage as high as he ever afterwards displayed.”

Sidney Colvin he met some time previous while visiting relatives in England, and their friendship was renewed when they met again in London; a friendship which lasted throughout their lives and which even the distance of two seas failed to obliterate. They kept up a lively correspondence and Mr. Colvin aided him with the publication of his writings while he was absent from his own country. After his death, according to Stevenson’s wishes, Mr. Colvin edited a large collection of his letters and in the notes which he added paid his friend many splendid tributes which show him to be a fair critic as well as an ardent admirer. “He had only to speak,” he says, “in order to be recognized in the first minute for a witty and charming gentleman, and within the first five minutes for a master spirit and man of genius.”

Louis’s long absences from home often troubled his mother and caused her to complain when writing. In one answer to her about this time he said:



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

For all so little of his writing was ever done in his own country, nevertheless he turned to Scotland again and again for the setting of his stories and the subject of his essays. Although he often spoke harshly of Edinburgh when at home, he paid her many loving tributes in writing of her in a foreign land: “The quaint grey-castled city where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat.... I do not even know if I desire to live there, but let me hear in some far land a kindred voice sing out ‘Oh, why left I my hame?’ and it seems at once as if no beauty under the kind heavens, and no society of the wise and good, can repay me for my absence from my own country. And although I think I would rather die elsewhere, yet in my heart of hearts I long to be buried among good Scotch clods. I will say it fairly, it grows on me with every year; there are no stars so lovely as the Edinburgh street lamps. When I forget thee, Auld Reekie, may my right hand forget its cunning.”

CHAPTER V

AMATEUR EMIGRANT

“Hope went before them
And the world was wide.”

In the summer of 1879 R.L.S. was once more seized with the desire to roam and to roam farther than ever before. California had been beckoning to him for some time, and in August he suddenly made up his mind, and with scarcely a word of farewell to his family and friends he embarked on the steamship *Devonia*, bound for New York.

Partly for the sake of economy, for he determined to pay his own way on this venture, and partly because he was anxious to experience emigrant life, he engaged passage in the second cabin, which in those days differed very little from the steerage. The main advantages were a trifle better food and a cabin to himself with a table where he could write.

In his usual way he soon made acquaintance with his fellow passengers and did them many a friendly turn. They took him for one of themselves and showed little curiosity as to where he came from, who he was, or where he was going. He says: “The sailors called me ‘mate,’ the officers addressed me as ‘my man,’ my comrades accepted me



without hesitation for a person of their own character and experience. One, a mason himself, believed I was a mason, several, among these at least one of the seamen, judged me to be a petty officer in the American navy; and I was so often set down for a practical engineer that at last I had not the heart to deny it.”



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The emigrants were from many countries, though the majority were Scotch and Irish bound for the new world with the hope of meeting with better fortune than they had had in the old, and they whiled away the days at sea in their several ways, making the best of their discomforts and cheering one another when they grew lonely or homesick for those they had left behind.

When the weather was good their spirits rose and there were many rounds of singing and story-telling as they sat clustered together like bees under the lee of the deck-house, and in all of these Stevenson joined heartily.

“We were indeed a musical ship’s company,” he says, “and cheered our way into exile with the fiddle, the accordion, and the songs of all nations, good, bad or indifferent—Scottish, English, Irish, Russian or Norse—the songs were received with generous applause. Once or twice, a recitation, very spiritedly rendered in a powerful Scotch accent, varied the proceedings; and once we sought in vain to dance a quadrille, eight men of us together, to the music of the violin. The performers were humorous, frisky fellows, who loved to cut capers in private life; but as soon as they were arranged for the dance, they conducted themselves like so many mutes at a funeral. I have never seen decorum pushed so far; and as this was not expected, the quadrille was soon whistled off, and the dancers departed.

“But the impulse to sing was strong, and triumphed over modesty and even the inclemencies of the sea and sky. On one rough Saturday night, we got together by the main deck-house, in a place sheltered from the wind and rain. Some clinging to the ladder which led to the hurricane-deck and the rest knitting arms or taking hands, we made a ring to support the women in the violent lurching of the ship, and when we were thus disposed, sang to our hearts’ content.

“There was a single chess-board and a single pack of cards. Sometimes as many as twenty of us would be playing dominoes for love. There were feats of dexterity, puzzles for the intelligence and a regular daily competition to guess the vessel’s progress; at twelve o’clock when the result was published in the wheel house, came to be a moment of considerable interest.... We had beside, romps in plenty. Puss in the Corner, which we rebaptized, in more manly style, Devil and Four Corners, was my favorite game; but there were many who preferred another, the humor of which was to box a person’s ears until he found out who cuffed him.”

The voyage, which lasted ten days, was uneventful except for some rough weather when Stevenson found his cabin most stuffy and uncomfortable. He was not really ill, however, and spent much of the time finishing a tale called “The Story of a Lie,” while his table played “Bob Jerry with the ink bottle.” On his arrival in New York the story was sent back to London with the following letter to Sidney Colvin:

“On Board S.S. Devonia an hour or two out of New York, Aug., 1879.



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“MY DEAR COLVIN:

“I have finished my story. The handwriting is not good because of the ship’s misconduct; thirty-one pages in ten days at sea is not bad. I am not very well; bad food, bad air and hard work have brought me down. But the spirits keep good. The voyage has been most interesting and will make, if not a series of Pall Mall articles, at least the first part of a new book. The last weight on me has been trying to keep notes for this purpose. Indeed I have worked like a horse and am tired as a donkey. If I should have to push on far by rail, I shall bring nothing but my fine bones to port.

“Goodbye to you all. I suppose it is now late afternoon with you all across the seas. What shall I find over here? I dare not wonder.—Ever yours R.L.S.”

As California was the goal he aimed for, in spite of his fatigue after ten days of poor living and the sea, he determined to push on immediately in an emigrant train bound for the Pacific coast.

On reaching port he and a man named Jones, with whom he had had more in common than with any of his other fellow passengers, landed together.

“Jones and I issued into West Street, sitting on some straw in the bottom of an open baggage wagon. It rained miraculously, and from that moment till on the following night I left New York, there was scarce a lull, and no cessation of the downpour....

“It took but a few moments, though it cost a good deal of money, to be rattled along West Street to our destination: Reunion House, No. 10 West Street, ‘kept by one Mitchell.’

“Here I was at last in America and was soon out upon the New York streets, spying for things foreign....

“The following day I had a thousand and one things to do; only the day to do them in and a journey across the continent before me in the evening.... It rained with potent fury; every now and then I had to get under cover for a while in order, so to speak, to give my mackintosh a rest; for under this continued drenching it began to grow damp on the inside. I went to banks, post-offices, railway offices, restaurants, publishers, book sellers and money changers.

“I was so wet when I got back to Mitchell’s toward evening, that I had simply to divest myself of my shoes, socks and trousers, and leave them behind for the benefit of New York City. No fire could have dried them ere I had to start; and to pack them in their present condition was to spread ruin among my other possessions. With a heavy heart I said farewell to them as they lay a pulp in the middle of a pool upon the floor of Mitchell’s kitchen. I wonder if they are dry by now.”

That night he joined a party of emigrants bound for the West, the weight of his baggage much increased by the result of his day's purchases—Bancroft's "History of the United States" in six fat volumes. So in less than twenty-four hours after landing on one coast he was on his way to the other.



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If at times he had been uncomfortable on the steamer he was ten times more so on the train. It is hard to realize in these days of easy travelling what the discomforts of riding in the emigrant trains were; crowded together in badly lighted, badly ventilated cars, with stiff wooden benches on either side, which were most uncomfortable to sit on and next to impossible to lie down upon. Meals were taken as best they might when they stopped at way stations while some bought milk and eggs and made a shift to cook themselves a meal or brew a cup of tea on the stove at the end of the car.

Over a week of this sort of slow travelling through the heat of the plains was enough to tax the strength and courage of the most robust man, let alone one in as delicate health as Stevenson at that time, and it is a wonder he ever lived through it. Indeed, he was ill but kept cheerful in spite of all, and was interested in the country and the sights along the way. His own discomforts seemed to dwindle when he contrasted them with those the pioneers endured travelling that same direction twenty years before; crawling along in ox-carts with their cattle and family possessions; suffering hunger, thirst, and infinite weariness, and living in daily terror of attack from the Indians.

He made note of all he saw and the doings of his fellow emigrants, to be used later on. Letters to Henley and Colvin en route are interesting.

“In the Emigrant Train from New York to San Francisco, Aug., 1879.

DEAR COLVIN,—I am in the cars between Pittsburg and Chicago, just now bowling through Ohio. I am taking charge of a kid, whose mother is asleep, with one eye while I write you this with the other. I reached N.Y. Sunday night, and by five o'clock Monday was underway for the West.—It is now about ten on Wednesday morning, so I have already been forty hours in the cars. It is impossible to lie down in them, which must end by being very wearying....

“No man is any use until he has dared everything; I feel just now as if I had, and so might become a man. ‘If ye have faith like a grain of mustard seed.’ That is so true! Just now I have faith as big as a cigar case, I will not say die, and I do not fear man nor fortune.—R.L.S.”

“Crossing Nebraska, Saturday, Aug. 23, 1879.

“My Dear Henley,—I am sitting on the top of the cars with a mill party from Missouri going west for his health. Desolate flat prairie upon all hands.... When we stop, which we do often, for emigrants and freight travel together, the kine first, the man after, the whole plain is heard singing with cicadae. This is a pause, as you may see from the writing. What happened to the old pedestrian emigrants; what was the tedium suffered by the Indians and trappers of our youth, the imagination trembles to conceive. This is now Saturday, 23rd, and I have been steadily travelling since I parted from you at St. Pancras. It is a strange vicissitude



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from the Savile Club to this; I sleep with a man from Pennsylvania who has been in the Navy Yard, and mess with him and the Missouri bird already alluded to. We have a tin wash-bowl among four, I wear nothing but a shirt and a pair of trousers and never button my shirt. When I land for a meal, I pass my coat and feel dressed. This life is to last until Friday, Saturday or Sunday next. It is a strange affair to be an emigrant, as I hope you shall see in a future work. I wonder if this will be legible; my present station on the wagon roof, though airy, compared to the cars, is both dirty and insecure. I can see the track straight before and straight behind me to either horizon....

“Our journey is through ghostly deserts, sage brush and alkali, and rocks without form or color, a sad corner of the world. I confess I am not jolly, but mighty calm, in my distresses. My illness is a subject of great mirth to some of my fellow travellers, and I smile rather sickly at their jests.

“We are going along Bitter Creek just now, a place infamous in the history of emigration, a place I shall remember myself among the blackest.—R.L.S.”

When California was finally reached he decided to rest and recover strength by camping out for a few days in the Coast Range Mountains beyond Monterey, but the anxiety and strain of the long journey had been greater than he realized, and he broke down and became very ill. For two nights he lay out under the trees in a kind of stupor and at length was rescued by two frontiersmen in charge of a goat-ranch, who took him to their cabin and cared for him until he partly recovered.

“Here is another curious start in my life,” he wrote to Sidney Colvin. “I am living at an Angora goat-ranch, in the Coast Line Mountains, eighteen miles from Monterey. I was camping out, but got so sick that the two rancheros took me in and tended me. One is an old bear hunter, seventy-two years old, and a captain from the Mexican War; the other a pilgrim, and one who was out with the bear flag and under Fremont when California was taken by the States. They are both true frontiersmen, and most kind and pleasant. Captain Smith, the bear hunter, is my physician, and I obey him like an oracle....

“I am now lying in an upper chamber, with the clinking of goat bells in my ears, which proves to me that the goats are come home and it will soon be time to eat. The old bear hunter is doubtless now infusing tea; and Tom the Indian will come in with his gun in a few moments....

“The business of my life stands pretty nigh still. I work at my notes of the voyage. It will not be very like a book of mine; but perhaps none the less successful for that. I will not deny that I feel lonely to-day.... I have not yet had a word from England, partly, I suppose, because I have not yet written for my letters to New York; do not blame me for

this neglect, if you knew all I have been through, you would wonder I had done as much as I have. I teach the ranch children reading in the morning, for the mother is from home sick.



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“Ever your affectionate friend.

“R.L.S.”

As soon as Stevenson was well enough he returned to Monterey and fell to working upon several short stories and the notes of his voyage, which he brought together and published later under the titles “The Amateur Emigrant” and “Across the Plains.”

Monterey in those days was a small Mexican town; “a place of two or three streets economically paved with sea-sand, and two or three lanes, which were the water courses in the rainy season.... The houses were, for the most part, built of unbaked adobe brick....

“There was no activity but in and around the saloons, where the people sat almost all day playing cards. The smallest excursion was made on horseback. You would scarcely ever see the main street without a horse or two tied to posts, and making a fine figure with their Mexican housings. In a place so exclusively Mexican as Monterey, you saw not only Mexican saddles, but true Vaquero riding—men always at a hand gallop, up hill and down dale, and round the sharpest corners, urging their horses with cries and gesticulations and cruel rotary spurs, checking them dead, with a touch, or wheeling them right about face in a square yard. Spanish was the language of the street.”

He lodged with a doctor and his wife, and took his meals at the little restaurant kept by Jules Simoneau, “a most pleasant old boy,” with whom he played chess and discussed the universe daily.

About the middle of December he pushed on to San Francisco, and prepared to settle down and work for an indefinite time. Though he had known but few people in Monterey, nevertheless it was a social little place in comparison to a great city like San Francisco, where Stevenson found himself indeed a stranger and friendless and learned for the first time in his life what it really meant to be lonely.

Funds were running low; so he secured the cheapest possible lodging and took his meals at various small restaurants, living at the rate of seventy cents a day.

On December 26 he wrote: “For four days I have spoken to no one but my landlady or landlord or the restaurant waiters. This is not a gay way to pass Christmas, is it?” But some days later, nothing daunted, he added: “I lead a pretty happy life, though you might not think it. I have great fun trying to be economical, which I find as good a game of play as any other. I have no want of occupation and though I rarely see any one to speak to, have little time to worry.”



To make matters worse, letters containing money went astray and word came that some articles submitted to his publishers in England, on which he had depended for funds, were not satisfactory, and this forced him to reduce his living expenses to forty-five cents a day. The letters from home were most unsatisfactory and lacked the kind of news he longed for. "Not one soul ever gives me any *news*," he complained to Sidney Colvin, "about people or things, everybody

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writes me sermons; it is good for me, but hardly the food necessary for a man who lives all alone on forty-five cents a day, and sometimes less, with quantities of hard work and many heavy thoughts. If one of you could write me a letter with a jest in it, a letter like what is written to real people in the world—I am still flesh and blood—I should enjoy it. Simpson did the other day, and it did me as much good as a bottle of wine—man alive I want gossip.”

Day in and day out he worked doggedly, fighting discouragement, with little strength or inspiration to write anything very worth while.

To cap all, his landlady’s little boy fell ill, and Stevenson, who had a great love and sympathy for all children, helped to nurse him, and this proved too much in the nervous and exhausted state he was in. The boy recovered, but Stevenson fell ill again, and for six weeks hovered between life and death.

This seems to have been the turning-point in his ill luck. Toward the middle of February, as he slowly began to mend, he was cheered on by long letters from home, full of anxiety for his health and advances of money from his father, with strict instructions that from now on he was no longer to stint and deny himself the bare necessities of life, as he had been doing. Later, in April, came a telegram from Thomas Stevenson saying that in future Louis was to count on an income of two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

Cheered with the prospect of an easier road ahead of him, he struggled back to life once more with a strong resolve to work harder and make those at home proud of him.

“It was a considerable shock to my pride to break down,” he wrote to a friend, “but there it’s done and can not be helped. Had my health held out another month, I should have made a year’s income, but breaking down when I did, I am surrounded by unfinished works. It is a good thing my father was on the spot, or I should have had to work and die.”

Early in the spring he and Mrs. Osbourne met again, and on May 19, 1880, they were married in San Francisco.

For the rest of his life Stevenson had no cause to complain of loneliness, for in his wife he had an “inseparable sharer of all his adventures; the most open-hearted of friends to all those who loved him; the most shrewd and stimulating critic of his work; and in sickness, despite her own precarious health, the most devoted and most efficient of nurses.”

Immediately after their marriage Stevenson and his wife and stepson—and the dog—went to the Coast Range Mountains and, taking possession of an old deserted miner’s



camp, practically lived out-of-doors for the next few months, with no neighbors aside from a hunter and his family.

This was healthy, but the life of a squatter has its limitations, and their trials and tribulations during these weeks Stevenson told most amusingly in “The Silverado Squatters.”

Gradually a longing began to come to R.L.S. to see those at home once more and have them know his wife. This desire grew so from day to day that July found them bidding good-by to California, and on the 7th of August they sailed from New York for Liverpool.



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CHAPTER VI

SCOTLAND AGAIN

“Bells upon the city are ringing in the night,
High above the gardens are the houses full of light,
On the heathy Pentlands is the curlew flying free,
And the broom is blowing bonnie in the north countrie.”

“We canna break the bonds that God decreed to bind,
Still we’ll be the children of the heather and the wind,
Far away from home O, it’s still for you and me
That the broom is blowing bonnie in the north countrie.”

On his return to Scotland the spell of his own land fell upon R.L.S. for the first time. He realized now how he loved it spite of its bad climate, how much there was at home waiting for him. “After all,” he said, “new countries, sun, music, and all the rest, can never take down our gusty, rainy, smoky, grim old city out of the first place it has been making for itself in the bottom of my soul.”

But he had returned only to be banished. The doctors found his lungs too weak to risk Edinburgh winters and advised him to try the Alps.

Accordingly a cottage was rented in Davos Platz, a health resort. There and at similar places near by they spent the next few winters with visits to England and France between. Switzerland never suited Stevenson. He disliked living among invalids, and with his love for exploring the nooks and corners of any spot he was in he felt like a prisoner when he found himself shut in a valley among continual snow with few walks possible for him to take. “The mountains are about me like a trap,” he complained. “You can not foot it up a hillside and behold the sea on a great plain, but live in holes and corners and can change only one for the other.”

Tobogganing was the only sport of Davos Platz he really enjoyed, and he pursued that to his heart’s content. “Perhaps the true way to toboggan is alone and at night,” he said. “First comes the tedious climb dragging your instrument behind you. Next a long breathing space, alone with the snow and pine woods, cold, silent and solemn to the heart. Then you push off; the toboggan fetches away, she begins to feel the hill, to glide, to swim, to gallop. In a breath you are out from under the pine-trees and the whole heaven full of stars reels and flashes overhead.”

He accomplished little work at this time. Sometimes for days he would be unable to write at all. But the little boy who had once told his mother, “I have been trying to make myself happy,” was the same man now who could say: “I was never bored in my life.” When unable to do anything else he would build houses of cards or lie in bed and model



little figures in clay. Anything to keep his hands busy and his mind distracted from the stories that crowded his brain and he had not strength to put on paper. His one horror, the fear that urged him on to work feverishly when he was suffering almost beyond endurance, was the thought that his illness might one day make him a helpless invalid.



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The splendid part to think of is that no hint of his dark days and pains crept into his writings or saddened those who came to see him. Complaint he kept to himself, prayed that he might “continue to be eager to be happy,” lived with the best that was in him from day to day, and the words that went forth from his sick-room have cheered and encouraged thousands.

When asked why he wrote so many stories of pirates and adventurers with few women to soften them he replied: “I suppose it’s the contrast; I have always admired great strength, even in a pirate. Courage has interested me more than anything else.”

He and his stepson had grown to be great chums. At Silverado Lloyd had been seized with a desire to write stories and had set up a toy printing-press which turned off several tales. At Davos Platz they both tried their hand at illustrating these stories with pictures cut on wood-blocks and gayly colored. Lloyd’s room was quite a gallery of these artistic attempts. But their favorite diversion was to play at a war game with lead soldiers. In after-years Lloyd wrote his recollections of the days they spent together enjoying this fun and he says: “The war game was constantly improved and elaborated, until from a few hours, a war took weeks to play, and the critical operations in the attic monopolized half our thoughts. This attic was a most chilly and dismal spot, reached by a crazy ladder, and unlit save for a single frosted window; so low at the eaves and so dark that we could seldom stand upright, nor see without a candle. Upon the attic floor a map was roughly drawn in chalks of different colors, with mountains, rivers, towns, bridges, and roads of two classes. Here we would play by the hour, with tingling fingers and stiffening knees, and an intentness, zest, and excitement that I shall never forget.

“The mimic battalions marched and counter-marched, changed by measured evolutions from column formation into line, with cavalry screens in front and massed support behind, in the most approved military fashion of to-day.”

Neither of them ever grew too old for this sport. Year after year they went back to the game. Even when they went to Samoa they laid out a campaign room with maps chalked on the floor.

In the spring of 1885 Thomas Stevenson purchased a house at Bournemouth, England, near London, as a present for his daughter-in-law.

They named the cottage “Skerryvore,” after the famous lighthouse he had helped to build in his young days, and it was their home for the next three years—busy ones for R.L.S.

[Illustration: Skerryvore Cottage, Bournemouth]

It was a real joy to have his father and mother and Bob Stevenson with them again and his friends in London frequently drop in for a visit.

His health was never worse than during the Bournemouth days. He seldom went beyond his own garden-gate but lived, as he says, "like a weevil in a biscuit." Yet he never worked harder or accomplished more. He wrote in bed and out of bed, sick or well, poems, plays, short stories, and verses.



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He finished "Treasure Island," the book that gained him his first popularity, and wrote "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," which made him famous at home and abroad.

"Treasure Island" had been started some time previous to please Lloyd, who asked him to write a "good story." It all began with a map. Stevenson always loved maps, and one day during a picture-making bout he had drawn a fine one. "It was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully colored," he says. "The shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbors that pleased me like sonnets.... I ticketed my performance Treasure Island."

Immediately the island began to take life and swarm with people, all sorts of strange scenes began to take place upon it, and as he gazed at his map Stevenson discovered the plot for the "good story."

"It is horrid fun," he wrote, "and begins in the Admiral Benbow public house on the Devon coast; all about a map and a treasure and a mutiny, and a derelict ship ... and a doctor and a sea-cook with one leg with the chorus 'yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum,' ... No women in the story, Lloyd orders."

Parts of the coast at Monterey flashed back to his mind and helped him to picture the scenery of his "Treasure Island." "It was just such a place as the Monterey sand hills the hero John Hawkins found himself on leaving his mutinous shipmates. It was just such a thicket of live oak growing low along the sand like brambles, that he crawled and dodged when he heard the voices of the pirates near him and saw Long John Silver strike down with his crutch one of his mates who had refused to join in his plan for murder."

[Illustration: The Treasure Island map]

As the story grew he read each new chapter aloud to the family in the evening. He was writing it for one boy, but found he had more in his audience. "My father," he says, "not only heard with delight the daily chapter, but set himself actively to collaborate. When the time came for Billy Bones' chest to be ransacked, he must have passed the better part of a day preparing on the back of a legal envelope an inventory of its contents, which I exactly followed, and the name of Flint's old ship, the Walrus, was given at his particular request."

When the map was redrawn for the book it was embellished with "blowing whales and sailing ships; and my father himself brought into service a knack he had of various writing, and elaborately *forged* the signature of Captain Flint and the sailing directions of Billy Bones."



These daily readings were rare treats to those at Skerryvore, for Stevenson was a most dramatic reader. “When he came to stand in the place of Silver you could almost have imagined you saw the great one-legged John Silver, joyous-eyed, on the rolling sea.”

The book was not long in springing into popularity. Not only the boys enjoyed it but all sorts of staid and sober men became boys once more and sat up long after bedtime to finish the tale. Mr. Gladstone caught a glimpse of it at a friend’s house and did not rest the next day until he had procured a copy for himself, and Andrew Lang said: “This is the kind of stuff a fellow wants. I don’t know when, except Tom Sawyer and the Odyssey, that I ever liked a romance so well.”

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It was translated into many different languages, even appearing serially in certain Greek and Spanish papers.

“Kidnapped” followed; a story founded on the Appan murder. David Balfour, the hero, was one of his own ancestors; Alan Breck had actually lived, and the Alison who ferried Alan and David over to Torryburn was one of Cummie’s own people. The Highland country where the scenes were laid, he had traversed many times, and the Island of Earraid, where David was shipwrecked, was the spot where he had spent some of his engineering days.

Stevenson had often said the “brownies” in his dreams gave him ideas for his tales. At Skerryvore they came to him with a story that among all his others is counted the greatest.

“In the small hours one morning,” says his wife, “I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare I awakened him. He said angrily, ‘Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.’”

The dream was so vivid that he could not rest until he had written off the story, and it so possessed him that the first draft was finished within three days. It was called “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.”

This story instantly created much discussion. Articles were written about it, sermons were preached on it, and letters poured in from all sorts of people with their theories about the strange tale. Six months after it was published nearly forty thousand copies were sold in England alone; but its greatest success was in America where its popularity was immediate and its sale enormous.

One day he was attracted by a book of verses about children by Kate Greenaway, and wondered why he could not write some too of the children he remembered best of all. Scenes and doings in the days spent at Colinton with his swarm of cousins; the games they had played and the people they had known all trooped back with other memories of Edinburgh days. As he recalled these children, they tripped from his pen until he had a delightful collection of verses and determined to bring them together in a book.

First he called it “The Penny Whistle,” but soon changed the title to “A Child’s Garden of Verses” and dedicated it, with the following poem, to the only one he said who would really understand the verses, the one who had done so much to make his childhood days happy:

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

FROM HER BOY



“For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake;
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land;
For all the story-books you read;
For all the pains you comforted;
For all you pitied, all you bore
In sad and happy days of yore;—
My second Mother, my first wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

“And grant it, Heaven, that all who read,
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice.”



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“Of course,” he said, speaking of this dedication when he wrote to Cummie about the book, “this is only a flourish, like taking off one’s hat, but still a person who has taken the trouble to write things does not dedicate them to anyone without meaning it; and you must try to take this dedication in place of a great many things that I might have said, and that I ought to have done; to prove that I am not altogether unconscious of the great debt of gratitude I owe you.”

[Illustration: Facsimile of letter sent to Cummy with “An Inland Voyage”]

If Thomas Stevenson had been one of the first to doubt his boy’s literary ability, he was equally quick to acknowledge himself mistaken. He was proud of his brilliant son, keenly interested in whatever he was working on and, during the days spent together at Skerryvore, gave him valuable aid in his writing.

To have this old-time comradeship with his father, to enjoy his sympathy and understanding once more was Stevenson’s greatest joy at this time; a joy which he sorrowfully realized he must soon part with forever as his father’s health was failing rapidly.

Thomas Stevenson remained at Skerryvore until April, 1887, when he left for a short visit to Edinburgh. While there he became suddenly worse and died on the 8th of May.

Louis’s greatest reason for remaining in England was gone now, and he determined to cross the ocean with his family once more.

His mother willingly gave up her home, her family, her friends, and the comforts she had always enjoyed to go with him to a new country, on any venture he might propose if his health could only be improved thereby.

On August 21, 1887, Louis bade good-by to Scotland for the last time and sailed away from London on the steamship *Ludgate Hill* for New York.

CHAPTER VII

SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA

“Tis a good land to fall in with men, and a pleasant land to see.”

—(*Words spoken by Hendrik Hudson when he first brought his ship through the Narrows and saw the Bay of New York.*)

Stevenson’s second landing in New York was a great contrast to his first. The “Amateur Emigrant” had no one to bid him welcome and Godspeed but a West Street tavern-keeper, and now when Mr. Will Low, his old friend of Fontainebleau days, hastened to



the dock to welcome him on the *Ludgate Hill*, he found the author of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” already surrounded by reporters.

The trip had done him good in spite of their passage having been an unusually rough one, with numerous discomforts. The *Ludgate Hill* was not an up-to-date liner and she carried a very mixed cargo. The very fact of her being a tramp ship and that the passengers were free to be about with the men and officers, stay in the wheel-house, and enjoy a real sea life, delighted Stevenson, and he wrote back to Sidney Colvin:



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“I enjoyed myself more than I could have hoped on board our floating menagerie; stallions and monkeys and matches made our cargo; and the vast continent of the incongruities rolled the while like a haystack; and the stallions stood hypnotized by the motion, looking through the port at our dinner table, and winned when the crockery was broken; and the little monkeys stared at one another in their cages ... and the big monkey, Jacko scoured about the ship and rested willingly in my arms ... the other passengers, when they were not sick, looked on and laughed. Take all this picture, and make it roll till the bell shall sound unexpected notes and the fittings shall break loose in our state rooms, and you have the voyage of the Ludgate Hill. She arrived in the port of New York without beer, porter, soda-water, curacoa, fresh meat, or fresh water, and yet we lived and we regret her.”

After a short visit with friends in Newport they returned to New York and settled down for a time in the Hotel St. Stephen, on 11th Street, near University Place, to make plans for their winter's trip.

Soon after their arrival “Jekyll and Hyde” was dramatized and produced with great success. When it was known that the author of this remarkable story was in the city, people flocked from all sides to call on him, and fairly wearied him with their attentions, although he liked to see them and made many interesting acquaintances at the time.

Washington Square was one of his favorite spots in New York, and he spent many hours there watching the children playing about. A day he always recalled with special pleasure was the one when he had spent a whole forenoon in the Square talking with Mark Twain.

Among those who were anxious to know Stevenson was the American sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens. He had been delighted with his writings and regretted he had not met him in Paris when he and Mr. Low had been there together. “If Stevenson ever comes to New York,” he said to Mr. Low, “I want to meet him,” and added that he would consider it a great privilege if Stevenson would permit him to make his portrait.

It was with much pleasure, therefore, that Mr. Low brought them together, and they took to one another immediately. “I like your sculptor. What a splendid straightforward and simple fellow he is,” said Stevenson; and St. Gaudens's comment after their first meeting was: “Astonishingly young, not a bit like an invalid and a bully fellow.”

Stevenson readily consented to sit for his portrait, and they spent many delightful hours together while the sketches were being made for it.

One day the sculptor brought his eight-year-old son, Homer, with him, and years afterward gave the following description of the child's visit:



“On the way I endeavored to impress on the boy the fact that he was about to see a man whom he must remember all his life. It was a lovely day and as I entered the room Stevenson lay as usual on rather a high bed. I presented Homer to him ... but since my son’s interest, notwithstanding my injunctions, was to say the least far from enthusiastic, I sent him out to play.



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[Illustration: Bas-relief of Stevenson by Augustus Saint Gaudens]

“I then asked Stevenson to pose but that was not successful ... all the gestures being forced and affected. Therefore I suggested to him that if he would try to write, some natural attitude might result. He assented and taking a sheet of paper ... he pulled his knees up and began. Immediately his attitude was such that I was enabled to create something of use and continued drawing while he wrote with an occasional smile. Presently I finished and told him there was no necessity for his writing any more. He did not reply but proceeded for quite a while. Then he folded the paper with deliberation, placed it in an envelope, addressed it, and handed it to me. It was to ‘Master Homer St. Gaudens.’

“I asked him: ‘Do you wish me to give this to the boy?’

“‘Yes,’

“‘When? Now?’

“‘Oh, no, in five or ten years, or when I am dead.’

“I put it in a safe and here it is:

“May 27, 1888.

“DEAR HOMER ST. GAUDENS—Your father has brought you this day to see me and tells me it is his hope you may remember the occasion. I am going to do what I can to carry out his wish; and it may amuse you, years after, to see this little scrap of paper and to read what I write. I must begin by testifying that you yourself took no interest whatever in the introduction, and in the most proper spirit displayed a single-minded ambition to get back to play, and this I thought an excellent and admirable point in your character. You were also,—I use the past tense with a view to the time when you shall read rather than to that when I am writing,—a very pretty boy, and to my European views startlingly self-possessed. My time of observation was so limited that you must pardon me if I can say no more ... but you may perhaps like to know that the lean, flushed man in bed, who interested you so little, was in a state of mind extremely mingled and unpleasant; harassed with work which he thought he was not doing well, troubled with difficulties to which you will in time succeed, and yet looking forward to no less a matter than a voyage to the South Seas and the visitation of savage and desert islands.

“Your father’s friend,

“ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.”

The portrait was finished in bas-relief and many copies were made of it. The most familiar is the one giving only Stevenson’s head and shoulders, but the splendid big one



placed as a memorial to him in St. Giles's Cathedral in Edinburgh shows him as he must have looked that day lying in bed, writing to Homer St. Gaudens.

Another man in New York whom Stevenson had admired for years and longed to meet was General Sherman. The war was long past, and he was then an old gentleman living very quietly. One day St. Gaudens took Stevenson to call on him, and he was asked afterward if he was at all disappointed in his hero.



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“Disappointed,” he exclaimed. “It was simply magnificent to stand in the presence of one who has done what he has, and then to find him so genial and human. It was the next thing to seeing Wellington, and I dare say the Iron Duke would not have been half so human.”

The anticipation of a train trip across the continent was so distasteful that a proposed visit to Colorado was given up, and they decided to try the climate of the Adirondacks for the winter instead.

They chose Saranac, not far from the Canadian border, and rented a cottage there.

The climate was as unpleasant as possible. It rained, snowed, sleeted, and froze continually. The cold at times was arctic, the thermometer dropping thirty degrees below zero in January. “Venison was crunching with ice after being an hour in the oven, and a large lump of ice was still unmelted in a pot where water was steaming all around it.”

Their cottage was dubbed “Hunter’s Home.” It was far from the railroad, few luxuries were to be had, and they lived a simple life in earnest.

Of course, they had a dog; no “hunter’s home” would be complete without one, but Louis scouted the idea of adding things as unfitting as plush table-covers and upholstered footstools. The table went bare, and he fashioned a footstool for his mother out of a log, in true backwoods fashion.

His wife and mother found the cold hard to bear, but he stood it remarkably well and benefited by it. Saranac reminded him of Scotland, he said, without the smell of peats and the heather.

Dressed in a buffalo coat, astrakhan cap, and Indian boots, he and Lloyd walked, skated, or went sleighing every day.

His pen was kept busy also. A new novel, “The Master of Ballantrae,” was started, and he contributed a series of articles to *Scribner’s Magazine*. For these he was paid a regular sum offered by the publishers and agreed upon in advance—a new experience. It made him feel “awfu’ grand,” he told a Scotch friend.

A venture he had been longing to make since a boy was a cruise among the islands of the South Seas. While enduring the bitter cold of Saranac such hazy ideas as he had had about such a trip began to form themselves into a definite scheme. He was anxious for a long voyage; perhaps the warm sea air might cure him after all else had failed.

So night after night he and Lloyd eagerly pored over books and maps, and the family discussed plans for such an expedition.



When spring came Mrs. Stevenson started for San Francisco to secure, if possible, a yacht in which they might undertake such a cruise. If all went well Louis and his mother and Lloyd would follow.

While they waited for results they spent the time at Manasquan, on the New Jersey coast. There Stevenson and his son enjoyed the sailing, and their New York friends came often to see them.

Mr. Low tells of the day at Manasquan when word was received from Mrs. Stevenson that she had found a schooner-yacht satisfactory for the voyage.

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An answer must be sent at once. Her husband telegraphed that they would come, but it was not without misgivings that he made this final decision. There was much at stake in an uncertain venture of the kind. It meant a sacrifice of comfort for his wife and mother, big expense, and perhaps no better health in the end.

However, it seemed worth the risk, and having decided to go he began to look forward to the trip with boyish delight. "It will be horrid fun," he said, "to be an invalid gentleman on board a yacht, to walk around with a spy-glass under your arm, to make landings and trade beads and chromos for cocoanuts, and to have the natives swim out to meet you."

He and Lloyd spent hours laying their course and making out lists of stores with which to furnish the schooner, regardless of the doubt expressed by their friends as to the capacity of the boat. "They calmly proceeded with their interminable lists and scorned the criticism of a mere land-lubber. All conversation that was not of a nautical character failed to hold their interest."

Cheered with strong hopes for Louis's future, the family departed for San Francisco on the 28th of May, 1888. Their one regret was the good friends they were leaving behind. This particularly affected Louis, but he tried to hide his feelings by making all sorts of lively and impossible proposals for their joining him later on.

His parting words to Mr. Low were: "There's England over there—and I've left it—perhaps I may never go back—and there on the other side of this big continent there's another sea rolling in. I loved the Pacific in the days when I was at Monterey, and perhaps now it will love me a little. I am going to meet it; ever since I was a boy the South Seas have laid a spell upon me."

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE SOUTH SEAS

"Since long ago, a child at home,
I read and longed to rise and roam,
Where'er I went, what'er I willed,
One promised land my fancy filled.
Hence the long road my home I made;
Tossed much in ships; have often laid
Below the uncurtained sky my head,
Rain-deluged and wind buffeted;
And many a thousand miles I crossed,
And corners turned—love's labor lost,
Till, Lady, to your isle of sun



I came, not hoping, and like one
Snatched out of blindness, rubbed my eyes,
And hailed my promised land with cries.”

Once, while Louis was a discontented student at the University of Edinburgh, the premier of New Zealand, Mr. Seed, spent an evening with his father and talked about the South Sea Islands until the boy said he was “sick with desire to go there.”

From that time on a visit to that out-of-the-way corner of the earth was a cherished dream, and he read everything he could lay hands on that told about it.

While in California, the first time, Mr. Virgil Williams, an artist, aroused his interest still more by the accounts of his own trip in the South Seas.

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Now his opportunity to see them had actually come. He already knew much of the kind of places and people they were going among.

Three thousand miles across the open sea lay the Marquesas Islands, the first group they hoped to visit, and it was for that port their schooner, the *Casco*, turned her head when she was towed out of the Golden Gate at dawn on the 28th of June.

Besides the family and a servant, Valentine Roch, who had been with them since Bournemouth days, the party consisted of the skipper, Captain Otis, who was well acquainted with the Pacific, a crew of four deck-hands, and a Japanese cook.

The *Casco* was a fore-and-aft schooner, ninety-five feet in length, of seventy tons' burden. "She had most graceful lines and with her lofty masts, white sails and decks, and glittering brass work, was a lovely craft to the eye as she sat upon the water."

"I must try to describe the vessel that is to be our home for so long," Mrs. Stevenson, senior, wrote to her sister at Colinton. "From the deck you step down into the cockpit, which is our open air drawing room. It has seats all around, nicely cushioned, and we sit or lie there most of the day. The compass is there, and the wheel, so the man at the wheel always keeps us company.... At the bottom of the stairs on the right hand side is the captain's room. Straight ahead is the main—or after—cabin, a nice bright place with a skylight and four portholes. There are four sofas that can be turned into beds if need be, and there are lockers under them in which our clothes are stored away. Above and behind each sofa is a berth concealed by white lace curtains on brass rods, and in these berths we three women are laid away as on shelves each night to sleep.

"Opposite the entrance is a mirror let into the wall, with two small shelves under it. On each side of this is a door. The one to the right leads ... to Lloyd's cabin, and beyond that again is the forward cabin, or dining room. The door to the left opens into ... Louis' sleeping-room. It is very roomy with both a bed and a sofa in it, so that he will be very comfortable....

"The dining room has a long table and chairs. Between the doors a very ugly picture of fruit and cake. Louis would fain cover it up if we could spare a flag with which to do it. The doors at the further end lead to the pantry and galley and beyond these are the men's quarters."

No expense had been spared in building the *Casco* to make her comfortable. She was intended, however, for cruising in the California waters and was hardly suited to the rough handling she received during the squally weather of the next few months. Fortunately she stood the test well and her passengers suffered few discomforts.

Once under way and settled for living, the trip proved quite uneventful. The long days were spent on deck reading or working, and Stevenson began to gather material for a

book on the South Seas. The ship's life suited him admirably; every strange fish and new star interested him, and he grew stronger hourly in the warm air.



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“Since the fifth day,” he wrote, “we were left behind by a full-rigged English ship ... bound round the Horn, we have not spied a sail, nor a land bird, nor a shred of seaweed. In impudent isolation, the toy schooner has plowed her path of snow across the empty deep, far from all track of commerce, far from any hand of help; now to the sound of slatting sails and stamping sheet blocks, staggering in the turmoil of that business falsely called a calm, now, in the assault of squalls burying her lee-rail in the sea.... Flying fish, a skimming silver rain on the blue sea; a turtle fast asleep in the early morning sunshine; the Southern Cross hung thwart the forerigging like the frame of a wrecked kite—the pole star and the familiar plough dropping ever lower in the wake; these build up thus far the history of our voyage. It is singular to come so far and see so infinitely little.”

The squalls that came very quickly, frequently broke the monotony of the trip. One moment the *Casco* would be sailing along easily and the “next moment, the inhabitants of the cabin were piled one upon another, the sea was pouring into the cockpit and spouting in fountains through forgotten deadlights, and the steersman stood spinning the wheel for his life in a halo of tropical rain.”

After twenty-two days at sea they sighted their first island, Nukahiva, one of the Marquesan group, and were all on deck before dawn anxiously watching for it. They not only looked forward eagerly to the sight of land again after so many days on the open ocean, but it was indeed an adventure to come to a country totally strange to all of them, where few white people had been before.

“Not one soul aboard the *Casco* had set foot upon the Islands,” says Stevenson, “or knew except by accident one word of any of the island tongues; and it was with something perhaps of the same anxious pleasure as thrilled the bosom of the discoverers that we drew near these problematic shores.

“Before yet the anchor plunged a canoe was already paddling from the hamlet. It contained two men: one white, one brown and tattooed across the face with bands of blue, both immaculate with white European clothes.... Canoe followed canoe till the ship swarmed with stalwart, six foot men in every stage of undress ... the more considerable tattooed from head to foot in awful patterns ... all talking and we could not understand one word; all trying to trade with us who had no thought of trading, or offering us island curios at prices palpably absurd.”

All this charmed and delighted Stevenson, who had dreamed many times of witnessing just such a scene. He wrote to Cummie that he was living all over again many of the stories she had read to him and found them coming true about himself.

For six weeks they cruised about among these islands, frequently dropping anchor and going ashore for several days. When the natives were convinced that they had neither come to trade or to make trouble, but were simply interested in them and their country,

they made the visitors most welcome and showered presents of fruit, mats, baskets, and fans upon them.



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All were eager to visit the schooner, which they called *Pahi Mani*, meaning the shining or the silver ship. The chiefs tried to measure its dimensions with their arms. The liveliest curiosity was shown about everything; the red velvet cushions, the looking-glasses, and the typewriter pleased particularly. A photograph of Queen Victoria hung in the fore-cabin and was always described to the island callers as *Vahine Haka-iki Beritano*, which meant literally, woman-great-chief Britain. It was a surprise to find how much many of them already knew about her.

Some afternoons the *Casco* swarmed with these strange visitors who were always delighted at the refreshments of ship's biscuits and pineapple syrup and water offered them. A certain chief was particularly taken with a pair of gloves belonging to Mrs. Stevenson, senior. He smelled of them, called them British tattooing, and insisted on her putting them on and off a great many times.

The entire family fell quickly into the island mode of living; dressed as the white inhabitants did; ate all the strange kinds of native food; and when ashore lived in the native houses, which resembled bird-cages on stilts. The climate suited them to perfection, and Stevenson particularly benefited by it, bathing daily in the warm surf and taking long walks along the beach in search of strange shells.

"Here we are," his mother wrote to Cummie, "in a little bay surrounded by green mountains, on which sheep are grazing, and there are birds very like our own 'blackies' singing in the trees. If it were not for the groves of cocoanut palms, we might almost fancy ourselves in our own dear land. But the climate here is simply perfect. Of course it is hot, but there are always fresh breezes.... We have our principal meal at twelve o'clock, and spend the after part of the day on shore ... bathing, gathering shells, knitting, or reading. Our Japanese cook and steward just sets out the table with cold meats, fruit, and cake so that we can take our other meal at any time in the evening that suits us.

"Fanny and I are dressed like natives, in two garments. As we have to wade to and from the boat in landing and coming back, we discard stockings, and on the sands we usually go barefoot entirely. Louis wears only a shirt and trousers with the legs and arms rolled up as far as they will go, and he is always barefooted. You will therefore not be surprised to hear that we are all as red as lobsters. It is a strange irresponsible half savage life, and I sometimes wonder if we shall ever be able to return to civilized habits again.

[Illustration: South Sea houses]

"The natives are very simple and kindly people. The Roman Catholic priests have persuaded them to give up their constant wars and the practice of cannibalism, though only within recent years....



“Louis has learned a good many words of the language, and with the help of signs can contrive to carry on a conversation, but I have stuck fast with two words: ‘*ka-oha*’ which means ‘How do you do?’ ‘thank you,’ and ‘good bye,’ and I am not quite sure how much else, and ‘*Mitaj*,’ meaning good, nice, pretty, kind. I don’t expect to get beyond these, but it is wonderful how much one can express with them....



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“The natives have got names for us all. Louis was at first ‘the old man,’ much to his distress; but now they call him ‘*Ona*’ meaning owner of the yacht, a name he greatly prefers to the first. Fanny is *Vahine*, or wife; I am the *old woman*, and Lloyd rejoices in the name of *Mate Karahi*, the young man with glass eyes (spectacles). Perhaps it is a compliment here to be called old, as it is in China, at any rate, one native told Louis that he himself was old, but his mother was not!...

“A native dance was got up for our benefit. None of the dancing-women appeared, but five men dressed in shirt and trousers, danced together with spirit and grace. The music was provided by a drum, made out of an old tin box. Many of the steps reminded me of a Highland reel, but were curiously mixed up with calisthenic, and even gymnastic exercises; the hands in particular were used very gracefully, and they often took off their hats and waved them to and fro. But they also climbed on each other’s shoulders, and did other strange things. After dancing for some time, they sang songs to us in a curious, low, weird kind of crooning. Altogether it was a strange sort of afternoon party!”

The Marquesas Islands belong to the French, and the commandant in charge was most cordial to Stevenson, inviting him to his house frequently during his stay in the islands. When at the expiration of six weeks it was time for the *Casco* to weigh anchor and the party sailed on to explore still farther, they left behind them many friends who regretted their departure. Here as elsewhere in the South Seas, Stevenson showed his sympathy and kindness toward the island people regardless of who they were or their rank. White or half-caste priest, missionary, or trader, all were treated the same. No bribe, he said, would induce him to call the natives savages.

Mr. Johnstone, an English resident in the South Seas at the time of Stevenson’s visit, says: “His inborn courtesy more than any of his other good traits, endeared him to his fellows in the Pacific ... in the hearts of our Island people he built a monument more lasting than stone or brass.”

The recollection of the history of his own wild Scottish Islands, the people and conditions his grandfather found among them, helped him to understand these people and account for many of their actions. Though at opposite ends of the earth, many of their customs and legends corresponded. The dwellers in the Hebrides in the old days likewise lived in clans with their chief and struggled to retain their independence against an invading power.

Tahiti, one of the group of Society Islands, was their next stopping place. Before starting a new mate was shipped, who was more familiar with the course, which lay through the Dangerous Archipelago—a group of low, badly lighted islands.

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The Society Islands are most beautiful, Tahiti probably the gem of them all, but on arriving Stevenson was in no condition to appreciate their loveliness. A cold contracted on the trip made him quite ill. The trip had proved very dangerous even with the aid of a pilot, and twice they gave themselves up for lost when they were becalmed and drifted in toward the shore. "The reefs were close in," wrote Stevenson, "with my eye! What a surf! The pilot thought we were gone and the captain had a boat cleared, when a lucky squall came to our rescue."

After landing his condition became so much worse his wife grew desperate and determined to find a comfortable spot for him. After much trouble a Chinaman with a team was secured, who agreed to drive the entire family to Tautira, the largest village, sixteen miles away over a road crossed by no less than twenty-one streams. On this uncertain venture they started, with the head of the family in a state of collapse, knowing nothing of the village they were going to or the living it would afford them.

None of them ever regretted the perseverance which led them on, however, for in all their wanderings in the South Seas before or after no place ever charmed them more, or were they received with greater hospitality than in Tautira.

The day after their arrival, Moe, an island princess and an ex-queen, visited them. When she found Stevenson ill she insisted he and his family be moved to her own house where they could have more comforts. The house at the time was occupied by Ori, a subchief, a subject and relative of the princess. But he and his family gladly turned out to make room for the visitors and lived in a tiny house near by.

"Ori is the very finest specimen of native we have seen yet," wrote Mrs. Stevenson. "He is several inches over six feet, of perfect though almost gigantic proportions."

As soon as her husband was strong enough to be about again he and Ori became great friends. Finally, according to an island custom, Stevenson was adopted into Ori's clan and became his brother. This likewise meant exchanging names and Ori became Rui, the nearest possible approach to Louis since there is no L or S in the Tahitian language. Louis in turn became Teriitera (pronounced Ter_ee_terah), which was Ori's Christian name, Ori standing merely for his clan title.

To show their gratitude for the hospitality shown them by Ori and the people of the village, Stevenson decided to give a public feast.

The feast day was set for Wednesday, and the previous Sunday a chief issued the invitations from the Farehau, a house resembling an enormous bird-cage in the centre of the village, from which all the news was read aloud to the people once a week.

A feast of such size necessitated much preparation.



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“The chief, who was our guide in the matter,” wrote Mrs. Stevenson, “found four large fat hogs, which Louis bought, and four cases of ship’s biscuit were sent over from the *Casco*, which is lying at Papeete for repairs.... Our hogs were killed in the morning, washed in the sea, and roasted whole in a pit with hot stones. When done they were laid on their stomachs in neat open coffins of green basket work, each hog with his case of biscuits beside him. Early in the morning the entire population began bathing, a bath being the preliminary to everything. At about three o’clock—four was the hour set—there was a general movement toward our premises, so that I had to hurry Louis into his clothes, all white even to his shoes. Lloyd was also in white, but barefoot.... The chief, who speaks French very well, stood beside Louis to interpret for him. By the time we had taken our respective places on the veranda in front of our door, an immense crowd had assembled. They came in five detachments.... Each set of people came bending under the weight of bamboo poles laden with fruits, figs, fowls, *etc.* All were dressed in their gayest and many had wreaths of leaves or flowers on their heads. The prettiest sight of all was the children, who came marching two and two abreast, the bamboo poles lying lengthwise across their shoulders.

“When all the offerings had been piled in five great heaps upon the ground, Louis made his oration to the accompaniment of the squealing of pigs, the cackling of hens, and the roar of the surf.... A speech was made in return on behalf of the village.... Each speaker finished by coming forward with one of the smaller things in his hand, which he offered personally to Louis, and then shook hands with us all and retired. Among these smaller presents were many fish-hooks for large fishing, laboriously carved from mother-of-pearl shell. One man came with one egg in each hand saying ‘carry these to Scotland with you, let them hatch into cocks, and their song shall remind you of Tautira.’ The schoolmaster, with a leaf-basket of rose apples, made his speech in French.”

While overhauling the *Casco* two or three days before they planned to leave Tautira, Captain Otis was shocked to find the whole upper half of the main masthead completely eaten out by dry-rot. This necessitated taking the schooner around to Papeete, on the other side of the island, for repairs. Under ordinary circumstances the setting of a new masthead need to have delayed them but a few days; in the South Seas, however, it was a different matter. Only after searching for days in Papeete was he able to find a man who knew anything of ship-carpentering, and when found he worked according to his own sweet will. So it was five weeks before the *Casco* was ready to return for her passengers, who in the meantime were in a state of anxiety as to her whereabouts.

During their enforced stay Ori treated the entire family like a brother indeed, doing everything in his power to make their visit pleasant.

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At last, on Christmas Day, they were ready to depart. The entire population of Tautira came to the beach to bid them farewell, and as the *Casco* swung out of the harbor one of the French officials fired a salute of twenty-one guns with his army rifle and the schooner returned it with a heavy-tongued Winchester.

Tautira had grown to seem like a real home to all of them. To leave it with very little hope of ever returning to see such good friends as Princess Moe and Ori was a real grief, while they in their turn were quite heart-broken. Stevenson's friendship had brought something into their lives they had never had before.

Honolulu was the goal of the *Casco* now, and all eagerly looked forward to the letters waiting for them there—the first word from home since leaving San Francisco.

Bad weather attended the *Casco* all the way. They were delayed by a succession of hurricanes and calms until the supply of food ran very low and they were reduced to a diet of "salt-horse" and ship-biscuit.

The last forty-eight hours of their run was made in the very teeth of a furious gale when the captain took big risks by carrying full sail, with the hope of making port before their supply of food and water was entirely exhausted. In spite of the danger, Stevenson enjoyed this daring run hugely. Later, when he and Lloyd wrote "The Wrecker" together, this very episode figured in the story, Captain Otis under the name of Captain Nares performing a similar sail-carrying feat on the schooner *Norah Creina*.

Mrs. Strong, Stevenson's stepdaughter, and her family were waiting in Honolulu and gave them a warm welcome. The travellers soon found themselves the centre of interest among Mrs. Strong's large circle of friends and it was with difficulty Stevenson found time to finish the last chapters of "The Master of Ballantrae," which he had been working on since leaving Saranac.

Honolulu, with its street-cars, shops, electric lights, and mixture of native and foreign population, seemed strangely crowded and modern after the scenes they had recently left; too modern by far to suit Stevenson, who preferred the unconventional wild life of the islands they had come from.

At the Royal Palace in Honolulu, Kalakaua, the last of the Hawaiian kings, still held court. He enjoyed R.L.S. and invited him often to the palace and told him the history and legends of many of the islands of the South Seas. It was from Kalakaua he first learned to know the troubled history of the Samoan Islands and of Apia, which was to be his future home.

The Island of Molokai, the leper colony, lay not far off. While in Honolulu he spent several days there, in the place where Father Damien had lately done his splendid work.



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According to their original scheme they were to return home from Honolulu, but having come so far they were eager to see more. They had tasted the dangers and fascination of the life among the wild islands, each so different, and it had only whetted their appetites for what lay still beyond. The chances of coming so far again were slight; it seemed too good an opportunity to miss. So Stevenson wrote to the friends at home, whom he longed daily to see: "Yes—I own up—I am untrue to friendship and (what is less, but still considerable) to civilization. I am not coming home for another year.... But look here and judge me tenderly. I have had more fun and pleasure of my life these past months than ever before, and more health than any time in ten long years.... And this precious deep is filled with islands which we may still visit, and though the sea is a dreadful place, I like to be there, and like squalls (when they are over) and to draw near to a new island I can not say how much I like...."

"Remember me as I was at home, and think of me sea-bathing and walking about, as jolly as a sand boy; you will own the temptation is strong; and as the scheme, bar fatal accidents, is bound to pay into the bargain, sooner or later, it seems it would be madness to come home now, with an imperfect book ... and perhaps fall sick again by autumn.

"It is a singular thing that as I was packing up old papers ere I left Skerryvore, I came on the prophecies of a drunken Highland sibyl, when I was sixteen. She said I was to be very happy,—to visit America and *to be much upon the sea*.... I can not say why I like the sea ... my poor grandfather it is from him I inherit the taste I fancy, and he was around many islands in his day; but I, please God, shall beat him at that before the recall is sounded."

So the *Casco* was shipped back to San Francisco, Mrs. Stevenson, senior, returned to Scotland for a visit, and the trading schooner *Equator* was chartered for a trip among the Marshall, Gilbert, and Samoan Islands.

Just before leaving, the following letter came from Ori, which Stevenson says he would rather have received than written "Red Gauntlet" or the "Sixth Aeneid."

"I make you to know my great affection. At the hour when you left us, I was filled with tears; my wife Rui Telime, also, and all my household. When you embarked I felt great sorrow. It is for this that I went upon the road, and you looked from that ship, and I looked at you on the ship with great grief until you had raised the anchor and hoisted the sail. When the ship started I ran along the beach to see you still; and when you were in the open sea I cried out to you 'Farewell Louis,' and when I was coming back to my house I seemed to hear your voice crying, 'Rui, farewell.' Afterwards I watched the ship as long as I could until the night fell; and when it was dark I said to myself: 'If I had wings I should fly to the ship to



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meet you,'... I wept then ... telling myself continually, 'Teriitera returns to his own country and leaves his dear Rui in grief.'... I will not forget you in my memory. Here is the thought: I desire to meet you again. It is my Teriitera makes the only riches I desire in this world. It is your eyes that I desire to see again. It must be that your body and my body shall eat together at one table, there is what would make my heart content. But now we are separated. May God be with you all. May His word and His mercy go with you, so that you may be well and we also, according to the words of Paul.

“ORI A ORI, that is to say, RUI.”

“All told,” said Stevenson, “if my books have enabled or helped me to make this voyage, to know Rui, and to have received such a letter, they have ... not been writ in vain.”

CHAPTER IX

VAILIMA

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

—*Prayer used with the household at Vailima.*

On the 7th of December, when the family landed at Upolu, the chief of the Samoas or Samoan Islands, they little dreamed it was to be their home for the next four years and the last the master of the house was ever to know.

It had been frequently borne upon Stevenson, however, while cruising among the Marshall and Gilbert Islands during the past months, that a home in either England or Scotland again was a vain dream for him.

“I do not ask for health,” he said, “but I will go anywhere and live in any place where I can enjoy the existence of a human being.” He seldom complained and it is rare to find even the brave sort of cry he made against fate to a friend at this time.



“For fourteen years I have not had a day’s real health. I have wakened sick and gone to bed weary, and I have done my work unflinchingly. I have written in bed, and written out of it, written in hemorrhages, written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness, and for so long, it seems to me I have won my wager and recovered my glove. I am better now, have been, rightly speaking, since I first came to the Pacific; and still few are the days when I am not in some physical distress. And the battle goes on—ill or well, is a trifle; so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield shall be this dingy inglorious one of the bed and the physics bottle.”



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Here in the tropics he might hope to live and work years longer—a return to a cold climate, he now knew, would be fatal.

Why not turn traders? Often on starry nights, drifting among the low islands, he and Lloyd and the captain of the *Equator* had lain out on deck and planned what a lark it would be to buy a schooner, cruise among the islands, and trade with the natives. They would write stories, too, about these strange island dwellers with their many weird superstitions and of the white men who drifted from all corners of the globe to make their home there.

Already Captain Reid had told them many such tales which Stevenson wove into stories. The “Beach of Falesa” and the “Isle of Voices” are probably the two most famous, while “the strange story of the loss of the brigantine *Wandering Minstrel* and what men and ships do in that wild and beautiful world beyond the American continent” formed a plot for the story called “The Wrecker,” which he and Lloyd Osbourne wrote together later on.

Samoa was a place he was eager to visit. King Kalakaua at Honolulu had already told him much of its troubled history. The group of thirteen islands lay about four thousand two hundred miles southwest of San Francisco. At that time they were under the control of England, Germany, and the United States according to a treaty entered into in 1889. These countries appointed a chief justice, a president of the municipal council, three consuls, and three land commissioners. A native king was likewise recognized on each island.

This triple control proved most unsatisfactory and for years past there had been constant friction among the officials and warlike outbreaks among the natives.

These complications interested Stevenson. His first idea had been to stop there but a short time. He now found he wanted to remain in Samoa long enough to write its history.

The Samoans are true Polynesians; a strong and handsome race whose reputation is high among all the people of the Pacific. The large majority have become Christians, but in spite of the influence of the missionaries and the foreign powers who control them, they retain many of their old customs and habits. They are naturally peace-loving in spite of their many wars. Fighting does not appeal to them for its own sake, and they enjoy a good family life, treating their women with great respect and lavishing affection upon their children.

Stevenson wanted those at home to know these people better; his sympathy, which was ever with the weaker side, was instantly aroused in behalf of the natives, and he wanted to tell their side of the story.



If they were to make a home anywhere in the South Seas there could be no better spot than Apia, the principal port and capital of these islands, as it had a good mail service, a most important feature to a writer. The monthly mail-steamers between San Francisco and Sydney, as well as other Australian mail-boats, stopped there.

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So he purchased four hundred acres on the hills three miles from Apia and preparations were immediately made for clearing the ground and building a house. Lloyd Osbourne left for England to bring back the household treasures from Skerryvore, to make a real home, and Stevenson and his wife lived gypsy fashion meanwhile in a four-room wooden house.

The new home was named Vailima, which is Samoan for “Five Waters,” there being five streams running through the property.

The house was built of wood, painted dark green with a red roof. When finished its chief feature was the great hall within, sixty feet long, lined and ceiled with California redwood. Here among the home treasures—his own portrait, war dresses, corselets, fans, and mats presented to him by island kings—the marble bust of grandfather Stevenson smiled down with approval on many a motley gathering. Louis often wondered if they reminded the old gentleman of some of the strange people he had entertained years ago in Baxter Place.

All about was dense, tropical undergrowth, only paths led to the house, and these must continually be cut out. All carrying was done by two big New Zealand pack-horses.

A large garden was planted—Mrs. Stevenson’s special hobby. Cocoanuts, oranges, guavas, and mangoes already grew on the estate. The ground was very fertile, and kava, the root of which is used for the Samoan national drink, pineapples, sweet potatoes, and eggplants were soon flourishing among other things. Limes were so plentiful that they formed the hedge about the place; citrons were so common that they rotted on the trees.

[Illustration: The house at Vailima]

All this ground-breaking, house-building, and gardening were new to Stevenson, and he revelled in them to the neglect of his writing.

“This is a hard and interesting and beautiful life we lead now,” he wrote to Sidney Colvin. “Our place is in a deep cleft of Vaea Mountain; some six hundred feet above the sea, embowered in forest, which is our strangling enemy, and which we combat with axes and dollars. I am crazy over outdoor work, and had at last to confine myself to the house, or literature must have gone by the board. *Nothing* is so interesting as weeding, clearing, and pathmaking; the oversight of laborers becomes a disease; it is quite an effort not to drop into the farmer; and it does make you feel so well. To come down covered with mud and drenched with sweat and rain after some hours in the bush, change, rub down, and take a chair in the verandah, is to taste a quiet conscience.”

Before his arrival in Apia, Stevenson’s tale of “The Bottle Imp” had been translated into Samoan by the missionaries. When the natives discovered he was its author they



immediately named him Tusitala, The Teller-of-Tales. He still owned the bottle, they said; it was that gave him the wealth to cruise about in a great boat and build a fine house. The family often wondered why native visitors were curious to see the inside of the great safe in the hall at Vailima until they found that it was the belief among the islanders that the safe was the bottle's hiding-place.



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Mrs. Stevenson, senior, returned with Lloyd from England, and later Mrs. Strong and her small son, Austin, came from Honolulu to make the family complete.

The servants were all natives, "boys" as they called themselves. There were usually about half a dozen about the house, with a boy for the garden and to look after the cows and pigs, besides a band of outside laborers, varying from half a dozen to thirty, under Lloyd's direction.

Sosimo was Stevenson's particular boy. He waited upon him hand and foot, looked after his clothes and his pony "Jack," and was devoted in every way. His loyalty to his master lasted to the end of his own life.

The servants were governed on something very like the clan system. A Vailima tartan was adopted for special occasions and Stevenson encouraged them to think of the household as a family, to take interest and pride in all its doings.

On Sunday evenings the entire household was assembled. A chapter of the Samoan Bible was read and Samoan hymns sung. Then a prayer in English written by Stevenson was read, concluding with the Lord's Prayer in Samoan.

If the master had cause to be displeased with any one of them, they were all summoned and reprimanded or fined.

His stories delighted them. They were never tired of looking at the picture of Skerryvore Light and hearing about the rugged coasts of Tusitala's native island and of his father and grandfather who built lighthouses. The latter impressed them greatly, since building of any kind in Samoa is considered a fine art. The deeds of General Gordon, the Indian Mutiny, and Lucknow were likewise favorite tales when Tusitala showed them a treasure he prized highly: a message written by General Gordon from Khartoum. It was in Arabic on a small piece of cigarette-paper which might be easily swallowed should the messenger be captured. Stevenson always believed it to be the last message sent before the great general's death.

They came to him for everything and he was ever ready with help and advice. They were quick to appreciate his justice and kindness, and to a man were devoted to him. "Once Tusitala's friend, always Tusitala's friend," they said.

With his customary energy he threw himself heart and soul for a time into the political troubles of the island, making himself the champion of the natives' cause. He wrote a series of letters to the papers at home stating his idea of the injustice shown the Samoans under their present government. It was a most delicate situation, and at times led to very strained relations between himself and the officials in Apia.



Those at home wondered why Stevenson tampered with island politics at all. Why did he not simply leave them to the powers in charge?

His answer was, he had made Samoa his home, the Samoans were his people, and he could not fail to resent any injustice shown them.



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Lloyd Osbourne says: "He was consulted on every imaginable subject.... Government chiefs and rebels consulted him with regard to policy; political letters were brought to him to read and criticise.... Parties would come to hear the latest news of the proposed disarming of the country, or to arrange a private audience with one of the officials; and poor war-worn chieftains, whose only anxiety was to join the winning side and who wished to consult with Tusitala as to which that might be. Mr. Stevenson would sigh sometimes as he saw these stately folks crossing the lawn in single file, their attendants following behind with presents and baskets, but he never failed to meet or hear them."

He aided one party of chieftains in prison, and to show their gratitude on regaining their freedom they cleared and dug a splendid road leading to his house. All the labor and expense they bore themselves, which amounted to no small matter. Ala Loto Alofa, they called it, the Road of the Loving Hearts.

Warlike outbreaks were not infrequent near Vailima. The woods were often full of scouting parties and the roll of drums could be heard. One day as Stevenson and Mrs. Strong were writing together they were interrupted by a war party crossing the lawn. Mrs. Strong asked: "Louis, have we a pistol or gun in the house that will shoot?" and he answered cheerfully without stopping his work: "No, but we have friends on both sides."

With all their political differences he and the officials retained friendly feeling. He paid calls on them at Apia and attended various town gatherings, while they were often entertained at Vailima.

Always hospitable, it was a delight to him now to keep open house. Not only the chief justice, the consuls, the doctor, the missionaries, and the traders were in the habit of dropping in to Vailima, but from every ship that docked at Apia came some visitor who was anxious to meet Stevenson and his family; from the war-ships came the officers and sailors.

The bluejackets were always particularly welcome. Mrs. Strong tells of a party who came from H.M.S. *Wallaroo* on one Thanksgiving Day, when "the kitchen department was in great excitement over that foreign bird the turkey" and all was confusion. "But Louis kept his sailors on all the afternoon. He took them over the house and showed them ... the curiosities from the islands, the big picture of Skerryvore lighthouse,... the treasured bit of Gordon's handwriting from Khartoum, in Arabic letters on a cigarette paper,... and the library, where the Scotchmen gathered about an old edition of Burns, with a portrait. Louis gave a volume of Underwoods (Stevenson's poems) with an inscription to Grant, the one who hailed from Edinburgh, and the man carried it carefully wrapped in his handkerchief. They went away waving their hats and keeping step."

A croquet-ground and tennis-court were laid out, and Vailima was the scene of balls, dinners, and parties of all kinds. No birthday or holiday, English, American, or Samoan,

was allowed to pass unnoticed, and the natives were included in these festivities whenever possible.

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The first Christmas at Vailima they had a party for the children who had never before seen a Christmas tree.

Tusitala's birthday was always a special event to his island friends. The feast was served in native style; all seated about on the floor. Rather large gatherings they must have been, to judge from Mrs. Strong's account. "We had sixteen pigs roasted whole underground, three enormous fish (small whales, Lloyd called them), four hundred pounds of beef, ditto of pork, 200 heads of taro, great bunches of bananas, native delicacies done up in bundles of *ti* leaves, 800 pineapples, many weighing fifteen pounds, all from Lloyd's patch. Among the presents for Tusitala, besides flowers and wreaths, were fans, native baskets ... and cocoanut cups beautifully polished."

[Illustration: A feast of chiefs]

On these occasions the hosts were often entertained with dances and songs. All the Samoans are great singers. They composed songs about everything and everybody, so that one could judge the standing a person held by the songs that were sung about him.

Those sung at Vailima parties were usually written by one of the house "boys" and "they were danced and acted with great spirit.... Sometimes every member of the family would be represented ... but the central figure, the heart of the song was always Tusitala."

It is a marvel with the many demands made upon him, his varied interests, and frequent visits to neighboring islands, Stevenson still found time to write stories, poems, prayers, notes of the South Sea Islands, Samoan history, and many, many letters. "It is a life that suits me but absorbs me like an ocean," he said. Through it all his health continued fairly good. He was able to take long tramps and rides that would have been physically impossible two years before.

Mrs. Strong acted as his secretary and the majority of his writing now was done by dictation. "He generally makes notes early in the morning," she wrote, "which he elaborates as he reads them aloud ... he never falters for a word, but gives me the sentence with capital letters and all the stops as clearly and steadily as though he were reading from an unseen book."

The two South Sea books occupied much of his time, but it was of his own land and people so far away that he had so little hope of ever seeing again, he loved best to write.

"It is a singular thing," he wrote to James Barrie, "that I should live here in the South Seas, and yet my imagination so continually inhabit the cold old huddle of grey hills from which we came."



He finished and sent away further adventures of David Balfour and Alan Breck under the title of "David Balfour." "St. Ives" followed with its scenes laid around Edinburgh Castle, Swanston Cottage, and the Pentland Hills. In his last book, "Weir of Hermiston," the one he left unfinished, broken off in the midst of a word, he roamed the streets of Auld Reekie again with a hero very like what he had once been himself, who was likewise an enthusiastic member of the "Spec."

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Something which pleased him greatly at this time was the news from his friend Charles Baxter in Edinburgh that a complete edition of his works was to be published in the best possible form with a limited number of copies, to be called the “Edinburgh Edition.”

“I suppose it was your idea to give it that name,” Stevenson wrote, thanking him. “No other would have affected me in the same manner.... Could a more presumptuous idea have occurred to us in those days when we used to search our pockets for coppers, too often in vain, and combine forces to produce the threepence necessary for two glasses of beer, than that I should be strong and well at the age of forty three in the island of Upolu, and that you should be at home bringing out the ‘Edinburgh Edition’?”

In spite of the many interests in his present life, his love for the people and the country, the yearning for the friends far away grew daily.

How he longed to have them see Vailima with all its beauties! To talk over old times again. Such visits were continually planned, but they were never realized.

He seldom complained and those who were with him every day rarely found him low in spirits. It was into the letters to his old intimates that these longings crept when it swept over him that, though a voluntary exile in a pleasant place, he was an exile none the less, with the fate of him who wrote:

“There’s a track across the deep,
And a path across the sea,
But for me there’s nae return
To my ain countree.”

“When the smell of the good wet earth” came to him it came “with a kind of Highland tone.” A tropic shower found him in a “frame of mind and body that belonged to Scotland.” And when he turned to write the chronicle of his grandfather’s life and work, the beautiful words in which he described the old gentleman’s farewell to “Sumbraugh and the wild crags of Skye” meant likewise his own farewell to those shores. No more was he to “see the topaz and ruby interchange on the summit of Bell Rock,” no more to see “the castle on its hills,” or the venerable city which he always thought of as his home.

“Like Leyden,” he wrote, “I have gone into a far land to die, not stayed like Burns to mingle in the end with Scottish soil.”

It was drawing near the close of their fourth year in Apia. On November 13 his birthday had been celebrated with the usual festivities, and on Thanksgiving Day he had given a dinner to his American friends—and then the end of all his wanderings and working came suddenly.



“He wrote hard all that morning of the last day,” says Lloyd Osbourne, “on his half-finished book *Hermiston*.... In the afternoon the mail fell to be answered; not business correspondence—but replies to the long, kindly letters of distant friends, received but two days since, and still bright in memory.



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“At sunset he came downstairs.... He was helping his wife on the verandah, and gaily talking, when suddenly he put both hands to his head, and cried out, ‘What’s that?’ Then he asked quickly, ‘Do I look strange?’ Even as he did so he fell on his knees beside her. He was helped into the great hall, between his wife and body-servant, Sosimo, losing consciousness instantly, as he lay back in the arm-chair that had once been his grandfather’s. Little time was lost in bringing the doctors, Anderson of the man-of-war, and his friend Dr. Funk. They looked at him and shook their heads ... he had passed the bounds of human skill....

“The dozen and more Samoans that formed part of the clan of which he was chief, sat in a wide semicircle on the floor, their reverent, troubled, sorrow-stricken faces all fixed upon their dying master. Some knelt on one knee to be instantly ready for any command that might be laid upon them....

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

“The great Union Jack that flew over the house was hauled down and laid over the body, fit shroud for a loyal Scotsman. He lay in the hall which was ever his pride, where he had passed the gayest and most delightful hours of his life.... In it were the treasures of his far off Scottish home.... The Samoans passed in procession beside his bed, kneeling and kissing his hand, each in turn, before taking their places for the long night watch beside him. No entreaty could induce them to retire, to rest themselves for the painful arduous duties of the morrow. It would show little love for Tusitala, they said, if they did not spend their last night beside him. Mournful and silent, they sat in deep dejection, poor, simple, loyal folks, fulfilling the duty that they owed their chief.

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

“The morning of the 4th of December broke cool and sunny.... A meeting of chiefs was held to apportion the work and divide the men into parties. Forty were sent with knives and axes to cut a path up the steep face of the mountain, and the writer himself led another party to the summit—men chosen from the immediate family—to dig the grave on the spot where it was Robert Louis Stevenson’s wish that he should lie.... Nothing more picturesque can be imagined than the ledge that forms the summit to Vaea, a place no wider than a room, and flat as a table. On either side the land descends precipitously; in front lies the vast ocean and surf-swept reefs; to the right and left green mountains rise....

“All the morning Samoans were arriving with flowers, few of these were white, for they have not learned our foreign custom, and the room glowed with the many colors. There were no strangers on that day, no acquaintances; those only were called who would



deeply feel the loss. At one o'clock a body of powerful Samoans bore away the coffin, hid beneath a tattered red ensign that had flown above his vessel in many a remote corner of the South Seas. A path so steep and rugged taxed their strength to the utmost, for not only was the journey difficult in itself, but extreme care was requisite to carry the coffin shoulder high....



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“No stranger hand touched him.... Those who loved him carried him to his last home; even the coffin was the work of an old friend. The grave was dug by his own men.”

Tusitala had left them, and his friends in the South Seas had lost a faithful friend and companion, a wise and just master.

His family and friends the world over had lost not only these but far more. His life had been a chivalrous one with all the best that chivalry stands for, “loyalty, honesty, generosity, courage, courtesy, and self-devotion; to impute no unworthy motives and to bear no grudges; to bear misfortune with cheerfulness and without a murmur; to strike hard for the right and to take no mean advantage; to be gentle to women and kind to all that are weak; to be rigorous with oneself and very lenient to others—these ... were the traits that distinguished Stevenson.”

“They do not make life easy as he frequently found.”

His resting-place on the crest of Vaea Mountain is covered by a tomb of gray stone. On one side is inscribed in English the verses he had written for his own requiem:

A ROBERT LOUIS [Symbol: Omega]
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 the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.”

[Illustration: The tomb of Stevenson on Vaea Mountain]

On the other side, written in Samoan and surrounded by carvings of thistles, his native flowers, and the hibiscus flowers, emblem of the South, are the words from the 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.”

The Samoan chiefs have forbidden the use of firearms upon Vaea hillside, “that the birds may live there undisturbed, and raise above his grave the songs he loved so well.”



“Tusitala, the lover of children, the teller of tales,
Giver of counsels and dreams, a wonder, a world's delight,
Looks o'er the labours of men in the plain and the hills; and the sails
Pass and repass on the sea that he loved, in the day and the night.”

—ANDREW LANG.

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Saint-Gaudens, Augustus: "Reminiscences of Saint-Gaudens." Chapters dealing with Mr. Saint-Gaudens's recollections of Stevenson at the time he made his portrait.

Stevenson, Mrs. Margaret: "Letters—From Saranac to the Marquesas and Beyond."

Poems by Stevenson: "In the States."

"Winter."



IN THE SOUTH SEAS

Stevenson, Mrs. Margaret: "Letters—From Saranac to the Marquesas and Beyond."

Stevenson, R.L.: "In the South Seas."

Stevenson, Mrs. R.L.: "Cruise of the *Janet Nichol* Among the South Sea Islands—a Diary."

Stevenson, R.L.: "Beach of Falesa," "Isle of Voices," "Bottle Imp"—in "Island Nights' Entertainments."

——"The Wrecker."

——"The Ebb Tide."

—— Letters Dealing with Pacific Voyages and Life in Samoa—in his collected letters edited by Sidney Colvin.

Stevenson, Mrs. Margaret: "Letters from Samoa."

Stevenson, R.L.: "A Foot-Note to History. Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa."

Strong, Mrs. Isobel, and Osbourne, Lloyd: "Memories of Vailima."

Stevenson, R.L.: "Prayers Written at Vailima."

Poems by Stevenson: "The Song of Rahero—a Legend of Tahiti."

 "The Feast of Famine—Marquesan Manners."

 "To an Island Princess."

 "To Kalakaua."

 "To Princess Kaiulani."

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“The House of Tembinoka.”

“The Woodman.”

“Tropic Rain.”

“To My Wife.”

“To My Wife” (a fragment).

Poems of Farewell: “The Morning Drum-Call on My Eager Ear.”

“In the Highlands, in the Country Places.”

“To My Old Familiars.”

“The Tropics Vanish.”

“To S.C.”

“To S.R. Crockett.”

“Evensong.”

“We Uncommiserate Pass into the Night.”

“I Have Trod the Upward and Downward Slope.”

“An End of Travel.”

“The Celestial Surgeon.”

“Home No More Home to Me, Whither Must I Wander?”

“Farewell, Fair Day and Fading Light.”

“Requiem.”

Lang, Andrew: “Tusitala”—in “Later Collected Verses.”