

РОБЕРТ СТИВЕНСОН

THE LETTERS OF
ROBERT LOUIS
STEVENSON — VOLUME
2

Robert Louis Stevenson
The Letters of Robert Louis
Stevenson — Volume 2

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The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson — Volume 2:

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Robert Louis Stevenson

The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson — Volume 2

CHAPTER VIII — LIFE AT BOURNEMOUTH, CONTINUED, JANUARY 1886-JULY 1887

Letter: TO MRS. DE MATTOS

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH],
JANUARY 1ST, 1886**

DEAREST KATHARINE, — Here, on a very little book and accompanied with lame verses, I have put your name. Our kindness is now getting well on in years; it must be nearly of age; and it gets more valuable to me with every time I see you. It is not possible to express any sentiment, and it is not necessary to try, at least between us. You know very well that I love you dearly, and that I always will. I only wish the verses were better, but at least you like the story; and it is sent to you by the one that loves you — Jekyll, and not Hyde.

R. L. S.

AVE!

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

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

R. L. S.

Letter: TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH], 1ST, 1886

MY DEAR KINNICUM, — I am a very bad dog, but not for the first time. Your book, which is very interesting, came duly; and I immediately got a very bad cold indeed, and have been fit for nothing whatever. I am a bit better now, and aye on the mend; so I write to tell you, I thought of you on New Year's Day; though,

I own, it would have been more decent if I had thought in time for you to get my letter then. Well, what can't be cured must be endured, Mr. Lawrie; and you must be content with what I give. If I wrote all the letters I ought to write, and at the proper time, I should be very good and very happy; but I doubt if I should do anything else.

I suppose you will be in town for the New Year; and I hope your health is pretty good. What you want is diet; but it is as much use to tell you that as it is to tell my father. And I quite admit a diet is a beastly thing. I doubt, however, if it be as bad as not being allowed to speak, which I have tried fully, and do not like. When, at the same time, I was not allowed to read, it passed a joke. But these are troubles of the past, and on this day, at least, it is proper to suppose they won't return. But we are not put here to enjoy ourselves: it was not God's purpose; and I am prepared to argue, it is not our sincere wish. As for our deserts, the less said of them the better, for somebody might hear, and nobody cares to be laughed at. A good man is a very noble thing to see, but not to himself; what he seems to God is, fortunately, not our business; that is the domain of faith; and whether on the first of January or the thirty-first of December, faith is a good word to end on.

My dear Cummy, many happy returns to you and my best love. — The worst correspondent in the world,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MR. AND MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH],
JANUARY 1ST, 1886**

MY DEAR PEOPLE, — Many happy returns of the day to you all; I am fairly well and in good spirits; and much and hopefully occupied with dear Jenkin's life. The inquiry in every detail, every letter that I read, makes me think of him more nobly. I cannot imagine how I got his friendship; I did not deserve it. I believe the notice will be interesting and useful.

My father's last letter, owing to the use of a quill pen and the neglect of blotting-paper, was hopelessly illegible. Every one tried, and every one failed to decipher an important word on which the interest of one whole clause (and the letter consisted of two) depended.

I find I can make little more of this; but I'll spare the blots. -
Dear people, ever your loving son,

R. L. S.

I will try again, being a giant refreshed by the house being empty. The presence of people is the great obstacle to letter-writing. I deny that letters should contain news (I mean mine; those of other people should). But mine should contain appropriate sentiments and humorous nonsense, or nonsense without the humour. When the house is empty, the mind is seized with a desire — no, that is too strong — a willingness

to pour forth unmitigated rot, which constitutes (in me) the true spirit of correspondence. When I have no remarks to offer (and nobody to offer them to), my pen flies, and you see the remarkable consequence of a page literally covered with words and genuinely devoid of sense. I can always do that, if quite alone, and I like doing it; but I have yet to learn that it is beloved by correspondents. The deuce of it is, that there is no end possible but the end of the paper; and as there is very little left of that — if I cannot stop writing — suppose you give up reading. It would all come to the same thing; and I think we should all be happier...

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

**[SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH], JAN. 2ND, 1886**

MY DEAR LOW, — LAMIA has come, and I do not know how to thank you, not only for the beautiful art of the designs, but for the handsome and apt words of the dedication. My favourite is 'Bathes unseen,' which is a masterpiece; and the next, 'Into the green recessed woods,' is perhaps more remarkable, though it does not take my fancy so imperiously. The night scene at Corinth pleases me also. The second part offers fewer opportunities. I own I should like to see both ISABELLA and the EVE thus illustrated; and then there's HYPERION — O, yes, and ENDYMION! I should like to see the lot: beautiful pictures dance before me by hundreds: I believe ENDYMION

would suit you best. It also is in faery-land; and I see a hundred opportunities, cloudy and flowery glories, things as delicate as the cobweb in the bush; actions, not in themselves of any mighty purport, but made for the pencil: the feast of Pan, Peona's isle, the 'slabbed margin of a well,' the chase of the butterfly, the nymph, Glaucus, Cybele, Sleep on his couch, a farrago of unconnected beauties. But I divagate; and all this sits in the bosom of the publisher.

What is more important, I accept the terms of the dedication with a frank heart, and the terms of your Latin legend fairly. The sight of your pictures has once more awakened me to my right mind; something may come of it; yet one more bold push to get free of this prisonyard of the abominably ugly, where I take my daily exercise with my contemporaries. I do not know, I have a feeling in my bones, a sentiment which may take on the forms of imagination, or may not. If it does, I shall owe it to you; and the thing will thus descend from Keats even if on the wrong side of the blanket. If it can be done in prose — that is the puzzle — I divagate again. Thank you again: you can draw and yet you do not love the ugly: what are you doing in this age? Flee, while it is yet time; they will have your four limbs pinned upon a stable door to scare witches. The ugly, my unhappy friend, is *DE RIGUEUR*: it is the only wear! What a chance you threw away with the serpent! Why had Apollonius no pimples? Heavens, my dear Low, you do not know your business...

I send you herewith a Gothic gnome for your Greek nymph;

but the gnome is interesting, I think, and he came out of a deep mine, where he guards the fountain of tears. It is not always the time to rejoice. — Yours ever,

R. L. S.

The gnome's name is JEKYLL & HYDE; I believe you will find he is likewise quite willing to answer to the name of Low or Stevenson.

SAME DAY. — I have copied out on the other sheet some bad verses, which somehow your picture suggested; as a kind of image of things that I pursue and cannot reach, and that you seem — no, not to have reached — but to have come a thought nearer to than I. This is the life we have chosen: well, the choice was mad, but I should make it again.

What occurs to me is this: perhaps they might be printed in (say) the CENTURY for the sake of my name; and if that were possible, they might advertise your book. It might be headed as sent in acknowledgment of your LAMIA. Or perhaps it might be introduced by the phrases I have marked above. I dare say they would stick it in: I want no payment, being well paid by LAMIA. If they are not, keep them to yourself.

TO WILL H. LOW

DAMNED BAD LINES IN RETURN FOR A BEAUTIFUL BOOK

Youth now flees on feathered foot.
Faint and fainter sounds the flute;
Rarer songs of Gods.
And still,
Somewhere on the sunny hill,
Or along the winding stream,
Through the willows, flits a dream;
Flits, but shows a smiling face,
Flees, but with so quaint a grace,
None can choose to stay at home,
All must follow — all must roam.
This is unborn beauty: she
Now in air floats high and free,
Takes the sun, and breaks the blue; -
Late, with stooping pinion flew
Raking hedgerow trees, and wet
Her wing in silver streams, and set
Shining foot on temple roof.
Now again she flies aloof,

Coasting mountain clouds, and kissed
By the evening's amethyst.
In wet wood and miry lane
Still we pound and pant in vain;
Still with earthy foot we chase
Waning pinion, fainting face;
Still, with grey hair, we stumble on
Till — behold! — the vision gone!
Where has fleeting beauty led?
To the doorway of the dead!
qy. omit? [Life is gone, but life was gay:
We have come the primrose way!]

R. L. S.

Letter: TO EDMUND GOSSE

**SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH, JAN. 2ND, 1886**

MY DEAR GOSSE, — Thank you for your letter, so interesting to my vanity. There is a review in the *St. James's*, which, as it seems to hold somewhat of your opinions, and is besides written with a pen and not a poker, we think may possibly be yours. The *PRINCE* has done fairly well in spite of the reviews, which have been bad: he was, as you doubtless saw, well slated in the *SATURDAY*; one paper received it as a

child's story; another (picture my agony) described it as a 'Gilbert comedy.' It was amusing to see the race between me and Justin M'Carthy: the Milesian has won by a length.

That is the hard part of literature. You aim high, and you take longer over your work, and it will not be so successful as if you had aimed low and rushed it. What the public likes is work (of any kind) a little loosely executed; so long as it is a little wordy, a little slack, a little dim and knotless, the dear public likes it; it should (if possible) be a little dull into the bargain. I know that good work sometimes hits; but, with my hand on my heart, I think it is by an accident. And I know also that good work must succeed at last; but that is not the doing of the public; they are only shamed into silence or affectation. I do not write for the public; I do write for money, a nobler deity; and most of all for myself, not perhaps any more noble, but both more intelligent and nearer home.

Let us tell each other sad stories of the bestiality of the beast whom we feed. What he likes is the newspaper; and to me the press is the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from an university chair, and everything prurient, and ignoble, and essentially dull, finds its abode and pulpit. I do not like mankind; but men, and not all of these — and fewer women. As for respecting the race, and, above all, that fatuous rabble of burgesses called 'the public,' God save me from such irreligion! — that way lies disgrace and dishonour. There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular.

This is perhaps a trifle stronger than my sedate and permanent opinion. Not much, I think. As for the art that we practise, I have never been able to see why its professors should be respected. They chose the primrose path; when they found it was not all primroses, but some of it brambly, and much of it uphill, they began to think and to speak of themselves as holy martyrs. But a man is never martyred in any honest sense in the pursuit of his pleasure; and DELIRIUM TREMENS has more of the honour of the cross. We were full of the pride of life, and chose, like prostitutes, to live by a pleasure. We should be paid if we give the pleasure we pretend to give; but why should we be honoured?

I hope some day you and Mrs. Gosse will come for a Sunday; but we must wait till I am able to see people. I am very full of Jenkin's life; it is painful, yet very pleasant, to dig into the past of a dead friend, and find him, at every spadeful, shine brighter. I own, as I read, I wonder more and more why he should have taken me to be a friend. He had many and obvious faults upon the face of him; the heart was pure gold. I feel it little pain to have lost him, for it is a loss in which I cannot believe; I take it, against reason, for an absence; if not to-day, then to-morrow, I still fancy I shall see him in the door; and then, now when I know him better, how glad a meeting! Yes, if I could believe in the immortality business, the world would indeed be too good to be true; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire: the sods cover us, and the worm that never dies, the conscience, sleeps well at last; these are the wages,

besides what we receive so lavishly day by day; and they are enough for a man who knows his own frailty and sees all things in the proportion of reality. The soul of piety was killed long ago by that idea of reward. Nor is happiness, whether eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his wayside campings; his soul is in the journey; he was born for the struggle, and only tastes his life in effort and on the condition that he is opposed. How, then, is such a creature, so fiery, so pugnacious, so made up of discontent and aspiration, and such noble and uneasy passions — how can he be rewarded but by rest? I would not say it aloud; for man's cherished belief is that he loves that happiness which he continually spurns and passes by; and this belief in some ulterior happiness exactly fits him. He does not require to stop and taste it; he can be about the rugged and bitter business where his heart lies; and yet he can tell himself this fairy tale of an eternal tea-party, and enjoy the notion that he is both himself and something else; and that his friends will yet meet him, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable, — as if love did not live in the faults of the beloved only, and draw its breath in an unbroken round of forgiveness! But the truth is, we must fight until we die; and when we die there can be no quiet for mankind but complete resumption into — what? — God, let us say — when all these desperate tricks will lie spellbound at last.

Here came my dinner and cut this sermon short —
EXCUSEZ.

Letter: TO JAMES PAYN

**SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH, JAN. 2ND, 1886**

DEAR JAMES PAYN, — Your very kind letter came very welcome; and still more welcome the news that you see — 's tale. I will now tell you (and it was very good and very wise of me not to tell it before) that he is one of the most unlucky men I know, having put all his money into a pharmacy at Hyeres, when the cholera (certainly not his fault) swept away his customers in a body. Thus you can imagine the pleasure I have to announce to him a spark of hope, for he sits to-day in his pharmacy, doing nothing and taking nothing, and watching his debts inexorably mount up.

To pass to other matters: your hand, you are perhaps aware, is not one of those that can be read running; and the name of your daughter remains for me undecipherable. I call her, then, your daughter — and a very good name too — and I beg to explain how it came about that I took her house. The hospital was a point in my tale; but there is a house on each side. Now the true house is the one before the hospital: is that No. 11? If not, what do you complain of? If it is, how can I help what is true? Everything in the DYNAMITER is not true; but the story of the Brown Box is, in almost every particular; I lay my hand on my heart and swear to it. It took place in that house in 1884; and if your daughter

was in that house at the time, all I can say is she must have kept very bad society.

But I see you coming. Perhaps your daughter's house has not a balcony at the back? I cannot answer for that; I only know that side of Queen Square from the pavement and the back windows of Brunswick Row. Thence I saw plenty of balconies (terraces rather); and if there is none to the particular house in question, it must have been so arranged to spite me.

I now come to the conclusion of this matter. I address three questions to your daughter: -

1st Has her house the proper terrace?

2nd. Is it on the proper side of the hospital?

3rd. Was she there in the summer of 1884?

You see, I begin to fear that Mrs. Desborough may have deceived me on some trifling points, for she is not a lady of peddling exactitude. If this should prove to be so, I will give your daughter a proper certificate, and her house property will return to its original value.

Can man say more? — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I saw the other day that the Eternal had plagiarised from LOST SIR MASSINGBERD: good again, sir! I wish he would plagiarise the death of Zero.

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

**SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
JAN. SOMETHING OR OTHER-TH, 1886**

MY DEAR LOW, — I send you two photographs: they are both done by Sir Percy Shelley, the poet's son, which may interest. The sitting down one is, I think, the best; but if they choose that, see that the little reflected light on the nose does not give me a turn-up; that would be tragic. Don't forget 'Baronet' to Sir Percy's name.

We all think a heap of your book; and I am well pleased with my dedication. — Yours ever,

R. L. STEVENSON.

P.S. — APROPOS of the odd controversy about Shelley's nose: I have before me four photographs of myself, done by Shelley's son: my nose is hooked, not like the eagle, indeed, but like the accipitrine family in man: well, out of these four, only one marks the bend, one makes it straight, and one suggests a turn-up. This throws a flood of light on calumnious man — and the scandal-mongering sun. For personally I cling to my curve. To continue the Shelley controversy: I have a look of him, all his sisters had noses like mine; Sir Percy has a marked hook; all the family had high cheek-bones like mine; what doubt, then, but that this turn-up (of which Jeaffreson accuses the poet, along with much other FATRAS) is the result of some accident similar

to what has happened in my photographs by his son?

R. L. S.

Letter: TO THOMAS STEVENSON

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
JANUARY 25, 1886.]**

MY DEAR FATHER, — Many thanks for a letter quite like yourself. I quite agree with you, and had already planned a scene of religion in BALFOUR; the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge furnishes me with a catechist whom I shall try to make the man. I have another catechist, the blind, pistol-carrying highway robber, whom I have transferred from the Long Island to Mull. I find it a most picturesque period, and wonder Scott let it escape. The COVENANT is lost on one of the Tarrans, and David is cast on Earraid, where (being from inland) he is nearly starved before he finds out the island is tidal; then he crosses Mull to Toronsay, meeting the blind catechist by the way; then crosses Morven from Kinlochaline to Kingairloch, where he stays the night with the good catechist; that is where I am; next day he is to be put ashore in Appin, and be present at Colin Campbell's death. To-day I rest, being a little run down. Strange how liable we are to brain fag in this scooty family! But as far as I have got, all but the last chapter, I think David is on his feet, and (to my mind) a far better story and far sounder at

heart than TREASURE ISLAND.

I have no earthly news, living entirely in my story, and only coming out of it to play patience. The Shelleys are gone; the Taylors kinder than can be imagined. The other day, Lady Taylor drove over and called on me; she is a delightful old lady, and great fun. I mentioned a story about the Duchess of Wellington which I had heard Sir Henry tell; and though he was very tired, he looked it up and copied it out for me in his own hand. — Your most affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO C. W. STODDARD

**SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
FEB. 13TH, 1886**

MY DEAR STODDARD, — I am a dreadful character; but, you see, I have at last taken pen in hand; how long I may hold it, God knows. This is already my sixth letter to-day, and I have many more waiting; and my wrist gives me a jog on the subject of scrivener's cramp, which is not encouraging.

I gather you were a little down in the jaw when you wrote your last. I am as usual pretty cheerful, but not very strong. I stay in the house all winter, which is base; but, as you continue to see, the pen goes from time to time, though neither fast enough nor constantly enough to please me.

My wife is at Bath with my father and mother, and the interval of widowery explains my writing. Another person writing for you when you have done work is a great enemy to correspondence. To-day I feel out of health, and shan't work; and hence this so much overdue reply.

I was re-reading some of your South Sea Idyls the other day: some of the chapters are very good indeed; some pages as good as they can be.

How does your class get along? If you like to touch on OTTO, any day in a by-hour, you may tell them — as the author's last dying confession — that it is a strange example of the difficulty of being ideal in an age of realism; that the unpleasant giddy-mindedness, which spoils the book and often gives it a wanton air of unreality and juggling with air-bells, comes from unsteadiness of key; from the too great realism of some chapters and passages — some of which I have now spotted, others I dare say I shall never spot — which disprepares the imagination for the cast of the remainder.

Any story can be made TRUE in its own key; any story can be made FALSE by the choice of a wrong key of detail or style: Otto is made to reel like a drunken — I was going to say man, but let us substitute cipher — by the variations of the key. Have you observed that the famous problem of realism and idealism is one purely of detail? Have you seen my 'Note on Realism' in Cassell's MAGAZINE OF ART; and 'Elements of Style' in the CONTEMPORARY; and 'Romance' and 'Humble Apology' in

LONGMAN'S? They are all in your line of business; let me know what you have not seen and I'll send 'em.

I am glad I brought the old house up to you. It was a pleasant old spot, and I remember you there, though still more dearly in your own strange den upon a hill in San Francisco; and one of the most San Francisco-y parts of San Francisco.

Good-bye, my dear fellow, and believe me your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO J. A. SYMONDS

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH [SPRING 1886]

MY DEAR SYMONDS, — If we have lost touch, it is (I think) only in a material sense; a question of letters, not hearts. You will find a warm welcome at Skerryvore from both the lightkeepers; and, indeed, we never tell ourselves one of our financial fairy tales, but a run to Davos is a prime feature. I am not changeable in friendship; and I think I can promise you you have a pair of trusty well- wishers and friends in Bournemouth: whether they write or not is but a small thing; the flag may not be waved, but it is there.

Jekyll is a dreadful thing, I own; but the only thing I feel dreadful about is that damned old business of the war in the members. This time it came out; I hope it will stay in, in future.

Raskolnikoff is easily the greatest book I have read in ten

years; I am glad you took to it. Many find it dull: Henry James could not finish it: all I can say is, it nearly finished me. It was like having an illness. James did not care for it because the character of Raskolnikoff was not objective; and at that I divined a great gulf between us, and, on further reflection, the existence of a certain impotence in many minds of to-day, which prevents them from living IN a book or a character, and keeps them standing afar off, spectators of a puppet show. To such I suppose the book may seem empty in the centre; to the others it is a room, a house of life, into which they themselves enter, and are tortured and purified. The Juge d'Instruction I thought a wonderful, weird, touching, ingenious creation: the drunken father, and Sonia, and the student friend, and the uncircumscribed, protoplasmic humanity of Raskolnikoff, all upon a level that filled me with wonder: the execution also, superb in places. Another has been translated — HUMILIES ET OFFENSES. It is even more incoherent than LE CRIME ET LE CHATIMENT, but breathes much of the same lovely goodness, and has passages of power. Dostoieffsky is a devil of a swell, to be sure. Have you heard that he became a stout, imperialist conservative? It is interesting to know. To something of that side, the balance leans with me also in view of the incoherency and incapacity of all. The old boyish idea of the march on Paradise being now out of season, and all plans and ideas that I hear debated being built on a superb indifference to the first principles of human character, a helpless desire to acquiesce in anything of which I know the worst assails

me. Fundamental errors in human nature of two sorts stand on the skyline of all this modern world of aspirations. First, that it is happiness that men want; and second, that happiness consists of anything but an internal harmony. Men do not want, and I do not think they would accept, happiness; what they live for is rivalry, effort, success — the elements our friends wish to eliminate. And, on the other hand, happiness is a question of morality — or of immorality, there is no difference — and conviction. Gordon was happy in Khartoum, in his worst hours of danger and fatigue; Marat was happy, I suppose, in his ugliest frenzy; Marcus Aurelius was happy in the detested camp; Pepys was pretty happy, and I am pretty happy on the whole, because we both somewhat crowingly accepted a VIA MEDIA, both liked to attend to our affairs, and both had some success in managing the same. It is quite an open question whether Pepys and I ought to be happy; on the other hand, there is no doubt that Marat had better be unhappy. He was right (if he said it) that he was LA MISERE HUMAINE, cureless misery — unless perhaps by the gallows. Death is a great and gentle solvent; it has never had justice done it, no, not by Whitman. As for those crockery chimney-piece ornaments, the bourgeois (QUORUM PARS), and their cowardly dislike of dying and killing, it is merely one symptom of a thousand how utterly they have got out of touch of life. Their dislike of capital punishment and their treatment of their domestic servants are for me the two flaunting emblems of their hollowness.

God knows where I am driving to. But here comes my lunch.

Which interruption, happily for you, seems to have stayed the issue. I have now nothing to say, that had formerly such a pressure of twaddle. Pray don't fail to come this summer. It will be a great disappointment, now it has been spoken of, if you do. — Yours ever,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

**[SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH, MARCH 1886.]**

MY DEAR LOW, — This is the most enchanting picture. Now understand my state: I am really an invalid, but of a mysterious order. I might be a MALADE IMAGINAIRE, but for one too tangible symptom, my tendency to bleed from the lungs. If we could go, (1ST) We must have money enough to travel with LEISURE AND COMFORT — especially the first. (2ND) You must be prepared for a comrade who would go to bed some part of every day and often stay silent (3RD) You would have to play the part of a thoughtful courier, sparing me fatigue, looking out that my bed was warmed, etc. (4TH) If you are very nervous, you must recollect a bad haemorrhage is always on the cards, with its concomitants of anxiety and horror for those who are beside me.

Do you blench? If so, let us say no more about it.

If you are still unafraid, and the money were forthcoming, I believe the trip might do me good, and I feel sure that, working together, we might produce a fine book. The Rhone is the river of Angels. I adore it: have adored it since I was twelve, and first saw it from the train.

Lastly, it would depend on how I keep from now on. I have stood the winter hitherto with some credit, but the dreadful weather still continues, and I cannot holloa till I am through the wood.

Subject to these numerous and gloomy provisos, I embrace the prospect with glorious feelings.

I write this from bed, snow pouring without, and no circumstance of pleasure except your letter. That, however, counts for much. I am glad you liked the doggerel: I have already had a liberal cheque, over which I licked my fingers with a sound conscience. I had not meant to make money by these stumbling feet, but if it comes, it is only too welcome in my handsome but impecunious house.

Let me know soon what is to be expected — as far as it does not hang by that inconstant quantity, my want of health. Remember me to Madam with the best thanks and wishes; and believe me your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MRS. FLEEMING JENKIN

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, APRIL 1886.]

MY DEAR MRS. JENKIN, — I try to tell myself it is good nature, but

I know it is vanity that makes me write.

I have drafted the first part of Chapter VI., Fleeming and his friends, his influence on me, his views on religion and literature, his part at the Savile; it should boil down to about ten pages, and I really do think it admirably good. It has so much evoked Fleeming for myself that I found my conscience stirred just as it used to be after a serious talk with him: surely that means it is good? I had to write and tell you, being alone.

I have excellent news of Fanny, who is much better for the change. My father is still very yellow, and very old, and very weak, but yesterday he seemed happier, and smiled, and followed what was said; even laughed, I think. When he came away, he said to me, 'Take care of yourself, my dearie,' which had a strange sound of childish days, and will not leave my mind.

You must get Litolf's GAVOTTES CELEBRES: I have made another trover there: a musette of Lully's. The second part of it I have not yet got the hang of; but the first — only a few bars! The gavotte is beautiful and pretty hard, I think, and very much of the period; and at the end of it, this musette enters with the most really thrilling effect of simple beauty. O — it's first-rate. I am quite mad over it. If you find other books containing Lully,

Rameau, Martini, please let me know; also you might tell me, you who know Bach, where the easiest is to be found. I write all morning, come down, and never leave the piano till about five; write letters, dine, get down again about eight, and never leave the piano till I go to bed. This is a fine life. — Yours most sincerely,

R. L. S.

If you get the musette (Lully's), please tell me if I am right, and it was probably written for strings. Anyway, it is as neat as — as neat as Bach — on the piano; or seems so to my ignorance. I play much of the Rigadoon but it is strange, it don't come off QUITE so well with me!

[Musical score which cannot be reproduced]

There is the first part of the musette copied (from memory, so I hope there's nothing wrong). Is it not angelic? But it ought, of course, to have the gavotte before. The gavotte is in G, and ends on the keynote thus (if I remember): -

[Musical score which cannot be reproduced]

staccato, I think. Then you sail into the musette.

N.B. — Where I have put an 'A,' is that a dominant eleventh, or what? or just a seventh on the D? and if the latter, is that allowed? It sounds very funny. Never mind all my questions; if I begin about music (which is my leading ignorance and curiosity), I have always to babble questions: all my friends know me now, and take no notice whatever. The whole piece is marked allegro; but surely could easily be played too fast? The dignity must not be lost; the periwig feeling.

Letter: TO THOMAS STEVENSON

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, March 1886.]

MY DEAR FATHER, — The David problem has to-day been decided. I am to leave the door open for a sequel if the public take to it, and this will save me from butchering a lot of good material to no purpose. Your letter from Carlisle was pretty like yourself, sir, as I was pleased to see; the hand of Jekyll, not the hand of Hyde. I am for action quite unfit, and even a letter is beyond me; so pray take these scraps at a vast deal more than their intrinsic worth. I am in great spirits about David, Colvin agreeing with Henley, Fanny, and myself in thinking it far the most human of my labours hitherto. As to whether the long-eared British public may take to it, all think it more than doubtful; I wish they would, for I could do a second volume with ease and pleasure, and Colvin thinks it sin and folly to throw away David and Alan Breck upon so small a field as this one. — Ever your affectionate son,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO MRS. FLEEMING JENKIN

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH], APRIL 15
OR 16 (THE HOUR NOT BEING KNOWN), 1886**

MY DEAR MRS. JENKIN, — It is I know not what hour of the night; but

I cannot sleep, have lit the gas, and here goes.

First, all your packet arrived: I have dipped into the Schumann already with great pleasure. Surely, in what concerns us there is a sweet little chirrup; the GOOD WORDS arrived in the morning just when I needed it, and the famous notes that I had lost were recovered also in the nick of time.

And now I am going to bother you with my affairs: premising, first, that this is PRIVATE; second, that whatever I do the LIFE shall be done first, and I am getting on with it well; and third, that I do not quite know why I consult you, but something tells me you will hear with fairness.

Here is my problem. The Curtin women are still miserable prisoners; no one dare buy their farm of them, all the manhood of England and the world stands aghast before a threat of murder. (1) Now, my work can be done anywhere; hence I can take up without loss a back-going Irish farm, and live on, though not (as I had originally written) in it: First Reason. (2) If I should be killed, there are a good many who would feel it: writers are so much in the public eye, that a writer being murdered would attract attention, throw a bull's-eye light upon this cowardly business:

Second Reason. (3) I am not unknown in the States, from which the funds come that pay for these brutalities: to some faint extent, my death (if I should be killed) would tell there: Third Reason. (4) NOBODY ELSE IS TAKING UP THIS OBVIOUS AND CRYING DULY: Fourth Reason. (5) I have a crazy health and may die at any moment, my life is of no purchase in an insurance office, it is the less account to husband it, and the business of husbanding a life is dreary and demoralising: Fifth Reason.

I state these in no order, but as they occur to me. And I shall do the like with the objections.

First Objection: It will do no good; you have seen Gordon die and nobody minded; nobody will mind if you die. This is plainly of the devil. Second Objection: You will not even be murdered, the climate will miserably kill you, you will strangle out in a rotten damp heat, in congestion, etc. Well, what then? It changes nothing: the purpose is to brave crime; let me brave it, for such time and to such an extent as God allows. Third Objection: The Curtin women are probably highly uninteresting females. I haven't a doubt of it. But the Government cannot, men will not, protect them. If I am the only one to see this public duty, it is to the public and the Right I should perform it — not to Mesdames Curtin. Fourth Objection: I am married. 'I have married a wife!' I seem to have heard it before. It smells ancient! what was the context? Fifth Objection: My wife has had a mean life (1), loves me (2), could not bear to lose me (3). (1) I admit: I am sorry. (2) But what does she love me for? and (3) she must lose me soon

or late. And after all, because we run this risk, it does not follow we should fail. Sixth Objection: My wife wouldn't like it. No, she wouldn't. Who would? But the Curtins don't like it. And all those who are to suffer if this goes on, won't like it. And if there is a great wrong, somebody must suffer. Seventh Objection: I won't like it. No, I will not; I have thought it through, and I will not. But what of that? And both she and I may like it more than we suppose. We shall lose friends, all comforts, all society: so has everybody who has ever done anything; but we shall have some excitement, and that's a fine thing; and we shall be trying to do the right, and that's not to be despised. Eighth Objection: I am an author with my work before me. See Second Reason. Ninth Objection: But am I not taken with the hope of excitement? I was at first. I am not much now. I see what a dreary, friendless, miserable, God-forgotten business it will be. And anyway, is not excitement the proper reward of doing anything both right and a little dangerous? Tenth Objection: But am I not taken with a notion of glory? I dare say I am. Yet I see quite clearly how all points to nothing coming, to a quite inglorious death by disease and from the lack of attendance; or even if I should be knocked on the head, as these poor Irish promise, how little any one will care. It will be a smile at a thousand breakfast-tables. I am nearly forty now; I have not many illusions. And if I had? I do not love this health-tending, housekeeping life of mine. I have a taste for danger, which is human, like the fear of it. Here is a fair cause; a just cause; no knight ever set lance in rest for a juster. Yet it needs

not the strength I have not, only the passive courage that I hope I could muster, and the watchfulness that I am sure I could learn.

Here is a long midnight dissertation; with myself; with you. Please let me hear. But I charge you this: if you see in this idea of mine the finger of duty, do not dissuade me. I am nearing forty, I begin to love my ease and my home and my habits, I never knew how much till this arose; do not falsely counsel me to put my head under the bed-clothes. And I will say this to you: my wife, who hates the idea, does not refuse. 'It is nonsense,' says she, 'but if you go, I will go.' Poor girl, and her home and her garden that she was so proud of! I feel her garden most of all, because it is a pleasure (I suppose) that I do not feel myself to share.

1. Here is a great wrong. 2. " growing wrong. 3. " wrong founded on crime. 4. " crime that the Government cannot prevent. 5. " crime that it occurs to no man to defy. 6. But it has occurred to me. 7. Being a known person, some will notice my defiance. 8. Being a writer, I can MAKE people notice it. 9. And, I think, MAKE people imitate me. 10. Which would destroy in time this whole scaffolding of oppression. 11. And if I fail, however ignominiously, that is not my concern. It is, with an odd mixture of reverence and humorous remembrances of Dickens, be it said — it is A-nother's.

And here, at I cannot think what hour of the morning, I shall dry up, and remain, — Yours, really in want of a little help,

R. L. S.

Sleepless at midnight's dewy hour. " " witching " " " maudlin

" " " etc.

NEXT MORNING. — Eleventh Objection: I have a father and mother. And who has not? Macduff's was a rare case; if we must wait for a Macduff. Besides, my father will not perhaps be long here. Twelfth Objection: The cause of England in Ireland is not worth supporting. A QUI LE DITES-VOUS? And I am not supporting that. Home Rule, if you like. Cause of decency, the idea that populations should not be taught to gain public ends by private crime, the idea that for all men to bow before a threat of crime is to loosen and degrade beyond redemption the whole fabric of man's decency.

Letter: TO MRS. FLEEMING JENKIN

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, APRIL 1886.]

MY DEAR MRS. JENKIN, — The Book — It is all drafted: I hope soon to send you for comments Chapters III., IV., and V. Chapter VII. is roughly but satisfactorily drafted: a very little work should put that to rights. But Chapter VI. is no joke; it is a MARE MAGNUM: I swim and drown and come up again; and it is all broken ends and mystification: moreover, I perceive I am in want of more matter. I must have, first of all, a little letter from Mr. Ewing about the phonograph work: IF you think he would understand it is quite a matter of chance whether I use a word or a fact out of it. If you think he would not: I will go without. Also, could I have a look at Ewing's PRECIS? And lastly, I perceive I

must interview you again about a few points; they are very few, and might come to little; and I propose to go on getting things as well together as I can in the meanwhile, and rather have a final time when all is ready and only to be criticised. I do still think it will be good. I wonder if Trelat would let me cut? But no, I think I wouldn't after all; 'tis so quaint and pretty and clever and simple and French, and gives such a good sight of Fleeming: the plum of the book, I think.

You misunderstood me in one point: I always hoped to found such a society; that was the outside of my dream, and would mean entire success. BUT — I cannot play Peter the Hermit. In these days of the Fleet Street journalist, I cannot send out better men than myself, with wives or mothers just as good as mine, and sisters (I may at least say) better, to a danger and a long-drawn dreariness that I do not share. My wife says it's cowardice; what brave men are the leader-writers! Call it cowardice; it is mine. Mind you, I may end by trying to do it by the pen only: I shall not love myself if I do; and is it ever a good thing to do a thing for which you despise yourself? — even in the doing? And if the thing you do is to call upon others to do the thing you neglect? I have never dared to say what I feel about men's lives, because my own was in the wrong: shall I dare to send them to death? The physician must heal himself; he must honestly TRY the path he recommends: if he does not even try, should he not be silent?

I thank you very heartily for your letter, and for the seriousness you brought to it. You know, I think when a serious thing is

your own, you keep a saner man by laughing at it and yourself as you go. So I do not write possibly with all the really somewhat sickened gravity I feel. And indeed, what with the book, and this business to which I referred, and Ireland, I am scarcely in an enviable state. Well, I ought to be glad, after ten years of the worst training on earth — valetudinarianism — that I can still be troubled by a duty. You shall hear more in time; so far, I am at least decided: I will go and see Balfour when I get to London.

We have all had a great pleasure: a Mrs. Rawlinson came and brought with her a nineteen-year-old daughter, simple, human, as beautiful as — herself; I never admired a girl before, you know it was my weakness: we are all three dead in love with her. How nice to be able to do so much good to harassed people by — yourself! Ever yours,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO MISS RAWLINSON

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, APRIL 1886.]

OF the many flowers you brought me,
Only some were meant to stay,
And the flower I thought the sweetest
Was the flower that went away.

Of the many flowers you brought me,
All were fair and fresh and gay,
But the flower I thought the sweetest
Was the blossom of the May.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MISS MONROE

**SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
MAY 25TH, 1886**

DEAR MISS MONROE, — (I hope I have this rightly) I must lose no time in thanking you for a letter singularly pleasant to receive. It may interest you to know that I read to the signature without suspecting my correspondent was a woman; though in one point (a reference to the Countess) I might have found a hint of the truth. You are not pleased with Otto; since I judge you do not like weakness; and no more do I. And yet I have more than tolerance for Otto, whose faults are the faults of weakness, but never of ignoble weakness, and who seeks before all to be both kind and just. Seeks, not succeeds. But what is man? So much of cynicism to recognise that nobody does right is the best equipment for those who do not wish to be cynics in good earnest. Think better of Otto, if my plea can influence you; and this I mean for your own sake — not his, poor fellow, as he will never learn your opinion; but for yours, because, as men go in this world

(and women too), you will not go far wrong if you light upon so fine a fellow; and to light upon one and not perceive his merits is a calamity. In the flesh, of course, I mean; in the book the fault, of course, is with my stumbling pen. Seraphina made a mistake about her Otto; it begins to swim before me dimly that you may have some traits of Seraphina?

With true ingratitude you see me pitch upon your exception; but it is easier to defend oneself gracefully than to acknowledge praise. I am truly glad that you should like my books; for I think I see from what you write that you are a reader worth convincing. Your name, if I have properly deciphered it, suggests that you may be also something of my countrywoman; for it is hard to see where Monroe came from, if not from Scotland. I seem to have here a double claim on your good nature: being myself pure Scotch and having appreciated your letter, make up two undeniable merits which, perhaps, if it should be quite without trouble, you might reward with your photograph. — Yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MISS MONROE

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, JUNE 1886.]

MY DEAR MISS MONROE, — I am ill in bed and stupid, incoherently stupid; yet I have to answer your letter, and if the answer is incomprehensible you must forgive me. You say my

letter caused you pleasure; I am sure, as it fell out, not near so much as yours has brought to me. The interest taken in an author is fragile: his next book, or your next year of culture, might see the interest frosted or outgrown; and himself, in spite of all, you might probably find the most distasteful person upon earth. My case is different. I have bad health, am often condemned to silence for days together — was so once for six weeks, so that my voice was awful to hear when I first used it, like the whisper of a shadow — have outlived all my chief pleasures, which were active and adventurous, and ran in the open air: and being a person who prefers life to art, and who knows it is a far finer thing to be in love, or to risk a danger, than to paint the finest picture or write the noblest book, I begin to regard what remains to me of my life as very shadowy. From a variety of reasons, I am ashamed to confess I was much in this humour when your letter came. I had a good many troubles; was regretting a high average of sins; had been recently reminded that I had outlived some friends, and wondering if I had not outlived some friendships; and had just, while boasting of better health, been struck down again by my haunting enemy, an enemy who was exciting at first, but has now, by the iteration of his strokes, become merely annoying and inexpressibly irksome. Can you fancy that to a person drawing towards the elderly this sort of conjunction of circumstances brings a rather aching sense of the past and the future? Well, it was just then that your letter and your photograph were brought to me in bed; and there came to me at once the

most agreeable sense of triumph. My books were still young; my words had their good health and could go about the world and make themselves welcome; and even (in a shadowy and distant sense) make something in the nature of friends for the sheer hulk that stays at home and bites his pen over the manuscripts. It amused me very much to remember that I had been in Chicago, not so many years ago, in my proper person; where I had failed to awaken much remark, except from the ticket collector; and to think how much more gallant and persuasive were the fellows that I now send instead of me, and how these are welcome in that quarter to the sitter of Herr Platz, while their author was not very welcome even in the villainous restaurant where he tried to eat a meal and rather failed.

And this leads me directly to a confession. The photograph which shall accompany this is not chosen as the most like, but the best- looking. Put yourself in my place, and you will call this pardonable. Even as it is, even putting forth a flattered presentment, I am a little pained; and very glad it is a photograph and not myself that has to go; for in this case, if it please you, you can tell yourself it is my image — and if it displeased you, you can lay the blame on the photographer; but in that, there were no help, and the poor author might belie his labours.

KIDNAPPED should soon appear; I am afraid you may not like it, as it is very unlike PRINCE OTTO in every way; but I am myself a great admirer of the two chief characters, Alan and David. VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE has never been issued

in the States. I do not think it is a book that has much charm for publishers in any land; but I am to bring out a new edition in England shortly, a copy of which I must try to remember to send you. I say try to remember, because I have some superficial acquaintance with myself: and I have determined, after a galling discipline, to promise nothing more until the day of my death: at least, in this way, I shall no more break my word, and I must now try being churlish instead of being false.

I do not believe you to be the least like Seraphina. Your photograph has no trace of her, which somewhat relieves me, as I am a good deal afraid of Seraphinas — they do not always go into the woods and see the sunrise, and some are so well-mailed that even that experience would leave them unaffected and unsoftened. The 'hair and eyes of several complexions' was a trait taken from myself; and I do not bind myself to the opinions of Sir John. In this case, perhaps — but no, if the peculiarity is shared by two such pleasant persons as you and I (as you and me — the grammatical nut is hard), it must be a very good thing indeed, and Sir John must be an ass.

The BOOK READER notice was a strange jumble of fact and fancy. I wish you could have seen my father's old assistant and present partner when he heard my father described as an 'inspector of lighthouses,' for we are all very proud of the family achievements, and the name of my house here in Bournemouth is stolen from one of the sea-towers of the Hebrides which are our pyramids and monuments. I was never at Cambridge,

again; but neglected a considerable succession of classes at Edinburgh. But to correct that friendly blunderer were to write an autobiography. — And so now, with many thanks, believe me yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO R. A. M. STEVENSON

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, JULY 1886

SIR, — Your foolish letter was unduly received. There may be hidden fifths, and if there are, it shows how dam spontaneous the thing was. I could tinker and tic-tac-toe on a piece of paper, but scorned the act with a Threnody, which was poured forth like blood and water on the groaning organ. If your heart (which was what I addressed) remained unmoved, let us refer to the affair no more: crystallised emotion, the statement and the reconciliation of the sorrows of the race and the individual, is obviously no more to you than supping sawdust. Well, well. If ever I write another Threnody! My next op. will probably be a Passepiéd and fugue in G (or D).

The mind is in my case shrunk to the size and sp. gr. of an aged Spanish filbert. O, I am so jolly silly. I now pickle with some freedom (1) the refrain of MARTINI'S MOUTONS; (2) SUL MARGINE D'UN RIO, arranged for the infant school by the Aged Statesman; (3) the first phrase of Bach's musette

(Sweet Englishwoman, No. 3), the rest of the musette being one prolonged cropper, which I take daily for the benefit of my health. All my other works (of which there are many) are either arranged (by R. L. Stevenson) for the manly and melodious forefinger, or else prolonged and melancholy croppers... I find one can get a notion of music very nicely. I have been pickling deeply in the Magic Flute; and have arranged LA DOVE PRENDE, almost to the end, for two melodious forefingers. I am next going to score the really nobler COLOMBA O TORTORELLA for the same instruments.

This day is published The works of Ludwig van Beethoven arranged and wiederdurchgearbeiteted for two melodious forefingers by, Sir, — Your obedient servant,

PIMPERLY STIPPLE.

That's a good idea? There's a person called Lenz who actually does it — beware his den; I lost eighteenpennies on him, and found the bleeding corpses of pieces of music divorced from their keys, despoiled of their graces, and even changed in time; I do not wish to regard music (nor to be regarded) through that bony Lenz. You say you are 'a spumfed idiot'; but how about Lenz? And how about me, sir, me?

I yesterday sent Lloyd by parcel post, at great expense, an empty matchbox and empty cigarette-paper book, a bell from a cat's collar, an iron kitchen spoon, and a piece of coal more than half the superficies of this sheet of paper. They are now (appropriately enough) speeding towards the Silly Isles; I hope

he will find them useful. By that, and my telegram with prepaid answer to yourself, you may judge of my spiritual state. The finances have much brightened; and if KIDNAPPED keeps on as it has begun, I may be solvent. — Yours,

THRENODIAE AVCTOR

(The authour of ane Threnodie).

Op. 2: Scherzo (in G Major) expressive of the Sense of favours to come.

Letter: TO R. A. M. STEVENSON

SKERRYVORE [BOURNEMOUTH, JULY 1886]

DEAR BOB, — Herewith another shy; more melancholy than before, but I think not so abjectly idiotic. The musical terms seem to be as good as in Beethoven, and that, after all, is the great affair. Bar the dam bareness of the base, it looks like a piece of real music from a distance. I am proud to say it was not made one hand at a time; the base was of synchronous birth with the treble; they are of the same age, sir, and may God have mercy on their souls! — Yours,

THE MAESTRO.

Letter: TO MR. AND MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

**SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH, JULY 7TH, 1886**

MY DEAR PEOPLE, — It is probably my fault, and not yours, that I did not understand. I think it would be well worth trying the winter in Bournemouth; but I would only take the house by the month — this after mature discussion. My leakage still pursues its course; if I were only well, I have a notion to go north and get in (if I could) at the inn at Kirkmichael, which has always smiled upon me much. If I did well there, we might then meet and do what should most smile at the time.

Meanwhile, of course, I must not move, and am in a rancid box here, feeling the heat a great deal, and pretty tired of things. Alexander did a good thing of me at last; it looks like a mixture of an aztec idol, a lion, an Indian Rajah, and a woman; and certainly represents a mighty comic figure. F. and Lloyd both think it is the best thing that has been done of me up to now.

You should hear Lloyd on the penny whistle, and me on the piano! Dear powers, what a concerto! I now live entirely for the piano, he for the whistle; the neighbours, in a radius of a furlong and a half, are packing up in quest of brighter climes. — Ever yours,

R. L. S.

P.S. — Please say if you can afford to let us have money for

this trip, and if so, how much. I can see the year through without help, I believe, and supposing my health to keep up; but can scarce make this change on my own metal.

R. L. S.

Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH, JULY 1886]

DEAR CHARLES, — Doubtless, if all goes well, towards the 1st of August we shall be begging at your door. Thanks for a sight of the papers, which I return (you see) at once, fearing further responsibility.

Glad you like Dauvit; but eh, man, yon's terrible strange conduc' o' thon man Rankeillor. Ca' him a legal adviser! It would make a bonny law-shuit, the Shaws case; and yon paper they signed, I'm thinking, wouldnae be muckle thought o' by Puggy Deas. — Yours ever,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO THOMAS STEVENSON

**[SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH], JULY 28, 1886**

MY DEAR FATHER, — We have decided not to come to

Scotland, but just to do as Dobell wished, and take an outing. I believe this is wiser in all ways; but I own it is a disappointment. I am weary of England; like Alan, 'I weary for the heather,' if not for the deer. Lloyd has gone to Scilly with Katharine and C., where and with whom he should have a good time. David seems really to be going to succeed, which is a pleasant prospect on all sides. I am, I believe, floated financially; a book that sells will be a pleasant novelty. I enclose another review; mighty complimentary, and calculated to sell the book too.

Coolin's tombstone has been got out, honest man! and it is to be polished, for it has got scratched, and have a touch of gilding in the letters, and be sunk in the front of the house. Worthy man, he, too, will maybe weary for the heather, and the bents of Gullane, where (as I dare say you remember) he gaed clean gyte, and jumped on to his crown from a gig, in hot and hopeless chase of many thousand rabbits. I can still hear the little cries of the honest fellow as he disappeared; and my mother will correct me, but I believe it was two days before he turned up again at North Berwick: to judge by his belly, he had caught not one out of these thousands, but he had had some exercise.

I keep well. — Ever your affectionate son,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

BRITISH MUSEUM [AUGUST 10TH, 1886]

MY DEAR MOTHER, — We are having a capital holiday, and I am much better, and enjoying myself to the nines. Richmond is painting my portrait. To-day I lunch with him, and meet Burne-Jones; to-night Browning dines with us. That sounds rather lofty work, does it not? His path was paved with celebrities. To-morrow we leave for Paris, and next week, I suppose, or the week after, come home. Address here, as we may not reach Paris. I am really very well. — Ever your affectionate son,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO T. WATTS-DUNTON

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH [SEPTEMBER 1886]

DEAR MR. WATTS, The sight of the last ATHENAEUM reminds me of you, and of my debt, now too long due. I wish to thank you for your notice of KIDNAPPED; and that not because it was kind, though for that also I valued it, but in the same sense as I have thanked you before now for a hundred articles on a hundred different writers. A critic like you is one who fights the good fight, contending with stupidity, and I would fain hope not

all in vain; in my own case, for instance, surely not in vain.

What you say of the two parts in KIDNAPPED was felt by no one more painfully than by myself. I began it partly as a lark, partly as a pot-boiler; and suddenly it moved, David and Alan stepped out from the canvas, and I found I was in another world. But there was the cursed beginning, and a cursed end must be appended; and our old friend Byles the butcher was plainly audible tapping at the back door. So it had to go into the world, one part (as it does seem to me) alive, one part merely galvanised: no work, only an essay. For a man of tentative method, and weak health, and a scarcity of private means, and not too much of that frugality which is the artist's proper virtue, the days of sinecures and patrons look very golden: the days of professional literature very hard. Yet I do not so far deceive myself as to think I should change my character by changing my epoch; the sum of virtue in our books is in a relation of equality to the sum of virtues in ourselves; and my KIDNAPPED was doomed, while still in the womb and while I was yet in the cradle, to be the thing it is.

And now to the more genial business of defence. You attack my fight on board the COVENANT: I think it literal. David and Alan had every advantage on their side — position, arms, training, a good conscience; a handful of merchant sailors, not well led in the first attack, not led at all in the second, could only by an accident have taken the round-house by attack; and since the defenders had firearms and food, it is even doubtful if they could have been starved out. The only doubtful point

with me is whether the seamen would have ever ventured on the second onslaught; I half believe they would not; still the illusion of numbers and the authority of Hoseason would perhaps stretch far enough to justify the extremity. — I am, dear Mr. Watts, your very sincere admirer,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

SKERRYVORE, SEPTEMBER 4, 1886

NOT roses to the rose, I trow,
The thistle sends, nor to the bee
Do wasps bring honey. Wherefore now
Should Locker ask a verse from me?

Martial, perchance, — but he is dead,
And Herrick now must rhyme no more;
Still burning with the muse, they tread
(And arm in arm) the shadowy shore.

They, if they lived, with dainty hand,
To music as of mountain brooks,
Might bring you worthy words to stand
Unshamed, dear Locker, in your books.

But tho' these fathers of your race
Be gone before, yourself a sire,
To-day you see before your face
Your stalwart youngsters touch the lyre -

On these — on Lang, or Dobson — call,
Long leaders of the songful feast.
They lend a verse your laughing fall -
A verse they owe you at the least.

Letter: TO FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

**[SKERRYVORE], BOURNEMOUTH,
SEPTEMBER 1886**

DEAR LOCKER, — You take my verses too kindly, but you will admit, for such a bluebottle of a versifier to enter the house of Gertrude, where her necklace hangs, was not a little brave. Your kind invitation, I fear, must remain unaccented; and yet — if I am very well — perhaps next spring — (for I mean to be very well) — my wife might... But all that is in the clouds with my better health. And now look here: you are a rich man and know many people, therefore perhaps some of the Governors of Christ's Hospital. If you do, I know a most deserving case, in

which I would (if I could) do anything. To approach you, in this way, is not decent; and you may therefore judge by my doing it, how near this matter lies to my heart. I enclose you a list of the Governors, which I beg you to return, whether or not you shall be able to do anything to help me.

The boy's name is — ; he and his mother are very poor. It may interest you in her cause if I tell you this: that when I was dangerously ill at Hyeres, this brave lady, who had then a sick husband of her own (since dead) and a house to keep and a family of four to cook for, all with her own hands, for they could afford no servant, yet took watch-about with my wife, and contributed not only to my comfort, but to my recovery in a degree that I am not able to limit. You can conceive how much I suffer from my impotence to help her, and indeed I have already shown myself a thankless friend. Let not my cry go up before you in vain! — Yours in hope,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

**SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
SEPTEMBER 1886**

MY DEAR LOCKER, — That I should call myself a man of letters, and land myself in such unfathomable ambiguities! No, my dear Locker, I did not want a cheque; and in my ignorance of

business, which is greater even than my ignorance of literature, I have taken the liberty of drawing a pen through the document and returning it; should this be against the laws of God or man, forgive me. All that I meant by my excessively disgusting reference to your material well-being was the vague notion that a man who is well off was sure to know a Governor of Christ's Hospital; though how I quite arrived at this conclusion I do not see. A man with a cold in the head does not necessarily know a ratcatcher; and the connection is equally close — as it now appears to my awakened and somewhat humbled spirit. For all that, let me thank you in the warmest manner for your friendly readiness to contribute. You say you have hopes of becoming a miser: I wish I had; but indeed I believe you deceive yourself, and are as far from it as ever. I wish I had any excuse to keep your cheque, for it is much more elegant to receive than to return; but I have my way of making it up to you, and I do sincerely beg you to write to the two Governors. This extraordinary outpouring of correspondence would (if you knew my habits) convince you of my great eagerness in this matter. I would promise gratitude; but I have made a promise to myself to make no more promises to anybody else, having broken such a host already, and come near breaking my heart in consequence; and as for gratitude, I am by nature a thankless dog, and was spoiled from a child up. But if you can help this lady in the matter of the Hospital, you will have helped the worthy. Let me continue to hope that I shall make out my visit in the spring, and believe me, yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

It may amuse you to know that a very long while ago, I broke my heart to try to imitate your verses, and failed hopelessly. I saw some of the evidences the other day among my papers, and blushed to the heels.

R. L. S.

I give up finding out your name in the meantime, and keep to that by which you will be known — Frederick Locker.

Letter: TO FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH],
24TH SEPTEMBER 1886**

MY DEAR LOCKER, — You are simply an angel of light, and your two letters have gone to the post; I trust they will reach the hearts of the recipients — at least, that could not be more handsomely expressed. About the cheque: well now, I am going to keep it; but I assure you Mrs. — has never asked me for money, and I would not dare to offer any till she did. For all that I shall stick to the cheque now, and act to that amount as your almoner. In this way I reward myself for the ambiguity of my epistolary style.

I suppose, if you please, you may say your verses are thin (would you so describe an arrow, by the way, and one that struck the gold? It scarce strikes me as exhaustively descriptive), and,

thin or not, they are (and I have found them) inimitably elegant. I thank you again very sincerely for the generous trouble you have taken in this matter which was so near my heart, and you may be very certain it will be the fault of my health and not my inclination, if I do not see you before very long; for all that has past has made me in more than the official sense sincerely yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

SKERRYVORE, DEC. 14, 1886

MY DEAR COLVIN, — This is first-rate of you, the Lord love you for it! I am truly much obliged. He — my father — is very changeable; at times, he seems only a slow quiet edition of himself; again, he will be very heavy and blank; but never so violent as last spring; and therefore, to my mind, better on the whole.

Fanny is pretty peepy; I am splendid. I have been writing much verse — quite the bard, in fact; and also a dam tale to order, which will be what it will be: I don't love it, but some of it is passable in its mouldy way, **THE MISADVENTURES OF JOHN NICHOLSON**. All my bardly exercises are in Scotch; I have struck my somewhat ponderous guitar in that tongue to no small extent: with what success, I know not, but I think it's better than my English verse; more marrow and fatness, and more

ruggedness.

How goes KEATS? Pray remark, if he (Keats) hung back from Shelley, it was not to be wondered at, WHEN SO MANY OF HIS FRIENDS WERE SHELLEY'S PENSIONERS. I forget if you have made this point; it has been borne in upon me reading Dowden and the SHELLEY PAPERS; and it will do no harm if you have made it. I finished a poem to-day, and writ 3000 words of a story, TANT BIEN QUE MAL; and have a right to be sleepy, and (what is far nobler and rarer) am so. — My dear Colvin, ever yours,

THE REAL MACKAY.

Letter: TO FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

**SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
FEBRUARY 5TH, 1887**

MY DEAR LOCKER, — Here I am in my bed as usual, and it is indeed a long while since I went out to dinner. You do not know what a crazy fellow this is. My winter has not so far been luckily passed, and all hope of paying visits at Easter has vanished for twelve calendar months. But because I am a beastly and indurated invalid, I am not dead to human feelings; and I neither have forgotten you nor will forget you. Some day the wind may round to the right quarter and we may meet; till then I am still truly yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO HENRY JAMES

**[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
FEBRUARY 1887.]**

MY DEAR JAMES, — My health has played me it in once more in the absurdest fashion, and the creature who now addresses you is but a stringy and white-faced BOUILLI out of the pot of fever, with the devil to pay in every corner of his economy. I suppose (to judge by your letter) I need not send you these sheets, which came during my collapse by the rush. I am on the start with three volumes, that one of tales, a second one of essays, and one of — ahem — verse. This is a great order, is it not? After that I shall have empty lockers. All new work stands still; I was getting on well with Jenkin when this blessed malady unhorsed me, and sent me back to the dung-collecting trade of the republisher. I shall re-issue VIRG. PUER. as Vol. I. of ESSAYS, and the new vol. as Vol. II. of ditto; to be sold, however, separately. This is but a dry maundering; however, I am quite unfit — 'I am for action quite unfit Either of exercise or wit.' My father is in a variable state; many sorrows and perplexities environ the house of Stevenson; my mother shoots north at this hour on business of a distinctly rancid character; my father (under my wife's tutorage) proceeds to-morrow to Salisbury; I remain

here in my bed and whistle; in no quarter of heaven is anything encouraging apparent, except that the good Colvin comes to the hotel here on a visit. This dreary view of life is somewhat blackened by the fact that my head aches, which I always regard as a liberty on the part of the powers that be. This is also my first letter since my recovery. God speed your laudatory pen!

My wife joins in all warm messages. — Yours,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

(APRIL 1887.)

MY DEAR LOW, — The fares to London may be found in any continental Bradshaw or sich; from London to Bournemouth impoverished parties who can stoop to the third class get their ticket for the matter of 10s., or, as my wife loves to phrase it, 'a half a pound.' You will also be involved in a 3s. fare to get to Skerryvore; but this, I dare say, friends could help you in on your arrival; so that you may reserve your energies for the two tickets — costing the matter of a pound — and the usual gratuities to porters. This does not seem to me much: considering the intellectual pleasures that await you here, I call it dirt cheap. I BELIEVE the third class from Paris to London (VIA Dover) is ABOUT forty francs, but I cannot swear. Suppose it to be fifty.

50x2=100

The expense of spirit or spontaneous lapse of coin on the journey, at 5 frcs. a head, $5 \times 2 = 10$

Victuals on ditto, at 5 frcs. a head, $5 \times 2 = 10$

Gratuity to stewardess, in case of severe prostration, at 3 francs

One night in London, on a modest footing, say 20

Two tickets to Bournemouth at 12.50, $12.50 \times 2 = 25$

Porters and general devilment, say 5

Cabs in London, say 2 shillings, and in Bournemouth, 3 shillings = 5 shillings, 6 frcs. 25

Total frcs. 179.25

Or, the same in pounds, 7 pounds, 3s. 6 and a half d.

Or, the same in dollars, \$35.45,

if there be any arithmetical virtue in me. I have left out dinner in London in case you want to blow out, which would come extry, and with the aid of VANGS FANGS might easily double the whole amount — above all if you have a few friends to meet you.

In making this valuable project, or budget, I discovered for the first time a reason (frequently overlooked) for the singular costliness of travelling with your wife. Anybody would count the tickets double; but how few would have remembered — or indeed has any one ever remembered? — to count the spontaneous lapse of coin double also? Yet there are two of you, each must do his daily leakage, and it must be done out of your travelling fund. You will tell me, perhaps, that you carry the coin yourself: my dear sir, do you think you can fool your Maker?

Your wife has to lose her quota; and by God she will — if you kept the coin in a belt. One thing I have omitted: you will lose a certain amount on the exchange, but this even I cannot foresee, as it is one of the few things that vary with the way a man has. — I am, dear sir, yours financially,

SAMUEL BUDGETT.

Letter: TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

SKERRYVORE, APRIL 16TH, 1887

MY DEAREST CUMMY, — As usual, I have been a dreary bad fellow and not written for ages; but you must just try to forgive me, to believe (what is the truth) that the number of my letters is no measure of the number of times I think of you, and to remember how much writing I have to do. The weather is bright, but still cold; and my father, I'm afraid, feels it sharply. He has had — still has, rather — a most obstinate jaundice, which has reduced him cruelly in strength, and really upset him altogether. I hope, or think, he is perhaps a little better; but he suffers much, cannot sleep at night, and gives John and my mother a severe life of it to wait upon him. My wife is, I think, a little better, but no great shakes. I keep mightily respectable myself.

Coolin's Tombstone is now built into the front wall of Skerryvore, and poor Bogie's (with a Latin inscription also) is set just above it. Poor, unhappy wee man, he died, as you must

have heard, in fight, which was what he would have chosen; for military glory was more in his line than the domestic virtues. I believe this is about all my news, except that, as I write, there is a blackbird singing in our garden trees, as it were at Swanston. I would like fine to go up the burnside a bit, and sit by the pool and be young again — or no, be what I am still, only there instead of here, for just a little. Did you see that I had written about John Todd? In this month's LONGMAN it was; if you have not seen it, I will try and send it you. Some day climb as high as Halkerside for me (I am never likely to do it for myself), and sprinkle some of the well water on the turf. I am afraid it is a pagan rite, but quite harmless, and YE CAN SAIN IT WI' A BIT PRAYER. Tell the Peewies that I mind their forbears well. My heart is sometimes heavy, and sometimes glad to mind it all. But for what we have received, the Lord make us truly thankful. Don't forget to sprinkle the water, and do it in my name; I feel a childish eagerness in this.

Remember me most kindly to James, and with all sorts of love to yourself, believe me, your laddie,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. — I suppose Mrs. Todd ought to see the paper about her man; judge of that, and if you think she would not dislike it, buy her one from me, and let me know. The article is called 'Pastoral,' in LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE for April. I will send you the money; I would to-day, but it's the Sabbie day, and I cannae.

R. L. S.

Remembrances from all here.

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

[EDINBURGH, JUNE 1887.]

MY DEAR S. C., — At last I can write a word to you. Your little note in the P. M. G. was charming. I have written four pages in the CONTEMPORARY, which Bunting found room for: they are not very good, but I shall do more for his memory in time.

About the death, I have long hesitated, I was long before I could tell my mind; and now I know it, and can but say that I am glad. If we could have had my father, that would have been a different thing. But to keep that changeling — suffering changeling — any longer, could better none and nothing. Now he rests; it is more significant, it is more like himself. He will begin to return to us in the course of time, as he was and as we loved him.

My favourite words in literature, my favourite scene — 'O let him pass,' Kent and Lear — was played for me here in the first moment of my return. I believe Shakespeare saw it with his own father. I had no words; but it was shocking to see. He died on his feet, you know; was on his feet the last day, knowing nobody — still he would be up. This was his constant wish; also that he might smoke a pipe on his last day. The funeral would have pleased

him; it was the largest private funeral in man's memory here.

We have no plans, and it is possible we may go home without going through town. I do not know; I have no views yet whatever; nor can have any at this stage of my cold and my business. —
Ever yours,

R. L. S.

CHAPTER IX — THE UNITED STATES AGAIN: WINTER IN THE ADIRONDACKS, AUGUST 1887-OCTOBER 1888

Letter: TO W. E. HENLEY

[SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH], AUGUST 1887

DEAR LAD, — I write to inform you that Mr. Stevenson's well-known work, VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE, is about to be reprinted. At the same time a second volume called MEMORIES AND PORTRAITS will issue from the roaring loom. Its interest will be largely autobiographical, Mr. S. having sketched there the lineaments of many departed friends, and dwelt fondly, and with a m'istened eye, upon bygone pleasures. The two will be issued under the common title of FAMILIAR ESSAYS; but the volumes will be vended separately to those who are mean enough not to hawk at both.

The blood is at last stopped: only yesterday. I began to think I should not get away. However, I hope — I hope — remark the word — no boasting — I hope I may luff up a bit now.

Dobell, whom I saw, gave as usual a good account of my lungs, and expressed himself, like his neighbours, hopefully about the trip. He says, my uncle says, Scott says, Brown says — they all say — You ought not to be in such a state of health; you should recover. Well, then, I mean to. My spirits are rising again after three months of black depression: I almost begin to feel as if I should care to live: I would, by God! And so I believe I shall. — Yours, BULLETIN M'GURDER.

How has the Deacon gone?

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

[SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH], August 6TH, 1887.

MY DEAR LOW, — We — my mother, my wife, my stepson, my maidservant, and myself, five souls — leave, if all is well, Aug. 20th, per Wilson line SS. LUDGATE HILL. Shall probably evade N. Y. at first, cutting straight to a watering-place: Newport, I believe, its name. Afterwards we shall steal incognito into LA BONNE VILLA, and see no one but you and the Scribners, if it may be so managed. You must understand I have been very seedy indeed, quite a dead body; and unless the voyage does miracles, I shall have to draw it dam fine. Alas, 'The Canoe Speaks' is now out of date; it will figure in my volume of verses now imminent. However, I may find some inspiration some day. — Till very soon, yours ever,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO MISS ADELAIDE BOODLE

BOURNEMOUTH, AUGUST 19TH, 1887

MY DEAR MISS BOODLE, — I promise you the paper-knife shall go to sea with me; and if it were in my disposal, I should promise it should return with me too. All that you say, I thank you for very much; I thank you for all the pleasantness that you have brought about our house; and I hope the day may come when I shall see you again in poor old Skerryvore, now left to the natives of Canada, or to worse barbarians, if such exist. I am afraid my attempt to jest is rather A CONTRE-COEUR. Good-bye — AU REVOIR — and do not forget your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MESSRS. CHATTO AND WINDUS

BOURNEMOUTH [AUGUST 1887]

DEAR SIRs, — I here enclose the two titles. Had you not better send me the bargains to sign? I shall be here till Saturday; and shall have an address in London (which I shall send you) till Monday, when I shall sail. Even if the proofs do not reach you till Monday morning, you could send a clerk from Fenchurch Street Station at 10.23 A.M. for Galleons Station, and he would find me embarking on board the LUDGATE HILL, Island Berth, Royal Albert Dock. Pray keep this in case it should be necessary to

catch this last chance. I am most anxious to have the proofs with me on the voyage. — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

**H.M.S. 'VULGARIUM,' OFF HAVRE DE
GRACE, THIS 22ND DAY OF AUGUST [1887]**

SIR, — The weather has been hitherto inimitable. Inimitable is the only word that I can apply to our fellow-voyagers, whom a categorist, possibly premature, has been already led to divide into two classes — the better sort consisting of the baser kind of Bagman, and the worser of undisguised Beasts of the Field. The berths are excellent, the pasture swallowable, the champagne of H. James (to recur to my favourite adjective) inimitable. As for the Commodore, he slept awhile in the evening, tossed off a cup of Henry James with his plain meal, walked the deck till eight, among sands and floating lights and buoys and wrecked brigantines, came down (to his regret) a minute too soon to see Margate lit up, turned in about nine, slept, with some interruptions, but on the whole sweetly, until six, and has already walked a mile or so of deck, among a fleet of other steamers waiting for the tide, within view of Havre, and pleasantly entertained by passing fishing-boats, hovering sea-gulls, and Vulgarians pairing on deck with endearments of

primitive simplicity. There, sir, can be viewed the sham quarrel, the sham desire for information, and every device of these two poor ancient sexes (who might, you might think, have learned in the course of the ages something new) down to the exchange of head- gear. — I am, sir, yours,

BOLD BOB BOLTSPLIT.

B. B. B. (ALIAS the Commodore) will now turn to his proofs. Havre de Grace is a city of some show. It is for-ti-fied; and, so far as I can see, is a place of some trade. It is situ-ated in France, a country of Europe. You always complain there are no facts in my letters.

R. L. S.

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

NEWPORT, R. I. U.S.A. [SEPTEMBER 1887]

MY DEAR COLVIN, — So long it went excellent well, and I had a time I am glad to have had; really enjoying my life. There is nothing like being at sea, after all. And O, why have I allowed myself to rot so long on land? But on the Banks I caught a cold, and I have not yet got over it. My reception here was idiotic to the last degree... It is very silly, and not pleasant, except where humour enters; and I confess the poor interviewer lads pleased me. They are too good for their trade; avoided anything I asked them to avoid, and were no more vulgar in their reports than they

could help. I liked the lads.

O, it was lovely on our stable-ship, chock full of stallions. She rolled heartily, rolled some of the fittings out of our state-room, and I think a more dangerous cruise (except that it was summer) it would be hard to imagine. But we enjoyed it to the masthead, all but Fanny; and even she perhaps a little. When we got in, we had run out of beer, stout, cocoa, soda-water, water, fresh meat, and (almost) of biscuit. But it was a thousandfold pleasanter than a great big Birmingham liner like a new hotel; and we liked the officers, and made friends with the quartermasters, and I (at least) made a friend of a baboon (for we carried a cargo of apes), whose embraces have pretty near cost me a coat. The passengers improved, and were a very good specimen lot, with no drunkard, no gambling that I saw, and less grumbling and backbiting than one would have asked of poor human nature. Apes, stallions, cows, matches, hay, and poor men-folk, all, or almost all, came successfully to land. — Yours ever,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO HENRY JAMES

[NEWPORT, U.S.A., SEPTEMBER 1887.]

MY DEAR JAMES, — Here we are at Newport in the house of the good Fairchilds; and a sad burthen we have laid upon their shoulders. I have been in bed practically ever since I came.

I caught a cold on the Banks after having had the finest time conceivable, and enjoyed myself more than I could have hoped on board our strange floating menagerie: stallions and monkeys and matches made our cargo; and the vast continent of these incongruities rolled the while like a haystack; and the stallions stood hypnotised by the motion, looking through the ports at our dinner-table, and winked when the crockery was broken; and the little monkeys stared at each other in their cages, and were thrown overboard like little bluish babies; and the big monkey, Jacko, scoured about the ship and rested willingly in my arms, to the ruin of my clothing; and the man of the stallions made a bower of the black tarpaulin, and sat therein at the feet of a raddled divinity, like a picture on a box of chocolates; and the other passengers, when they were not sick, looked on and laughed. Take all this picture, and make it roll till the bell shall sound unexpected notes and the fittings shall break lose in our state- room, and you have the voyage of the LUDGATE HILL. She arrived in the port of New York, without beer, porter, soda-water, curacoa, fresh meat, or fresh water; and yet we lived, and we regret her.

My wife is a good deal run down, and I am no great shakes.

America is, as I remarked, a fine place to eat in, and a great place for kindness; but, Lord, what a silly thing is popularity! I envy the cool obscurity of Skerryvore. If it even paid, said Meanness! and was abashed at himself. — Yours most sincerely,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

[NEW YORK: END OF SEPTEMBER 1887.]

MY DEAR S. C., — Your delightful letter has just come, and finds me in a New York hotel, waiting the arrival of a sculptor (St. Gaudens) who is making a medallion of yours truly and who is (to boot) one of the handsomest and nicest fellows I have seen. I caught a cold on the Banks; fog is not for me; nearly died of interviewers and visitors, during twenty-four hours in New York; cut for Newport with Lloyd and Valentine, a journey like fairy-land for the most engaging beauties, one little rocky and pine-shaded cove after another, each with a house and a boat at anchor, so that I left my heart in each and marvelled why American authors had been so unjust to their country; caught another cold on the train; arrived at Newport to go to bed and to grow worse, and to stay in bed until I left again; the Fairchilds proving during this time kindness itself; Mr. Fairchild simply one of the most engaging men in the world, and one of the children, Blair, AET. ten, a great joy and amusement in his solemn adoring attitude to the author of TREASURE ISLAND.

Here I was interrupted by the arrival of my sculptor. I have begged him to make a medallion of himself and give me a copy. I will not take up the sentence in which I was wandering so long, but begin fresh. I was ten or twelve days at Newport; then came back convalescent to New York. Fanny and Lloyd are off to the Adirondacks to see if that will suit; and the rest of us leave

Monday (this is Saturday) to follow them up. I hope we may manage to stay there all winter. I have a splendid appetite and have on the whole recovered well after a mighty sharp attack. I am now on a salary of 500 pounds a year for twelve articles in SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE on what I like; it is more than 500 pounds, but I cannot calculate more precisely. You have no idea how much is made of me here; I was offered 2000 pounds for a weekly article — eh heh! how is that? but I refused that lucrative job. The success of UNDERWOODS is gratifying. You see, the verses are sane; that is their strong point, and it seems it is strong enough to carry them.

A thousand thanks for your grand letter, ever yours,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO W. E. HENLEY

NEW YORK [SEPTEMBER 1887]

MY DEAR LAD, — Herewith verses for Dr. Hake, which please communicate. I did my best with the interviewers; I don't know if Lloyd sent you the result; my heart was too sick: you can do nothing with them; and yet — literally sweated with anxiety to please, and took me down in long hand!

I have been quite ill, but go better. I am being not busted, but medallioned, by St. Gaudens, who is a first-rate, plain, high-minded artist and honest fellow; you would like him down to the

ground. I believe sculptors are fine fellows when they are not demons. O, I am now a salaried person, 600 pounds a year, to write twelve articles in SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE; it remains to be seen if it really pays, huge as the sum is, but the slavery may overweigh me. I hope you will like my answer to Hake, and specially that he will.

Love to all. — Yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

(LE SALARIE).

Letter: To R. A. M. STEVENSON

**SARANAC LAKE, ADIRONDACKS,
NEW YORK, U.S.A. [OCTOBER 1887]**

MY DEAR BOB, — The cold [of Colorado] was too rigorous for me; I could not risk the long railway voyage, and the season was too late to risk the Eastern, Cape Hatteras side of the steamer one; so here we stuck and stick. We have a wooden house on a hill-top, overlooking a river, and a village about a quarter of a mile away, and very wooded hills; the whole scene is very Highland, bar want of heather and the wooden houses.

I have got one good thing of my sea voyage: it is proved the sea agrees heartily with me, and my mother likes it; so if I get any better, or no worse, my mother will likely hire a yacht for a month or so in summer. Good Lord! What fun! Wealth is only

useful for two things: a yacht and a string quartette. For these two I will sell my soul. Except for these I hold that 700 pounds a year is as much as anybody can possibly want; and I have had more, so I know, for the extra coins were for no use, excepting for illness, which damns everything.

I was so happy on board that ship, I could not have believed it possible. We had the beastliest weather, and many discomforts; but the mere fact of its being a tramp-ship gave us many comforts; we could cut about with the men and officers, stay in the wheel-house, discuss all manner of things, and really be a little at sea. And truly there is nothing else. I had literally forgotten what happiness was, and the full mind — full of external and physical things, not full of cares and labours and rot about a fellow's behaviour. My heart literally sang; I truly care for nothing so much as for that. We took so north a course, that we saw Newfoundland; no one in the ship had ever seen it before.

It was beyond belief to me how she rolled; in seemingly smooth water, the bell striking, the fittings bounding out of our state-room. It is worth having lived these last years, partly because I have written some better books, which is always pleasant, but chiefly to have had the joy of this voyage. I have been made a lot of here, and it is sometimes pleasant, sometimes the reverse; but I could give it all up, and agree that — was the author of my works, for a good seventy ton schooner and the coins to keep her on. And to think there are parties with yachts who would make the exchange! I know a little about fame now;

it is no good compared to a yacht; and anyway there is more fame in a yacht, more genuine fame; to cross the Atlantic and come to anchor in Newport (say) with the Union Jack, and go ashore for your letters and hang about the pier, among the holiday yachtsmen — that's fame, that's glory, and nobody can take it away; they can't say your book is bad; you HAVE crossed the Atlantic. I should do it south by the West Indies, to avoid the damned Banks; and probably come home by steamer, and leave the skipper to bring the yacht home.

Well, if all goes well, we shall maybe sail out of Southampton water some of these days and take a run to Havre, and try the Baltic, or somewhere.

Love to you all. — Ever your afft.,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO EDMUND GOSSE

SARANAC LAKE, OCT. 8TH, 1887

MY DEAR GOSSE, — I have just read your article twice, with cheers of approving laughter. I do not believe you ever wrote anything so funny: Tyndall's 'shell,' the passage on the Davos press and its invaluable issues, and that on V. Hugo and Swinburne, are exquisite; so, I say it more ruefully, is the touch about the doctors. For the rest, I am very glad you like my verses so well; and the qualities you ascribe to them seem to me well

found and well named. I own to that kind of candour you attribute to me: when I am frankly interested, I suppose I fancy the public will be so too; and when I am moved, I am sure of it. It has been my luck hitherto to meet with no staggering disillusion. 'Before' and 'After' may be two; and yet I believe the habit is now too thoroughly ingrained to be altered. About the doctors, you were right, that dedication has been the subject of some pleasantries that made me grind, and of your happily touched reproof which made me blush. And to miscarry in a dedication is an abominable form of book-wreck; I am a good captain, I would rather lose the tent and save my dedication.

I am at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks, I suppose for the winter: it seems a first-rate place; we have a house in the eye of many winds, with a view of a piece of running water — Highland, all but the dear hue of peat — and of many hills — Highland also, but for the lack of heather. Soon the snow will close on us; we are here some twenty miles — twenty-seven, they say, but this I profoundly disbelieve — in the woods; communication by letter is slow and (let me be consistent) aleatory; by telegram is as near as may be impossible.

I had some experience of American appreciation; I liked a little of it, but there is too much; a little of that would go a long way to spoil a man; and I like myself better in the woods. I am so damned candid and ingenuous (for a cynic), and so much of a 'cweatu' of impulse — aw' (if you remember that admirable Leech), that I begin to shirk any more taffy; I think I begin to like

it too well. But let us trust the Gods; they have a rod in pickle; reverently I doff my trousers, and with screwed eyes await the AMARI ALIQUID of the great God Busby.

I thank you for the article in all ways, and remain yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO W. H. LOW

[SARANAC, OCTOBER 1887.]

SIR, — I have to trouble you with the following PAROLES BIEN SENTIES. We are here at a first-rate place. 'Baker's' is the name of our house, but we don't address there; we prefer the tender care of the Post-Office, as more aristocratic (it is no use to telegraph even to the care of the Post-Office who does not give a single damn). Baker's has a prophet's chamber, which the hypercritical might describe as a garret with a hole in the floor: in that garret, sir, I have to trouble you and your wife to come and slumber. Not now, however: with manly hospitality, I choke off any sudden impulse. Because first, my wife and my mother are gone (a note for the latter, strongly suspected to be in the hand of your talented wife, now sits silent on the mantel shelf), one to Niagara and t'other to Indianapolis. Because, second, we are not yet installed. And because third, I won't have you till I have a buffalo robe and leggings, lest you should want to paint me as a

plain man, which I am not, but a rank Saranacker and wild man of the woods. — Yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO WILLIAM ARCHER.

SARANAC LAKE, OCTOBER 1887

DEAR ARCHER, — Many thanks for the Wondrous Tale. It is scarcely a work of genius, as I believe you felt. Thanks also for your pencillings; though I defend 'shrew,' or at least many of the shrews.

We are here (I suppose) for the winter in the Adirondacks, a hill and forest country on the Canadian border of New York State, very unsettled and primitive and cold, and healthful, or we are the more bitterly deceived. I believe it will do well for me; but must not boast.

My wife is away to Indiana to see her family; my mother, Lloyd, and I remain here in the cold, which has been exceeding sharp, and the hill air, which is inimitably fine. We all eat bravely, and sleep well, and make great fires, and get along like one o'clock,

I am now a salaried party; I am a BOURGEOIS now; I am to write a weekly paper for Scribner's, at a scale of payment which makes my teeth ache for shame and diffidence. The editor is, I believe, to apply to you; for we were talking over likely men,

and when I instanced you, he said he had had his eye upon you from the first. It is worth while, perhaps, to get in tow with the Scribners; they are such thorough gentlefolk in all ways that it is always a pleasure to deal with them. I am like to be a millionaire if this goes on, and be publicly hanged at the social revolution. well, I would prefer that to dying in my bed; and it would be a godsend to my biographer, if ever I have one. What are you about? I hope you are all well and in good case and spirits, as I am now, after a most nefast experience of despondency before I left; but indeed I was quite run down. Remember me to Mrs. Archer, and give my respects to Tom. — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO HENRY JAMES

**[SARANAC LAKE, OCTOBER 1887.] I know
not the day; but the month it is the drear
October by the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir**

MY DEAR HENRY JAMES, — This is to say FIRST, the voyage was a huge success. We all enjoyed it (bar my wife) to the ground: sixteen days at sea with a cargo of hay, matches, stallions, and monkeys, and in a ship with no style on, and plenty of sailors to talk to, and the endless pleasures of the sea — the romance of it, the sport of the scratch dinner and the smashing crockery, the pleasure — an endless pleasure — of balancing to

the swell: well, it's over.

SECOND, I had a fine time, rather a troubled one, at Newport and New York; saw much of and liked hugely the Fairchilds, St. Gaudens the sculptor, Gilder of the CENTURY — just saw the dear Alexander — saw a lot of my old and admirable friend Will Low, whom I wish you knew and appreciated — was medallioned by St. Gaudens, and at last escaped to

THIRD, Saranac Lake, where we now are, and which I believe we mean to like and pass the winter at. Our house — emphatically 'Baker's' — is on a hill, and has a sight of a stream turning a corner in the valley — bless the face of running water! — and sees some hills too, and the paganly prosaic roofs of Saranac itself; the Lake it does not see, nor do I regret that; I like water (fresh water I mean) either running swiftly among stones, or else largely qualified with whisky. As I write, the sun (which has been long a stranger) shines in at my shoulder; from the next room, the bell of Lloyd's typewriter makes an agreeable music as it patters off (at a rate which astonishes this experienced novelist) the early chapters of a humorous romance; from still further off — the walls of Baker's are neither ancient nor massive — rumours of Valentine about the kitchen stove come to my ears; of my mother and Fanny I hear nothing, for the excellent reason that they have gone sparking off, one to Niagara, one to Indianapolis. People complain that I never give news in my letters. I have wiped out that reproach.

But now, FOURTH, I have seen the article; and it may be

from natural partiality, I think it the best you have written. O — I remember the Gautier, which was an excellent performance; and the Balzac, which was good; and the Daudet, over which I licked my chops; but the R. L. S. is better yet. It is so humorous, and it hits my little frailties with so neat (and so friendly) a touch; and Alan is the occasion for so much happy talk, and the quarrel is so generously praised. I read it twice, though it was only some hours in my possession; and Low, who got it for me from the CENTURY, sat up to finish it ere he returned it; and, sir, we were all delighted. Here is the paper out, nor will anything, not even friendship, not even gratitude for the article, induce me to begin a second sheet; so here with the kindest remembrances and the warmest good wishes, I remain, yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER

SARANAC, 18TH NOVEMBER 1887

MY DEAR CHARLES, — No likely I'm going to waste a sheet of paper... I am offered 1600 pounds (\$8000) for the American serial rights on my next story! As you say, times are changed since the Lothian Road. Well, the Lothian Road was grand fun too; I could take an afternoon of it with great delight. But I'm awfu' grand noo, and long may it last!

Remember me to any of the faithful — if there are any left.

I wish

I could have a crack with you. — Yours ever affectionately,

R. L. S.

I find I have forgotten more than I remembered of business... Please let us know (if you know) for how much Skerryvore is let; you will here detect the female mind; I let it for what I could get; nor shall the possession of this knowledge (which I am happy to have forgot) increase the amount by so much as the shadow of a sixpenny piece; but my females are agog. — Yours ever,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO CHARLES SCRIBNER

[SARANAC, NOVEMBER 20 OR 21, 1887.]

MY DEAR MR. SCRIBNER, — Heaven help me, I am under a curse just now. I have played fast and loose with what I said to you; and that, I beg you to believe, in the purest innocence of mind. I told you you should have the power over all my work in this country; and about a fortnight ago, when M'Clure was here, I calmly signed a bargain for the serial publication of a story. You will scarce believe that I did this in mere oblivion; but I did; and all that I can say is that I will do so no more, and ask you to forgive me. Please write to me soon as to this.

Will you oblige me by paying in for three articles, as already sent, to my account with John Paton & Co., 52 William Street?

This will be most convenient for us.

The fourth article is nearly done; and I am the more deceived, or it is A BUSTER.

Now as to the first thing in this letter, I do wish to hear from you soon; and I am prepared to hear any reproach, or (what is harder to hear) any forgiveness; for I have deserved the worst. —
Yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO E. L. BURLINGAME

SARANAC, NOVEMBER 1887

DEAR MR. BURLINGAME, — I enclose corrected proof of BEGGARS, which seems good. I mean to make a second sermon, which, if it is about the same length as PULVIS ET UMBRA, might go in along with it as two sermons, in which case I should call the first 'The Whole Creation,' and the second 'Any Good.' We shall see; but you might say how you like the notion.

One word: if you have heard from Mr. Scribner of my unhappy oversight in the matter of a story, you will make me ashamed to write to you, and yet I wish to beg you to help me into quieter waters. The oversight committed — and I do think it was not so bad as Mr. Scribner seems to think it-and discovered, I was in a miserable position. I need not tell you that my first impulse was to offer to share or to surrender the price agreed upon when

it should fall due; and it is almost to my credit that I arranged to refrain. It is one of these positions from which there is no escape; I cannot undo what I have done. And I wish to beg you — should Mr. Scribner speak to you in the matter — to try to get him to see this neglect of mine for no worse than it is: unpardonable enough, because a breach of an agreement; but still pardonable, because a piece of sheer carelessness and want of memory, done, God knows, without design and since most sincerely regretted. I have no memory. You have seen how I omitted to reserve the American rights in JEKYLL: last winter I wrote and demanded, as an increase, a less sum than had already been agreed upon for a story that I gave to Cassell's. For once that my forgetfulness has, by a cursed fortune, seemed to gain, instead of lose, me money, it is painful indeed that I should produce so poor an impression on the mind of Mr. Scribner. But I beg you to believe, and if possible to make him believe, that I am in no degree or sense a FAISEUR, and that in matters of business my design, at least, is honest. Nor (bating bad memory and self-deception) am I untruthful in such affairs.

If Mr. Scribner shall have said nothing to you in the matter, please regard the above as unwritten, and believe me, yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO E. L. BURLINGAME

SARANAC, NOVEMBER 1887

DEAR MR. BURLINGAME, — The revise seemed all right, so I did not trouble you with it; indeed, my demand for one was theatrical, to impress that obdurate dog, your reader. Herewith a third paper: it has been a cruel long time upon the road, but here it is, and not bad at last, I fondly hope. I was glad you liked the **LANTERN BEARERS**; I did, too. I thought it was a good paper, really contained some excellent sense, and was ingeniously put together. I have not often had more trouble than I have with these papers; thirty or forty pages of foul copy, twenty is the very least I have had. Well, you pay high; it is fit that I should have to work hard, it somewhat quiets my conscience. — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO J. A. SYMONDS

**SARANAC LAKE, ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS,
NEW YORK, U.S.A., NOVEMBER 21, 1887**

MY DEAR SYMONDS, — I think we have both meant and wanted to write to you any time these months; but we have been much tossed about, among new faces and old, and new scenes and old, and scenes (like this of Saranac) which are neither one nor other. To give you some clue to our affairs, I had best begin

pretty well back. We sailed from the Thames in a vast bucket of iron that took seventeen days from shore to shore. I cannot describe how I enjoyed the voyage, nor what good it did me; but on the Banks I caught friend catarrh. In New York and then in Newport I was pretty ill; but on my return to New York, lying in bed most of the time, with St. Gaudens the sculptor sculpting me, and my old friend Low around, I began to pick up once more. Now here we are in a kind of wilderness of hills and firwoods and boulders and snow and wooden houses. So far as we have gone the climate is grey and harsh, but hungry and somnolent; and although not charming like that of Davos, essentially bracing and briskening. The country is a kind of insane mixture of Scotland and a touch of Switzerland and a dash of America, and a thought of the British Channel in the skies. We have a decent house -

DECEMBER 6TH.

— A decent house, as I was saying, sir, on a hill-top, with a look down a Scottish river in front, and on one hand a Perthshire hill; on the other, the beginnings and skirts of the village play hide and seek among other hills. We have been below zero, I know not how far (10 at 8 A.M. once), and when it is cold it is delightful; but hitherto the cold has not held, and we have chopped in and out from frost to thaw, from snow to rain, from quiet air to the most disastrous north-westerly curdlers of the blood. After a week of practical thaw, the ice still bears in favoured places. So there is hope.

I wonder if you saw my book of verses? It went into a second

edition, because of my name, I suppose, and its PROSE merits. I do not set up to be a poet. Only an all-round literary man: a man who talks, not one who sings. But I believe the very fact that it was only speech served the book with the public. Horace is much a speaker, and see how popular! most of Martial is only speech, and I cannot conceive a person who does not love his Martial; most of Burns, also, such as 'The Louse,' 'The Toothache,' 'The Haggis,' and lots more of his best. Excuse this little apology for my house; but I don't like to come before people who have a note of song, and let it be supposed I do not know the difference.

To return to the more important — news. My wife again suffers in high and cold places; I again profit. She is off to-day to New York for a change, as heretofore to Berne, but I am glad to say in better case than then. Still it is undeniable she suffers, and you must excuse her (at least) if we both prove bad correspondents. I am decidedly better, but I have been terribly cut up with business complications: one disagreeable, as threatening loss; one, of the most intolerable complexion, as involving me in dishonour. The burthen of consistent carelessness: I have lost much by it in the past; and for once (to my damnation) I have gained. I am sure you will sympathise. It is hard work to sleep; it is hard to be told you are a liar, and have to hold your peace, and think, 'Yes, by God, and a thief too!' You remember my lectures on Ajax, or the Unintentional Sin? Well, I know all about that now. Nothing seems so unjust to the sufferer: or is more just in essence.

LAISSEZ PASSER LA JUSTICE DE DIEU.

Lloyd has learned to use the typewriter, and has most gallantly completed upon that the draft of a tale, which seems to me not without merit and promise, it is so silly, so gay, so absurd, in spots (to my partial eyes) so genuinely humorous. It is true, he would not have written it but for the New Arabian Nights; but it is strange to find a young writer funny. Heavens, but I was depressing when I took the pen in hand! And now I doubt if I am sadder than my neighbours. Will this beginner move in the inverse direction?

Let me have your news, and believe me, my dear Symonds, with genuine affection, yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO W. E. HENLEY

SARANAC [DECEMBER 1887]

MY DEAR LAD, — I was indeed overjoyed to hear of the Dumas. In the matter of the dedication, are not cross dedications a little awkward? Lang and Rider Haggard did it, to be sure. Perpend. And if you should conclude against a dedication, there is a passage in MEMORIES AND PORTRAITS written AT you, when I was most desperate (to stir you up a bit), which might be quoted: something about Dumas still waiting his biographer. I have a decent time when the weather is fine; when it is grey, or

windy, or wet (as it too often is), I am merely degraded to the dirt. I get some work done every day with a devil of a heave; not extra good ever; and I regret my engagement. Whiles I have had the most deplorable business annoyances too; have been threatened with having to refund money; got over that; and found myself in the worse scrape of being a kind of unintentional swindler. These have worried me a great deal; also old age with his stealing steps seems to have clawed me in his clutch to some tune.

Do you play All Fours? We are trying it; it is still all haze to me. Can the elder hand BEG more than once? The Port Admiral is at Boston mingling with millionaires. I am but a weed on Lethe wharf. The wife is only so-so. The Lord lead us all: if I can only get off the stage with clean hands, I shall sing Hosanna. 'Put' is described quite differently from your version in a book I have; what are your rules? The Port Admiral is using a game of put in a tale of his, the first copy of which was gloriously finished about a fortnight ago, and the revise gallantly begun: THE FINSBURY TONTINE it is named, and might fill two volumes, and is quite incredibly silly, and in parts (it seems to me) pretty humorous. — Love to all from

AN OLD, OLD MAN.

I say, Taine's ORIGINES DE LA FRANCE CONTEMPORAINE is no end; it would turn the dead body of Charles Fox into a living Tory.

Letter: TO MRS. FLEEMING JENKIN

[SARANAC LAKE, DECEMBER 1887.]

MY DEAR MRS. JENKIN, — The Opal is very well; it is fed with glycerine when it seems hungry. I am very well, and get about much more than I could have hoped. My wife is not very well; there is no doubt the high level does not agree with her, and she is on the move for a holiday to New York. Lloyd is at Boston on a visit, and I hope has a good time. My mother is really first-rate; she and I, despairing of other games for two, now play All Fours out of a gamebook, and have not yet discovered its niceties, if any.

You will have heard, I dare say, that they made a great row over me here. They also offered me much money, a great deal more than my works are worth: I took some of it, and was greedy and hasty, and am now very sorry. I have done with big prices from now out. Wealth and self-respect seem, in my case, to be strangers.

We were talking the other day of how well Fleeming managed to grow rich. Ah, that is a rare art; something more intellectual than a virtue. The book has not yet made its appearance here; the life alone, with a little preface, is to appear in the States; and the Scribners are to send you half the royalties. I should like it to do well, for Fleeming's sake.

Will you please send me the Greek water-carrier's song? I have a particular use for it.

Have I any more news, I wonder? — and echo wonders along with me. I am strangely disquieted on all political matters; and I do not know if it is 'the signs of the times' or the sign of my own time of life. But to me the sky seems black both in France and England, and only partly clear in America. I have not seen it so dark in my time; of that I am sure.

Please let us have some news; and, excuse me, for the sake of my well-known idleness; and pardon Fanny, who is really not very well, for this long silence. — Very sincerely your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO MISS ADELAIDE BOODLE

[SARANAC LAKE, DECEMBER 1887.]

MY DEAR MISS BOODLE, — I am so much afraid, our gamekeeper may weary of unacknowledged reports! Hence, in the midst of a perfect horror of detestable weathers of a quite incongruous strain, and with less desire for correspondence than — well, than — well, with no desire for correspondence, behold me dash into the breach. Do keep up your letters. They are most delightful to this exiled backwoods family; and in your next, we shall hope somehow or other to hear better news of you and yours — that in the first place — and to hear more news of our beasts and birds and kindly fruits of earth and those human tenants who are (truly) too much with us.

I am very well; better than for years: that is for good. But then my wife is no great shakes; the place does not suit her — it is my private opinion that no place does — and she is now away down to New York for a change, which (as Lloyd is in Boston) leaves my mother and me and Valentine alone in our wind-beleaguered hilltop hatbox of a house. You should hear the cows butt against the walls in the early morning while they feed; you should also see our back log when the thermometer goes (as it does go) away — away below zero, till it can be seen no more by the eye of man — not the thermometer, which is still perfectly visible, but the mercury, which curls up into the bulb like a hibernating bear; you should also see the lad who 'does chores' for us, with his red stockings and his thirteen year old face, and his highly manly tramp into the room; and his two alternative answers to all questions about the weather: either 'Cold,' or with a really lyrical movement of the voice, 'LOVELY — raining!'

Will you take this miserable scarp for what it is worth? Will you also understand that I am the man to blame, and my wife is really almost too much out of health to write, or at least doesn't write? — And believe me, with kind remembrance to Mrs. Boodle and your sisters, very sincerely yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER

SARANAC, 12TH DECEMBER '87

Give us news of all your folk. A Merry Christmas from all of us.

MY DEAR CHARLES, — Will you please send 20 pounds to — for a Christmas gift from — ? Moreover, I cannot remember what I told you to send to — ; but as God has dealt so providentially with me this year, I now propose to make it 20 pounds.

I beg of you also to consider my strange position. I jined a club which it was said was to defend the Union; and had a letter from the secretary, which his name I believe was Lord Warmingpan (or words to that effect), to say I am elected, and had better pay up a certain sum of money, I forget what. Now I cannae verra weel draw a blank cheque and send to -

LORD WARMINGPAN (or words to that effect),
London, England.

And, man, if it was possible, I would be dooms glad to be out o' this bit scrapie. Mebbe the club was ca'd 'The Union,' but I wouldnae like to sweir; and mebbe it wasnae, or mebbe only words to that effec' — but I wouldnae care just exac'ly about sweirin'. Do ye no think Henley, or Pollick, or some o' they London fellies, micht mebbe perhaps find out for me? and just what the soom was? And that you would aiblins pay for me? For I thocht I was sae dam patriotic jinin', and it would be a kind o'

a come-down to be turned out again. Mebbe Lang would ken; or mebbe Rider Haggyard: they're kind o' Union folks. But it's my belief his name was Warmingpan whatever. Yours,

THOMSON, ALIAS ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Could it be Warminster?

Letter: TO MISS MONROE

**SARANAC LAKE, NEW
YORK [DECEMBER 19, 1887]**

DEAR MISS MONROE, — Many thanks for your letter and your good wishes. It was much my desire to get to Chicago: had I done — or if I yet do — so, I shall hope to see the original of my photograph, which is one of my show possessions; but the fates are rather contrary. My wife is far from well; I myself dread worse than almost any other imaginable peril, that miraculous and really insane invention the American Railroad Car. Heaven help the man — may I add the woman — that sets foot in one! Ah, if it were only an ocean to cross, it would be a matter of small thought to me — and great pleasure. But the railroad car — every man has his weak point; and I fear the railroad car as abjectly as I do an earwig, and, on the whole, on better grounds. You do not know how bitter it is to have to make such a confession; for you have not the pretension nor the weakness of a man. If I do get to Chicago, you will hear of me: so much can be said. And do

you never come east?

I was pleased to recognise a word of my poor old Deacon in your letter. It would interest me very much to hear how it went and what you thought of piece and actors; and my collaborator, who knows and respects the photograph, would be pleased too. — Still in the hope of seeing you, I am, yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO HENRY JAMES

SARANAC LAKE, WINTER 1887-8

MY DEAR HENRY JAMES, — It may please you to know how our family has been employed. In the silence of the snow the afternoon lamp has lighted an eager fireside group: my mother reading, Fanny, Lloyd, and I devoted listeners; and the work was really one of the best works I ever heard; and its author is to be praised and honoured; and what do you suppose is the name of it? and have you ever read it yourself? and (I am bound I will get to the bottom of the page before I blow the gaff, if I have to fight it out on this line all summer; for if you have not to turn a leaf, there can be no suspense, the conspectory eye being swift to pick out proper names; and without suspense, there can be little pleasure in this world, to my mind at least) — and, in short, the name of it is RODERICK HUDSON, if you please. My dear James, it is

very spirited, and very sound, and very noble too. Hudson, Mrs. Hudson, Rowland, O, all first-rate: Rowland a very fine fellow; Hudson as good as he can stick (did you know Hudson? I suspect you did), Mrs. H. his real born mother, a thing rarely managed in fiction.

We are all keeping pretty fit and pretty hearty; but this letter is not from me to you, it is from a reader of R. H. to the author of the same, and it says nothing, and has nothing to say, but thank you.

We are going to re-read CASAMASSIMA as a proper pendant. Sir, I think these two are your best, and care not who knows it.

May I beg you, the next time RODERICK is printed off, to go over the sheets of the last few chapters, and strike out 'immense' and 'tremendous'? You have simply dropped them there like your pocket- handkerchief; all you have to do is to pick them up and pouch them, and your room — what do I say? — your cathedral! — will be swept and garnished. — I am, dear sir, your delighted reader,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. — Perhaps it is a pang of causeless honesty, perhaps. I hope it will set a value on my praise of RODERICK, perhaps it's a burst of the diabolic, but I must break out with the news that I can't bear the PORTRAIT OF A LADY. I read it all, and I wept too; but I can't stand your having written it; and I beg you will write no more of the like. INFRA, sir; Below you: I can't help

it — it may be your favourite work, but in my eyes it's BELOW YOU to write and me to read. I thought RODERICK was going to be another such at the beginning; and I cannot describe my pleasure as I found it taking bones and blood, and looking out at me with a moved and human countenance, whose lineaments are written in my memory until my last of days.

R. L. S.

My wife begs your forgiveness; I believe for her silence.
Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

SARANAC LAKE [DECEMBER 1887]

MY DEAR COLVIN, — This goes to say that we are all fit, and the place is very bleak and wintry, and up to now has shown no such charms of climate as Davos, but is a place where men eat and where the cattarrh, catarrh (cattarrh, or cattarrhh) appears to be unknown. I walk in my verandy in the snaw, sir, looking down over one of those dabbled wintry landscapes that are (to be frank) so chilly to the human bosom, and up at a grey, English — nay, MEHERCLE, Scottish — heaven; and I think it pretty bleak; and the wind swoops at me round the corner, like a lion, and fluffs the snow in my face; and I could aspire to be elsewhere; but yet I do not catch cold, and yet, when I come in, I eat. So that hitherto Saranac, if not deliriously delectable, has not been a failure; nay, from the mere point of view of the wicked body,

it has proved a success. But I wish I could still get to the woods; alas, NOUS N'IRONS PLUS AU BOIS is my poor song; the paths are buried, the dingles drifted full, a little walk is grown a long one; till spring comes, I fear the burthen will hold good.

I get along with my papers for SCRIBNER not fast, nor so far specially well; only this last, the fourth one (which makes a third part of my whole task), I do believe is pulled off after a fashion. It is a mere sermon: 'Smith opens out'; but it is true, and I find it touching and beneficial, to me at least; and I think there is some fine writing in it, some very apt and pregnant phrases. PULVIS ET UMBRA, I call it; I might have called it a Darwinian Sermon, if I had wanted. Its sentiments, although parsonic, will not offend even you, I believe. The other three papers, I fear, bear many traces of effort, and the unguine inspiration of an income at so much per essay, and the honest desire of the incomer to give good measure for his money. Well, I did my damndest anyway.

We have been reading H. James's RODERICK HUDSON, which I eagerly press you to get at once: it is a book of a high order — the last volume in particular. I wish Meredith would read it. It took my breath away.

I am at the seventh book of the AENEID, and quite amazed at its merits (also very often floored by its difficulties). The Circe passage at the beginning, and the sublime business of Amata with the simile of the boy's top — O Lord, what a happy thought! — have specially delighted me. — I am, dear sir, your respected friend,

JOHN GREGG GILLSON, J.P., M.R.I.A., etc

Letter: TO SIDNEY COLVIN

[SARANAC, DECEMBER 24, 1887.]

MY DEAR COLVIN, — Thank you for your explanations. I have done no more Virgil since I finished the seventh book, for I have, first been eaten up with Taine, and next have fallen head over heels into a new tale, THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE. No thought have I now apart from it, and I have got along up to page ninety-two of the draft with great interest. It is to me a most seizing tale: there are some fantastic elements; the most is a dead genuine human problem — human tragedy, I should say rather. It will be about as long, I imagine, as KIDNAPPED.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

(1) My old Lord Durrisdeer. (2) The Master of Ballantrae, AND (3) Henry Durie, HIS SONS. (4) Clementina, ENGAGED TO THE FIRST, MARRIED TO THE SECOND. (5) Ephraim Mackellar, LAND STEWARD AT DURRISDEER AND NARRATOR OF THE MOST OF THE BOOK. (6) Francis Burke, Chevalier de St. Louis, ONE OF PRINCE CHARLIE'S IRISHMEN AND NARRATOR OF THE REST.

Besides these, many instant figures, most of them dumb or nearly so: Jessie Brown the whore, Captain Crail, Captain MacCombie, our old friend Alan Breck, our old friend Riach

(both only for an instant), Teach the pirate (vulgarly Blackbeard), John Paul and Macconochie, servants at Durrissdeer. The date is from 1745 to '65 (about). The scene, near Kirkcudbright, in the States, and for a little moment in the French East Indies. I have done most of the big work, the quarrel, duel between the brothers, and announcement of the death to Clementina and my Lord — Clementina, Henry, and Mackellar (nicknamed Squaretoes) are really very fine fellows; the Master is all I know of the devil. I have known hints of him, in the world, but always cowards; he is as bold as a lion, but with the same deadly, causeless duplicity I have watched with so much surprise in my two cowards. 'Tis true, I saw a hint of the same nature in another man who was not a coward; but he had other things to attend to; the Master has nothing else but his devilry. Here come my visitors — and have now gone, or the first relay of them; and I hope no more may come. For mark you, sir, this is our 'day' — Saturday, as ever was, and here we sit, my mother and I, before a large wood fire and await the enemy with the most steadfast courage; and without snow and greyness: and the woman Fanny in New York for her health, which is far from good; and the lad Lloyd at the inn in the village because he has a cold; and the handmaid Valentine abroad in a sleigh upon her messages; and to-morrow Christmas and no mistake. Such is human life: LA CARRIERE HUMAINE. I will enclose, if I remember, the required autograph.

I will do better, put it on the back of this page. Love to all,

and mostly, my very dear Colvin, to yourself. For whatever I say or do, or don't say or do, you may be very sure I am, — Yours always affectionately,

R. L. S.

Letter: TO MISS ADELAIDE BOODLE

**SARANAC LAKE, ADIRONDACKS,
N.Y., U.S.A., CHRISTMAS 1887**

MY DEAR MISS BOODLE, — And a very good Christmas to you all; and better fortune; and if worse, the more courage to support it — which I think is the kinder wish in all human affairs. Somewhile — I fear a good while — after this, you should receive our Christmas gift; we have no tact and no taste, only a welcome and (often) tonic brutality; and I dare say the present, even after my friend Baxter has acted on and reviewed my hints, may prove a White Elephant. That is why I dread presents. And therefore pray understand if any element of that hamper prove unwelcome, IT IS TO BE EXCHANGED. I will not sit down under the name of a giver of White Elephants. I never had any elephant but one, and his initials were R. L. S.; and he trod on my foot at a very early age. But this is a fable, and not in the least to the point: which is that if, for once in my life, I have wished to make things nicer for anybody but the Elephant (see fable), do not suffer me to have made them ineffably more embarrassing,

and exchange — ruthlessly exchange!

For my part, I am the most cockered up of any mortal being; and one of the healthiest, or thereabout, at some modest distance from the bull's eye. I am condemned to write twelve articles in SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE for the love of gain; I think I had better send you them; what is far more to the purpose, I am on the jump with a new story which has bewitched me — I doubt it may bewitch no one else. It is called THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE — pronounce Ballan-tray. If it is not good, well, mine will be the fault; for I believe it is a good tale.

The greetings of the season to you, and your mother, and your sisters. My wife heartily joins. — And I am, yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. — You will think me an illiterate dog: I am, for the first time, reading ROBERTSON'S SERMONS. I do not know how to express how much I think of them. If by any chance you should be as illiterate as I, and not know them, it is worth while curing the defect.

R. L. S.

Letter: TO CHARLES BAXTER

SARANAC LAKE, JANUARY '88

DEAR CHARLES, — You are the flower of Doers... Will my doer collaborate thus much in my new novel? In the year 1794 or

5, Mr. Ephraim Mackellar, A.M., late. steward on the Durrisdeer estates, completed a set of memoranda (as long as a novel) with regard to the death of the (then) late Lord Durrisdeer, and as to that of his attainted elder brother, called by the family courtesy title the Master of Ballantrae. These he placed in the hands of John Macbrair. W.S., the family agent, on the understanding they were to be sealed until 1862, when a century would have elapsed since the affair in the wilderness (my lord's death). You succeeded Mr. Macbrair's firm; the Durrisdeers are extinct; and last year, in an old green box, you found these papers with Macbrair's indorsation. It is that indorsation of which I want a copy; you may remember, when you gave me the papers, I neglected to take that, and I am sure you are a man too careful of antiquities to have let it fall aside. I shall have a little introduction descriptive of my visit to Edinburgh, arrival there, dinner with yourself, and first reading of the papers in your smoking-room: all of which, of course, you well remember. — Ever yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

Your name is my friend Mr. Johnstone Thomson, W.S.!!!
Letter: TO E. L. BURLINGAME

SARANAC, WINTER 1887-8

DEAR MR. BURLINGAME, — I am keeping the sermon

to see if I can't add another. Meanwhile, I will send you very soon a different paper which may take its place. Possibly some of these days soon I may get together a talk on things current, which should go in (if possible) earlier than either. I am now less nervous about these papers; I believe I can do the trick without great strain, though the terror that breathed on my back in the beginning is not yet forgotten.

THE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE I have had to leave aside, as I was quite worked out. But in about a week I hope to try back and send you the first four numbers: these are all drafted, it is only the revision that has broken me down, as it is often the hardest work. These four I propose you should set up for me at once, and we'll copyright 'em in a pamphlet. I will tell you the names of the BONA FIDE purchasers in England.

The numbers will run from twenty to thirty pages of my manuscript. You can give me that much, can you not? It is a howling good tale — at least these first four numbers are; the end is a trifle more fantastic, but 'tis all picturesque.

Don't trouble about any more French books; I am on another scent, you see, just now. Only the FRENCH IN HINDUSTAN I await with impatience, as that is for BALLANTRAE. The scene of that romance is Scotland — the States — Scotland — India — Scotland — and the States again; so it jumps like a flea. I have enough about the States now, and very much obliged I am; yet if Drake's TRAGEDIES OF the WILDERNESS is (as I gather) a collection of originals, I should like to purchase it. If

it is a picturesque vulgarisation, I do not wish to look it in the face. Purchase, I say; for I think it would be well to have some such collection by me with a view to fresh works. — Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S. — If you think of having the MASTER illustrated, I suggest that Hole would be very well up to the Scottish, which is the larger part. If you have it done here, tell your artist to look at the hall of Craigievar in Billing's BARONIAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL ANTIQUITIES, and he will get a broad hint for the hall at Durrisdere: it is, I think, the chimney of Craigievar and the roof of Pinkie, and perhaps a little more of Pinkie altogether; but I should have to see the book myself to be sure. Hole would be invaluable for this. I dare say if you had it illustrated, you could let me have one or two for the English edition.

R. L. S.

Letter: TO WILLIAM ARCHER

[SARANAC, WINTER 1887-8.]

MY DEAR ARCHER, — What am I to say? I have read your friend's book with singular relish. If he has written any other, I beg you will let me see it; and if he has not, I beg him to lose no time in supplying the deficiency. It is full of promise; but I

should like to know his age. There are things in it that are very clever, to which I attach small importance; it is the shape of the age. And there are passages, particularly the rally in presence of the Zulu king, that show genuine and remarkable narrative talent — a talent that few will have the wit to understand, a talent of strength, spirit, capacity, sufficient vision, and sufficient self-sacrifice, which last is the chief point in a narrator.

As a whole, it is (of course) a fever dream of the most feverish. Over Bashville the footman I howled with derision and delight; I dote on Bashville — I could read of him for ever; **DE BASHVILLE JE SUIS LE FERVENT** — there is only one Bashville, and I am his devoted slave; **BASHVILLE EST MAGNIFIQUE, MAIS IL N'EST GUERE POSSIBLE**. He is the note of the book. It is all mad, mad and deliriously delightful; the author has a taste in chivalry like Walter Scott's or Dumas', and then he daubs in little bits of socialism; he soars away on the wings of the romantic griffon — even the griffon, as he cleaves air, shouting with laughter at the nature of the quest — and I believe in his heart he thinks he is labouring in a quarry of solid granite realism.

It is this that makes me — the most hardened adviser now extant — stand back and hold my peace. If Mr. Shaw is below five-and- twenty, let him go his path; if he is thirty, he had best be told that he is a romantic, and pursue romance with his eyes open; — or perhaps he knows it; — God knows! — my brain is softened.

It is HORRID FUN. All I ask is more of it. Thank you for the pleasure you gave us, and tell me more of the inimitable author. (I say, Archer, my God, what women!) — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO WILLIAM ARCHER

SARANAC, FEBRUARY 1888

MY DEAR ARCHER, — Pretty sick in bed; but necessary to protest and continue your education.

Why was Jenkin an amateur in my eyes? You think because not amusing (I think he often was amusing). The reason is this: I never, or almost never, saw two pages of his work that I could not have put in one without the smallest loss of material. That is the only test I know of writing. If there is anywhere a thing said in two sentences that could have been as clearly and as engagingly and as forcibly said in one, then it's amateur work. Then you will bring me up with old Dumas. Nay, the object of a story is to be long, to fill up hours; the story-teller's art of writing is to water out by continual invention, historical and technical, and yet not seem to water; seem on the other hand to practise that same wit of conspicuous and declaratory condensation which is the proper art of writing. That is one thing in which my stories fail: I am always cutting the flesh off their bones.

I would rise from the dead to preach!

Hope all well. I think my wife better, but she's not allowed to write; and this (only wrung from me by desire to Boss and Parsonise and Dominate, strong in sickness) is my first letter for days, and will likely be my last for many more. Not blame my wife for her silence: doctor's orders. All much interested by your last, and fragment from brother, and anecdotes of Tomarcher. —
The sick but still Moral

R. L. S.

Tell Shaw to hurry up: I want another.

Letter: TO WILLIAM ARCHER

[SARANAC, SPRING 1888?]

MY DEAR ARCHER, — It happened thus. I came forth from that performance in a breathing heat of indignation. (Mind, at this distance of time and with my increased knowledge, I admit there is a problem in the piece; but I saw none then, except a problem in brutality; and I still consider the problem in that case not established.) On my way down the FRANCAIS stairs, I trod on an old gentleman's toes, whereupon with that suavity that so well becomes me, I turned about to apologise, and on the instant, repenting me of that intention, stopped the apology midway, and added something in French to this effect: No, you are one of the LACHES who have been applauding that piece. I retract my apology. Said the old Frenchman, laying his hand on my arm,

and with a smile that was truly heavenly in temperance, irony, good-nature, and knowledge of the world, 'Ah, monsieur, vous etes bien jeune!' — Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Letter: TO E. L. BURLINGAME

SARANAC [FEBRUARY 1888]

DEAR MR. BURLINGAME, — Will you send me (from the library) some of the works of my dear old G. P. R. James. With the following especially I desire to make or to renew acquaintance: THE SONGSTER, THE GIPSY, THE CONVICT, THE STEPMOTHER, THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL, THE ROBBER.

EXCUSEZ DU PEU.

This sudden return to an ancient favourite hangs upon an accident. The 'Franklin County Library' contains two works of his, THE CAVALIER and MORLEY ERNSTEIN. I read the first with indescribable amusement — it was worse than I had feared, and yet somehow engaging; the second (to my surprise) was better than I had dared to hope: a good honest, dull, interesting tale, with a genuine old-fashioned talent in the invention when not strained; and a genuine old-fashioned feeling for the English language. This experience awoke appetite, and you see I have taken steps to stay it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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