



**The Letters of**  
**Robert Louis Stevenson**  
( Volume V )

by Robert Louis Stevenson

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XII .....1

    LIFE IN SAMOA, CONTINUED, JANUARY 1893 DECEMBER

    1894 .....1

## CHAPTER XII

LIFE IN SAMOA, CONTINUED, JANUARY 1893 DECEMBER  
1894

Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER

APRIL, 1893.

...About THE JUSTICE CLERK, I long to go at it, but will first try to get a short story done. Since January I have had two severe illnesses, my boy, and some heart breaking anxiety over Fanny; and am only now convalescing. I came down to dinner last night for the first time, and that only because the service had broken down, and to relieve an inexperienced servant. Nearly four months now I have rested my brains; and if it be true that rest is good for brains, I ought to be able to pitch in like a giant refreshed. Before the autumn, I hope to send you some JUSTICE CLERK, or WEIR OF HERMISTON, as Colvin seems to prefer; I own to indecision. Received SYNTAX, DANCE OF DEATH, and

PITCAIRN, which last I have read from end to end since its arrival, with vast improvement. What a pity it stops so soon! I wonder is there nothing that seems to prolong the series? Why doesn't some young man take it up? How about my old friend Fountainhall's DECISIONS? I remember as a boy that there was some good reading there. Perhaps you could borrow me that, and send it on loan; and perhaps Laing's MEMORIALS therewith; and a work I'm ashamed to say I have never read, BALFOUR'S LETTERS...I have come by accident, through a correspondent, on one very curious and interesting fact namely, that Stevenson was one of the names adopted by the MacGregors at the proscription. The details supplied by my correspondent are both convincing and amusing; but it would be highly interesting to find out more of this.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO A CONAN DOYLE**

VAILIMA, APIA, SAMOA, APRIL 5TH, 1893.

DEAR SIR, You have taken many occasions to make yourself very agreeable to me, for which I might in decency have thanked you earlier. It is now my turn; and I hope you will allow me to offer you my compliments on your very ingenious and very interesting adventures of Sherlock Holmes. That is the class of literature that I like when I have the toothache. As a matter of fact, it was a pleurisy I was enjoying when I took the volume up; and it will interest you as a medical man to know that the cure was for the moment effectual. Only the one thing troubles me: can this be my old friend Joe Bell? I am, yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. And lo, here is your address supplied me here in Samoa! But do not take mine, O frolic fellow Spookist, from the same source; mine is wrong.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO S. R. CROCKETT**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, MAY 17TH, 1893.

DEAR MR. CROCKETT, I do not owe you two letters, nor yet nearly one, sir! The last time I heard of you, you wrote about an accident, and I sent you a letter to my lawyer, Charles Baxter, which does not seem to have been presented, as I see nothing of it in his accounts. Query, was that lost? I should not like you to think I had been so unmannerly and so inhuman. If you have written since, your letter also has miscarried, as is much the rule in this part of the world, unless you register.

Your book is not yet to hand, but will probably follow next month. I detected you early in the BOOKMAN, which I usually see, and noted you in particular as displaying a monstrous ingratitude about the footnote. Well, mankind is ungrateful; 'Man's ingratitude to man makes countless thousands mourn,' quo' Rab or words to that effect. By the way, an anecdote of a cautious sailor: 'Bill, Bill,' says I to him,

'OR WORDS TO THAT EFFECT.'

I shall never take that walk by the Fisher's Tryst and Glencorse. I shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall never set my foot again upon the heather. Here I am until I die, and here will I be buried. The word is out and the doom written. Or, if I do come, it will be a voyage to a further goal, and in fact a suicide; which, however, if I could get my family all fixed up in the money way, I might, perhaps, perform, or attempt. But there is a plaguey risk of breaking down by the way; and I believe I shall stay here until the end comes like a good boy, as I am. If I did it, I should put upon my trunks: 'Passenger to Hades.' How strangely wrong your information is! In the first place, I should never carry a novel to Sydney; I should post it from here. In the second place, WEIR OF HERMISTON is as yet scarce begun. It's going to be excellent, no doubt; but it consists of about twenty pages. I have a tale, a shortish tale in length, but it has proved long to do, THE EBB TIDE, some part of which goes home this mail. It is by me and Mr. Osbourne, and is really a singular work. There are only four

characters, and three of them are bandits well, two of them are, and the third is their comrade and accomplice. It sounds cheering, doesn't it? Barratry, and drunkenness, and vitriol, and I cannot tell you all what, are the beams of the roof. And yet I don't know I sort of think there's something in it. You'll see (which is more than I ever can) whether Davis and Attwater come off or not.

WEIR OF HERMISTON is a much greater undertaking, and the plot is not good, I fear; but Lord Justice Clerk Hermiston ought to be a plum. Of other schemes, more or less executed, it skills not to speak.

I am glad to hear so good an account of your activity and interests, and shall always hear from you with pleasure; though I am, and must continue, a mere sprite of the inkbottle, unseen in the flesh. Please remember me to your wife and to the four year old sweetheart, if she be not too engrossed with higher matters. Do you know where the road crosses the burn under Glencorse Church? Go there, and say a prayer for me: MORITURUS SALUTAT. See that it's a sunny day; I would



like it to be a Sunday, but that's not possible in the premises; and stand on the right hand bank just where the road goes down into the water, and shut your eyes, and if I don't appear to you! well, it can't be helped, and will be extremely funny.

I have no concern here but to work and to keep an eye on this distracted people. I live just now wholly alone in an upper room of my house, because the whole family are down with influenza, bar my wife and myself. I get my horse up sometimes in the afternoon and have a ride in the woods; and I sit here and smoke and write, and rewrite, and destroy, and rage at my own impotence, from six in the morning till eight at night, with trifling and not always agreeable intervals for meals.

I am sure you chose wisely to keep your country charge. There a minister can be something, not in a town. In a town, the most of them are empty houses and public speakers. Why should you suppose your book will be slated because you have no friends? A new writer, if he is any good, will be acclaimed generally with more noise than he deserves. But

by this time you will know for certain. I am, yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. Be it known to this fluent generation that I R. L. S., in the forty third of my age and the twentieth of my professional life, wrote twenty four pages in twenty one days, working from six to eleven, and again in the afternoon from two to four or so, without fail or interruption. Such are the gifts the gods have endowed us withal: such was the facility of this prolific writer!

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO AUGUSTUS ST. GAUDENS**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, MAY 29TH, 1893

MY DEAR GOD LIKE SCULPTOR, I wish in the most delicate manner in the world to insinuate a few commissions:

No. 1. Is for a couple of copies of my medallion, as gilt edged and high toned as it is possible to make them. One is for our house here, and should be addressed as above. The other is for my friend Sidney Colvin, and should be

addressed Sidney Colvin, Esq., Keeper of the Print Room, British Museum, London.

No. 2. This is a rather large order, and demands some explanation. Our house is lined with varnished wood of a dark ruddy colour, very beautiful to see; at the same time, it calls very much for gold; there is a limit to picture frames, and really you know there has to be a limit to the pictures you put inside of them. Accordingly, we have had an idea of a certain kind of decoration, which, I think, you might help us to make practical. What we want is an alphabet of gilt letters (very much such as people play with), and all mounted on spikes like drawing pins; say two spikes to each letter, one at top, and one at bottom. Say that they were this height, and that you chose a model of some really exquisitely fine, clear type from some Roman monument, and that they were made either of metal or some composition gilt the point is, could not you, in your land of wooden houses, get a manufacturer to take the idea and manufacture them at a venture, so that I could get two or three hundred pieces or so at a moderate

figure? You see, suppose you entertain an honoured guest, when he goes he leaves his name in gilt letters on your walls; an infinity of fun and decoration can be got out of hospitable and festive mottoes; and the doors of every room can be beautified by the legend of their names. I really think there is something in the idea, and you might be able to push it with the brutal and licentious manufacturer, using my name if necessary, though I should think the name of the god like sculptor would be more germane. In case you should get it started, I should tell you that we should require commas in order to write the Samoan language, which is full of words written thus: la'u, ti'e ti'e. As the Samoan language uses but a very small proportion of the consonants, we should require a double or treble stock of all vowels and of F, G, L, U, N, P, S, T, and V.

The other day in Sydney, I think you might be interested to hear, I was sculpt a second time by a man called , as well as I can remember and read. I mustn't criticise a present, and he had very little time to do it in. It is thought by my family

to be an excellent likeness of Mark Twain. This poor fellow, by the by, met with the devil of an accident. A model of a statue which he had just finished with a desperate effort was smashed to smithereens on its way to exhibition.

Please be sure and let me know if anything is likely to come of this letter business, and the exact cost of each letter, so that I may count the cost before ordering. Yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO EDMUND GOSSE**

JUNE 10TH, 1893.

MY DEAR GOSSE, My mother tells me you never received the very long and careful letter that I sent you more than a year ago; or is it two years?

I was indeed so much surprised at your silence that I wrote to Henry James and begged him to inquire if you had received it; his reply was an (if possible) higher power of the same silence; whereupon I bowed my head and acquiesced. But there is no doubt the letter was written and sent; and I am

sorry it was lost, for it contained, among other things, an irrecoverable criticism of your father's LIFE, with a number of suggestions for another edition, which struck me at the time as excellent.

Well, suppose we call that cried off, and begin as before? It is fortunate indeed that we can do so, being both for a while longer in the day. But, alas! when I see 'works of the late J. A. S.,' I can see no help and no reconciliation possible. I wrote him a letter, I think, three years ago, heard in some roundabout way that he had received it, waited in vain for an answer (which had probably miscarried), and in a humour between frowns and smiles wrote to him no more. And now the strange, poignant, pathetic, brilliant creature is gone into the night, and the voice is silent that uttered so much excellent discourse; and I am sorry that I did not write to him again. Yet I am glad for him; light lie the turf! The SATURDAY is the only obituary I have seen, and I thought it very good upon the whole. I should be half tempted to write an IN MEMORIAM, but I am submerged with other work.

Are you going to do it? I very much admire your efforts that way; you are our only academician.

So you have tried fiction? I will tell you the truth: when I saw it announced, I was so sure you would send it to me, that I did not order it! But the order goes this mail, and I will give you news of it. Yes, honestly, fiction is very difficult; it is a terrible strain to CARRY your characters all that time. And the difficulty of according the narrative and the dialogue (in a work in the third person) is extreme. That is one reason out of half a dozen why I so often prefer the first. It is much in my mind just now, because of my last work, just off the stocks three days ago, *THE EBB TIDE*: a dreadful, grimy business in the third person, where the strain between a vilely realistic dialogue and a narrative style pitched about (in phrase) 'four notes higher' than it should have been, has sown my head with grey hairs; or I believe so if my head escaped, my heart has them.

The truth is, I have a little lost my way, and stand bemused at the cross roads. A subject? Ay, I have dozens; I

have at least four novels begun, they are none good enough; and the mill waits, and I'll have to take second best. THE EBB TIDE I make the world a present of; I expect, and, I suppose, deserve to be torn to pieces; but there was all that good work lying useless, and I had to finish it!

All your news of your family is pleasant to hear. My wife has been very ill, but is now better; I may say I am ditto, THE EBB TIDE having left me high and dry, which is a good example of the mixed metaphor. Our home, and estate, and our boys, and the politics of the island, keep us perpetually amused and busy; and I grind away with an odd, dogged, down sensation and an idea IN PETTO that the game is about played out. I have got too realistic, and I must break the trammels I mean I would if I could; but the yoke is heavy. I saw with amusement that Zola says the same thing; and truly the DEBACLE was a mighty big book, I have no need for a bigger, though the last part is a mere mistake in my opinion. But the Emperor, and Sedan, and the doctor at the ambulance, and the horses in the field of battle, Lord, how gripped it is!



What an epical performance! According to my usual opinion, I believe I could go over that book and leave a masterpiece by blotting and no ulterior art. But that is an old story, ever new with me. Taine gone, and Renan, and Symonds, and Tennyson, and Browning; the suns go swiftly out, and I see no suns to follow, nothing but a universal twilight of the demi-divinities, with parties like you and me and Lang beating on toy drums and playing on penny whistles about glow worms. But Zola is big anyway; he has plenty in his belly; too much, that is all; he wrote the DEBACLE and he wrote LA BETE HUMAINE, perhaps the most excruciatingly silly book that I ever read to an end. And why did I read it to an end, W. E. G.? Because the animal in me was interested in the lewdness. Not sincerely, of course, my mind refusing to partake in it; but the flesh was slightly pleased. And when it was done, I cast it from me with a peal of laughter, and forgot it, as I would forget a Montepin. Taine is to me perhaps the chief of these losses; I did luxuriate in his ORIGINES; it was something beyond literature, not quite so good, if you please, but so

much more systematic, and the pages that had to be 'written' always so adequate. Robespierre, Napoleon, were both excellent good.

JUNE 18TH, '93

Well, I have left fiction wholly, and gone to my GRANDFATHER, and on the whole found peace. By next month my GRANDFATHER will begin to be quite grown up. I have already three chapters about as good as done; by which, of course, as you know, I mean till further notice or the next discovery. I like biography far better than fiction myself: fiction is too free. In biography you have your little handful of facts, little bits of a puzzle, and you sit and think, and fit 'em together this way and that, and get up and throw 'em down, and say damn, and go out for a walk. And it's real soothing; and when done, gives an idea of finish to the writer that is very peaceful. Of course, it's not really so finished as quite a rotten novel; it always has and always must have the incurable illogicalities of life about it, the fathoms of slack and the miles of tedium. Still, that's where the fun comes in;

and when you have at last managed to shut up the castle spectre (dulness), the very outside of his door looks beautiful by contrast. There are pages in these books that may seem nothing to the reader; but you REMEMBER WHAT THEY WERE, YOU KNOW WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN, and they seem to you witty beyond comparison. In my GRANDFATHER I've had (for instance) to give up the temporal order almost entirely; doubtless the temporal order is the great foe of the biographer; it is so tempting, so easy, and lo! there you are in the bog! Ever yours,

R. L. STEVENSON.

With all kind messages from self and wife to you and yours. My wife is very much better, having been the early part of this year alarmingly ill. She is now all right, only complaining of trifles, annoying to her, but happily not interesting to her friends. I am in a hideous state, having stopped drink and smoking; yes, both. No wine, no tobacco; and the dreadful part of it is that looking forward I have what shall I say? nauseating intimations that it ought to be for ever.

**Letter: TO HENRY JAMES**

VAILIMA PLANTATION, SAMOAN ISLANDS,  
JUNE 17TH, 1893.

MY DEAR HENRY JAMES, I believe I have neglected a mail in answering yours. You will be very sorry to hear that my wife was exceedingly ill, and very glad to hear that she is better. I cannot say that I feel any more anxiety about her. We shall send you a photograph of her taken in Sydney in her customary island habit as she walks and gardens and shrilly drills her brown assistants. She was very ill when she sat for it, which may a little explain the appearance of the photograph. It reminds me of a friend of my grandmother's who used to say when talking to younger women, 'Aweel, when I was young, I wasnae just exactly what ye wad call BONNY, but I was pale, penetratin', and interestin'.' I would not venture to hint that Fanny is 'no bonny,' but there is no doubt but that in this presentment she is 'pale, penetratin', and interesting.'

As you are aware, I have been wading deep waters and contending with the great ones of the earth, not wholly without success. It is, you may be interested to hear, a dreary and infuriating business. If you can get the fools to admit one thing, they will always save their face by denying another. If you can induce them to take a step to the right hand, they generally indemnify themselves by cutting a caper to the left. I always held (upon no evidence whatever, from a mere sentiment or intuition) that politics was the dirtiest, the most foolish, and the most random of human employments. I always held, but now I know it! Fortunately, you have nothing to do with anything of the kind, and I may spare you the horror of further details.

I received from you a book by a man by the name of Anatole France. Why should I disguise it? I have no use for Anatole. He writes very prettily, and then afterwards? Baron Marbot was a different pair of shoes. So likewise is the Baron de Vitrolles, whom I am now perusing with delight. His escape in 1814 is one of the best pages I remember anywhere

to have read. But Marbot and Vitrolles are dead, and what has become of the living? It seems as if literature were coming to a stand. I am sure it is with me; and I am sure everybody will say so when they have the privilege of reading THE EBB TIDE. My dear man, the grimness of that story is not to be depicted in words. There are only four characters, to be sure, but they are such a troop of swine! And their behaviour is really so deeply beneath any possible standard, that on a retrospect I wonder I have been able to endure them myself until the yarn was finished. Well, there is always one thing; it will serve as a touchstone. If the admirers of Zola admire him for his pertinent ugliness and pessimism, I think they should admire this; but if, as I have long suspected, they neither admire nor understand the man's art, and only wallow in his rancidness like a hound in offal, then they will certainly be disappointed in THE EBB TIDE. ALAS! poor little tale, it is not EVEN rancid.

By way of an antidote or febrifuge, I am going on at a great rate with my HISTORY OF THE STEVENSONS,

which I hope may prove rather amusing, in some parts at least. The excess of materials weighs upon me. My grandfather is a delightful comedy part; and I have to treat him besides as a serious and (in his way) a heroic figure, and at times I lose my way, and I fear in the end will blur the effect. However, A LA GRACE DE DIEU! I'll make a spoon or spoil a horn. You see, I have to do the Building of the Bell Rock by cutting down and packing my grandsire's book, which I rather hope I have done, but do not know. And it makes a huge chunk of a very different style and quality between Chapters II. and IV. And it can't be helped! It is just a delightful and exasperating necessity. You know, the stuff is really excellent narrative: only, perhaps there's too much of it! There is the rub. Well, well, it will be plain to you that my mind is affected; it might be with less. THE EBB TIDE and NORTHERN LIGHTS are a full meal for any plain man.

I have written and ordered your last book, THE REAL THING, so be sure and don't send it. What else are you doing or thinking of doing? News I have none, and don't want any. I

have had to stop all strong drink and all tobacco, and am now in a transition state between the two, which seems to be near madness. You never smoked, I think, so you can never taste the joys of stopping it. But at least you have drunk, and you can enter perhaps into my annoyance when I suddenly find a glass of claret or a brandy and water give me a splitting headache the next morning. No mistake about it; drink anything, and there's your headache. Tobacco just as bad for me. If I live through this breach of habit, I shall be a white livered puppy indeed. Actually I am so made, or so twisted, that I do not like to think of a life without the red wine on the table and the tobacco with its lovely little coal of fire. It doesn't amuse me from a distance. I may find it the Garden of Eden when I go in, but I don't like the colour of the gate posts. Suppose somebody said to you, you are to leave your home, and your books, and your clubs, and go out and camp in mid Africa, and command an expedition, you would howl, and kick, and flee. I think the same of a life without wine and tobacco; and if this goes on, I've got to go and do it, sir, in the



living flesh!

I thought Bourget was a friend of yours? And I thought the French were a polite race? He has taken my dedication with a stately silence that has surprised me into apoplexy. Did I go and dedicate my book to the nasty alien, and the 'horrid Frenchman, and the Bloody Furrineer? Well, I wouldn't do it again; and unless his case is susceptible of explanation, you might perhaps tell him so over the walnuts and the wine, by way of speeding the gay hours. Sincerely, I thought my dedication worth a letter.

If anything be worth anything here below! Do you know the story of the man who found a button in his hash, and called the waiter? 'What do you call that?' says he. 'Well,' said the waiter, 'what d'you expect? Expect to find a gold watch and chain?' Heavenly apologue, is it not? I expected (rather) to find a gold watch and chain; I expected to be able to smoke to excess and drink to comfort all the days of my life; and I am still indignantly staring on this button! It's not even

a button; it's a teetotal badge! Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO HENRY JAMES**

APIA, JULY 1893.

MY DEAR HENRY JAMES, Yes. LES TROPHEES, on the whole, a book. It is excellent; but is it a life's work? I always suspect YOU of a volume of sonnets up your sleeve; when is it coming down? I am in one of my moods of wholesale impatience with all fiction and all verging on it, reading instead, with rapture, FOUNTAINHALL'S DECISIONS. You never read it: well, it hasn't much form, and is inexpressibly dreary, I should suppose, to others and even to me for pages. It's like walking in a mine underground, and with a damned bad lantern, and picking out pieces of ore. This, and war, will be my excuse for not having read your (doubtless) charming work of fiction. The revolving year will bring me round to it; and I know, when fiction shall begin to feel a little SOLID to me again, that I shall love it, because

it's James. Do you know, when I am in this mood, I would rather try to read a bad book? It's not so disappointing, anyway. And FOUNTAINHALL is prime, two big folio volumes, and all dreary, and all true, and all as terse as an obituary; and about one interesting fact on an average in twenty pages, and ten of them unintelligible for technicalities. There's literature, if you like! It feeds; it falls about you genuine like rain. Rain: nobody has done justice to rain in literature yet: surely a subject for a Scot. But then you can't do rain in that ledger book style that I am trying for or between a ledger book and an old ballad. How to get over, how to escape from, the besotting PARTICULARITY of fiction. 'Roland approached the house; it had green doors and window blinds; and there was a scraper on the upper step.' To hell with Roland and the scraper! Yours ever,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO A CONAN DOYLE**

VAILIMA, JULY 12, 1893.

MY DEAR DR. CONAN DOYLE, The WHITE COMPANY has not yet turned up; but when it does which I suppose will be next mail you shall hear news of me. I have a great talent for compliment, accompanied by a hateful, even a diabolic frankness.

Delighted to hear I have a chance of seeing you and Mrs. Doyle; Mrs. Stevenson bids me say (what is too true) that our rations are often spare. Are you Great Eaters? Please reply.

As to ways and means, here is what you will have to do. Leave San Francisco by the down mail, get off at Samoa, and twelve days or a fortnight later, you can continue your journey to Auckland per Upolu, which will give you a look at Tonga and possibly Fiji by the way. Make this a FIRST PART OF YOUR PLANS. A fortnight, even of Vailima diet, could kill nobody.

We are in the midst of war here; rather a nasty business,

with the head taking; and there seem signs of other trouble. But I believe you need make no change in your design to visit us. All should be well over; and if it were not, why! you need not leave the steamer. Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

19TH JULY '93.

...We are in the thick of war see ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS we have only two outside boys left to us. Nothing is doing, and PER CONTRA little paying...My life here is dear; but I can live within my income for a time at least so long as my prices keep up and it seems a clear duty to waste none of it on gadding about...My life of my family fills up intervals, and should be an excellent book when it is done, but big, damnably big.

My dear old man, I perceive by a thousand signs that we grow old, and are soon to pass away! I hope with dignity; if not, with courage at least. I am myself very ready; or would

be will be when I have made a little money for my folks. The blows that have fallen upon you are truly terrifying; I wish you strength to bear them. It is strange, I must seem to you to blaze in a Birmingham prosperity and happiness; and to myself I seem a failure. The truth is, I have never got over the last influenza yet, and am miserably out of heart and out of kilter. Lungs pretty right, stomach nowhere, spirits a good deal overshadowed; but we'll come through it yet, and cock our bonnets. (I confess with sorrow that I am not yet quite sure about the INTELLECTS; but I hope it is only one of my usual periods of non work. They are more unbearable now, because I cannot rest. NO REST BUT THE GRAVE FOR SIR WALTER! O the words ring in a man's head.)

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO A CONAN DOYLE**

VAILIMA, AUGUST 23RD, 1893.

MY DEAR DR. CONAN DOYLE, I am reposing after a somewhat severe experience upon which I think it my duty to report to you. Immediately after dinner this evening it occurred to me to re narrate to my native overseer Simele your story of THE ENGINEER'S THUMB. And, sir, I have done it. It was necessary, I need hardly say, to go somewhat farther afield than you have done. To explain (for instance) what a railway is, what a steam hammer, what a coach and horse, what coining, what a criminal, and what the police. I pass over other and no less necessary explanations. But I did actually succeed; and if you could have seen the drawn, anxious features and the bright, feverish eyes of Simele, you would have (for the moment at least) tasted glory. You might perhaps think that, were you to come to Samoa, you might be introduced as the Author of THE ENGINEER'S THUMB. Disabuse yourself. They do not know what it is to make up a

story. THE ENGINEER'S THUMB (God forgive me) was narrated as a piece of actual and factual history. Nay, and more, I who write to you have had the indiscretion to perpetrate a trifling piece of fiction entitled THE BOTTLE IMP. Parties who come up to visit my unpretentious mansion, after having admired the ceilings by Vanderputty and the tapestry by Gobbling, manifest towards the end a certain uneasiness which proves them to be fellows of an infinite delicacy. They may be seen to shrug a brown shoulder, to roll up a speaking eye, and at last secret bursts from them: 'Where is the bottle?' Alas, my friends (I feel tempted to say), you will find it by the Engineer's Thumb! Talofa soifuia.

Oa'ū, O lau no moni, O Tusitala.

More commonly known as,

R. L. STEVENSON.

Have read the REFUGEES; Conde and old P. Murat very good; Louis XIV. and Louvois with the letter bag very rich. You have reached a trifle wide perhaps; too MANY celebrities? Though I was delighted to re encounter my old



friend Du Chaylu. Old Murat is perhaps your high water mark; 'tis excellently human, cheerful and real. Do it again. Madame de Maintenon struck me as quite good. Have you any document for the decapitation? It sounds steepish. The devil of all that first part is that you see old Dumas; yet your Louis XIV. is **DISTINCTLY GOOD**. I am much interested with this book, which fulfils a good deal, and promises more. Question: How far a Historical Novel should be wholly episodic? I incline to that view, with trembling. I shake hands with you on old Murat.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO GEORGE MEREDITH**

SEPT. 5TH, 1893, VAILIMA PLANTATION, UPOLU, SAMOA.

MY DEAR MEREDITH, I have again and again taken up the pen to write to you, and many beginnings have gone into the waste paper basket (I have one now for the second time in my life and feel a big man on the strength of it). And

no doubt it requires some decision to break so long a silence. My health is vastly restored, and I am now living patriarchally in this place six hundred feet above the sea on the shoulder of a mountain of 1500. Behind me, the unbroken bush slopes up to the backbone of the island (3 to 4000) without a house, with no inhabitants save a few runaway black boys, wild pigs and cattle, and wild doves and flying foxes, and many parti coloured birds, and many black, and many white: a very eerie, dim, strange place and hard to travel. I am the head of a household of five whites, and of twelve Samoans, to all of whom I am the chief and father: my cook comes to me and asks leave to marry and his mother, a fine old chief woman, who has never lived here, does the same. You may be sure I granted the petition. It is a life of great interest, complicated by the Tower of Babel, that old enemy. And I have all the time on my hands for literary work. My house is a great place; we have a hall fifty feet long with a great red wood stair ascending from it, where we dine in state myself usually dressed in a singlet and a pair of trousers

and attended on by servants in a single garment, a kind of kilt also flowers and leaves and their hair often powdered with lime. The European who came upon it suddenly would think it was a dream. We have prayers on Sunday night I am a perfect pariah in the island not to have them oftener, but the spirit is unwilling and the flesh proud, and I cannot go it more. It is strange to see the long line of the brown folk crouched along the wall with lanterns at intervals before them in the big shadowy hall, with an oak cabinet at one end of it and a group of Rodin's (which native taste regards as PRODIGIEUSEMENT LESTE) presiding over all from the top and to hear the long rambling Samoan hymn rolling up (God bless me, what style! But I am off business to day, and this is not meant to be literature.).

I have asked Colvin to send you a copy of CATRIONA, which I am sometimes tempted to think is about my best work. I hear word occasionally of the AMAZING MARRIAGE. It will be a brave day for me when I get hold of it. Gower Woodseer is now an ancient, lean, grim, exiled

Scot, living and labouring as for a wager in the tropics; still active, still with lots of fire in him, but the youth ah, the youth where is it? For years after I came here, the critics (those genial gentlemen) used to deplore the relaxation of my fibre and the idleness to which I had succumbed. I hear less of this now; the next thing is they will tell me I am writing myself out! and that my unconscientious conduct is bringing their grey hairs with sorrow to the dust. I do not know I mean I do know one thing. 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 first I 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 should be this dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle. At least I have not failed, but I would have preferred a place of trumpetings and the open air over my head.

This is a devilish egotistical yarn. Will you try to imitate me in that if the spirit ever moves you to reply? And meantime be sure that away in the midst of the Pacific there is a house on a wooded island where the name of George Meredith is very dear, and his memory (since it must be no more) is continually honoured. Ever your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Remember me to Mariette, if you please; and my wife sends her most kind remembrances to yourself.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO AUGUSTUS ST. GAUDENS**

VAILIMA, SEPTEMBER 1893.

MY DEAR ST. GAUDENS, I had determined not to write to you till I had seen the medallion, but it looks as if that might mean the Greek Kalends or the day after to morrow. Reassure yourself, your part is done, it is ours that halts the consideration of conveyance over our sweet little road on boys' backs, for we cannot very well apply the horses to this work; there is only one; you cannot put it in a panier; to put it on the horse's back we have not the heart. Beneath the beauty of R. L. S., to say nothing of his verses, which the publishers find heavy enough, and the genius of the god like sculptor, the spine would snap and the well knit limbs of the (ahem) cart horse would be loosed by death. So you are to conceive me, sitting in my house, dubitative, and the medallion chuckling in the warehouse of the German firm, for some days longer; and hear me meanwhile on the golden letters.

Alas! they are all my fancy painted, but the price is prohibitive. I cannot do it. It is another day dream burst. Another gable of Abbotsford has gone down, fortunately before it was builded, so there's nobody injured except me. I had a strong conviction that I was a great hand at writing inscriptions, and meant to exhibit and test my genius on the walls of my house; and now I see I can't. It is generally thus. The Battle of the Golden Letters will never be delivered. On making preparation to open the campaign, the King found himself face to face with invincible difficulties, in which the rapacity of a mercenary soldiery and the complaints of an impoverished treasury played an equal part. Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I enclose a bill for the medallion; have been trying to find your letter, quite in vain, and therefore must request you to pay for the bronze letters yourself and let me know the damage.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO J. HORNE STEVENSON**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1893.

MY DEAR STEVENSON, A thousand thanks for your voluminous and delightful collections. Baxter so soon as it is ready will let you see a proof of my introduction, which is only sent out as a sprat to catch whales. And you will find I have a good deal of what you have, only mine in a perfectly desultory manner, as is necessary to an exile. My uncle's pedigree is wrong; there was never a Stevenson of Caldwell, of course, but they were tenants of the Muirs; the farm held by them is in my introduction; and I have already written to Charles Baxter to have a search made in the Register House. I hope he will have had the inspiration to put it under your surveillance. Your information as to your own family is intensely interesting, and I should not wonder but what you and we and old John Stevenson, 'land labourer in the parish of Dailly,' came all of the same stock. Ayrshire and probably Cunningham seems to be the home of the race our part of it.



From the distribution of the name which your collections have so much extended without essentially changing my knowledge of we seem rather pointed to a British origin. What you say of the Engineers is fresh to me, and must be well thrashed out. This introduction of it will take a long while to walk about! as perhaps I may be tempted to let it become long; after all, I am writing THIS for my own pleasure solely. Greetings to you and other Speculatives of our date, long bygone, alas! Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. I have a different version of my grandfather's arms or my father had if I could find it.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO JOHN P N**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 3RD, 1893.

DEAR JOHNNIE, Well, I must say you seem to be a tremendous fellow! Before I was eight I used to write stories or dictate them at least and I had produced an excellent history of Moses, for which I got 1 pound from an uncle; but I had never gone the length of a play, so you have beaten me fairly on my own ground. I hope you may continue to do so, and thanking you heartily for your nice letter, I shall beg you to believe me yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO RUSSELL P N**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 3RD, 1893.

DEAR RUSSELL, I have to thank you very much for your capital letter, which came to hand here in Samoa along with your mother's. When you 'grow up and write stories like me,' you will be able to understand that there is scarce

anything more painful than for an author to hold a pen; he has to do it so much that his heart sickens and his fingers ache at the sight or touch of it; so that you will excuse me if I do not write much, but remain (with compliments and greetings from one Scot to another though I was not born in Ceylon you're ahead of me there). Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM**

VAILIMA, DECEMBER 5, 1893.

MY DEAREST CUMMY, This goes to you with a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Happy New Year anyway, for I think it should reach you about NOOR'S DAY. I dare say it may be cold and frosty. Do you remember when you used to take me out of bed in the early morning, carry me to the back windows, show me the hills of Fife, and quote to me.

'A' the hills are covered wi' snaw, An' winter's noo come fairly'?

There is not much chance of that here! I wonder how my mother is going to stand the winter. If she can, it will be a very good thing for her. We are in that part of the year which I like the best the Rainy or Hurricane Season. 'When it is good, it is very, very good; and when it is bad, it is horrid,' and our fine days are certainly fine like heaven; such a blue of the sea, such green of the trees, and such crimson of the hibiscus flowers, you never saw; and the air as mild and gentle as a baby's breath, and yet not hot!

The mail is on the move, and I must let up. With much love, I am, your laddie,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

6TH DECEMBER 1893.

'OCTOBER 25, 1685. At Privy Council, George Murray, Lieutenant of the King's Guard, and others, did, on the 21st of September last, obtain a clandestine order of Privy Council to apprehend the person of Janet Pringle, daughter to the late

Clifton, and she having retired out of the way upon information, he got an order against Andrew Pringle, her uncle, to produce her...But she having married Andrew Pringle, her uncle's son (to disappoint all their designs of selling her), a boy of thirteen years old.' But my boy is to be fourteen, so I extract no further. FOUNTAINHALL, i. 320.

'MAY 6, 1685. Wappus Pringle of Clifton was still alive after all, and in prison for debt, and transacts with Lieutenant Murray, giving security for 7000 marks.' i. 372.

No, it seems to have been HER brother who had succeeded.

MY DEAR CHARLES, The above is my story, and I wonder if any light can be thrown on it. I prefer the girl's father dead; and the question is, How in that case could Lieutenant George Murray get his order to 'apprehend' and his power to 'sell' her in marriage?

Or might Lieutenant G. be her tutor, and she fugitive to the Pringles, and on the discovery of her whereabouts hastily married?

A good legal note on these points is very ardently desired by me; it will be the corner stone of my novel.

This is for I am quite wrong to tell you for you will tell others and nothing will teach you that all my schemes are in the air, and vanish and reappear again like shapes in the clouds it is for HEATHERCAT: whereof the first volume will be called THE KILLING TIME, and I believe I have authorities ample for that. But the second volume is to be called (I believe) DARIEN, and for that I want, I fear, a good deal of truck:

DARIEN PAPERS, CARSTAIRS PAPERS,  
MARCHMONT PAPERS, JERVISWOODE  
CORRESPONDENCE,

I hope may do me. Some sort of general history of the Darien affair (if there is a decent one, which I misdoubt), it would also be well to have the one with most details, if possible. It is singular how obscure to me this decade of Scots history remains, 1690 1700 a deuce of a want of light and grouping to it! However, I believe I shall be mostly out

of Scotland in my tale; first in Carolina, next in Darien. I want also I am the daughter of the horse leech truly 'Black's new large map of Scotland,' sheets 3, 4, and 5, a 7s. 6d. touch. I believe, if you can get the

CALDWELL PAPERS, they had better come also; and if there be any reasonable work but no, I must call a halt....

I fear the song looks doubtful, but I'll consider of it, and I can promise you some reminiscences which it will amuse me to write, whether or not it will amuse the public to read of them. But it's an unco business to SUPPLY deid heid coapy.

**Letter: TO J. M BARRIE**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 7TH, 1893.

MY DEAR BARRIE, I have received duly the MAGNUM OPUS, and it really is a MAGNUM OPUS. It is a beautiful specimen of Clark's printing, paper sufficient, and the illustrations all my fancy painted. But the particular flower of the flock to whom I have hopelessly lost my heart is Tibby Birse. I must have known Tibby Birse when she was

a servant's mantua maker in Edinburgh and answered to the name of Miss BRODDIE. She used to come and sew with my nurse, sitting with her legs crossed in a masculine manner; and swinging her foot emphatically, she used to pour forth a perfectly unbroken stream of gossip. I didn't hear it, I was immersed in far more important business with a box of bricks, but the recollection of that thin, perpetual, shrill sound of a voice has echoed in my ears sinsyne. I am bound to say she was younger than Tibbie, but there is no mistaking that and the indescribable and eminently Scottish expression.

I have been very much prevented of late, having carried out thoroughly to my own satisfaction two considerable illnesses, had a birthday, and visited Honolulu, where politics are (if possible) a shade more exasperating than they are with us. I am told that it was just when I was on the point of leaving that I received your superlative epistle about the cricket eleven. In that case it is impossible I should have answered it, which is inconsistent with my own recollection of the fact. What I remember is, that I sat down under your



immediate inspiration and wrote an answer in every way worthy. If I didn't, as it seems proved that I couldn't, it will never be done now. However, I did the next best thing, I equipped my cousin Graham Balfour with a letter of introduction, and from him, if you know how for he is rather of the Scottish character you may elicit all the information you can possibly wish to have as to us and ours. Do not be bluffed off by the somewhat stern and monumental first impression that he may make upon you. He is one of the best fellows in the world, and the same sort of fool that we are, only better looking, with all the faults of Vailimans and some of his own I say nothing about virtues.

I have lately been returning to my wallowing in the mire. When I was a child, and indeed until I was nearly a man, I consistently read Covenanting books. Now that I am a grey beard or would be, if I could raise the beard I have returned, and for weeks back have read little else but Wodrow, Walker, Shields, etc. Of course this is with an idea of a novel, but in the course of it I made a very curious discovery. I have been

accustomed to hear refined and intelligent critics those who know so much better what we are than we do ourselves, trace down my literary descent from all sorts of people, including Addison, of whom I could never read a word. Well, laigh i' your lug, sir the clue was found. My style is from the Covenanting writers. Take a particular case the fondness for rhymes. I don't know of any English prose writer who rhymes except by accident, and then a stone had better be tied around his neck and himself cast into the sea. But my Covenanting buckies rhyme all the time a beautiful example of the unconscious rhyme above referred to.

Do you know, and have you really tasted, these delightful works? If not, it should be remedied; there is enough of the Auld Licht in you to be ravished.

I suppose you know that success has so far attended my banners my political banners I mean, and not my literary. In conjunction with the Three Great Powers I have succeeded in getting rid of My President and My Chief Justice. They've gone home, the one to Germany, the other to Souwegia. I

hear little echoes of footfalls of their departing footsteps through the medium of the newspapers....

Whereupon I make you my salute with the firm remark that it is time to be done with trifling and give us a great book, and my ladies fall into line with me to pay you a most respectful courtesy, and we all join in the cry, 'Come to Vailima!'

My dear sir, your soul's health is in it you will never do the great book, you will never cease to work in L., etc., till you come to Vailima.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO R. LE GALLIENNE**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 28TH, 1893.

DEAR MR. LE GALLIENNE, I have received some time ago, through our friend Miss Taylor, a book of yours. But that was by no means my first introduction to your name. The same book had stood already on my shelves; I had read articles of yours in the ACADEMY; and by a piece of

constructive criticism (which I trust was sound) had arrived at the conclusion that you were 'Log roller.' Since then I have seen your beautiful verses to your wife. You are to conceive me, then, as only too ready to make the acquaintance of a man who loved good literature and could make it. I had to thank you, besides, for a triumphant exposure of a paradox of my own: the literary prostitute disappeared from view at a phrase of yours 'The essence is not in the pleasure but the sale.' True: you are right, I was wrong; the author is not the whore, but the libertine; and yet I shall let the passage stand. It is an error, but it illustrated the truth for which I was contending, that literature painting all art, are no other than pleasures, which we turn into trades.

And more than all this, I had, and I have to thank you for the intimate loyalty you have shown to myself; for the eager welcome you give to what is good for the courtly tenderness with which you touch on my defects. I begin to grow old; I have given my top note, I fancy; and I have written too many books. The world begins to be weary of the

old booth; and if not weary, familiar with the familiarity that breeds contempt. I do not know that I am sensitive to criticism, if it be hostile; I am sensitive indeed, when it is friendly; and when I read such criticism as yours, I am emboldened to go on and praise God.

You are still young, and you may live to do much. The little, artificial popularity of style in England tends, I think, to die out; the British pig returns to his true love, the love of the styleless, of the shapeless, of the slapdash and the disorderly. There is trouble coming, I think; and you may have to hold the fort for us in evil days.

Lastly, let me apologise for the crucifixion that I am inflicting on you (BIEN A CONTRE COEUR) by my bad writing. I was once the best of writers; landladies, puzzled as to my 'trade,' used to have their honest bosoms set at rest by a sight of a page of manuscript. 'Ah,' they would say, 'no wonder they pay you for that'; and when I sent it in to the printers, it was given to the boys! I was about thirty nine, I think, when I had a turn of scrivener's palsy; my hand got

worse; and for the first time, I received clean proofs. But it has gone beyond that now, I know I am like my old friend James Payn, a terror to correspondents; and you would not believe the care with which this has been written. Believe me to be, very sincerely yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO MRS. A. BAKER**

DECEMBER 1893.

DEAR MADAM, There is no trouble, and I wish I could help instead. As it is, I fear I am only going to put you to trouble and vexation. This Braille writing is a kind of consecration, and I would like if I could to have your copy perfect. The two volumes are to be published as Vols. I. and II. of THE ADVENTURES OF DAVID BALFOUR. 1st, KIDNAPPED; 2nd, CATRIONA. I am just sending home a corrected KIDNAPPED for this purpose to Messrs. Cassell, and in order that I may if possible be in time, I send it to you first of all. Please, as soon as you have noted the changes,

forward the same to Cassell and Co., La Belle Sauvage Yard,  
Ludgate Hill.

I am writing to them by this mail to send you  
CATRIONA.

You say, dear madam, you are good enough to say, it is  
'a keen pleasure' to you to bring my book within the reach of  
the blind.

Conceive then what it is to me! and believe me,  
sincerely yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I was a barren tree before, I blew a quenched coal, I  
could not, on their midnight shore, The lonely blind console.

A moment, lend your hand, I bring My sheaf for you to  
bind, And you can teach my words to sing In the darkness of  
the blind.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO HENRY JAMES**

APIA, DECEMBER 1893.

MY DEAR HENRY JAMES, The mail has come upon me like an armed man three days earlier than was expected; and the Lord help me! It is impossible I should answer anybody the way they should be. Your jubilation over CATRIONA did me good, and still more the subtlety and truth of your remark on the starving of the visual sense in that book. 'Tis true, and unless I make the greater effort and am, as a step to that, convinced of its necessity it will be more true I fear in the future. I HEAR people talking, and I FEEL them acting, and that seems to me to be fiction. My two aims may be described as

1ST. War to the adjective. 2ND. Death to the optic nerve.

Admitted we live in an age of the optic nerve in literature. For how many centuries did literature get along without a sign of it? However, I'll consider your letter.



How exquisite is your character of the critic in ESSAYS IN LONDON! I doubt if you have done any single thing so satisfying as a piece of style and of insight. Yours ever,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

1ST JANUARY '94.

MY DEAR CHARLES, I am delighted with your idea, and first, I will here give an amended plan and afterwards give you a note of some of the difficulties.

Plan of the Edinburgh edition 14 vols.

...It may be a question whether my TIMES letters might not be appended to the 'Footnote' with a note of the dates of discharge of Cedercrantz and Pilsach.

I am particularly pleased with this idea of yours, because I am come to a dead stop. I never can remember how bad I have been before, but at any rate I am bad enough just now, I mean as to literature; in health I am well and strong. I take it I shall be six months before I'm heard of again, and

this time I could put in to some advantage in revising the text and (if it were thought desirable) writing prefaces. I do not know how many of them might be thought desirable. I have written a paper on TREASURE ISLAND, which is to appear shortly. MASTER OF BALLANTRAE I have one drafted. THE WRECKER is quite sufficiently done already with the last chapter, but I suppose an historic introduction to DAVID BALFOUR is quite unavoidable. PRINCE OTTO I don't think I could say anything about, and BLACK ARROW don't want to. But it is probable I could say something to the volume of TRAVELS. In the verse business I can do just what I like better than anything else, and extend UNDERWOODS with a lot of unpublished stuff. APROPOS, if I were to get printed off a very few poems which are somewhat too intimate for the public, could you get them run up in some luxurious manner, so that fools might be induced to buy them in just a sufficient quantity to pay expenses and the thing remain still in a manner private? We could supply photographs of the illustrations and the poems are of Vailima

and the family I should much like to get this done as a surprise for Fanny.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO H. B. BAILDON**

VAILIMA, JANUARY 15TH, 1894.

MY DEAR BAILDON, Last mail brought your book and its Dedication. 'Frederick Street and the gardens, and the short lived Jack o' Lantern,' are again with me and the note of the east wind, and Froebel's voice, and the smell of soup in Thomson's stair. Truly, you had no need to put yourself under the protection of any other saint, were that saint our Tamate himself! Yourself were enough, and yourself coming with so rich a sheaf.

For what is this that you say about the Muses? They have certainly never better inspired you than in 'Jael and Sisera,' and 'Herodias and John the Baptist,' good stout poems, fiery and sound. 'Tis but a mask and behind it chuckles the

God of the Garden,' I shall never forget. By the by, an error of the press, page 49, line 4, 'No infant's lesson are the ways of God.' THE is dropped.

And this reminds me you have a bad habit which is to be comminated in my theory of letters. Same page, two lines lower: 'But the vulture's track' is surely as fine to the ear as 'But vulture's track,' and this latter version has a dreadful baldness. The reader goes on with a sense of impoverishment, of unnecessary sacrifice; he has been robbed by footpads, and goes scouting for his lost article! Again, in the second Epode, these fine verses would surely sound much finer if they began, 'As a hardy climber who has set his heart,' than with the jejune 'As hardy climber.' I do not know why you permit yourself this license with grammar; you show, in so many pages, that you are superior to the paltry sense of rhythm which usually dictates it as though some poetaster had been suffered to correct the poet's text. By the way, I confess to a heartfelt weakness for AURICULAS. Believe me the very grateful and characteristic pick thank, but still sincere and

affectionate,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO W H LOW**

VAILIMA, JANUARY 15th, 1894.

MY DEAR LOW,... Pray you, stoop your proud head, and sell yourself to some Jew magazine, and make the visit out. I assure you, this is the spot for a sculptor or painter. This, and no other I don't say to stay there, but to come once and get the living colour into them. I am used to it; I do not notice it; rather prefer my grey, freezing recollections of Scotland; but there it is, and every morning is a thing to give thanks for, and every night another bar when it rains, of course.

About THE WRECKER rather late days, and I still suspect I had somehow offended you; however, all's well that ends well, and I am glad I am forgiven did you not fail to appreciate the attitude of Dodd? He was a fizzle and a stick, he knew it, he knew nothing else, and there is an

undercurrent of bitterness in him. And then the problem that Pinkerton laid down: why the artist can DO NOTHING ELSE? is one that continually exercises myself. He cannot: granted. But Scott could. And Montaigne. And Julius Caesar. And many more. And why can't R. L. S.? Does it not amaze you? It does me. I think of the Renaissance fellows, and their all round human sufficiency, and compare it with the ineffable smallness of the field in which we labour and in which we do so little. I think DAVID BALFOUR a nice little book, and very artistic, and just the thing to occupy the leisure of a busy man; but for the top flower of a man's life it seems to me inadequate. Small is the word; it is a small age, and I am of it. I could have wished to be otherwise busy in this world. I ought to have been able to build lighthouses and write DAVID BALFOURS too. HINC ILLAE LACRYMAE. I take my own case as most handy, but it is as illustrative of my quarrel with the age. We take all these pains, and we don't do as well as Michael Angelo or Leonardo, or even Fielding, who was an active magistrate, or Richardson, who was a

busy bookseller. J'AI HONTE POUR NOUS; my ears burn.

I am amazed at the effect which this Chicago exhibition has produced upon you and others. It set Mrs. Fairchild literally mad to judge by her letters. And I wish I had seen anything so influential. I suppose there was an aura, a halo, some sort of effulgency about the place; for here I find you louder than the rest. Well, it may be there is a time coming; and I wonder, when it comes, whether it will be a time of little, exclusive, one eyed rascals like you and me, or parties of the old stamp who can paint and fight, and write and keep books of double entry, and sculp, and scalp. It might be. You have a lot of stuff in the kettle, and a great deal of it Celtic. I have changed my mind progressively about England, practically the whole of Scotland is Celtic, and the western half of England, and all Ireland, and the Celtic blood makes a rare blend for art. If it is stiffened up with Latin blood, you get the French. We were less lucky: we had only Scandinavians, themselves decidedly artistic, and the Low German lot. However, that is a good starting point, and with

all the other elements in your crucible, it may come to something great very easily. I wish you would hurry up and let me see it. Here is a long while I have been waiting for something GOOD in art; and what have I seen? Zola's DEBACLE and a few of Kipling's tales. Are you a reader of Barbey d'Aurevilly? He is a never failing source of pleasure to me, for my sins, I suppose. What a work is the RIDEAU CRAMOISI! and L'ENSORCELEE! and LE CHEVALIER DES TOUCHES!

This is degenerating into mere twaddle. So please remember us all most kindly to Mrs. Low, and believe me ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. Were all your privateers voiceless in the war of 1812? Did NO ONE of them write memoirs? I shall have to do my privateer from chic, if you can't help me. My application to Scribner has been quite in vain. See if you can get hold of some historic sharp in the club, and tap him; they must some of them have written memoirs or notes of some



sort; perhaps still unprinted; if that be so, get them copied for me.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO H. B. BAILDON**

VAILIMA, JANUARY 30TH, 1894.

MY DEAR BAILDON, 'Call not blessed.' Yes, if I could die just now, or say in half a year, I should have had a splendid time of it on the whole. But it gets a little stale, and my work will begin to senesce; and parties to shy bricks at me; and now it begins to look as if I should survive to see myself impotent and forgotten. It's a pity suicide is not thought the ticket in the best circles.

But your letter goes on to congratulate me on having done the one thing I am a little sorry for; a little not much for my father himself lived to think that I had been wiser than he. But the cream of the jest is that I have lived to change my mind; and think that he was wiser than I. Had I been an engineer, and literature my amusement, it would have been

better perhaps. I pulled it off, of course, I won the wager, and it is pleasant while it lasts; but how long will it last? I don't know, say the Bells of Old Bow.

All of which goes to show that nobody is quite sane in judging himself. Truly, had I given way and gone in for engineering, I should be dead by now. Well, the gods know best.

I hope you got my letter about the RESCUE. Adieu,

R. L. S.

True for you about the benefit: except by kisses, jests, song, ET HOC GENUS OMNE, man CANNOT convey benefit to another. The universal benefactor has been there before him.

**Letter: TO J. H. BATES**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, MARCH 25TH, 1894.

MY DEAR MR. JOE H. BATES, I shall have the greatest pleasure in acceding to your complimentary request. I shall think it an honour to be associated with your chapter, and I need not remind you (for you have said it yourself) how much depends upon your own exertions whether to make it to me a real honour or only a derision. This is to let you know that I accept the position that you have seriously offered to me in a quite serious spirit. I need scarce tell you that I shall always be pleased to receive reports of your proceedings; and if I do not always acknowledge them, you are to remember that I am a man very much occupied otherwise, and not at all to suppose that I have lost interest in my chapter.

In this world, which (as you justly say) is so full of sorrow and suffering, it will always please me to remember that my name is connected with some efforts after alleviation, nor less so with purposes of innocent recreation which, after

all, are the only certain means at our disposal for bettering human life.

With kind regards, to yourself, to Mr. L. C. Congdon, to E. M. G. Bates, and to Mr. Edward Hugh Higlee Bates, and the heartiest wishes for the future success of the chapter, believe me, yours cordially,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO WILLIAM ARCHER**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, MARCH 27TH, 1894.

MY DEAR ARCHER, Many thanks for your THEATRICAL WORLD. Do you know, it strikes me as being really very good? I have not yet read much of it, but so far as I have looked, there is not a dull and not an empty page in it. Hazlitt, whom you must often have thought of, would have been pleased. Come to think of it, I shall put this book upon the Hazlitt shelf. You have acquired a manner that I can only call august; otherwise, I should have to call it such amazing impudence. The BAUBLE SHOP and BECKET are

examples of what I mean. But it 'sets you weel.'

Marjorie Fleming I have known, as you surmise, for long. She was possibly no, I take back possibly she was one of the greatest works of God. Your note about the resemblance of her verses to mine gave me great joy, though it only proved me a plagiarist. By the by, was it not over *THE CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES* that we first scraped acquaintance? I am sorry indeed to hear that my esteemed correspondent Tomarcher has such poor taste in literature. I fear he cannot have inherited this trait from his dear papa. Indeed, I may say I know it, for I remember the energy of papa's disapproval when the work passed through his hands on its way to a second birth, which none regrets more than myself. It is an odd fact, or perhaps a very natural one; I find few greater pleasures than reading my own works, but I never, O I never read *THE BLACK ARROW*. In that country Tomarcher reigns supreme. Well, and after all, if Tomarcher likes it, it has not been written in vain.

We have just now a curious breath from Europe. A

young fellow just beginning letters, and no fool, turned up here with a letter of introduction in the well known blue ink and decorative hieroglyphs of George Meredith. His name may be known to you. It is Sidney Lysaght. He is staying with us but a day or two, and it is strange to me and not unpleasant to hear all the names, old and new, come up again. But oddly the new are so much more in number. If I revisited the glimpses of the moon on your side of the ocean, I should know comparatively few of them.

My amanuensis deserts me I should have said you, for yours is the loss, my script having lost all bond with humanity. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin: that nobody can read my hand. It is a humiliating circumstance that thus evens us with printers!

You must sometimes think it strange or perhaps it is only I that should so think it to be following the old round, in the gas lamps and the crowded theatres, when I am away here in the tropical forest and the vast silences!

My dear Archer, my wife joins me in the best wishes to

yourself and Mrs. Archer, not forgetting Tom; and I am yours  
very cordially,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO W B. YEATS**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, APRIL 14, 1894.

DEAR SIR, Long since when I was a boy I remember the emotions with which I repeated Swinburne's poems and ballads. Some ten years ago, a similar spell was cast upon me by Meredith's LOVE IN THE VALLEY; the stanzas beginning 'When her mother tends her' haunted me and made me drunk like wine; and I remember waking with them all the echoes of the hills about Hyeres. It may interest you to hear that I have a third time fallen in slavery: this is to your poem called the LAKE ISLE OF INNISFRAE. It is so quaint and airy, simple, artful, and eloquent to the heart but I seek words in vain. Enough that 'always night and day I hear lake water lapping with low sounds on the shore,' and am, yours

gratefully,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO GEORGE MEREDITH**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, APRIL 17TH, 1894.

MY DEAR MEREDITH, Many good things have the gods sent to me of late. First of all there was a letter from you by the kind hand of Mariette, if she is not too great a lady to be remembered in such a style; and then there came one Lysaght with a charming note of introduction in the well known hand itself. We had but a few days of him, and liked him well. There was a sort of geniality and inward fire about him at which I warmed my hands. It is long since I have seen a young man who has left in me such a favourable impression; and I find myself telling myself, 'O, I must tell this to Lysaght,' or, 'This will interest him,' in a manner very unusual after so brief an acquaintance. The whole of my family shared in this favourable impression, and my halls have re-echoed ever since, I am sure he will be amused to know, with



WIDDICOMBE FAIR.

He will have told you doubtless more of my news than I could tell you myself; he has your European perspective, a thing long lost to me. I heard with a great deal of interest the news of Box Hill. And so I understand it is to be enclosed! Allow me to remark, that seems a far more barbaric trait of manners than the most barbarous of ours. We content ourselves with cutting off an occasional head.

I hear we may soon expect the AMAZING MARRIAGE. You know how long, and with how much curiosity, I have looked forward to the book. Now, in so far as you have adhered to your intention, Gower Woodsere will be a family portrait, age twenty five, of the highly respectable and slightly influential and fairly aged TUSITALA. You have not known that gentleman; console yourself, he is not worth knowing. At the same time, my dear Meredith, he is very sincerely yours for what he is worth, for the memories of old times, and in the expectation of many pleasures still to come. I suppose we shall never see each other again; flitting youths

of the Lysaght species may occasionally cover these unconscionable leagues and bear greetings to and fro. But we ourselves must be content to converse on an occasional sheet of notepaper, and I shall never see whether you have grown older, and you shall never deplore that Gower Woodsere should have declined into the pantaloon TUSITALA. It is perhaps better so. Let us continue to see each other as we were, and accept, my dear Meredith, my love and respect.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. My wife joins me in the kindest messages to yourself and Mariette.

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

VAILIMA, APRIL 17, '94.

MY DEAR CHARLES, ST. IVES is now well on its way into the second volume. There remains no mortal doubt that it will reach the three volume standard.

I am very anxious that you should send me

1ST. TOM AND JERRY, a cheap edition.

2nd. The book by Ashton the DAWN OF THE CENTURY, I think it was called which Colvin sent me, and which has miscarried, and

3rd. If it is possible, a file of the EDINBURGH COURANT for the years 1811, 1812, 1813, or 1814. I should not care for a whole year. If it were possible to find me three months, winter months by preference, it would do my business not only for ST. IVES, but for the JUSTICE CLERK as well. Suppose this to be impossible, perhaps I could get the loan of it from somebody; or perhaps it would be possible to have some one read a file for me and make notes. This would be extremely bad, as unhappily one man's food is another man's poison, and the reader would probably leave out everything I should choose. But if you are reduced to that, you might mention to the man who is to read for me that balloon ascensions are in the order of the day.

4th. It might be as well to get a book on balloon ascension, particularly in the early part of the century.

...

III. At last this book has come from Scribner, and, alas! I have the first six or seven chapters of ST. IVES to recast entirely. Who could foresee that they clothed the French prisoners in yellow? But that one fatal fact and also that they shaved them twice a week damns the whole beginning. If it had been sent in time, it would have saved me a deal of trouble....

I have had a long letter from Dr. Scott Dalglish, 25 Mayfield Terrace, asking me to put my name down to the Ballantyne Memorial Committee. I have sent him a pretty sharp answer in favour of cutting down the memorial and giving more to the widow and children. If there is to be any foolery in the way of statues or other trash, please send them a guinea; but if they are going to take my advice and put up a simple tablet with a few heartfelt words, and really devote the bulk of the subscriptions to the wife and family, I will go to the length of twenty pounds, if you will allow me (and if the case of the family be at all urgent), and at least I direct you to send ten pounds. I suppose you had better see Scott Dalglish

himself on the matter. I take the opportunity here to warn you that my head is simply spinning with a multitude of affairs, and I shall probably forget a half of my business at last.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO MRS. SITWELL**

VAILIMA, APRIL 1894.

MY DEAR FRIEND, I have at last got some photographs, and hasten to send you, as you asked, a portrait of Tusitala. He is a strange person; not so lean, say experts, but infinitely battered; mighty active again on the whole; going up and down our break neck road at all hours of the day and night on horseback; holding meetings with all manner of chiefs; quite a political personage God save the mark! in a small way, but at heart very conscious of the inevitable flat failure that awaits every one. I shall never do a better book than CATRIONA, that is my high water mark, and the trouble of production increases on me at a great rate and mighty anxious about how I am to leave my family: an

elderly man, with elderly preoccupations, whom I should be ashamed to show you for your old friend; but not a hope of my dying soon and cleanly, and 'winning off the stage.' Rather I am daily better in physical health. I shall have to see this business out, after all; and I think, in that case, they should have they might have spared me all my ill health this decade past, if it were not to unbar the doors. I have no taste for old age, and my nose is to be rubbed in it in spite of my face. I was meant to die young, and the gods do not love me.

This is very like an epitaph, bar the handwriting, which is anything but monumental, and I dare say I had better stop. Fanny is down at her own cottage planting or deplanting or replanting, I know not which, and she will not be home till dinner, by which time the mail will be all closed, else she would join me in all good messages and remembrances of love. I hope you will congratulate Burne Jones from me on his baronetcy. I cannot make out to be anything but raspingly, harrowingly sad; so I will close, and not affect levity which I cannot feel. Do not altogether forget me; keep a corner of

your memory for the exile

LOUIS.

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

VAILIMA, MAY 1894.

MY DEAR CHARLES, My dear fellow, I wish to assure you of the greatness of the pleasure that this Edinburgh Edition gives me. I suppose it was your idea to give it that name. No other would have affected me in the same manner. Do you remember, how many years ago I would be afraid to hazard a guess one night when I communicated to you certain intimations of early death and aspirations after fame? I was particularly maudlin; and my remorse the next morning on a review of my folly has written the matter very deeply in my mind; from yours it may easily have fled. If any one at that moment could have shown me the Edinburgh Edition, I suppose I should have died. It is with gratitude and wonder that I consider 'the way in which I have been led.' Could a more preposterous idea have occurred to us in those days

when we used to search our pockets for coppers, too often in vain, and combine forces to produce the threepence necessary for two glasses of beer, or wander down the Lothian Road without any, than that I should be strong and well at the age of forty three in the island of Upolu, and that you should be at home bringing out the Edinburgh Edition? If it had been possible, I should almost have preferred the Lothian Road Edition, say, with a picture of the old Dutch smuggler on the covers. I have now something heavy on my mind. I had always a great sense of kinship with poor Robert Fergusson so clever a boy, so wild, of such a mixed strain, so unfortunate, born in the same town with me, and, as I always felt, rather by express intimation than from evidence, so like myself. Now the injustice with which the one Robert is rewarded and the other left out in the cold sits heavy on me, and I wish you could think of some way in which I could do honour to my unfortunate namesake. Do you think it would look like affectation to dedicate the whole edition to his memory? I think it would. The sentiment which would



dictate it to me is too abstruse; and besides, I think my wife is the proper person to receive the dedication of my life's work. At the same time, it is very odd it really looks like the transmigration of souls I feel that I must do something for Fergusson; Burns has been before me with the gravestone. It occurs to me you might take a walk down the Canongate and see in what condition the stone is. If it be at all uncared for, we might repair it, and perhaps add a few words of inscription.

I must tell you, what I just remembered in a flash as I was walking about dictating this letter there was in the original plan of the MASTER OF BALLANTRAE a sort of introduction describing my arrival in Edinburgh on a visit to yourself and your placing in my hands the papers of the story. I actually wrote it, and then condemned the idea as being a little too like Scott, I suppose. Now I must really find the MS. and try to finish it for the E. E. It will give you, what I should so much like you to have, another corner of your own in that lofty monument.

Suppose we do what I have proposed about Fergusson's monument, I wonder if an inscription like this would look arrogant

This stone originally erected by Robert Burns has been repaired at the charges of Robert Louis Stevenson, and is by him re dedicated to the memory of Robert Fergusson, as the gift of one Edinburgh lad to another.

In spacing this inscription I would detach the names of Fergusson and Burns, but leave mine in the text.

Or would that look like sham modesty, and is it better to bring out the three Roberts?

**Letter: TO R A M STEVENSON**

VAILIMA, JUNE 1894.

MY DEAR BOB, I must make out a letter this mail or perish in the attempt. All the same, I am deeply stupid, in bed with a cold, deprived of my amanuensis, and conscious of the wish but not the furnished will. You may be interested to hear how the family inquiries go. It is now quite certain that we

are a second rate lot, and came out of Cunningham or Clydesdale, therefore BRITISH folk; so that you are Cymry on both sides, and I Cymry and Pict. We may have fought with King Arthur and known Merlin. The first of the family, Stevenson of Stevenson, was quite a great party, and dates back to the wars of Edward First. The last male heir of Stevenson of Stevenson died 1670, 220 pounds, 10s. to the bad, from drink. About the same time the Stevensons, who were mostly in Cunningham before, crop up suddenly in the parish of Neilston, over the border in Renfrewshire. Of course, they may have been there before, but there is no word of them in that parish till 1675 in any extracts I have. Our first traceable ancestor was a tenant farmer of Muir of Cauldwells James in Nether Carsewell. Presently two families of maltmen are found in Glasgow, both, by re duplicated proofs, related to James (the son of James) in Nether Carsewell. We descend by his second marriage from Robert; one of these died 1733. It is not very romantic up to now, but has interested me surprisingly to fish out, always

hoping for more and occasionally getting at least a little clearness and confirmation. But the earliest date, 1655, apparently the marriage of James in Nether Carsewell, cannot as yet be pushed back. From which of any number of dozen little families in Cunningham we should derive, God knows! Of course, it doesn't matter a hundred years hence, an argument fatal to all human enterprise, industry, or pleasure. And to me it will be a deadly disappointment if I cannot roll this stone away! One generation further might be nothing, but it is my present object of desire, and we are so near it! There is a man in the same parish called Constantine; if I could only trace to him, I could take you far afield by that one talisman of the strange Christian name of Constantine. But no such luck! And I kind of fear we shall stick at James.

So much, though all inchoate, I trouble you with, knowing that you, at least, must take an interest in it. So much is certain of that strange Celtic descent, that the past has an interest for it apparently gratuitous, but fiercely strong. I wish to trace my ancestors a thousand years, if I trace them

by gallowses. It is not love, not pride, not admiration; it is an expansion of the identity, intimately pleasing, and wholly uncritical; I can expend myself in the person of an inglorious ancestor with perfect comfort; or a disgraced, if I could find one. I suppose, perhaps, it is more to me who am childless, and refrain with a certain shock from looking forwards. But, I am sure, in the solid grounds of race, that you have it also in some degree.

I. JAMES, a tenant of the Muirs, in Nether Carsewell, Neilston, married (1665?) Jean Keir.

II. ROBERT (Maltman in Glasgow), died 1733, | married 1st; married second, | Elizabeth Cumming.

William (Maltman in || Glasgow).

ROBERT (Maltman ROBERT, MARION, ELIZABETH. in Glasgow), married Margaret Fulton (had NOTE. Between 1730 1766 flourished a large family). in Glasgow Alan the Coppersmith, who || acts as a kind of a pin to the whole

Stevenson system there. He was caution

IV. ALAN, West India to Robert the Second's will, and

to merchant, married William's will, and to the will of a Jean Lillie. John, another maltman.

V. ROBERT, married Jean Smith.

VI. ALAN. Margaret Jones

VII. R. A. M. S.

Enough genealogy. I do not know if you will be able to read my hand. Unhappily, Belle, who is my amanuensis, is out of the way on other affairs, and I have to make the unwelcome effort. (O this is beautiful, I am quite pleased with myself.) Graham has just arrived last night (my mother is coming by the other steamer in three days), and has told me of your meeting, and he said you looked a little older than I did; so that I suppose we keep step fairly on the downward side of the hill. He thought you looked harassed, and I could imagine that too. I sometimes feel harassed. I have a great family here about me, a great anxiety. The loss (to use my grandfather's expression), the 'loss' of our family is that we are disbelievers in the morrow perhaps I should say, rather, in next year. The future is ALWAYS black to us; it was to

Robert Stevenson; to Thomas; I suspect to Alan; to R. A. M. S. it was so almost to his ruin in youth; to R. L. S., who had a hard hopeful strain in him from his mother, it was not so much so once, but becomes daily more so. Daily so much more so, that I have a painful difficulty in believing I can ever finish another book, or that the public will ever read it.

I have so huge a desire to know exactly what you are doing, that I suppose I should tell you what I am doing by way of an example. I have a room now, a part of the twelve foot verandah sparred in, at the most inaccessible end of the house. Daily I see the sunrise out of my bed, which I still value as a tonic, a perpetual tuning fork, a look of God's face once in the day. At six my breakfast comes up to me here, and I work till eleven. If I am quite well, I sometimes go out and bathe in the river before lunch, twelve. In the afternoon I generally work again, now alone drafting, now with Belle dictating. Dinner is at six, and I am often in bed by eight. This is supposing me to stay at home. But I must often be away, sometimes all day long, sometimes till twelve, one, or

two at night, when you might see me coming home to the sleeping house, sometimes in a trackless darkness, sometimes with a glorious tropic moon, everything drenched with dew unsaddling and creeping to bed; and you would no longer be surprised that I live out in this country, and not in Bournemouth in bed.

My great recent interruptions have (as you know) come from politics; not much in my line, you will say. But it is impossible to live here and not feel very sorely the consequences of the horrid white mismanagement. I tried standing by and looking on, and it became too much for me. They are such illogical fools; a logical fool in an office, with a lot of red tape, is conceivable. Furthermore, he is as much as we have any reason to expect of officials a thoroughly common place, unintellectual lot. But these people are wholly on wires; laying their ears down, skimming away, pausing as though shot, and presto! full spread on the other tack. I observe in the official class mostly an insane jealousy of the smallest kind, as compared to which the artist's is of a



grave, modest character the actor's, even; a desire to extend his little authority, and to relish it like a glass of wine, that is IMPAYABLE. Sometimes, when I see one of these little kings strutting over one of his victories wholly illegal, perhaps, and certain to be reversed to his shame if his superiors ever heard of it I could weep. The strange thing is that they HAVE NOTHING ELSE. I auscultate them in vain; no real sense of duty, no real comprehension, no real attempt to comprehend, no wish for information you cannot offend one of them more bitterly than by offering information, though it is certain that you have MORE, and obvious that you have OTHER, information than they have; and talking of policy, they could not play a better stroke than by listening to you, and it need by no means influence their action. TENEZ, you know what a French post office or railway official is? That is the diplomatic card to the life. Dickens is not in it; caricature fails.

All this keeps me from my work, and gives me the unpleasant side of the world. When your letters are

disbelieved it makes you angry, and that is rot; and I wish I could keep out of it with all my soul. But I have just got into it again, and farewell peace!

My work goes along but slowly. I have got to a crossing place, I suppose; the present book, SAINT IVES, is nothing; it is in no style in particular, a tissue of adventures, the central character not very well done, no philosophic pith under the yarn; and, in short, if people will read it, that's all I ask; and if they won't, damn them! I like doing it though; and if you ask me why! after that I am on WEIR OF HERMISTON and HEATHERCAT, two Scotch stories, which will either be something different, or I shall have failed. The first is generally designed, and is a private story of two or three characters in a very grim vein. The second alas! the thought is an attempt at a real historical novel, to present a whole field of time; the race our own race the west land and Clydesdale blue bonnets, under the influence of their last trial, when they got to a pitch of organisation in madness that no other peasantry has ever made an offer at. I

was going to call it THE KILLING TIME, but this man Crockett has forestalled me in that. Well, it'll be a big smash if I fail in it; but a gallant attempt. All my weary reading as a boy, which you remember well enough, will come to bear on it; and if my mind will keep up to the point it was in a while back, perhaps I can pull it through.

For two months past, Fanny, Belle, Austin (her child), and I have been alone; but yesterday, as I mentioned, Graham Balfour arrived, and on Wednesday my mother and Lloyd will make up the party to its full strength. I wish you could drop in for a month or a week, or two hours. That is my chief want. On the whole, it is an unexpectedly pleasant corner I have dropped into for an end of it, which I could scarcely have foreseen from Wilson's shop, or the Princes Street Gardens, or the Portobello Road. Still, I would like to hear what my ALTER EGO thought of it; and I would sometimes like to have my old MAITRE ES ARTS express an opinion on what I do. I put this very tamely, being on the whole a quiet elderly man; but it is a strong passion with me, though

intermittent. Now, try to follow my example and tell me something about yourself, Louisa, the Bab, and your work; and kindly send me some specimens of what you're about. I have only seen one thing by you, about Notre Dame in the WESTMINSTER or ST. JAMES'S, since I left England, now I suppose six years ago.

I have looked this trash over, and it is not at all the letter I wanted to write not truck about officials, ancestors, and the like rancidness but you have to let your pen go in its own broken down gait, like an old butcher's pony, stop when it pleases, and go on again as it will. Ever, my dear Bob, your affectionate cousin,

R. L. STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO HENRY JAMES**

VAILIMA, JULY 7TH, 1894.

DEAR HENRY JAMES, I am going to try and dictate to you a letter or a note, and begin the same without any spark of hope, my mind being entirely in abeyance. This malady is

very bitter on the literary man. I have had it now coming on for a month, and it seems to get worse instead of better. If it should prove to be softening of the brain, a melancholy interest will attach to the present document. I heard a great deal about you from my mother and Graham Balfour; the latter declares that you could take a First in any Samoan subject. If that be so, I should like to hear you on the theory of the constitution. Also to consult you on the force of the particles O LO 'O and UA, which are the subject of a dispute among local pundits. You might, if you ever answer this, give me your opinion on the origin of the Samoan race, just to complete the favour.

They both say that you are looking well, and I suppose I may conclude from that that you are feeling passably. I wish I was. Do not suppose from this that I am ill in body; it is the numskull that I complain of. And when that is wrong, as you must be very keenly aware, you begin every day with a smarting disappointment, which is not good for the temper. I am in one of the humours when a man wonders how any one

can be such an ass as to embrace the profession of letters, and not get apprenticed to a barber or keep a baked potato stall. But I have no doubt in the course of a week, or perhaps to morrow, things will look better.

We have at present in port the model warship of Great Britain. She is called the CURACOA, and has the nicest set of officers and men conceivable. They, the officers, are all very intimate with us, and the front verandah is known as the Curacoa Club, and the road up to Vailima is known as the Curacoa Track. It was rather a surprise to me; many naval officers have I known, and somehow had not learned to think entirely well of them, and perhaps sometimes ask myself a little uneasily how that kind of men could do great actions? and behold! the answer comes to me, and I see a ship that I would guarantee to go anywhere it was possible for men to go, and accomplish anything it was permitted man to attempt. I had a cruise on board of her not long ago to Manu'a, and was delighted. The goodwill of all on board; the grim playfulness of quarters, with the wounded falling down at the

word; the ambulances hastening up and carrying them away; the Captain suddenly crying, 'Fire in the ward room!' and the squad hastening forward with the hose; and, last and most curious spectacle of all, all the men in their dust coloured fatigue clothes, at a note of the bugle, falling simultaneously flat on deck, and the ship proceeding with its prostrate crew QUASI to ram an enemy; our dinner at night in a wild open anchorage, the ship rolling almost to her gunwales, and showing us alternately her bulwarks up in the sky, and then the wild broken cliffy palm crested shores of the island with the surf thundering and leaping close aboard. We had the ward room mess on deck, lit by pink wax tapers, everybody, of course, in uniform but myself, and the first lieutenant (who is a rheumatically body) wrapped in a boat cloak. Gradually the sunset faded out, the island disappeared from the eye, though it remained menacingly present to the ear with the voice of the surf; and then the captain turned on the searchlight and gave us the coast, the beach, the trees, the native houses, and the cliffs by glimpses of daylight, a kind

of deliberate lightning. About which time, I suppose, we must have come as far as the dessert, and were probably drinking our first glass of port to Her Majesty. We stayed two days at the island, and had, in addition, a very picturesque snapshot at the native life. The three islands of Manu'a are independent, and are ruled over by a little slip of a half caste girl about twenty, who sits all day in a pink gown, in a little white European house with about a quarter of an acre of roses in front of it, looking at the palm trees on the village street, and listening to the surf. This, so far as I could discover, was all she had to do. 'This is a very dull place,' she said. It appears she could go to no other village for fear of raising the jealousy of her own people in the capital. And as for going about 'tafatafaoing,' as we say here, its cost was too enormous. A strong able bodied native must walk in front of her and blow the conch shell continuously from the moment she leaves one house until the moment she enters another. Did you ever blow the conch shell? I presume not; but the sweat literally hailed off that man, and I expected every moment to



see him burst a blood vessel. We were entertained to kava in the guest house with some very original features. The young men who run for the KAVA have a right to misconduct themselves AD LIBITUM on the way back; and though they were told to restrain themselves on the occasion of our visit, there was a strange hurly burly at their return, when they came beating the trees and the posts of the houses, leaping, shouting, and yelling like Bacchants.

I tasted on that occasion what it is to be great. My name was called next after the captain's, and several chiefs (a thing quite new to me, and not at all Samoan practice) drank to me by name.

And now, if you are not sick of the CURACOA and Manu'a, I am, at least on paper. And I decline any longer to give you examples of how not to write.

By the by, you sent me long ago a work by Anatole France, which I confess I did not TASTE. Since then I have made the acquaintance of the ABBE COIGNARD, and have become a faithful adorer. I don't think a better book was ever

written.

And I have no idea what I have said, and I have no idea what I ought to have said, and I am a total ass, but my heart is in the right place, and I am, my dear Henry James, yours,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO MR MARCEL SCHWOB**

VAILIMA, UPOLU, SAMOA, JULY 7, 1894.

DEAR MR. MARCEL SCHWOB, Thank you for having remembered me in my exile. I have read MIMES twice as a whole; and now, as I write, I am reading it again as it were by accident, and a piece at a time, my eye catching a word and travelling obediently on through the whole number. It is a graceful book, essentially graceful, with its haunting agreeable melancholy, its pleasing savour of antiquity. At the same time, by its merits, it shows itself rather as the promise of something else to come than a thing final in itself. You have yet to give us and I am expecting it with impatience something of a larger gait; something daylight, not twilight;

something with the colours of life, not the flat tints of a temple illumination; something that shall be SAID with all the clearnesses and the trivialities of speech, not SUNG like a semi articulate lullaby. It will not please yourself as well, when you come to give it us, but it will please others better. It will be more of a whole, more worldly, more nourished, more commonplace and not so pretty, perhaps not even so beautiful. No man knows better than I that, as we go on in life, we must part from prettiness and the graces. We but attain qualities to lose them; life is a series of farewells, even in art; even our proficiencies are deciduous and evanescent. So here with these exquisite pieces the XVIIth, XVIIIth, and IVth of the present collection. You will perhaps never excel them; I should think the 'Hermes,' never. Well, you will do something else, and of that I am in expectation. Yours cordially,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO A ST. GAUDENS**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, JULY 8, 1894.

MY DEAR ST. GAUDENS, This is to tell you that the medallion has been at last triumphantly transported up the hill and placed over my smoking room mantelpiece. It is considered by everybody a first rate but flattering portrait. We have it in a very good light, which brings out the artistic merits of the god like sculptor to great advantage. As for my own opinion, I believe it to be a speaking likeness, and not flattered at all; possibly a little the reverse. The verses (curse the rhyme) look remarkably well.

Please do not longer delay, but send me an account for the expense of the gilt letters. I was sorry indeed that they proved beyond the means of a small farmer. Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO MISS ADELAIDE BOODLE**

VAILIMA, JULY 14, 1894.

MY DEAR ADELAIDE,... So, at last, you are going into mission work? where I think your heart always was. You will like it in a way, but remember it is dreary long. Do you know the story of the American tramp who was offered meals and a day's wage to chop with the back of an axe on a fallen trunk. 'Damned if I can go on chopping when I can't see the chips fly!' You will never see the chips fly in mission work, never; and be sure you know it beforehand. The work is one long dull disappointment, varied by acute revulsions; and those who are by nature courageous and cheerful and have grown old in experience, learn to rub their hands over infinitesimal successes. However, as I really believe there is some good done in the long run GUTTA CAVAT LAPIDEM NON VI in this business it is a useful and honourable career in which no one should be ashamed to embark. Always remember the fable of the sun, the storm, and the traveller's

cloak. Forget wholly and for ever all small pruderies, and remember that **YOU CANNOT CHANGE ANCESTRAL FEELINGS OF RIGHT AND WRONG WITHOUT WHAT IS PRACTICALLY SOUL MURDER.** Barbarous as the customs may seem, always hear them with patience, always judge them with gentleness, always find in them some seed of good; see that you always develop them; remember that all you can do is to civilise the man in the line of his own civilisation, such as it is. And never expect, never believe in, thaumaturgic conversions. They may do very well for St. Paul; in the case of an Andaman islander they mean less than nothing. In fact, what you have to do is to teach the parents in the interests of their great grandchildren.

Now, my dear Adelaide, dismiss from your mind the least idea of fault upon your side; nothing is further from the fact. I cannot forgive you, for I do not know your fault. My own is plain enough, and the name of it is cold hearted neglect; and you may busy yourself more usefully in trying to forgive me. But ugly as my fault is, you must not suppose it

to mean more than it does; it does not mean that we have at all forgotten you, that we have become at all indifferent to the thought of you. See, in my life of Jenkin, a remark of his, very well expressed, on the friendships of men who do not write to each other. I can honestly say that I have not changed to you in any way; though I have behaved thus ill, thus cruelly. Evil is done by want of will, principally by want of industry. You can imagine what I would say (in a novel) of any one who had behaved as I have done, DETERIORA SEQUOR. And you must somehow manage to forgive your old friend; and if you will be so very good, continue to give us news of you, and let us share the knowledge of your adventures, sure that it will be always followed with interest even if it is answered with the silence of ingratitude. For I am not a fool; I know my faults, I know they are ineluctable, I know they are growing on me. I know I may offend again, and I warn you of it. But the next time I offend, tell me so plainly and frankly like a lady, and don't lacerate my heart and bludgeon my vanity with imaginary faults of your own

and purely gratuitous penitence. I might suspect you of irony!

We are all fairly well, though I have been off work and off as you know very well letter writing. Yet I have sometimes more than twenty letters, and sometimes more than thirty, going out each mail. And Fanny has had a most distressing bronchitis for some time, which she is only now beginning to get over. I have just been to see her; she is lying though she had breakfast an hour ago, about seven in her big cool, mosquito proof room, ingloriously asleep. As for me, you see that a doom has come upon me: I cannot make marks with a pen witness 'ingloriously' above; and my amanuensis not appearing so early in the day, for she is then immersed in household affairs, and I can hear her 'steering the boys' up and down the verandahs you must decipher this unhappy letter for yourself and, I fully admit, with everything against you. A letter should be always well written; how much more a letter of apology! Legibility is the politeness of men of letters, as punctuality of kings and beggars. By the punctuality of my replies, and the beauty of my hand writing,



judge what a fine conscience I must have!

Now, my dear gamekeeper, I must really draw to a close. For I have much else to write before the mail goes out three days hence. Fanny being asleep, it would not be conscientious to invent a message from her, so you must just imagine her sentiments. I find I have not the heart to speak of your recent loss. You remember perhaps, when my father died, you told me those ugly images of sickness, decline, and impaired reason, which then haunted me day and night, would pass away and be succeeded by things more happily characteristic. I have found it so. He now haunts me, strangely enough, in two guises; as a man of fifty, lying on a hillside and carving mottoes on a stick, strong and well; and as a younger man, running down the sands into the sea near North Berwick, myself AETAT. II somewhat horrified at finding him so beautiful when stripped! I hand on your own advice to you in case you have forgotten it, as I know one is apt to do in seasons of bereavement. Ever yours, with much

love and sympathy,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO MRS. BAKER**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, JULY 16, 1894.

DEAR MRS. BAKER, I am very much obliged to you for your letter and the enclosure from Mr. Skinner. Mr. Skinner says he 'thinks Mr. Stevenson must be a very kind man'; he little knows me. But I am very sure of one thing, that you are a very kind woman. I envy you my amanuensis being called away, I continue in my own hand, or what is left of it unusually legible, I am thankful to see I envy you your beautiful choice of an employment. There must be no regrets at least for a day so spent; and when the night falls you need ask no blessing on your work.

'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these.' Yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO J. M BARRIE**

VAILIMA, JULY 13, 1894.

MY DEAR BARRIE, This is the last effort of an ulcerated conscience. I have been so long owing you a letter, I have heard so much of you, fresh from the press, from my mother and Graham Balfour, that I have to write a letter no later than to day, or perish in my shame. But the deuce of it is, my dear fellow, that you write such a very good letter that I am ashamed to exhibit myself before my junior (which you are, after all) in the light of the dreary idiot I feel. Understand that there will be nothing funny in the following pages. If I can manage to be rationally coherent, I shall be more than satisfied.

In the first place, I have had the extreme satisfaction to be shown that photograph of your mother. It bears evident traces of the hand of an amateur. How is it that amateurs invariably take better photographs than professionals? I must qualify invariably. My own negatives have always

represented a province of chaos and old night in which you might dimly perceive fleecy spots of twilight, representing nothing; so that, if I am right in supposing the portrait of your mother to be yours, I must salute you as my superior. Is that your mother's breakfast? Or is it only afternoon tea? If the first, do let me recommend to Mrs. Barrie to add an egg to her ordinary. Which, if you please, I will ask her to eat to the honour of her son, and I am sure she will live much longer for it, to enjoy his fresh successes. I never in my life saw anything more deliciously characteristic. I declare I can hear her speak. I wonder my mother could resist the temptation of your proposed visit to Kirriemuir, which it was like your kindness to propose. By the way, I was twice in Kirriemuir, I believe in the year '71, when I was going on a visit to Glenogil. It was Kirriemuir, was it not? I have a distinct recollection of an inn at the end I think the upper end of an irregular open place or square, in which I always see your characters evolve. But, indeed, I did not pay much attention; being all bent upon my visit to a shooting box, where I

should fish a real trout stream, and I believe preserved. I did, too, and it was a charming stream, clear as crystal, without a trace of peat a strange thing in Scotland and alive with trout; the name of it I cannot remember, it was something like the Queen's River, and in some hazy way connected with memories of Mary Queen of Scots. It formed an epoch in my life, being the end of all my trout fishing. I had always been accustomed to pause and very laboriously to kill every fish as I took it. But in the Queen's River I took so good a basket that I forgot these niceties; and when I sat down, in a hard rain shower, under a bank, to take my sandwiches and sherry, lo! and behold, there was the basketful of trouts still kicking in their agony. I had a very unpleasant conversation with my conscience. All that afternoon I persevered in fishing, brought home my basket in triumph, and sometime that night, 'in the wee sma' hours ayont the twal,' I finally forswore the gentle craft of fishing. I dare say your local knowledge may identify this historic river; I wish it could go farther and identify also that particular Free kirk in which I sat and

groaned on Sunday. While my hand is in I must tell you a story. At that antique epoch you must not fall into the vulgar error that I was myself ancient. I was, on the contrary, very young, very green, and (what you will appreciate, Mr. Barrie) very shy. There came one day to lunch at the house two very formidable old ladies or one very formidable, and the other what you please answering to the honoured and historic name of the Miss C A 's of Balnamoon. At table I was exceedingly funny, and entertained the company with tales of geese and bubbly jocks. I was great in the expression of my terror for these bipeds, and suddenly this horrid, severe, and eminently matronly old lady put up a pair of gold eye glasses, looked at me awhile in silence, and pronounced in a clangorous voice her verdict. 'You give me very much the effect of a coward, Mr. Stevenson!' I had very nearly left two vices behind me at Glenogil fishing and jesting at table. And of one thing you may be very sure, my lips were no more opened at that meal.

JULY 29TH

No, Barrie, 'tis in vain they try to alarm me with their

bulletins. No doubt, you're ill, and unco ill, I believe; but I have been so often in the same case that I know pleurisy and pneumonia are in vain against Scotsmen who can write, (I once could.) You cannot imagine probably how near me this common calamity brings you. CE QUE J'AI TOUSSE DANS MA VIE! How often and how long have I been on the rack at night and learned to appreciate that noble passage in the Psalms when somebody or other is said to be more set on something than they 'who dig for hid treasures yea, than those who long for the morning' for all the world, as you have been racked and you have longed. Keep your heart up, and you'll do. Tell that to your mother, if you are still in any danger or suffering. And by the way, if you are at all like me and I tell myself you are very like me be sure there is only one thing good for you, and that is the sea in hot climates. Mount, sir, into 'a little frigot' of 5000 tons or so, and steer peremptorily for the tropics; and what if the ancient mariner, who guides your frigot, should startle the silence of the ocean with the cry of land ho! say, when the day is dawning and

you should see the turquoise mountain tops of Upolu coming hand over fist above the horizon? Mr. Barrie, sir, 'tis then there would be larks! And though I cannot be certain that our climate would suit you (for it does not suit some), I am sure as death the voyage would do you good would do you BEST and if Samoa didn't do, you needn't stay beyond the month, and I should have had another pleasure in my life, which is a serious consideration for me. I take this as the hand of the Lord preparing your way to Vailima in the desert, certainly in the desert of Cough and by the ghoul haunted woodland of Fever but whither that way points there can be no question and there will be a meeting of the twa Hoasting Scots Makers in spite of fate, fortune, and the Devil. ABSIT OMEN!

My dear Barrie, I am a little in the dark about this new work of yours: what is to become of me afterwards? You say carefully methought anxiously that I was no longer me when I grew up? I cannot bear this suspense: what is it? It's no forgery? And AM I HANGIT? These are the elements of a very pretty lawsuit which you had better come to Samoa to



compromise. I am enjoying a great pleasure that I had long looked forward to, reading Orme's HISTORY OF INDOSTAN; I had been looking out for it everywhere; but at last, in four volumes, large quarto, beautiful type and page, and with a delectable set of maps and plans, and all the names of the places wrongly spelled it came to Samoa, little Barrie. I tell you frankly, you had better come soon. I am sair failed a'ready; and what I may be if you continue to dally, I dread to conceive. I may be speechless; already, or at least for a month or so, I'm little better than a teetoller I beg pardon, a teetotaller. It is not exactly physical, for I am in good health, working four or five hours a day in my plantation, and intending to ride a paper chase next Sunday ay, man, that's a fact, and I havena had the hert to breathe it to my mother yet the obligation's poleetical, for I am trying every means to live well with my German neighbours and, O Barrie, but it's no easy! To be sure, there are many exceptions. And the whole of the above must be regarded as private strictly private. Breathe it not in Kirriemuir: tell it not to the daughters of

Dundee! What a nice extract this would make for the daily papers! and how it would facilitate my position here!...

AUGUST 5TH.

This is Sunday, the Lord's Day. 'The hour of attack approaches.' And it is a singular consideration what I risk; I may yet be the subject of a tract, and a good tract too such as one which I remember reading with recreant awe and rising hair in my youth, of a boy who was a very good boy, and went to Sunday Schule, and one day kipped from it, and went and actually bathed, and was dashed over a waterfall, and he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A dangerous trade, that, and one that I have to practise. I'll put in a word when I get home again, to tell you whether I'm killed or not. 'Accident in the (Paper) Hunting Field: death of a notorious author. We deeply regret to announce the death of the most unpopular man in Samoa, who broke his neck at the descent of Magagi, from the misconduct of his little raving lunatic of an old beast of a pony. It is proposed to commemorate the incident by the erection of a suitable pile.

The design (by our local architect, Mr. Walker) is highly artificial, with a rich and voluminous Crockett at each corner, a small but impervious Barriere at the entrance, an arch at the top, an Archer of a pleasing but solid character at the bottom; the colour will be genuine William Black; and Lang, lang may the ladies sit wi' their fans in their hands.' Well, well, they may sit as they sat for me, and little they'll reck, the ungrateful jauds! Muckle they cared about Tusitala when they had him! But now ye can see the difference; now, leddies, ye can repent, when ower late, o' your former cauldness and what ye'll perhaps allow me to ca' your TEPEEDITY! He was beautiful as the day, but his day is done! And perhaps, as he was maybe gettin' a wee thing fly blawn, it's nane too shune.

MONDAY, AUGUST 6TH.

Well, sir, I have escaped the dangerous conjunction of the widow's only son and the Sabbath Day. We had a most enjoyable time, and Lloyd and I were 3 and 4 to arrive; I will not tell here what interval had elapsed between our arrival

and the arrival of 1 and 2; the question, sir, is otiose and malign; it deserves, it shall have no answer. And now without further delay to the main purpose of this hasty note. We received and we have already in fact distributed the gorgeous fahbrics of Kirriemuir. Whether from the splendour of the robes themselves, or from the direct nature of the compliments with which you had directed us to accompany the presentations, one young lady blushed as she received the proofs of your munificence...Bad ink, and the dregs of it at that, but the heart in the right place. Still very cordially interested in my Barrie and wishing him well through his sickness, which is of the body, and long defended from mine, which is of the head, and by the impolite might be described as idiocy. The whole head is useless, and the whole sitting part painful: reason, the recent Paper Chase.

There was racing and chasing in Vailile plantation, And vastly we enjoyed it, But, alas! for the state of my foundation, For it wholly has destroyed it.

Come, my mind is looking up. The above is wholly

impromptu. On oath,

TUSITALA.

AUGUST 12, 1894

And here, Mr. Barrie, is news with a vengeance. Mother Hubbard's dog is well again what did I tell you? Pleurisy, pneumonia, and all that kind of truck is quite unavailing against a Scotchman who can write and not only that, but it appears the perfidious dog is married. This incident, so far as I remember, is omitted from the original epic

She went to the graveyard To see him get him buried,  
And when she came back The Deil had got merried.

It now remains to inform you that I have taken what we call here 'German offence' at not receiving cards, and that the only reparation I will accept is that Mrs. Barrie shall incontinently upon the receipt of this Take and Bring you to Vailima in order to apologise and be pardoned for this offence. The commentary of Tamaitai upon the event was brief but pregnant: 'Well, it's a comfort our guest room is furnished for two.'

This letter, about nothing, has already endured too long.  
I shall just present the family to Mrs. Barrie Tamaitai,  
Tamaitai Matua, Teuila, Palema, Loia, and with an extra low  
bow, Yours,

TUSITALA.

**Letter: TO DR BAKEWELL**

VAILIMA, AUGUST 7, 1894.

DEAR DR. BAKEWELL, I am not more than human. I  
am more human than is wholly convenient, and your  
anecdote was welcome. What you say about UNWILLING  
WORK, my dear sir, is a consideration always present with  
me, and yet not easy to give its due weight to. You grow  
gradually into a certain income; without spending a penny  
more, with the same sense of restriction as before when you  
painfully scraped two hundred a year together, you find you  
have spent, and you cannot well stop spending, a far larger  
sum; and this expense can only be supported by a certain  
production. However, I am off work this month, and occupy

myself instead in weeding my cacao, paper chases, and the like. I may tell you, my average of work in favourable circumstances is far greater than you suppose: from six o'clock till eleven at latest, and often till twelve, and again in the afternoon from two to four. My hand is quite destroyed, as you may perceive, to day to a really unusual extent. I can sometimes write a decent fist still; but I have just returned with my arms all stung from three hours' work in the cacao. Yours, etc.,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO JAMES PAYN**

VAILIMA, UPOLU, SAMOA AUGUST 11, 1894.

MY DEAR JAMES PAYN, I hear from Lang that you are unwell, and it reminds me of two circumstances: First, that it is a very long time since you had the exquisite pleasure of hearing from me; and second, that I have been very often unwell myself, and sometimes had to thank you for a grateful anodyne.

They are not good, the circumstances, to write an anodyne letter. The hills and my house at less than (boom) a minute's interval quake with thunder; and though I cannot hear that part of it, shells are falling thick into the fort of Luatuanu'u (boom). It is my friends of the CURACOA, the FALKE, and the BUSSARD bombarding (after all these boom months) the rebels of Atua. (Boom boom.) It is most distracting in itself; and the thought of the poor devils in their fort (boom) with their bits of rifles far from pleasant. (Boom boom.) You can see how quick it goes, and I'll say no more about Mr. Bow wow, only you must understand the perpetual accompaniment of this uncomfortable sound, and make allowances for the value of my copy. It is odd, though, I can well remember, when the Franco Prussian war began, and I was in Eilean Earraid, far enough from the sound of the loudest cannonade, I could HEAR the shots fired, and I felt the pang in my breast of a man struck. It was sometimes so distressing, so instant, that I lay in the heather on the top of the island, with my face hid, kicking my heels for agony. And



now, when I can hear the actual concussion of the air and hills, when I KNOW personally the people who stand exposed to it, I am able to go on TANT BIEN QUE MAL with a letter to James Payn! The blessings of age, though mighty small, are tangible. I have heard a great deal of them since I came into the world, and now that I begin to taste of them Well! But this is one, that people do get cured of the excess of sensibility; and I had as lief these people were shot at as myself or almost, for then I should have some of the fun, such as it is.

You are to conceive me, then, sitting in my little gallery room, shaken by these continual spasms of cannon, and with my eye more or less singly fixed on the imaginary figure of my dear James Payn. I try to see him in bed; no go. I see him instead jumping up in his room in Waterloo Place (where EX HYPOTHESI he is not), sitting on the table, drawing out a very black briar root pipe, and beginning to talk to a slim and ill dressed visitor in a voice that is good to hear and with a smile that is pleasant to see. (After a little more than half an

hour, the voice that was ill to hear has ceased, the cannonade is over.) And I am thinking how I can get an answering smile wafted over so many leagues of land and water, and can find no way.

I have always been a great visitor of the sick; and one of the sick I visited was W. E. Henley, which did not make very tedious visits, so I'll not get off much purgatory for them. That was in the Edinburgh Infirmary, the old one, the true one, with Georgius Secundus standing and pointing his toe in a niche of the facade; and a mighty fine building it was! And I remember one winter's afternoon, in that place of misery, that Henley and I chanced to fall in talk about James Payn himself. I am wishing you could have heard that talk! I think that would make you smile. We had mixed you up with John Payne, for one thing, and stood amazed at your extraordinary, even painful, versatility; and for another, we found ourselves each students so well prepared for examinations on the novels of the real Mackay. Perhaps, after all, this is worth something in life to have given so much pleasure to a pair so

different in every way as were Henley and I, and to be talked of with so much interest by two such (beg pardon) clever lads!

The cheerful Lang has neglected to tell me what is the matter with you; so, I'm sorry to say, I am cut off from all the customary consolations. I can't say, 'Think how much worse it would be if you had a broken leg!' when you may have the crushing repartee up your sleeve, 'But it is my leg that is broken.' This is a pity. But there are consolations. You are an Englishman (I believe); you are a man of letters; you have never been made C.B.; your hair was not red; you have played cribbage and whist; you did not play either the fiddle or the banjo; you were never an aesthete; you never contributed to 'S JOURNAL'; your name is not Jabez Balfour; you are totally unconnected with the Army and Navy departments; I understand you to have lived within your income why, cheer up! here are many legitimate causes of congratulation. I seem to be writing an obituary notice. ABSIT OMEN! But I feel very sure that these considerations

will have done you more good than medicine.

By the by, did you ever play piquet? I have fallen a victim to this debilitating game. It is supposed to be scientific; God save the mark, what self deceivers men are! It is distinctly less so than cribbage. But how fascinating! There is such material opulence about it, such vast ambitions may be realised and are not; it may be called the Monte Cristo of games. And the thrill with which you take five cards partakes of the nature of lust and you draw four sevens and a nine, and the seven and nine of a suit that you discarded, and O! but the world is a desert! You may see traces of discouragement in my letter: all due to piquet! There has been a disastrous turn of the luck against me; a month or two ago I was two thousand ahead; now, and for a week back, I have been anything from four thousand eight hundred to five thousand two hundred astern. If I have a sixieme, my beast of a partner has a septieme; and if I have three aces, three kings, three queens, and three knaves (excuse the slight exaggeration), the devil holds quatorze of tens! I remain, my dear James Payn,

your sincere and obliged friend old friend let me say,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO MISS MIDDLETON**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, SEPTEMBER 9, 1894.

DEAR MISS MIDDLETON, Your letter has been like the drawing up of a curtain. Of course I remember you very well, and the Skye terrier to which you refer a heavy, dull, fatted, graceless creature he grew up to be was my own particular pet. It may amuse you, perhaps, as much as 'The Inn' amused me, if I tell you what made this dog particularly mine. My father was the natural god of all the dogs in our house, and poor Jura took to him of course. Jura was stolen, and kept in prison somewhere for more than a week, as I remember. When he came back Smeoroch had come and taken my father's heart from him. He took his stand like a man, and positively never spoke to my father again from that day until the day of his death. It was the only sign of character he ever showed. I took him up to my room and to

be my dog in consequence, partly because I was sorry for him, and partly because I admired his dignity in misfortune.

With best regards and thanks for having reminded me of so many pleasant days, old acquaintances, dead friends, and what is perhaps as pathetic as any of them dead dogs, I remain, yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO A CONAN DOYLE**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, SEPTEMBER 9, 1894.

MY DEAR CONAN DOYLE, If you found anything to entertain you in my TREASURE ISLAND article, it may amuse you to know that you owe it entirely to yourself. YOUR 'First Book' was by some accident read aloud one night in my Baronial 'All. I was consumedly amused by it, so was the whole family, and we proceeded to hunt up back IDLERS and read the whole series. It is a rattling good series, even people whom you would not expect came in quite the proper tone Miss Braddon, for instance, who was really one

of the best where all are good or all but one! ... In short, I fell in love with 'The First Book' series, and determined that it should be all our first books, and that I could not hold back where the white plume of Conan Doyle waved gallantly in the front. I hope they will republish them, though it's a grievous thought to me that that effigy in the German cap likewise the other effigy of the noisome old man with the long hair, telling indelicate stories to a couple of deformed negresses in a rancid shanty full of wreckage should be perpetuated. I may seem to speak in pleasantry it is only a seeming that German cap, sir, would be found, when I come to die, imprinted on my heart. Enough my heart is too full. Adieu. Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(in a German cap, damn 'em!)

**Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER**

VAILIMA, SEPTEMBER 1894.

MY DEAR CHARLES,... Well, there is no more Edmund Baxter now; and I think I may say I know how you feel. He was one of the best, the kindest, and the most genial men I ever knew. I shall always remember his brisk, cordial ways and the essential goodness which he showed me whenever we met with gratitude. And the always is such a little while now! He is another of the landmarks gone; when it comes to my own turn to lay my weapons down, I shall do so with thankfulness and fatigue; and whatever be my destiny afterward, I shall be glad to lie down with my fathers in honour. It is human at least, if not divine. And these deaths make me think of it with an ever greater readiness. Strange that you should be beginning a new life, when I, who am a little your junior, am thinking of the end of mine. But I have had hard lines; I have been so long waiting for death, I have unwrapped my thoughts from about life so long, that I have



not a filament left to hold by; I have done my fiddling so long under Vesuvius, that I have almost forgotten to play, and can only wait for the eruption, and think it long of coming. Literally, no man has more wholly outlived life than I. And still it's good fun.

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO R A M STEVENSON**

VAILIMA, SEPTEMBER 1894.

DEAR BOB, You are in error about the Picts. They were a Gaelic race, spoke a Celtic tongue, and we have no evidence that I know of that they were blacker than other Celts. The Balfours, I take it, were plainly Celts; their name shows it the 'cold croft,' it means; so does their country. Where the BLACK Scotch come from nobody knows; but I recognise with you the fact that the whole of Britain is rapidly and progressively becoming more pigmented; already in one man's life I can decidedly trace a difference in the children about a school door. But colour is not an essential

part of a man or a race. Take my Polynesians, an Asiatic people probably from the neighbourhood of the Persian gulf. They range through any amount of shades, from the burnt hue of the Low Archipelago islander, which seems half negro, to the 'bleached' pretty women of the Marquesas (close by on the map), who come out for a festival no darker than an Italian; their colour seems to vary directly with the degree of exposure to the sun. And, as with negroes, the babes are born white; only it should seem a LITTLE SACK of pigment at the lower part of the spine, which presently spreads over the whole field. Very puzzling. But to return. The Picts furnish to day perhaps a third of the population of Scotland, say another third for Scots and Britons, and the third for Norse and Angles is a bad third. Edinburgh was a Pictish place. But the fact is, we don't know their frontiers. Tell some of your journalist friends with a good style to popularise old Skene; or say your prayers, and read him for yourself; he was a Great Historian, and I was his blessed clerk, and did not know it; and you will not be in a state of grace about the Picts

till you have studied him. J. Horne Stevenson (do you know him?) is working this up with me, and the fact is it's not interesting to the public but it's interesting, and very interesting, in itself, and just now very embarrassing this rural parish supplied Glasgow with such a quantity of Stevensons in the beginning of last century! There is just a link wanting; and we might be able to go back to the eleventh century, always undistinguished, but clearly traceable. When I say just a link, I guess I may be taken to mean a dozen. What a singular thing is this undistinguished perpetuation of a family throughout the centuries, and the sudden bursting forth of character and capacity that began with our grandfather! But as I go on in life, day by day, I become more of a bewildered child; I cannot get used to this world, to procreation, to heredity, to sight, to hearing; the commonest things are a burthen. The prim obliterated polite face of life, and the broad, bawdy, and orgiastic or maenadic foundations, form a spectacle to which no habit reconciles me; and I could wish my days to be bound each to each' by the same

open mouthed wonder. They ARE anyway, and whether I wish it or not.

I remember very well your attitude to life, this conventional surface of it. You had none of that curiosity for the social stage directions, the trivial FICELLES of the business; it is simian, but that is how the wild youth of man is captured; you wouldn't imitate, hence you kept free a wild dog, outside the kennel and came dam' near starving for your pains. The key to the business is of course the belly; difficult as it is to keep that in view in the zone of three miraculous meals a day in which we were brought up. Civilisation has become reflex with us; you might think that hunger was the name of the best sauce; but hunger to the cold solitary under a bush of a rainy night is the name of something quite different. I defend civilisation for the thing it is, for the thing it has COME to be, the standpoint of a real old Tory. My ideal would be the Female Clan. But how can you turn these crowding dumb multitudes BACK? They don't do anything BECAUSE; they do things, write able articles, stitch shoes,

dig, from the purely simian impulse. Go and reason with monkeys!

No, I am right about Jean Lillie. Jean Lillie, our double great grandmother, the daughter of David Lillie, sometime Deacon of the Wrights, married, first, Alan Stevenson, who died May 26, 1774, 'at Santt Kittes of a fever,' by whom she had Robert Stevenson, born 8th June 1772; and, second, in May or June 1787, Thomas Smith, a widower, and already the father of our grandmother. This improbable double connection always tends to confuse a student of the family, Thomas Smith being doubly our great grandfather.

I looked on the perpetuation of our honoured name with veneration. My mother collared one of the photos, of course; the other is stuck up on my wall as the chief of our sept. Do you know any of the Gaelic Celtic sharps? you might ask what the name means. It puzzles me. I find a M'STEIN and a MACSTEPHANE; and our own great grandfather always called himself Steenson, though he wrote it Stevenson. There are at least three PLACES called Stevenson STEVENSON in

Cunningham, STEVENSON in Peebles, and STEVENSON in Haddington. And it was not the Celtic trick, I understand, to call places after people. I am going to write to Sir Herbert Maxwell about the name, but you might find some one.

Get the Anglo Saxon heresy out of your head; they superimposed their language, they scarce modified the race; only in Berwickshire and Roxburgh have they very largely affected the place names. The Scandinavians did much more to Scotland than the Angles. The Saxons didn't come.

Enough of this sham antiquarianism. Yes, it is in the matter of the book, of course, that collaboration shows; as for the manner, it is superficially all mine, in the sense that the last copy is all in my hand. Lloyd did not even put pen to paper in the Paris scenes or the Barbizon scene; it was no good; he wrote and often rewrote all the rest; I had the best service from him on the character of Nares. You see, we had been just meeting the man, and his memory was full of the man's words and ways. And Lloyd is an impressionist, pure and simple. The great difficulty of collaboration is that you

can't explain what you mean. I know what kind of effect I mean a character to give what kind of TACHE he is to make; but how am I to tell my collaborator in words? Hence it was necessary to say, 'Make him So and so'; and this was all right for Nares and Pinkerton and Loudon Dodd, whom we both knew, but for Bellairs, for instance a man with whom I passed ten minutes fifteen years ago what was I to say? and what could Lloyd do? I, as a personal artist, can begin a character with only a haze in my head, but how if I have to translate the haze into words before I begin? In our manner of collaboration (which I think the only possible I mean that of one person being responsible, and giving the COUP DE POUCE to every part of the work) I was spared the obviously hopeless business of trying to explain to my collaborator what STYLE I wished a passage to be treated in. These are the times that illustrate to a man the inadequacy of spoken language. Now to be just to written language I can (or could) find a language for my every mood, but how could I TELL any one beforehand what this effect was to be, which it

would take every art that I possessed, and hours and hours of deliberate labour and selection and rejection, to produce? These are the impossibilities of collaboration. Its immediate advantage is to focus two minds together on the stuff, and to produce in consequence an extraordinarily greater richness of purview, consideration, and invention. The hardest chapter of all was 'Cross Questions and Crooked Answers.' You would not believe what that cost us before it assumed the least unity and colour. Lloyd wrote it at least thrice, and I at least five times this is from memory. And was that last chapter worth the trouble it cost? Alas, that I should ask the question! Two classes of men the artist and the educationalist are sworn, on soul and conscience, not to ask it. You get an ordinary, grinning, red headed boy, and you have to educate him. Faith supports you; you give your valuable hours, the boy does not seem to profit, but that way your duty lies, for which you are paid, and you must persevere. Education has always seemed to me one of the few possible and dignified ways of life. A sailor, a shepherd, a schoolmaster to a less degree, a soldier



and (I don't know why, upon my soul, except as a sort of schoolmaster's unofficial assistant, and a kind of acrobat in tights) an artist, almost exhaust the category.

If I had to begin again I know not SI JEUNESSE SAVAIT, SI VIEILLESSE POUVAIT... I know not at all I believe I should try to honour Sex more religiously. The worst of our education is that Christianity does not recognise and hallow Sex. It looks askance at it, over its shoulder, oppressed as it is by reminiscences of hermits and Asiatic self tortures. It is a terrible hiatus in our modern religions that they cannot see and make venerable that which they ought to see first and hallow most. Well, it is so; I cannot be wiser than my generation.

But no doubt there is something great in the half success that has attended the effort of turning into an emotional religion, Bald Conduct, without any appeal, or almost none, to the figurative, mysterious, and constitutive facts of life. Not that conduct is not constitutive, but dear! it's dreary! On the whole, conduct is better dealt with on the cast iron

'gentleman' and duty formula, with as little fervour and poetry as possible; stoical and short.

...There is a new something or other in the wind, which exercises me hugely: anarchy, I mean, anarchism. People who (for pity's sake) commit dastardly murders very basely, die like saints, and leave beautiful letters behind 'em (did you see Vaillant to his daughter? it was the New Testament over again); people whose conduct is inexplicable to me, and yet their spiritual life higher than that of most. This is just what the early Christians must have seemed to the Romans. Is this, then, a new DRIVE among the monkeys? Mind you, Bob, if they go on being martyred a few years more, the gross, dull, not unkindly bourgeois may get tired or ashamed or afraid of going on martyring; and the anarchists come out at the top just like the early Christians. That is, of course, they will step into power as a PERSONNEL, but God knows what they may believe when they come to do so; it can't be stranger or more improbable than what Christianity had come to be by the same time.

Your letter was easily read, the pagination presented no difficulty, and I read it with much edification and gusto. To look back, and to stereotype one bygone humour what a hopeless thing! The mind runs ever in a thousand eddies like a river between cliffs. You (the ego) are always spinning round in it, east, west, north, and south. You are twenty years old, and forty, and five, and the next moment you are freezing at an imaginary eighty; you are never the plain forty four that you should be by dates. (The most philosophical language is the Gaelic, which has NO PRESENT TENSE and the most useless.) How, then, to choose some former age, and stick there?

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO SIR HERBERT MAXWELL**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, SEPTEMBER 10, 1894.

DEAR SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, I am emboldened by reading your very interesting Rhind Lectures to put to you a question: What is my name, Stevenson?

I find it in the forms Stevinetoun, Stevensoune, Stevensonne, Stenesone, Stewinsoune, M'Stein, and MacStephane. My family, and (as far as I can gather) the majority of the inglorious clan, hailed from the borders of Cunningham and Renfrew, and the upper waters of the Clyde. In the Barony of Bothwell was the seat of the laird Stevenson of Stevenson; but, as of course you know, there is a parish in Cunningham and places in Peebles and Haddington bearing the same name.

If you can at all help me, you will render me a real service which I wish I could think of some manner to repay.

Believe me, yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. I should have added that I have perfect evidence before me that (for some obscure reason) Stevenson was a favourite alias with the M'Gregors.

**Letter: TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM**

VAILIMA, OCTOBER 8TH 1894.

MY DEAR CUMMY, So I hear you are ailing? Think shame to yourself! So you think there is nothing better to be done with time than that? and be sure we can all do much ourselves to decide whether we are to be ill or well! like a man on the gymnastic bars. We are all pretty well. As for me, there is nothing the matter with me in the world, beyond the disgusting circumstance that I am not so young as once I was. Lloyd has a gymnastic machine, and practises upon it every morning for an hour: he is beginning to be a kind of young Samson. Austin grows fat and brown, and gets on not so ill with his lessons, and my mother is in great price. We are having knock me down weather for heat; I never remember it so hot before, and I fancy it means we are to have a hurricane again this year, I think; since we came here, we have not had a single gale of wind! The Pacific is but a child to the North Sea; but when she does get excited, and gets up and girds

herself, she can do something good. We have had a very interesting business here. I helped the chiefs who were in prison; and when they were set free, what should they do but offer to make a part of my road for me out of gratitude? Well, I was ashamed to refuse, and the trumps dug my road for me, and put up this inscription on a board:

‘CONSIDERING THE GREAT LOVE OF HIS EXCELLENCY TUSITALA IN HIS LOVING CARE OF US IN OUR TRIBULATION IN THE PRISON WE HAVE MADE THIS GREAT GIFT; IT SHALL NEVER BE MUDDY, IT SHALL GO ON FOR EVER, THIS ROAD THAT WE HAVE DUG!’ We had a great feast when it was done, and I read them a kind of lecture, which I dare say Auntie will have, and can let you see. Weel, guid bye to ye, and joy be wi’ ye! I hae nae time to say mair. They say I’m gettin’ FAT a fact! Your laddie, with all love,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO JAMES PAYN**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, NOV. 4, 1894.

MY DEAR JAMES PAYN, I am asked to relate to you a little incident of domestic life at Vailima. I had read your GLEAMS OF MEMORY, No. 1; it then went to my wife, to Osbourne, to the cousin that is within my gates, and to my respected amanuensis, Mrs. Strong. Sunday approached. In the course of the afternoon I was attracted to the great 'all the winders is by Vanderputty, which upon entering I beheld a memorable scene. The floor was bestrewn with the forms of midshipmen from the CURACOA 'boldly say a wilderness of gunroom' and in the midst of this sat Mrs. Strong throned on the sofa and reading aloud GLEAMS OF MEMORY. They had just come the length of your immortal definition of boyhood in the concrete, and I had the pleasure to see the whole party dissolve under its influence with inextinguishable laughter. I thought this was not half bad for arthritic gout! Depend upon it, sir, when I go into the arthritic

gout business, I shall be done with literature, or at least with the funny business. It is quite true I have my battlefields behind me. I have done perhaps as much work as anybody else under the most deplorable conditions. But two things fall to be noticed: In the first place, I never was in actual pain; and in the second, I was never funny. I'll tell you the worst day that I remember. I had a haemorrhage, and was not allowed to speak; then, induced by the devil, or an errant doctor, I was led to partake of that bowl which neither cheers nor inebriates the castor oil bowl. Now, when castor oil goes right, it is one thing; but when it goes wrong, it is another. And it went **WRONG** with me that day. The waves of faintness and nausea succeeded each other for twelve hours, and I do feel a legitimate pride in thinking that I stuck to my work all through and wrote a good deal of *Admiral Guinea* (which I might just as well not have written for all the reward it ever brought me) in spite of the barbarous bad conditions. I think that is my great boast; and it seems a little thing alongside of your **GLEAMS OF MEMORY** illustrated by



spasms of arthritic gout. We really should have an order of merit in the trade of letters. For valour, Scott would have had it; Pope too; myself on the strength of that castor oil; and James Payn would be a Knight Commander. The worst of it is, though Lang tells me you exhibit the courage of Huish, that not even an order can alleviate the wretched annoyance of the business. I have always said that there is nothing like pain; toothache, dumb ague, arthritic gout, it does not matter what you call it, if the screw is put upon the nerves sufficiently strong, there is nothing left in heaven or in earth that can interest the sufferer. Still, even to this there is the consolation that it cannot last for ever. Either you will be relieved and have a good hour again before the sun goes down, or else you will be liberated. It is something after all (although not much) to think that you are leaving a brave example; that other literary men love to remember, as I am sure they will love to remember, everything about you your sweetness, your brightness, your helpfulness to all of us, and in particular those one or two really adequate and noble

papers which you have been privileged to write during these last years. With the heartiest and kindest good will, I remain, yours ever,

R. L. S.

**Letter: TO LIEUTENANT EELES**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, NOVEMBER 24, 1894.

MY DEAR EELES, The hand, as you will perceive (and also the spelling!), is Teuila's, but the scrannel voice is what remains of Tusitala's. First of all, for business. When you go to London you are to charter a hansom cab and proceed to the Museum. It is particular fun to do this on Sundays when the Monument is shut up. Your cabman expostulates with you, you persist. The cabman drives up in front of the closed gates and says, 'I told you so, sir.' You breathe in the porter's ears the mystic name of COLVIN, and he immediately unfolds the iron barrier. You drive in, and doesn't your cabman think you're a swell. A lord mayor is nothing to it. Colvin's door is the only one in the eastern gable of the building. Send in your

card to him with 'From R. L. S.' in the corner, and the machinery will do the rest. Henry James's address is 34 De Vere Mansions West. I cannot remember where the place is; I cannot even remember on which side of the park. But it's one of those big Cromwell Road looking deserted thoroughfares out west in Kensington or Bayswater, or between the two; and anyway, Colvin will be able to put you on the direct track for Henry James. I do not send formal introductions, as I have taken the liberty to prepare both of them for seeing you already.

Hoskyn is staying with us.

It is raining dismally. The Curacoa track is hardly passable, but it must be trod to morrow by the degenerate feet of their successor the Wallaroos. I think it a very good account of these last that we don't think them either deformed or habitual criminals they seem to be a kindly lot.

The doctor will give you all the gossip. I have preferred in this letter to stick to the strictly solid and necessary. With kind messages from all in the house to all in the wardroom,

all in the gunroom, and (may we dare to breathe it) to him who walks abaft, believe me, my dear Eeles, yours ever,

R. L. STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO SIR HERBERT MAXWELL**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 1, 1894.

DEAR SIR HERBERT, Thank you very much for your long and kind letter. I shall certainly take your advice and call my cousin, the Lyon King, into council. It is certainly a very interesting subject, though I don't suppose it can possibly lead to anything, this connection between the Stevensons and M'Gregors. Alas! your invitation is to me a mere derision. My chances of visiting Heaven are about as valid as my chances of visiting Monreith. Though I should like well to see you, shrunken into a cottage, a literary Lord of Ravenscraig. I suppose it is the inevitable doom of all those who dabble in Scotch soil; but really your fate is the more blessed. I cannot conceive anything more grateful to me, or more amusing or more picturesque, than to live in a cottage

outside your own park walls. With renewed thanks, believe me, dear Sir Herbert, yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO ANDREW LANG**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 1, 1894.

MY DEAR LANG, For the portrait of Braxfield, much thanks! It is engraved from the same Raeburn portrait that I saw in '76 or '77 with so extreme a gusto that I have ever since been Braxfield's humble servant, and am now trying, as you know, to stick him into a novel. Alas! one might as well try to stick in Napoleon. The picture shall be framed and hung up in my study. Not only as a memento of you, but as a perpetual encouragement to do better with his Lordship. I have not yet received the transcripts. They must be very interesting. Do you know, I picked up the other day an old LONGMAN'S, where I found an article of yours that I had missed, about Christie's? I read it with great delight. The year ends with us pretty much as it began, among wars and

rumours of wars, and a vast and splendid exhibition of official incompetence. Yours ever,

R. L. STEVENSON.

**Letter: TO EDMUND GOSSE**

VAILIMA, SAMOA, DECEMBER 1, 1894.

I AM afraid, MY DEAR WEG, that this must be the result of bribery and corruption! The volume to which the dedication stands as preface seems to me to stand alone in your work; it is so natural, so personal, so sincere, so articulate in substance, and what you always were sure of so rich in adornment.

Let me speak first of the dedication. I thank you for it from the heart. It is beautifully said, beautifully and kindly felt; and I should be a churl indeed if I were not grateful, and an ass if I were not proud. I remember when Symonds dedicated a book to me; I wrote and told him of 'the pang of gratified vanity' with which I had read it. The pang was present again, but how much more sober and autumnal like

your volume. Let me tell you a story, or remind you of a story. In the year of grace something or other, anything between '76 and '78 I mentioned to you in my usual autobiographical and inconsiderate manner that I was hard up. You said promptly that you had a balance at your banker's, and could make it convenient to let me have a cheque, and I accepted and got the money how much was it? twenty or perhaps thirty pounds? I know not but it was a great convenience. The same evening, or the next day, I fell in conversation (in my usual autobiographical and... see above) with a denizen of the Savile Club, name now gone from me, only his figure and a dim three quarter view of his face remaining. To him I mentioned that you had given me a loan, remarking easily that of course it didn't matter to you. Whereupon he read me a lecture, and told me how it really stood with you financially. He was pretty serious; fearing, as I could not help perceiving, that I should take too light a view of the responsibility and the service (I was always thought too light the irresponsible jester you remember. O, QUANTUM MUTATUS AB ILLO!)

If I remember rightly, the money was repaid before the end of the week or, to be more exact and a trifle pedantic, the sennight but the service has never been forgotten; and I send you back this piece of ancient history, CONSULE PLANCO, as a salute for your dedication, and propose that we should drink the health of the nameless one, who opened my eyes as to the true nature of what you did for me on that occasion.

But here comes my Amanuensis, so we'll get on more swimmingly now. You will understand perhaps that what so particularly pleased me in the new volume, what seems to me to have so personal and original a note, are the middle aged pieces in the beginning. The whole of them, I may say, though I must own an especial liking to

I yearn not for the fighting fate, That holds and hath achieved; I live to watch and meditate And dream and be deceived.'

You take the change gallantly. Not I, I must confess. It is all very well to talk of renunciation, and of course it has to be done. But, for my part, give me a roaring toothache! I do like



to be deceived and to dream, but I have very little use for either watching or meditation. I was not born for age. And, curiously enough, I seem to see a contrary drift in my work from that which is so remarkable in yours. You are going on sedately travelling through your ages, decently changing with the years to the proper tune. And here am I, quite out of my true course, and with nothing in my foolish elderly head but love stories. This must repose upon some curious distinction of temperaments. I gather from a phrase, boldly autobiographical, that you are well, not precisely growing thin. Can that be the difference?

It is rather funny that this matter should come up just now, as I am at present engaged in treating a severe case of middle age in one of my stories 'The Justice Clerk.' The case is that of a woman, and I think that I am doing her justice. You will be interested, I believe, to see the difference in our treatments. *SECRETA VITAE*, comes nearer to the case of my poor Kirstie. Come to think of it, Gosse, I believe the main distinction is that you have a family growing up around

you, and I am a childless, rather bitter, very clear eyed, blighted youth. I have, in fact, lost the path that makes it easy and natural for you to descend the hill. I am going at it straight. And where I have to go down it is a precipice.

I must not forget to give you a word of thanks for AN ENGLISH VILLAGE. It reminds me strongly of Keats, which is enough to say; and I was particularly pleased with the petulant sincerity of the concluding sentiment.

Well, my dear Gosse, here's wishing you all health and prosperity, as well as to the mistress and the bairns. May you live long, since it seems as if you would continue to enjoy life. May you write many more books as good as this one only there's one thing impossible, you can never write another dedication that can give the same pleasure to the vanished

TUSITALA.

· END ·