

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE WORKS OF ROBERT
LOUIS STEVENSON –
SWANSTON EDITION, VOL.
1

Роберт Льюис Стивенсон

**The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson
– Swanston Edition, Volume 1**

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Robert Louis Stevenson

The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson – Swanston Edition, Vol. 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SWANSTON EDITION

So much has been written on R. L. Stevenson, as a boy, a man, and a man of letters, so much has been written both by himself and others, that I can hope to add nothing essential to the world's knowledge of his character and appreciation of his genius. What is essential has been said, once for all, by Sir Sidney Colvin in "Notes and Introductions" to R. L. S.'s "Letters to His Family and Friends." I can but contribute the personal views of one who knew, loved, and esteemed his junior that is already a classic; but who never was of the inner circle of his intimates. We shared, however, a common appreciation of his genius, for he was not so dull as to suppose, or so absurd as to pretend to suppose, that much of his work was not excellent. His tale "Thrawn Janet" "is good," he says in a letter, with less vigour than but with as much truth as Thackeray exclaiming "that's genius," when he describes Becky's admiration of Rawdon's treatment of Lord Steyne, in the affray in Curzon Street. About the work of other men and novelists, or poets, we were almost invariably of the same mind; we were of one mind about the great Charles Gordon. "He was filled," too, "with enthusiasm for Joan of Arc," says his biographer, "a devotion, and also a cool headed admiration, which he never lost." In a letter he quotes Byron as having said that Jeanne "was a fanatical strumpet," and he cries shame on the noble poet. He projected an essay on the Blessed Maid, which is not in "the veniable part of things lost."

Thus we were so much of the same sentiments, in so many ways, that I can hope to speak with sympathy, if not always with complete understanding, of Stevenson. Like a true Scot, he was interested in his ancestry, his heredity; regarding Robert Fergusson, the young Scottish poet, who died so young, in an asylum, as his spiritual forefather, and hoping to attach himself to a branch of the Royal Clan Alpine, the MacGregors, as the root of the Stevensons. Of Fergusson, he had, in early youth, the waywardness, the liking for taverns and tavern talk, the half-rueful appreciation of the old closes and wynds of Old Edinburgh, a touch of the recklessness and more than all the pictorial power which, in Fergusson, Burns so magnanimously admired.

But genealogical research shows that Stevenson drew nothing from the dispossessed MacGregors, a clan greatly wronged, from Robert Bruce's day, and greatly given to wronging others. Alan Breck did not like "the Gregara," apart from their courage, and in Alan's day they were not consistent walkers.

Stevenson, as far as one can learn, had no Celtic blood; none, at least, of traceable infusion: he was more purely Lowland than Sir Walter Scott. His paternal line could be traced back to a West Country Stevenson of 1675; probably a tenant farmer, who was contemporary with the Whig rising at Bothwell Bridge, with the murder of Archbishop Sharp, with Claverhouse, and Sir George Mackenzie, called "the bloody Advocate." An earnest student of Mr. Wodrow's "History of the Sufferings," Louis did not find "James Stevenson in Nether Carsewell" among the many martyrs who live in the *Libre d'Or* of the Remnant. But he had "a Covenanting childhood;" his father, Mr. Thomas Stevenson, was loyal to the positions of John Knox (the theological positions); and, brought up in these, Louis had a taste, when the tenets of Calvin ceased to convince his reason, of what non-Covenanters endured at the hands of the godly in their day of power.

Every little Presbyterian, fifty years ago, was compelled to be familiar with the Genevan creed, as expressed in "The Shorter Catechism," but most little Presbyterians regarded that document as a

necessary but unintelligible evil—the sorrow that haunted the Sabbath. I knew it by rote, Effectual Calling and all, but did not perceive that it possessed either meaning or actuality. Nobody was so unkind as to interpret the significance of the questions and answers; but somebody did interpret them for Stevenson, or his early genius enabled him to discover what it is all about, as he told me once, and it seems that the tendency of the theology is terribly depressing. A happier though more or less theological influence on his childhood he found in the adventures and sufferings of the Covenanters. It is curious (and shows how much early education can do) that he never was a little Royalist: always his heart, like Lockhart's, which is no less strange, was with the true blue Remnant. I can remember no proof that he was fascinated by the greatness of Montrose.

As is well known, at about the age of sixteen he perverted a romance of his own making, "Hackston of Rathillet" (a fanatic of Fife), into a treatise: "The Pentland Rising, a Page of History," published in 1866. One would rather have possessed the romance.

Stevenson came from the Balfours of Pilrig, and was of gentle blood, on the spindle side. An ancestress of his mother was a granddaughter of Sir Gilbert Elliot (as a "law lord," or judge, Lord Minto), and so he could say: "I have shaken a spear in the debatable land, and shouted the slogan of the Elliots": perhaps "And wha dares meddle wi' me!" In "Weir of Hermiston" he returns to "the auld bauld Elliots" with zest. He was not, perhaps, aware that, through some remote ancestress on the spindle side, he "came of Harden's line," so that he and I had a common forebear with Sir Walter Scott, and were hundredth cousins of each other, if we reckon in the primitive manner by female descent. Of these Border ancestors, Louis inherited the courage; he was a fearless person, but one would not trace his genius to "The Bard of Rule," an Elliot named "Sweet Milk" who was slain in a duel by another minstrel, about 1627.

Genius is untraceable; the granite intellect of Louis's great engineering forefathers, the Stevensons, was not, like his, tuneful: though his father was imaginative, diverting himself with daydreams; and his uncle, Alan Stevenson, the builder of Skerryvore, yielded to the fascinations of the religious Muse. A volume of verse was the pledge of this dalliance. His mother, who gave him her gay indifference to discomfort and readiness for travel, also read to him, in his childhood, much good literature; for not till he was eight years of age was he an unreluctant reader—which is strange. The whole record of his life, from his eighteenth month, is a chronicle of fever and ill-health, borne always with heroic fortitude. His dear nurse, Alison Cunningham, seems to have been a kind of festive Cameronian. Her recitation of hymns was, though she hated "the playhouse," "grand and dramatic." There is a hymn, "Jehovah Tsidkenu," in which he rejoiced; and no wonder, for the refrain "Jehovah Tsidkenu was nothing to me," moves with the galloping hoof-beats of

"'Tis up wi' the bonnets o' Bonny Dundee!"

I have, however, ascertained that this theological piece is not sung to the tune, "The cavalry canter of Bonny Dundee." When the experiment is made, the results are unspeakably strange.

It need not be said, Stevenson has told us in verse and prose, that in childhood "his whole vocation was endless imitation." He was the hunter and the pirate and the king—throwing his fancy very seriously into each of his *rôles*, though visualizing never passed with him, as with some children it does, into actual hallucination. He had none of the invisible playmates that, to some children, are visible and real. He was less successful than Shelley in seeing apparitions: but the dreams which he communicated to Mr. Frederic Myers were curious illustrations of his subconscious activities—his Brownies, as he called them. They told him stories of which he could not foresee the end; one led up to a love affair forbidden even by exogamous law (with male descent and the sub-class system), and thus a fine plot was ruined.

Throughout life, he always played his part, as in childhood, with full conscious and picturesque effect, as did the great Montrose and the English Admirals, in whom he notes this dramatic trait. He

was not a *poseur*; he was merely sensitively conscious of himself and of life as an art. As a little boy with curls and a velvet tunic, he read "Ministering Children," and yearned to be a ministering child. An opportunity seemed to present itself; the class of boys called "keelies" by the more comfortable boys in Edinburgh, used to play in the street under the windows of his father's house. One lame boy, a baker's son, could only look on. Here was a chance to minister! Louis, with a beating heart, walked out on his angelic mission.

"Little boy, would you like to play with me?" he asked.

"You go to –!" was the answer of the independent son of the hardy baker.

It is difficult to pass from the enchanted childhood of this eternal child, with its imaginative playing at everything, broken only by fevers whereof the dreams were the nightmares of unconscious genius. He has told of all this as only he could tell it.

As a boy, despite his interrupted education, he laid the foundations of a knowledge of French and German, acquired Latin, and was not like that other boy who, *Euclide viso, cohorrui et evasit*. He was a mathematician! He never played cricket, I deeply regret to say, and his early love of football deserted him. He was no golfer, and a good day's trout-fishing, during which he neglected to kill each trout as it was taken, caused remorse, and made him abandon the contemplative boy's recreation. Boating, riding, and walking were his exercises. He read the good books that never lose their charm—Scott, Dumas, Shakespeare, "The Arabian Nights"; when very young he was delighted with "The Book of Snobs"; he also read Mayne Reid and "Ballantyne the Brave," and any story that contained *Skeltica*, cloaks, swords, wigs on the green, pirates and great adventures. He lived in literature, for Romance.

His doings at Edinburgh University, and as a budding engineer, he has chronicled; he took part in snowball rows, in the debates of the Speculative Society, and in private dramatic performances, organized by his senior and friend, Professor Fleeming Jenkin. To "dress up" in old costumes always pleased him. He happened to praise the acting of a girl of fourteen, who, in her family circle, said, "Perhaps when I am old, like the lady in Ronsard, I will say 'R. L. Stevenson sang of me.'" His gambols "with the wild Prince and Pains" are not unrecorded. These were his Fergussonian years. Perhaps he might have expressed Burns's esteem for the "class of men called black-guards," as far as their unconventionality is concerned. He saw a great deal of life in many varieties; like Scott in Liddesdale, "he was making himself a' the time." With his cousin R. A. M. Stevenson, Walter Ferrier, Mr. Charles Baxter, and Sir Walter Simpson (a good golfer and not a bad bat), he performed "acts of Libbelism," and discussed all things in the universe. He was wildly gay, and profoundly serious, he had the earnestness of the Covenanter in forming speculations more or less unorthodox. It is needless to dwell on the strain caused by his theological ideals and those of a loving but sternly Calvinistic sire, to whom his love was ever loyal.

These things bred melancholy, of necessity, and melancholy was purged by an almost unexampled interest, not in literature alone, but in the technique of style, and the construction of sentences and periods. Few of his confessions are better known than those on his apprenticeship in style to the great authors of the past. He gave himself up to the schools of Hazlitt, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Browne, Defoe, Hawthorne, Montaigne, Baudelaire, William Morris, and Obermann (De Senancour).

This he did when he was aged about eighteen, when other lads are trying to write Latin prose like Cicero, or Livy, or Tacitus (Tacitus is the easiest to ape, in a way), and Latin verse like Ovid, or Horace, or Virgil. This they do because it is "part of the curricoolum," as the Scottish baronet said, of school and college. But I do not remember anecdotes of other boys with a genius for English prose who set themselves to acquire style before they deemed that they had anything in particular to say.

In English essays at college a young fellow may be told by his tutor not to imitate Carlyle or Macaulay: the attempt to repeat the tones of Thackeray is most incident to youth. But to aim, like Stevenson while a student of Edinburgh University, at "the choice of the essential note and the right

word," in exercises written for his own improvement, is a thing so original that it keeps me wondering. Like most of us, I have always thought, with Mr. Froude, when asked how he acquired his style, that a man sits down and says what he has to say, and there is an end of it. We must not write like Clarendon now, even if we could; our sentences must be brief. It would be affectation to write like Sir Thomas Browne, if we could; or like de Quincey; and nobody can write like Mr. Ruskin, when he is simple, or like the late Master of Balliol, Mr. Jowett.

How far and how early Stevenson succeeded in the pursuit of style may be seen in his "Juvenilia": for example, in the essay on the Old Gardener. But one is inclined to think that he succeeded because he had a very keen natural perception of all things, was a most minute observer, knew what told in the matter of words, in fact, had a genius of his own; and that these graces came to him, though he says that they did not, by nature. He tells us how often he wrote and rewrote some of his chapters, some of his books. His *prima cura* we have not seen; perhaps it was as good as his most polished copy. "Prince Otto" has even seemed to me, in places, over-written. He now and then ran near the rock of preciousness, though he very seldom piled up his barque on that reef. His style is, to the right reader, a perpetual feast, "a dreiping roast," and his style cannot be parodied. I never saw a parody that came within a league of the jest it aimed at, save one burlesque of the deliberately stilted manner of his "New Arabian Nights." This triumph was achieved by Mr. Walter Pollock.

Stevenson's manner was too appropriate to his matter for parody: for nobody could reproduce his matter and the vividness of his visualization. When his characters were Scots, Lowlanders or Highlanders, it seems to me that their style has no rival except in the talk of Sir Walter's countrymen. A minute student who knew Stevenson, has told me that he once suggested "chafts," where Louis had written "cheeks" or "jaws," and that the emendation was accepted, but his Scots always use "the right word," and never (in prose) say "tae" for "to," I think. Theirs is the good Scots.

Perhaps I am biased in my doubt concerning the usefulness of his persistence in re-writing, by my regret that he destroyed so many of his romances, as not worthy of him. "King's chaff is better than other folk's corn" says our proverb. In his day, I bored him by pressing him to write more, and more rapidly; he never could have been commonplace, he never could have been less than excellent. But his conscience was adamant: no man was less of an improviser, as, fortunately, Scott was; had he *not* been, there would not be so many Waverley Novels.

Stevenson was hard on Scott, who wrote much as he himself did in boyhood. "I forgot to say," remarks the early Stevensonian hero, after describing a day full of adventures with Red Indians, "that I had made love to a beautiful girl." There is a faint resemblance to this over-sight in a long sentence of "Guy Mannering," which Stevenson criticized; but "Guy Mannering" was written in about six weeks, "to refresh the machine." Fastidious himself, conscientious almost to a fault in style, Stevenson's joy was in the romances of Xavier de Montépin and Fortuné du Boisgobey, names which suggest

"Old crusading knights austere,
That bore King Louis company."

When Dumas and Scott, and perhaps Mrs. Radcliffe, had been read too recently, Louis went to Fortuné and Xavier, and, doubtless, to the father of them, Gaboriau. None of these benefactors of the race was a student of style, but they gave him what Thackeray liked, stories "hot, *with*," as he says, briefly but adequately.

All of us are led, like that ancient people Israel, like all humanity, by a way we know not, and a path we do not understand. If some benevolent genie, who understood Stevenson's qualities and genius, could have directed his career, how would that spirit have educated him?

For some reason not intelligible he was put on an allowance of five shillings weekly, for his *menus plaisirs*, till he was twenty-three years of age. He never was an expensive man (except in giving, wherein he knew no stint); his favourite velvet coats, his yellow shoes, his black shirts, with a necktie

of a scrap of carpet, he said (I failed to guess its nature), were not extravagant. (The last occasion on which I saw him in the legendary velvet coat was also the only moment in which I viewed the author of his being. The circumstances were of the wildest comedy, but the tale can never be told; though in all respects it redounds to the credit of everybody concerned. Not one of us let a laugh out of himself.)

But a young man in his position likes to do many harmless things which cannot be done on five shillings a week, and so he sought the haunts of "thieves and chimney sweeps!" he says, and wrote sonnets in those shy retreats, which are known, perhaps, in Scotland, as "shebeens." Why "shebeens"? Is the word Gaelic misspelled? Cases of "shebeening" are tried before the Edinburgh magistrates, and as "my circle was being continually changed by the action of the police magistrates" (he says) conceivably his was a shebeening circle.

Another lad of his age, some eighty years earlier, was partial, like him, to taverns and old clothes. "They be good enough for drinking in," said Walter Scott, when Erskine, or some other friend, ventured to remonstrate. Scott, like Stevenson, knew queer people, knew beggars—but had not one of them shaken hands with Prince Charles? Certainly, after Scott met Green Mantle, and sheltered her, as she came from church, under his umbrella (a piece of furniture which Stevenson can never have possessed), he left off his old clothes, and went into the best company. But R. L. S. did not delight in the good company of his native town; nor did he suffer gladly the conventional raiment of the evening hours. Green Mantle there was none, as far as we learn. He was not popular with the young Scots of his age, his biographer says so candidly; candidly have they said as much to me, yet they were good fellows.

From childhood he had enjoyed all the indulgences of an only son, and an invalid; now he was "brought up short," and there were the religious disputes with a sire to whom he was devoted. The climate of his own romantic town (the worst in the world) was his foe; the wandering spirit in his blood called him to the south and the sun; he tells of months in which he had no mortal to whom he could speak freely, his cousin Bob being absent; he was unhappy; he was out of his *milieu*.

What would the genie have done for him? Neither of the English Universities would have been to his taste; the rebel in him would have kicked at morning chapel, lectures, cap and gown, Proctors, the talk of "oars" and "bats"; manifestly Balliol was not the place for R. L. S., though he might have been happy with his contemporary John Churton Collins. He, I remember—even to the velvet coat—was like Stevenson, and was a rebel. Grant Allen, too, would have been his contemporary—the only man in Oxford who took to Herbert Spencer, whom Stevenson also read with much edification.

Yet it is clear that Stevenson should not have been domiciled in the paternal mansion of Heriot Row. The genie might have transported him to a German University, perhaps to Heidelberg.

Dis aliter visum, and the result, for us, is his matchless book on Edinburgh. To see a copy thereof is to take it up, and read through it again; it is better at every reading.

In 1871 he broke to his father the news that the profession of engineering was not for him. The Scottish Bar (1874-1875) was not more attractive, and in 1873 his meeting with Mr. (now Sir) Sidney Colvin (then Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge, and already well known as a critic), and with a lady, Mrs. Sitwell, to whom many of his most carefully written early letters are addressed, probably sealed Stevenson into the profession of literature.

He has left this note on his prospects:

"I think now, this 5th or 6th of April, 1873, that I can see my future life. I think it will run stiller and stiller year by year; a very quiet, desultorily studious existence. If God only gives me tolerable health, I think now I shall be very happy; work and science calm the mind and stop gnawing in the brain; and as I am glad to say that I do now recognise that I shall never be a great man, I may set myself peacefully on a smaller journey; not without hope of coming to the inn before nightfall.

O dass mein Leben

Nach diesem Ziel ein ewig Wandeln sey!

DESIDERATA

- I. Good Health
- II. 2 to 3 hundred a year
- III. O du lieber Gott, *friends!*

AMEN

Robert Louis Stevenson"

He wrote an article, this born wayfarer, on "Roads," which was accepted by P. G. Hamerton for the "Portfolio," but in November, 1873, "nervous exhaustion, with a threatening of phthisis," caused him to be "Ordered South" to Mentone—a lonely exile. Here he was joined by Mr. Colvin, and in Mr. Colvin's rooms, for I also was "ordered South," I first met this surprising figure. Our schooldays had just overlapped; he was a "gyte" (a child in the lowest form; "class" we called it), when I was in the highest, but I had never seen him, nor heard of him.

In some rhymes of his later years, when Count Nerli was painting his portrait, Louis wrote:

"Oh, will he paint me the way I like, and as bonny as a girlie,
Or will he make me an ugly tyke; and be d— to Mr. Nerli?"

When first we met, he really was "as bonny as a girlie"; with his oval face, his flushed cheeks, his brown eyes, large and radiant, and his hair of a length more romantic than conventional. He wore a wide blue cloak, with a grace which hovered between that of an Italian poet and an early pirate.

It was impossible not to discover, in a short conversation, that he was very clever, but, as a girl said once of her first meeting with another girl, "We looked at each other with horny eyes of disapproval." I thought that he was affecting the poet, and in me he found a donnish affectation of the British sportsman. He said later that I complained, concerning Monsieur Paul de St. Victor, that he was "no sportsman," though his style was effulgent.

We seldom met again, unhappily, for I was then with a family in whose company he would have been happy: all young, all kind, simple, and beautiful, and all doomed. Stevenson was then seriously ill, certainly a short walk fatigued him.

The next news I had of him was in his essay, "Ordered South," concerning the emotions, apathies, and pleasures, on that then fairy coast, of a young man who thinks that his days are numbered. After reading this paper, I was absolutely convinced that, among the writers of our generation, Stevenson was first, like Eclipse, and the rest nowhere. There was nobody to be spoken of in his company as a writer. It was not his style alone—Pater's style had bewitched me in his first book—but it was the life that underlay the style of Stevenson.

He came home, and found peace at home, and a less inadequate allowance, and he put up a brazen plate, "R.L. Stevenson, Advocate," on the door in Heriot Row. But his practice was a jest. Some senior men sought his society, his old friends were with him; his articles were welcomed by Mr. Leslie Stephen in "The Cornhill Magazine," and were eagerly expected by a few. Directed by Mr. Stephen, he found Mr. Henley in the Edinburgh Infirmary, and that friendship began which was of such considerable influence in his life and work.

Mr. Henley's "maimed strength," his impeded vigour, even his blond upstanding hair and "beard all tangled," his uncomplaining fortitude under the most cruel trials, and the candid freshness of his conversation on men and books, won Stevenson's heart.

In London, Stevenson appeared now and again at the Savile Club, then tenating a rather gloomy little house in Savile Row. The members were mostly connected with science, literature, journalism, and the stage, and Stevenson became intimate with many of them, especially with the staff and the

sub-editor (in those days) of "The Saturday Review," Mr. Walter Pollock; and with Mr. Saintsbury, Mr. Traill, Mr. Charles Brookfield, Sir Walter Besant; a little later with Mr. Edmund Gosse, who was by much his favourite in this little society. In addition to the chaff of the "Saturday" reviewers, he enjoyed the talk of Prof. Robertson Smith, Prof. W. H. Clifford, and Prof. Fleeming Jenkin.

Stevenson never wrote, to my knowledge, in "The Saturday Review"; journalism never "set his genius." For one reason among many, his manner was by far too personal in those days of unsigned contributions. He needed money, he wished to be financially independent, but, in the Press, his independence could not be all that he desired. He did not wield the ready, punctual pen of him whom Lockhart most invidiously calls "the bronzed and mother-naked gentleman of the Press."

His conversation at luncheon, and after luncheon, in the Club was the delight of all, but, for various reasons, I was seldom present. I do remember an afternoon when I had him all to myself, but that was later. He poured out stories of his American wanderings, including a tale of a murderous lonely inn, kept by Scots, whose genius tended to assassination. He knew nothing of their exploits at home, but, then or afterwards, I heard of them from a boatman on Loch Awe. Their mother was a witch!

At this period Stevenson was much in Paris, and alone, or with his cousin Bob dwelt at Barbizon and other forest haunts of painters. The chronicle of these merry days is written in the early chapters of "The Wrecker."

In literature he was "finding himself," in his Essays, but the world did not find him easily or early.

History much attracted him, as it did Thackeray, who said, "I like history, it is so gentlemanly." But it can only be written by gentlemen of independent means. Stevenson's favourite period was that of the France of the fifteenth century, and he studied later some aspects of that time in essays on Charles d'Orleans, in his admirable picture of Villon as a man and poet, and especially in "A Lodging for the Night," and "The Sieur de Malétoit's Door," shut on a windy night in the month after the Maid failed at Paris (September, 1429).

These unexcelled short stories really revealed Stevenson as the narrator, his path lay clear before him. But even his friends were then divided in opinion; some preferring his essays, and his two books of sentimental travel, "An Inland Voyage" (1878) and "Travels with a Donkey" (1879). These were, indeed, admirable in style, humour, description, and incident, but the creative imagination in the stories of Villon's night and of the Sieur de Malétoit's door, the painting of character, the romance, the vividness, were worth many such volumes. They were well received by the Press, these sketches of travel, but, as Monsieur Got says in his "Journal" (1857), "Les succès des délicats sont, même quand ils s'établissent, trop lents à s'établir. La foule s'est tellement démocratisée qu'il n'a pas de salut si l'on ne frappe brutalement." The needful brutality was not employed till Stevenson "knocked them" with "Jekyll and Hyde."

"The world is so full of a number of things," that a few essays, two or three short stories in a magazine, a little book of sketches in prose, may be masterpieces in their three several ways, but they escape the notice of all but a few amateurs. Mr. Kipling's knock was much more insistent; he could not be unheard. It was not by essays on Burns and Knox, however independently done, that Stevenson could make his mark.

Concerning these heroes, Scotland has a vision of her own, and no man must undo it; no man must tell, about Knox, facts ignored by Professors of Church History. Indeed, to study Knox afresh demands research for which Stevenson had not the opportunity. The Covenanting side of his nature appeared in his study of the moral aspect of Burns; his feet of clay. It is agreed that we must veil the feet of clay. As Lockhart says, Scott infuriated Mr. Alexander Peterkin by remarking that Burns "was not chivalrous." Stevenson went further, and annoyed the Peterkins of his day. His task required courage: it was not found wanting.

In 1877, Stevenson had a new, if very narrow, opening. A friend of his at Edinburgh University, a young Mr. Caldwell Brown (so Stevenson named him to me; his real name seems to have been Glasgow Brown), came to the great metropolis to found a Conservative weekly journal. "London" was its name, but Edinburgh was its nature, and base, if a base it had. The editor was "in the air"; he knew nothing of his business and its difficulties; nothing of what the Conservative public, with sixpences to spend, was likely to want. He approached some of Stevenson's friends, and he gave the Conservative party scores of lively *ballades*, *villanelles*, and *rondeaux*. They were brilliant. Stevenson would not tell me the author's name; he proved to be Mr. Henley, who came to town, and, on the death of Mr. Brown, edited this unread periodical. There were "Society" notes, although Mr. Henley's haunts were not those of that kind of society, and one occasional contributor ventured to remonstrate about the chatter on the "professional beauties" of that distant day.

The "New Arabian Nights," with all their humour, and horror, all their intellectual high spirits, and reckless absurdity, were poured by Stevenson into this outcast flutterer of a Tory paper, to the great joy of some of the very irregular contributors. (It was an honest flutterer—its contributors received their wages.)

Then "London" died, and then seriousness enough came into the life of our Arabian author. In August, 1879, he disappeared; he went to America to marry the lady whom he had first met at Fontainebleau, whom he wedded at San Francisco (1880), and loved with all his heart.

Reconciled to his father, he returned to Scotland. His health had been anew impaired by troubles and privations, and the rest of his life in the Old World was occupied by a series of maladies, vain roamings in search of climate, and hard work constantly interrupted.

From his early childhood onwards, an army of maladies surrounded him, invested him, cut him off if, in an hour of health, he ventured on any sally; but they never overcame his invincible resolution. He was, as one of his favourite old authors says about I forget what emperor, "an entertainer of fortune by the day," making the most of every sunny hour, and the best of every hour passed under the shadow of imminent death. I remember that, soon after his marriage, he was staying in London at the house of a friend. Going to see him, I noted in him a somewhat anxious look, and I did not wonder at it! Mr. Henley was seated in a great chair, the whole of his face, from the eyes downwards, muffled in a huge crimson silk pocket handkerchief, of which the point covered his aureate beard.

The room was a large room, and as Louis flitted about it, *more suo*, he managed to tell me privily that Henley had a very bad cold, and that he himself caught every cold which came within a limited radius. He *did* catch that cold, I heard, and when once such an invader entered his system, nobody knew what the end of it might be. His lungs usually suffered; hemorrhage was frequent and often alarming. In one of these accesses, unable to speak, he wrote, "Do not be frightened. If this is the end it is an easy one."

Many scraps written by him in circumstances like these used to exist; some of them, though brief, were rich in the simple eloquence of indignation.

Almost no climate did him any good: in 1880-1881, he chiefly suffered at Davos, and in the tempests of September, in Braemar. At Davos he had few consolations except the society of Mr. J. A. Symonds (the Opalstein of his essay on "Talk and Talkers") and his family. He was still attached to the indigent Muse of History: meditating a "History of the Highlands," and another book on that much trampled topic, the Union of 1707. When one thinks of the commercial statistics necessary to the student of the Union—to take that grim aspect of it alone—*enfin*, "I have been there, and would not go." In the nature of things the History of the Union would have become a romance, with that impudent, entertaining rogue, Ker of Kersland, and his bewildered Cameronians, for the heroes: with Hamilton the waverer, and the dark, sardonic Lockhart of Carnwath, and Daniel Defoe as the English looker-on. The study of Highland history led to the reading of the Trial of James of the Glens, and the vain hunt for Alan Breck, and so to "Kidnapped."

Stevenson felt and described the exhilaration of Alpine mornings, but his style was as sensitive as his bronchial apparatus, and he declares that when he tried to write, the style suffered from "yeasty inflation," while his nights were haunted by the nightmares of his childhood.

The next change carried him to a cottage near Pitlochry, whence he wrote that he was engaged in the composition of "crawlers." The first and best of these, "Thrawn Janet," was (with his "Tod Lapraik" in "Kidnapped") the only pendant to Scott's "Wandering Willie's Tale," in the northern vernacular. The tale has a limited circle; no Southern can appreciate all its merits, the thing is so absolutely and essentially Scots; especially the atmosphere. He said that it was "true for a hill parish in Scotland in old days, not true for mankind and the world." So it is fortunate to be a native of a hill parish in Scotland!

"The Merry Men," as "a fantasia or vision of the sea," is excellent; the poor negro never was, to myself, "convincing." However, knowing Stevenson's taste in art, I designed for him, in Skeltic taste, an illustration (coloured) of the negro pursuing the wicked uncle (in the philabeg) over the crests of Ben Mor, Mull.

Descending from these heights, Stevenson, like every bookish Scot, "ettled at" a professorial chair—that of "History and Constitutional Law," in the University of Edinburgh.

The election was in the winter, the legist and historian occupied the autumn in composing the first half of "Treasure Island" (originally "The Sea Cook").

Everyone knows the story: how, playing with his stepson, Stevenson drew a map of an island—an island like a *dragon seyant*; considered the caves and hills and streams, and thought of the place as a haunt of these serviceable pirates, who always dumped down their hard-earned swag on distant and on deadly shores, which they carefully abstained from revisiting. The legends of Captain Kidd's *caches* have long haunted the imagination; the idea of Hidden Treasure has its eternal charm, and the story thereof was told, once for all, by Poe. Soon after "Treasure Island" appeared there was a real treasure hunt. The deposit, so I was informed, was "put down by a Fin," and Mr. Rider Haggard and I were actually paying (at least Mr. Haggard sent me a cheque) for shares in this alluring enterprise, when I learned that the Fin (or Finn? a native of Finland), had looted the church plate of some Spanish cathedral in America. Knowing this, I returned his cheque to Mr. Haggard; happily, for the isle was the playroom of young earthquakes, which had upset the soil and the landmarks to such a degree that the gentleman adventurer returned—*bredouille!* I hope Stevenson had nothing on.

In the Highland cottage, during the rain eternal, he amused himself with writing his story, as Shelley, Byron, Polidori, and Mary Godwin had diverted themselves in Swiss wet weather, with their ghost stories, "Frankenstein," and Byron's good opening of a romance of a vampire.

Visitors came—Mr. Colvin, Mr. Gosse, and Dr. Japp—they liked the tale as chapter by chapter was read aloud, and it was offered to a penny periodical for boys. A much better market might easily have been found; indeed, Stevenson "wasted his mercies." He was paid like the humblest of unknown scribblers; not even illustrations were given to the obscure romance running in dim inner pages of the periodical, and it appears that, as Théophile Gautier's editor said about one of *his* narratives, "the *abonné* was bored with the style."

It was an audacious thing for a man of Louis's health, and intermittent inspiration, to send in half the "copy," meaning to send the rest later from Davos. He might not be able, physically, to write—the inspiration might vanish—and there was John Addington Symonds, eager for him to write on the "Characters" of Theophrastus! He might as well have written, or better, on the "Characters" of Sir Thomas Overbury, which are rather less remote from the ken of the British public than those of the Greek.

If any young man or woman, not in possession of independent means, reads these lines of mine, let him or her take warning, and deserting history, morals, the essay, biography, and shunning anthropology as they would kippered sturgeon or the devil, cleave only to fiction!

Biography also allured Stevenson—his literary tastes were nearly his ruin; he wanted, at Davos, to write a "Life of Hazlitt," and at Bournemouth a biography of Arthur, Duke of Wellington. But time and strength were lacking; nor have we R. L. S.'s mature opinion of the strategy and tactics of the victor of Assaye. The Muse of piratical enterprise returned, and "Treasure Island" reached its haven, with no applause, in the paper for boys.

In the following May, Messrs. Cassell proposed to publish "Treasure Island" in book form, being spirited up, I suppose, by Mr. Henley, who was editing for them "The Magazine of Art," in which Stevenson wrote two or three articles. (I remember that a letter of my own to "The Editor," as Mr. Henley had proudly signed himself, came automatically into the hands of the General Editor, a clergyman, if I do not err, and that my observations on the Art of Savages, lighting on the wrong sort of ground, sprang up and nearly choked Mr. Henley.) Stevenson was already the victim of the Yankee pirate, whose industry, at least, made his name, though wrongly spelled, known to the community which later paid him so well for his work, and displayed for him an enthusiasm of affectionate admiration.

In 1884 he worked at the often rewritten "Prince Otto," and did a pot-boiler—"The Black Arrow"—which pleased the boy public of the paper much better than "Treasure Island." His time, from January, 1883, to May, 1884, was passed at Hyères. In the end of November, "Treasure Island" was published in book form, and was warmly welcomed by the Press and by such friends of the author as retained, at least in letters, any smack of youth. It was forced, as far as "You must read it, please," even on the friends of the friends, and so on in successive waves, yet it did not reach a wide circle: five or six thousand copies were sold in the first year. That is failure in the eyes of many of our novelists whose style does not bore the unfastidious *abonné*. Stevenson, in writing an article for a magazine on his "First Book," chose "Treasure Island," for books other than novels do not count as books. He spoke of terror as the motive and interest of the tale; the dread for each and all of a mutiny headed by his ruthless favourite, John Silver. Indeed, terror, whether caused by the eccentric furies of Mr. William Bones, mariner, or of the awful blind Pew with his tapping staff, runs through the volume as the dominant motive. But there is so much else: the many landscapes, so various and so vivid; the humour of the Doctor and the Squire, the variety of the seamen's characters; the Man of the Island, with his craving for a piece of cheese; above all, John Silver. He is terrible, this coldly cruel, crafty, and masterful Odysseus of the Pacific. His creator liked him, but I could have seen Silver withering on the wuddie at Execution Dock, or suspended from a yardarm, without shedding the tears of sensibility. "A pirate is rather a beast than otherwise," says a young critic in "The Human Boy," and I cannot get over Silver gloating on the prospect of torturing Trelawny. At all events, he is an original creation, and a miraculous portent in a boy's book.

Fiercer attacks of illness in various forms drove Stevenson to Bournemouth; he was engaged, when he had the strength, on those plays (in collaboration with Mr. Henley) which prove that he had not the mysterious gift of writing for the stage. "I hope Mr. Henley wrote most of it," said a lady, as she left the theatre where she had seen "Deacon Brodie" played. Had Deacon Brodie been Archdeacon Brodie, there would have been more piquancy in the contrast of his "double life."

This idea of the double life of each man had long haunted Stevenson. He told me once that he meant to write a story "about a fellow who was two fellows," which did not, when thus stated, seem a fortunate idea. However, happily, he continued to think of Hyde and Jekyll, yet knew not how to manage them. One night, after eating bread and jam freely, he had a nightmare; he saw Hyde, pursued, take refuge in a closet, swallow "the mixture as before"—the mysterious powder or potion—and change horribly into Jekyll.

He set to work at once, and in three feverish days completed the first draft of his parable. In this the Hyde aspect was only Jekyll's unassuming disguise, adopted at hours when he wished to be a little gay. Stevenson burned his first draft, and rewrote the whole in three days.

He knew, it seems, that the magical powder was an error. One sees how the thing could be managed otherwise, with a slight strain on the resources of psychical research. But in no way could the story have attained "the probable impossible," which Aristotle preferred to "the improbable possible."

Stevenson sent the manuscript to my friend Mr. Charles Longman, who, in turn, sent it to me. I began to read it one night, in the security of a modest London drawing-room, and, naturally, it fascinated me from the first page. Then I came to a certain page, which produced such an emotion that I threw the manuscript on a chair, and scuttled apprehensively to the safety of bed. Later, a kinsman, who seldom read a book, told me that, living alone in a great Highland house, he had thrown down the printed book at the same passage, and made the same inglorious retreat. Anyone who knows the book, knows what the passage is.

The story was produced in a paper-covered volume costing a shilling, and was little heeded till a reviewer in *The Times* "caught this great stupid public by the ear," as Thackeray said.

The clergy of all denominations did the rest. As they had preached on "Pamela," a hundred and forty years earlier, so they called the attention of their flocks to Hyde and to Jekyll. "Who are Hyde and Jekyll, my brethren? *You* are Hyde and Jekyll. *I* am Jekyll and Hyde; each of us is Jekyll, and, alas, *each of us is Hyde!*"

Stevenson had long ago "found himself"; now he was found by the public. The names of his two rascally heroes (Dr. Jekyll is even less of a gentleman than Hyde) became proverbial.

The gruesome parable occupied an interval in the making of what I suppose is his masterpiece—"Kidnapped." The story centres on the Appin Murder of 1751, about which he had made inquiries in the neighbourhood of Rannoch, where Alan Breck skulked after the shooting of Campbell of Glenure in the hanging wood south of Ballachulish. Stevenson could not learn who "the other man" was—the real murderer in the romance. I know, but respect the Celtic secret. The fatal gun was found, very many years after the deed, by an old woman, in a hollow tree, and it was *not* the gun of James Stewart.

(I have a friend whose great-great-grandfather was standing beside James of the Glens, watching the digging of potatoes. A horse was heard approaching at such a pace that James said, "Whoever the rider is, the horse is not his own." As he galloped past, the rider shouted: "Glenure is shot!" "Who did it I don't know, but I am the man that will hang for it," said James, too truly.)

Of "Kidnapped," Stevenson said (as Thackeray said of Henry Esmond and Lady Castlewood, as Scott says of Dugald Dalgetty) that, in this book alone of his, "the characters took the bit in their teeth," at a certain point. "It was they who spoke, it was they who wrote the remainder of the story."

They are spontaneous, they are living. Balfour, in the *scenario* of the tale, was to have been kidnapped and carried to the American plantations. But he and Alan "went their ain gait." At the end, you can see the pen drop from the weary fingers; they left half-told the story of Alan, to be continued in "Catriona."

A love of Jacobite times, and of Alan Breck's country, Lochaber, Glencoe, Mamore, may bias me; but in "Kidnapped" Stevenson appears to me to reach the height of his genius in designing character and landscape; in humour, dialogue, and creative power. As in his preceding stories, there is hardly the flutter of a petticoat, but the tale, like Prince Charles at Holyrood, can point to a Highland man of the sword, and say, "These are my beauties." I remember that Mr. Matthew Arnold admired the story greatly, and *he* had no Jacobite or local bias.

In May, 1887, Stevenson lost his father, and paid his last visit to his native country.

It was during this period, in 1886 probably, that I, for the first time, saw Stevenson confined to bed in one of his frequent illnesses, and then, also, I saw him for the last time. So emaciated was he (we need not dwell on what seemed that "last face of Hippocrates"), that we could not believe there remained for him some crowded years of life and comparatively healthy and joy-bestowing energy. If the ocean was henceforth to roll between us, at least he said that we were always best friends when furthest apart; though, indeed, we were never so intimate as to be otherwise than friendly. It was

never the man that I knew best; but the genius that I delighted in, "on this side idolatry." Always, in verse or in prose, in Scots or in English, he made one reader happy; by a kind of pre-established harmony of taste which might not have prevailed in the intercourse of every day's life.

In August, 1887, Stevenson left England for ever, arriving at New York as a lion, hunted by reporters, whom, no doubt, he received with the majestic courtesy of his own Prince of Bohemia. Two versions of Jekyll and Hyde were being acted; all this was very unlike the calm indifference of his native land. It seems that in Jekyll, as "Terryfled" (in Scott's phrase), there is a "love interest"; love is alien to Dr. Jekyll, as to the shepherd before he found that Love was a dweller on the rocks. The Terryfication was, at least, an advertisement. To advertise himself, in the modern way, Stevenson was not competent. He never was interviewed as a Celebrity at Home, as far as I am aware. Indeed, he loved not society papers, and lit a bonfire and danced a dance around it in his garden, when some editor of a journal of that sort was committed to prison. His name is not mentioned, but Stevenson and I had against him a grudge of very old standing.

Dollars in sufficient profusion were offered for his works, and in the Adirondack Hills, beside a frozen river in the starlit night, he dreamed of "a story of many years and countries, of the sea and the land, savagery and civilization." He thought of that old Indian marvel, the suspended life of the buried fakir, over whose grave the corn is sown and grown. He thought of an evil genius on whom this method should be tried in frozen Canadian earth. Thus, what seems like the far-fetched idea of a wearied fancy in "The Master of Ballantrae" was, from the first, of the essence of that bitter romance. The new conception fitted in with a tale, already dreamed of on the Perthshire moors, about the dark adventurous years of the Jacobite eclipse. The Prince was hidden in a convent of Paris, or flashing for a moment in the Mall, or cruising, a dingy bearded wanderer, in Germany or the Netherlands; while his followers were serving under French colours, under Montcalm or Lally-Tolendal. Men who had charged side by side at Gledsmuir and Culloden, might meet as foes in Canada or Hindostan. There is matter enough, in 1750-1765, for scores of romances, but who now can write them? But the Master did not now begin his deeds of bale. Stevenson's stepson, Mr. Osbourne, then very young, himself wrote "The Finsbury Tontine; or The Game of Bluff," and I was informed at the time by Stevenson's devoted admirer, Mr. McClure, that the book was completed by Mr. Osbourne for the Press. Then Stevenson took up the manuscript, and, as Mr. Osbourne says, "forced the thing to live as it had never lived before." Indeed, the style of "The Wrong Box" throughout, is Louis's style in such romantic farces as "The New Arabian Nights," a manner of his own creation.

I seem to remember that I saw the finished manuscript, or perhaps an early copy of the book, and I did not care for it. Mr. Kipling rather surprised me by finding it so very amusing. Mr. Osbourne says that the story "still retains (it seems to me) a sense of failure," and that the public does not relish it. For my own part, on later re-readings, the little farce has made me laugh hysterically at the sorrows of Mr. William Pitman, that mild drawing-master, caught up and whirled away into adventures worthy of the great Fortuné du Boisgobey. The scene in which he is described as the American Broadwood, a person inured to a simple patriarchal life, a being of violent passions; with the immortal John in the character of the Great Vance; and that joy for ever, Uncle Joseph, with his deathless thirst for popular information and instruction—these personages, this "educated insolence," never cease to amuse. Uncle Joseph is no caricature. But the world likes its sensational novels to be written with becoming seriousness; in short, "The Wrong Box" is aimed at a small but devoted circle of admirers.

People constantly ask men who have collaborated how they do the business? As a rule, so some French collaborator says, "some one is the dupe, and he is the man of genius." This was not true, too notably, in the case of Alexandre Dumas, nor was it true in Stevenson's case. As a rule, one man does the work, and the other looks on, but, again, this was not the way in which Stevenson and Mr. Osbourne worked. They first talked over the book together, and ideas were struck out in the encounter of minds. This practice may, very probably, prove unfruitful, or even injurious, to many writers; they are confused rather than assisted. After or during the course of the conversations (when he had an

ally), after reflection, when he had not, Stevenson used to write out a series of chapter headings. One, I remember, was "The Master of Ballantrae to the Rescue," an incident in a tale which he began about the obscure adventures of Prince Charles in 1749-1750. "Ballantrae to the Rescue"—the sound was promising, but I do not know who was to be obliged by the Master.

After the list of chapters was completed, Mr. Osbourne used to write the first draft, "to break the ground," and then each wrote and rewrote, an indefinite number of times. The style, the general effect produced, are the style and the effect of Stevenson. "He liked the comradeship." More care was taken than on a novel of which I and another were greatly guilty. My partner represented Mr. Nicholas Wogan as rubbing his hands after a bullet at Fontenoy (as history and I made quite clear) had deprived Mr. Wogan of one of his arms. There is no such error in the "Iliad," despite the unnumbered multitude of collaborators detected by the Higher Criticism.

In June, 1888, Stevenson sailed out on the Pacific in search of health, and followed the shining shadow through the isles and seas till he made his last home at Samoa. It was a three years' cruise among "summer isles of Eden." Perhaps no book of Stevenson's is less popular than his narrative of storm and calm, of beachcombers and brown Polynesian princes. The scenery is too exotic for the general taste. The joy and sorrow of Stevenson was to find a society "in much the same convulsionary and transitional state" as the Highlands and Islands after 1745. He was always haunted, and in popularity retarded, by History. He wanted to know about details of savage custom and of superstitious belief, a taste very far from being universal even in the most highly cultivated circles, where Folklore is a name of fear. He found among the natives such fatal Polynesian fairy ladies as they of Glenfinlas, on whom Scott wrote the ballad. He found a medicine-man who hypnotized him from behind his back, which nobody at home had been able to do before his face. He exchanged stories with the clansmen—Scots for Polynesian; they were much the same in character and incident. He had found, in Polynesia, the way out of our own present. He met a Polynesian Queen—a Mary Stuart or a Helen of Troy grown old. "She had been passed from chief to chief; she had been fought for and taken in war"; a "Queen of Cannibals, tattooed from head to foot." Now she had reached the Elysian plain and a windless age, living in religion, as it were: "she passes all her days with the sisters."

She was not a white woman: none of these people, so courteous and kind, were white, were up-to-date. In London and New York amateurs did not want to be told about them in Stevenson's "Letters from the South Seas." Stevenson "collected songs and legends": fortunately he also worked at "The Master of Ballantrae," in spite of frequent illnesses, and many perils of the sea. "The Master of Ballantrae" was finished at Honolulu; the closing chapters are the work of a weary pen.

He had made tryst with an evil genius that was essential to the conception of the book, and with a hideous tale of fraternal hatred, told by a constitutional coward. Everything is under the shadow of thunder and lit by lightning. A glimpse of Allan Breck, and the babblings of the Chevalier Bourke, are the only relief. But the life is as clearly seen as life in Stevenson's books always is, for example when the guinea is thrown through the stained window pane, or the old serving-man holds the candle to light the duel of brothers who are born foes; or as in the final scenes of desperate wanderings in the company of murderers through Canadian snows. But the book, as Sir Henry Yule said, is "as grim as the road to Lucknow"—as it was intended to be.

A fresh cruise, in the following year, bettered his health, and brought him the anecdote of a mystery of the sea which was the germ of "The Wrecker." He saw Samoa, and bought land there—Vailima—the last and best of his resting-places; and here he was joined, in 1891, by his intrepid mother. He was now a lord of land, a householder in his unpretentious Abbotsford, and "a great chief" among the natives, distracted as they were by a king *de facto*, and a king over the water, with the sonorous names of Malietoa and Mataafa. Samoan politics, the strifes of Germany, England, and the States, were labyrinthine: their chronicle is written in his "Footnote to History." My conjectures as to the romantic side of his dealings with the rightful king are vague and need not be recorded. "You can be in a new conspiracy every day," said an Irishman with zest, but conspiracies are better things

in fiction than in real life; and Stevenson had no personal ambitions, and, withal, as much common sense as Shelley displayed in certain late events of his life. He turned to the half-finished "Wrecker" and completed it.

When the story began to appear in "Scribner's Magazine" it seemed full of vivacity and promise. The opening scenes in the Pacific were like Paradise, as the author said, to dwellers in Brixton, or other purlieus of London. The financial school at which Loudon Dodd was educated in Stock Exchange flutters was rather less convincing than any dream of Paradise, but none the less amusing. At home in Edinburgh, with the old Scottish master of jerry-building and of "plinths," the atmosphere was truly Scots, tea-coseys and all, while the reminiscences of Paris and Fontainebleau, and the *grandeurs et misères* of "the young Americo-Parisienne sculptor" were perfectly fresh to the world, though some of the anecdotes were known to Stevenson's intimates. Mr. James Pinkerton is a laudable creation, with his loyalty, his innocence, his total ignorance and complete lack of taste, and his scampers too near the wind of commercial probity. The spirit of hustle incarnate in a man otherwise so innocent, the ideals caught from heaven knows what American works for the young, and the inspired patriotism, the blundering enthusiastic affection, make the early Pinkerton a study as original as it is entertaining.

The sale by auction of the wreck, which, by arrangement, is to be Pinkerton's prey, the mysterious opposition of the other bidder, so determined to win an object apparently so worthless, is no less thrilling than the sale of the fur coat in Boisgobey's "Crime de l'Opéra." But the reader knows why the fur coat is so much desired, whereas I remember being driven so wild by curiosity about the value of the wreck that I wrote to Louis, desiring to learn the secret. He would not divulge it, and when, after the voyage to the island and the excitement of knocking the wreck to pieces were over—when the secret came out, it was neither pleasant nor probable. That a mild British amateur of water-colour drawing should have taken part in a massacre of men, shot painfully with cheap revolvers, was an example of "the possible improbable," and much more of a tax on belief than the transformation of Dr. Jekyll. When I mildly urged this criticism, I learned, by return of post, from a correspondent usually as dilatory as Wordsworth, that I was a stay-at-home person ignorant of the world, and of life as it is lived by full-blooded men on the high seas. That was very true, but the amateur in water-colour was also a mild kind of good being. "What would I have done with the crew who were such compromising witnesses, and were butchered?" I would have marooned them.

"The Beach of Falesá" is a revelation of unfamiliar life and character, and one is attached to the little brown heroine. There was to have been "a supernatural element," better, probably, than the device of the Æolian harps hung in the thicket. "I have got the smell and the look of the thing a good deal," he said, and he had got the style of his rough English narrator, who was, as he told the missionary, "what you call a sinner, what I call a sweep," but repented in time.

A period of many projects followed; one, "The Young Chevalier," had a germ in "The Letter of Henry Goring" (1749-1750), with which I brought him acquainted, not knowing then that it was merely a romance by the prolific Eliza Heywood. It was in this tale that the Master of Ballantrae was to come to the rescue, and I think that a Scottish assassin (who lurks obscure in real history) and Mandrin, the famed French robber, were to appear, but only a chapter is published among other fragments. As it stands, Prince Charles's eyes are alternately blue and brown; brown was their actual colour—they were like Stevenson's own.

Fortunately, the "Chevalier" was deserted for the continuation of "Kidnapped," a sequel which is as good as, or, thanks to the two heroines, Catriona and Barbara Grant, is even better than, the original. To think of it is to wish to take it from the shelf and read it again. It is all excellent, from the scenes where Alan is hiding under a haystack (suggested by an adventure of the Chevalier Johnstone after Culloden), and the first meeting with that good daughter of Clan Alpine and of James Mor, onwards.

Stevenson excited a good deal of odium among fiery Celts by his scoundrel Master of Lovat. There is no reason, as far as I am aware, to suppose that Simon was a scoundrel, but, as a figure in

fiction, he is very firmly drawn. The abortive duel of Balfour with the Highland Ensign, who conceives high esteem of "Palfour," is in the author's best manner, as are the days of prison in that "unco place, the Bass," and he was justly proud of the wizard tale of Tod Lapraik. The bristling demeanour of Alan Breck and James Mor (a very gallant but distinctly unfortunate son of Rob Roy), seems a correct picture. Indeed, James Mor was correctly divined, probably from letters of his published in Scott's "Rob Roy." It does not appear that Stevenson ever saw a number of James's letters in the character of a spy (a spy who appears to be carefully bamboozling his employers), which exist in the Newcastle MSS. in the British Museum. But the James of these letters is the James of "Catriona." The scenes with the advocates of James of the Glens, at Inveraray, read as if they had been recorded in shorthand, at the moment. David himself is, of course, the Lowland prig he is meant to be, but Catriona, at last, was a moving heroine, though Stevenson, justly, preferred to her the beautiful Miss Grant, and entirely overcame the difficulty of making us realise her beauty. The Princess, in "Prince Otto," is a fair shadow, compared to Miss Grant, and Stevenson at last convinced most readers that if he had omitted the interest of womanhood, it was not from incompetence—though it may have been from diffidence.

At this time we used to receive letters from him not infrequently; he sent me the "Luck of Apemama," which he sacrilegiously purchased from its holder. This fetish, the palladium of the island, was in one point remarkable—a very ordinary shell in a perfectly new box of native make. Why it was thought "great medicine" and ignorantly worshipped, the pale-face student of magic and religion could not understand. However, it was the Luck of the island, and when it crossed the sea to Europe a pestilence of measles fell on the native population. There was no manifest connection of cause and effect.

Stevenson's letters to me were merely such notes as he might have written had we both been living within the four-mile radius; usually notes about books which he needed, always brightened with a quip and some original application of slang. Occasionally there were rhymes. One was about a lady:

"Who bekkled, bekkled, bekkled gaily."

Another had the refrain:

"The dibs that take the islands
Are the dollars of Peru."

One long and lively piece was on the Achaean hero of a fantastic romance by Mr. Rider Haggard and myself: the Ithacan, the Stormer of the City. Stevenson exclaimed:

"Ye wily auld blackguard,
How far ye hae staggered,
Frae Homer to Haggard
And Lang."

How variously excellent he was as a letter-writer the readers of his correspondence know, and how vast, considering his labours and his health, that correspondence is! Often it is freakish, often it is serious, but except in some epistles of the period of his apprenticeship, it is never written as if he anticipated the publisher and the editor. Good examples are his letters to a reviewer, who, criticizing him without knowing him, wrote as if he were either an insensible athletic optimist, or a sufferer who was a *poseur*. "The fact is, consciously or not, you doubt my honesty.... *Any brave man may make out a life which shall be happy for himself, and, by so being, beneficent to those about him. And if he fail, why should I hear him weeping?*" Why, indeed? Think of Mr. Carlyle! "Did I groan loud,

or did I groan low, Wackford?" said Mr. Squeers. Mr. Carlyle groaned loud, sometimes with fair reason. Stevenson did not groan at all. If he posed, if his silence was a pose, it was heroic. But his intellectual high spirits were almost invincible. If he had a pen in his hand, the *follet* of Molière rode it. Mr. Thomas Emmett, that famous Yorkshire cricketer, has spoken words of gold: "I was always happy as long as I was bowling." Stevenson, I think, was almost always happy when he was writing, when the instrument of his art was in his fingers.

Consider the deliberate and self-conscious glumness; the willful making the worst of things (in themselves pretty bad, I admit), that mark the novels of eminent moderns who thrive on their inexpensive pessimism, and have a name as *Psychologues! Ohé, les Psychologues!* Does anyone suppose that Stevenson could not have dipped his pencil in squalor and gloom, and psychology, and "oppositions of science falsely so-called," as St. Paul, in the spirit of prophecy, remarks? "Ugliness is only the prose of horror," he said. "It is when you are not able to write 'Macbeth' that you write 'Thérèse Raquin' ... In any case, and under any fashion, the great man produces beauty, terror, and mirth, and the little man produces—" We know what he produces, and though his books may be praised as if the little man were a Sophocles up to date, he and his works are a weariness to think upon. In them is neither beauty, mirth, nor terror, except the terror of illimitable ennui.

None the less, I believe that the little men of woe are happy; are enjoying themselves, while they are writing, while they are doing their best to make the public comfortably miserable. If these authors were as candid as Stevenson they would admit that they enjoy their "merry days of desolation," and that the world is not such a bad place for them, after all. But perhaps before this truth can be accepted and confessed by these eminent practitioners in pessimism, a gleam of humour must arise on their darkness—and that is past praying for. There is a burden of a Scots song which, perhaps, may have sung itself in the ear of Louis, when life was at its darkest:

"And werena my heart licht I wad die!"

Having finished "Catriona," at about the age that Scott had when he wrote his first novel, "Waverley," Stevenson thought of "Weir of Hermiston," ("I thought of Mr. Pickwick," says Dickens with admirable simplicity), and fell to that work furiously, as was his wont when a great theme dawned on him. But soon, as usual, came the cold fit; his inspirations being intermittent for some untraced reason, physical or psychological. Possibly he foresaw the practical difficulty of his initial idea: that the Roman Father should sit on the bench of Scottish Themis and try his own son on a capital charge. This would not have been permitted to occur in Scotland, even when "the Fifteen" were first constituted into a Court. If humane emotions did not forbid, it must have been clear that no Scottish judge (they were not "kinless loons") would have permitted his son to be found guilty. Conceivably this damping circumstance occurred to Stevenson. He dropped, for a while, the hanging judge, and began "St. Ives" as a short story. It was now that, early in 1893, under an attack of hemorrhage, Stevenson dictated his tale to his stepdaughter, on his fingers, in the gesture alphabet of the dumb. Perhaps this feat is as marvelous as Scott's dictating "The Bride of Lammermoor," *in tormentis*, to Will Laidlaw.

We see how his maladies hung on Stevenson's flank, even in Samoa, where his health had so remarkably improved, and permitted to him unwonted activities. After a visit to Sydney, he took up "The Ebb-Tide" in collaboration with Mr. Osbourne, whose draft of the first chapters he warmly applauded. It is not one of his central successes. His pencil was dipped in moral gloom, but even to the odious Cockney scoundrel, Huish, his Shakespearian tolerance accorded the virtue of indomitable courage. He could not help filling the book full with his abundant vitality and his keen observation of the islands and the beachcombers. The thing, to use an obsolete piece of slang, is *vécu*. There were other projects, many of them, which dawned rosily, and faded into the grey; and there was the rich and copious correspondence dated from Vailima. His friends, no doubt, hearing of his good health,

now and then, hoped to see his face again; the grouse on the hills of home were calling their eternal *Come back! come back!*

Stevenson, who himself could live contentedly on so little, was the most open-handed of men, the most liberal and cheerful of givers; and whether to Samoans in distressful times, or to others who sought his aid, his purse was never closed; while his hospitality was like Sir Walter's. Probably, in his hour of greatest success, he never was among "the best sellers." But any financial anxieties which may have beset him were assuaged, and his heart was greatly held up, by the success of the beautiful "Edinburgh Edition" of his works, conceived and carried out by the energy of his friend of old Edinburgh days, Mr. Charles Baxter.

His latest work was "Weir of Hermiston"; the plenitude of his genius shines in every page. He himself thought that this was his best work; so far as we can judge by the considerable fragment that exists, he was in the right. There is nothing immature, nothing here of the boy; he is approaching, in his tale, a fateful point of passion and disaster; his characters, especially the elder woman, the nurse, are entirely human, with no touch of caprice; they all live their separate lives in our memories. Then the end came. One moment of bewildered consciousness—then unconsciousness and death. He had written to me, some months before, a letter full of apprehensions of the fate of Scott and Swift; whether warned by some monitory experience, or whether he had merely chanced to be thinking of the two great men who outlived themselves. To him death had come almost as a friend in the fullness of his powers; there was no touch of weakness or decay, and he was mourned like a king by his Samoans, by his family, by all who had known him, and by many thousands who had never seen his face. There was mourning at home in Scotland (where we hoped against hope that the news was untrue), in England, in Europe, in America, in Australia and the Isles. He who had been such "a friendly writer," who had created for us so many friends in his characters, had made more friends for himself, friends more and more various in age, race, tastes, character, and temper, than any British writer, perhaps, since Dickens. He was taken from us untimely; broken was our strong hope in the future gifts of his genius, and there was a pain that does not attend the peaceful passing, in the fullness of years and wisdom and honour, of an immortal like Tennyson.

Any attempt by a contemporary to "place" Stevenson, to give him his "class" in English literature, would be a folly. The future must judge for itself, and, if we may estimate the taste of the future by that of the present, the reading public will not often look behind the most recent publications of its own day. But *les délicats* will look back on Stevenson as they now look back on Fielding, who, to my simple thinking, remains unsurpassed as a novelist; and as they turn to Lamb and Hazlitt as essayists. The poet is, of course, at his best immortal—time cannot stale *Beowulf*, or the nameless lyrists of the fourteenth century, or Chaucer, or Spenser, and so with the rest, *la mort n'y mord*. But it is as a writer of prose that Stevenson must be remembered. If he is not the master British essayist of the later nineteenth century, I really cannot imagine who is to be preferred to him. His vivacity, vitality, his original reflections on life, his personal and fascinating style, claim for him the crown. Nobody, perhaps, places him beside Lamb, and he would not have dreamed of being equaled in renown with Hazlitt, while he is, I conceive, more generally sympathetic than Mr. Pater, whose place is apart, whose province is entirely his own. When we think of Stevenson as a novelist, there is this conspicuous drawback, that he never did write a novel on characters and conditions in the mid-stream of the life that was contemporary with himself. He does not compete, therefore, with Thackeray and Dickens, Mr. Hardy and Mr. Meredith, but Scott is also no competitor.

"St. Ronan's Well" is Scott's only novel that deals with precisely contemporary life, and "St. Ronan's Well" is a kind of backwater; the story of a remote contemporary watering-place, of local squireens, and of a tragedy, mangled in deference to James Ballantyne. Scott did not often care to trust himself out of the last echoes of "the pipes that played for Charlie," and though his knowledge of contemporary life was infinitely wider than Stevenson's, we see many good reasons for his abstention from use of his knowledge. For example, it is obvious that he could not attempt a romance of the War

in the Peninsula, and of life in London, let us say, while Wellington was holding Torres Vedras. Even among Stevenson's abandoned projects, there is not, I think, one which deals with English society in the 'eighties. His health and his fugitive life imposed on him those limitations against which his taste did not rebel, for his taste led him to the past, and to adventure in a present not English, but exotic. He is not in the same field, so to speak, as Richardson and Fielding, Dickens and Thackeray, Mr. Hardy and Mr. Meredith; and their field, the great living world of their time, is what the general reader wants the novelist to deal with as he best may.

Shakespeare, to be sure, wrote no drama on Elizabethan times in England; we must go to Heywood and Ben Jonson for the drama of his contemporary world. Many circumstances caused Stevenson, when at his best, to be a historical novelist, and he is, since Scott and Thackeray, the best historical novelist whom we have.

Add to all this his notable eminence in tales of shorter scope; in essays, whether on life or on literature, so various and original, so graceful and so strong; add the fantasies of his fables, and remember that almost all he did is good—and we must, I think, give to Stevenson a very high place in the literature of his century.

Of his verse I have hitherto said nothing, and I do not think that if he had written verse alone, his place would have been highly distinguished. His "Child's Garden of Verse" is a little masterpiece in a *genre* of his own invention. His verses in Scots are full of humour, and he had a complete mastery of the old Northern English of the Lowlands. His more serious poems often contain ideas and the expression of moods which he handled better, I think, in his prose. Even the story of "Ticonderoga" I would rather have received from him in prose than in his ballad measure. Possibly I am prejudiced a little by his willfulness in giving to a Cameron the part of the generous hero; true to his word, in spite of the desire to avenge a brother, and of the thrice-repeated monition of the dead. It is not that I grudge any glory to the children of Lochiel, a clan, in General Wolfe's opinion, the bravest where all were brave, a clan of constant and boundless loyalty. But in Stevenson's own note to his poem, the Cameron "swears by his sword and Ben Cruachan," and "Cruachan" is a slogan of the Campbells. The hero, as a matter of fact, was a Campbell of Inverawe. "Between the name of *Cameron* and that of *Campbell* the Muse will never hesitate," says Stevenson. One name means "Wry mouth," the other "Crooked nose"; so far, the Muse has a poor choice! But the tale is a tale of the Campbells, of Clan Diarmaid, and the Muse must adhere to the historic truth.

This essay must not close on a difference of opinion concerning historical events—a jarring note.

There are points enough in Stevenson's character and opinions which I have not touched; such as his religious views. He never mentioned the topic of religion in my hearing; it is to his printed words that the reader must turn, and he cannot but perceive that Stevenson's was a deeply religious nature. With his faith, whatever its tenets may have been, was implicated his uneasily active conscience; his sense of duty. This appears to have directed his life; and was practically the same thing as his sense of honour. Honour, I conceive, is, in a phrase of Aristotle's, duty "with a bloom on it."

Readers of his Letters, and of his Biography by his cousin, Mr. Balfour; readers of his essays, and of his novels, must see that he was keenly interested in cases of conscience; in the right course to steer in an apparent conflict of duties. To say that his theory of the right course, in a hypothetical instance, was always the same as my own would be to abuse the confidence of the reader. As Preston-grange observes: "I would never charge myself with Mr. David's conscience; and if you could cast some part of it (as you went by) in a moss bog, you would find yourself to ride much easier without it"; and *not*, perhaps, always in the wrong direction. There is a case of conscience in "The Wrecker," something about opium-smuggling, and the conscience of Mr. Loudon Dodd (a truly Balfourian character), which I have studied, aided by other casuists, for a summer's day. We never could agree as to what the case really was, as to what was the moral issue.

Casuistry may not be my strong point. I have found myself between no less authorities than a Chancellor of England and a learned Jesuit, both of whom, I thought, would certainly accept my view of a very unusual case of conduct. A certain cleric, in his ecclesiastical duties, happened to overhear an automatically uttered remark by another person; who never meant to speak or to be overheard. The cleric acted on this information, with results distressing to a pair of true lovers. I maintained that he did wrong. "There was no appeal," I said, "to the umpire. Nobody in the field asked 'How's that?'" But the Chancellor and the learned Jesuit backed the clergyman.

Now, I never knew for certain how "Mr. David's conscience" would decide, but I think he would have been with me on this occasion, and with the Rules of the Game.

There was a very pleasant trait in Stevenson's character which, perhaps, does not display itself in most of his writings; his great affection for children. In "A Child's Garden of Verse," delightful as it is, and not to be read without "a great inclination to cry," the child is himself, the child "that is gone." But, in an early letter, he writes: "Kids is what is the matter with me ... Children are too good to be true." He had a natural infatuation, so to say, for children as children, which many men of the pen overcome with no apparent difficulty. He could not overcome it; little boys and girls were his delight, and he was theirs. At Molokai, the Leper Island, he played croquet with the little girls; refusing to wear gloves, lest he should remind them of their condition. Sensitive and weak in body as he was, Nelson was not more fearless. It was equally characteristic of another quality of his, the open hand, that he gave a grand piano to these leper children.

He says:

"But the nearest friends are the auldest friends,
And the grave's the place to seek them."

Among the nearest and the oldest friends of his I never was, but to few friends, nearer and older, does my *desiderium* go back so frequently; simply because almost every day brings something newly learned or known, which would have appealed most to his unequalled breadth of knowledge and interest and sympathy.

ANDREW LANG.

AN INLAND VOYAGE

"Thus sang they in the English boat."

MARVELL.

DEDICATION

TO

SIR WALTER GRINDLAY SIMPSON, BART

My dear "Cigarette,"

It was enough that you should have shared so liberally in the rains and portages of our voyage; that you should have had so hard a paddle to recover the derelict "Arethusa" on the flooded Oise: and that you should thenceforth have piloted a mere wreck of mankind to Origny Sainte-Benoîte and a supper so eagerly desired. It was perhaps more than enough, as you once somewhat piteously complained, that I should have set down all the strong language to you, and kept the appropriate reflections for myself. I could not in decency expose you to share the disgrace of another and more public shipwreck. But now that this voyage of ours is going into a cheap edition, that peril, we shall hope, is at an end, and I may put your name on the burgee.

But I cannot pause till I have lamented the fate of our two ships. That, sir, was not a fortunate day when we projected the possession of a canal barge; it was not a fortunate day when we shared our daydream with the most hopeful of daydreamers. For a while, indeed, the world looked smilingly. The barge was procured and christened, and as the "Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne," lay for some months, the admired of all admirers, in a pleasant river and under the walls of an ancient town. M. Mattras, the accomplished carpenter of Moret, had made her a centre of emulous labour; and you will not have forgotten the amount of sweet champagne consumed in the inn at the bridge end, to give zeal to the workmen and speed to the work. On the financial aspect I would not willingly dwell. The "Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne" rotted in the stream where she was beautified. She felt not the impulse of the breeze; she was never harnessed to the patent track-horse. And when at length she was sold, by the indignant carpenter of Moret, there were sold along with her the "Arethusa" and the "Cigarette", she of cedar, she, as we knew so keenly on a portage, of solid-hearted English oak. Now these historic vessels fly the tricolour and are known by new and alien names.

R. L. S.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

To equip so small a book with a preface is, I am half afraid, to sin against proportion. But a preface is more than an author can resist, for it is the reward of his labours. When the foundation-stone is laid, the architect appears with his plans, and struts for an hour before the public eye. So with the writer in his preface: he may have never a word to say, but he must show himself for a moment in the portico, hat in hand, and with an urbane demeanour.

It is best, in such circumstances, to represent a delicate shade of manner between humility and superiority: as if the book had been written by someone else, and you had merely run over it and inserted what was good. But for my part I have not yet learned the trick to that perfection; I am not yet able to dissemble the warmth of my sentiments towards a reader; and if I meet him on the threshold, it is to invite him in with country cordiality.

To say truth, I had no sooner finished reading this little book in proof, than I was seized upon by a distressing apprehension. It occurred to me that I might not only be the first to read these pages, but the last as well; that I might have pioneered this very smiling tract of country all in vain, and find not a soul to follow in my steps. The more I thought, the more I disliked the notion; until the distaste grew into a sort of panic terror, and I rushed into this Preface, which is no more than an advertisement for readers.

What am I to say for my book? Caleb and Joshua brought back from Palestine a formidable bunch of grapes; alas! my book produces naught so nourishing; and for the matter of that, we live in an age when people prefer a definition to any quantity of fruit.

I wonder, would a negative be found enticing? for, from the negative point of view, I flatter myself this volume has a certain stamp. Although it runs to considerably upwards of two hundred pages, it contains not a single reference to the imbecility of God's universe, nor so much as a single hint that I could have made a better one myself.—I really do not know where my head can have been. I seem to have forgotten all that makes it glorious to be man.—'Tis an omission that renders the book philosophically unimportant; but I am in hopes the eccentricity may please in frivolous circles.

To the friend who accompanied me I owe many thanks already, indeed I wish I owed him nothing else; but at this moment I feel towards him an almost exaggerated tenderness. He, at least, will become my reader:—if it were only to follow his own travels alongside of mine.

R. L. S.

AN INLAND VOYAGE

ANTWERP TO BOOM

We made a great stir in Antwerp Docks. A stevedore and a lot of dock porters took up the two canoes, and ran with them for the slip. A crowd of children followed cheering. The *Cigarette* went off in a splash and a bubble of small breaking water. Next moment the *Arethusa* was after her. A steamer was coming down, men on the paddle-box shouted hoarse warnings, the stevedore and his porters were bawling from the quay. But in a stroke or two the canoes were away out in the middle of the Scheldt, and all steamers, and stevedores, and other long-shore vanities were left behind.

The sun shone brightly; the tide was making—four jolly miles an hour; the wind blew steadily, with occasional squalls. For my part, I had never been in a canoe under sail in my life; and my first experiment out in the middle of this big river was not made without some trepidation. What would happen when the wind first caught my little canvas? I suppose it was almost as trying a venture into the regions of the unknown as to publish a first book, or to marry. But my doubts were not of long duration; and in five minutes you will not be surprised to learn that I had tied my sheet.

I own I was a little struck by this circumstance myself; of course, in company with the rest of my fellow-men, I had always tied the sheet in a sailing-boat; but in so little and crank a concern as a canoe, and with these charging squalls, I was not prepared to find myself follow the same principle; and it inspired me with some contemptuous views of our regard for life. It is certainly easier to smoke with the sheet fastened; but I had never before weighed a comfortable pipe of tobacco against an obvious risk, and gravely elected for the comfortable pipe. It is a commonplace, that we cannot answer for ourselves before we have been tried. But it is not so common a reflection, and surely more consoling, that we usually find ourselves a great deal braver and better than we thought. I believe this is every one's experience: but an apprehension that they may belie themselves in the future prevents mankind from trumpeting this cheerful sentiment abroad. I wish sincerely, for it would have saved me much trouble, there had been some one to put me in a good heart about life when I was younger; to tell me how dangers are most portentous on a distant sight; and how the good in a man's spirit will not suffer itself to be overlaid, and rarely or never deserts him in the hour of need. But we are all for tootling on the sentimental flute in literature; and not a man among us will go to the head of the march to sound the heady drums.

It was agreeable upon the river. A barge or two went past laden with hay. Reeds and willows bordered the stream; and cattle and grey venerable horses came and hung their mild heads over the embankment. Here and there was a pleasant village among trees, with a noisy shipping-yard; here and there a villa in a lawn. The wind served us well up the Scheldt and thereafter up the Rupel, and we were running pretty free when we began to sight the brickyards of Boom, lying for a long way on the right bank of the river. The left bank was still green and pastoral, with alleys of trees along the embankment, and here and there a flight of steps to serve a ferry, where perhaps there sat a woman with her elbows on her knees, or an old gentleman with a staff and silver spectacles. But Boom and its brickyards grew smokier and shabbier with every minute; until a great church with a clock, and a wooden bridge over the river, indicated the central quarters of the town.

Boom is not a nice place, and is only remarkable for one thing: that the majority of the inhabitants have a private opinion that they can speak English, which is not justified by fact. This gave a kind of haziness to our intercourse. As for the Hôtel de la Navigation, I think it is the worst feature of the place. It boasts of a sanded parlour, with a bar at one end, looking on the street; and another sanded parlour, darker and colder, with an empty bird-cage and a tricolor subscription box by way of sole adornment, where we made shift to dine in the company of three uncommunicative engineer

apprentices and a silent bagman. The food, as usual in Belgium, was of a nondescript occasional character; indeed, I have never been able to detect anything in the nature of a meal among this pleasing people; they seem to peck and trifle with viands all day long in an amateur spirit: tentatively French, truly German, and somehow falling between the two.

The empty bird-cage, swept and garnished, and with no trace of the old piping favourite, save where two wires had been pushed apart to hold its lump of sugar, carried with it a sort of graveyard cheer. The engineer apprentices would have nothing to say to us, nor indeed to the bagman; but talked low and sparingly to one another, or raked us in the gaslight with a gleam of spectacles. For though handsome lads, they were all (in the Scots phrase) barnacled.

There was an English maid in the hotel, who had been long enough out of England to pick up all sorts of funny foreign idioms, and all sorts of curious foreign ways, which need not here be specified. She spoke to us very fluently in her jargon, asked us information as to the manners of the present day in England, and obligingly corrected us when we attempted to answer. But as we were dealing with a woman, perhaps our information was not so much thrown away as it appeared. The sex likes to pick up knowledge and yet preserve its superiority. It is good policy, and almost necessary in the circumstances. If a man finds a woman admire him, were it only for his acquaintance with geography, he will begin at once to build upon the admiration. It is only by unintermittent snubbing that the pretty ones can keep us in our place. Men, as Miss Howe or Miss Harlowe would have said, "are such *encroachers*." For my part, I am body and soul with the women; and after a well-married couple, there is nothing so beautiful in the world as the myth of the divine huntress. It is no use for a man to take to the woods; we know him; St. Anthony tried the same thing long ago, and had a pitiful time of it by all accounts. But there is this about some women, which overtops the best gymnosophist among men, that they suffice to themselves, and can walk in a high and cold zone without the countenance of any trousered being. I declare, although the reverse of a professed ascetic, I am more obliged to women for this ideal than I should be to the majority of them, or indeed to any but one, for a spontaneous kiss. There is nothing so encouraging as the spectacle of self-sufficiency. And when I think of the slim and lovely maidens, running the woods all night to the note of Diana's horn; moving among the old oaks, as fancy-free as they; things of the forest and the starlight, not touched by the commotion of man's hot and turbid life—although there are plenty other ideals that I should prefer—I find my heart beat at the thought of this one. 'Tis to fail in life, but to fail with what a grace! That is not lost which is not regretted. And where—here slips out the male—where would be much of the glory of inspiring love, if there were no contempt to overcome?

ON THE WILLEBROEK CANAL

Next morning, when we set forth on the Willebroek Canal, the rain began heavy and chill. The water of the canal stood at about the drinking temperature of tea; and under this cold aspersion the surface was covered with steam. The exhilaration of departure, and the easy motion of the boats under each stroke of the paddles, supported us through this misfortune while it lasted; and when the cloud passed and the sun came out again, our spirits went up above the range of stay-at-home humours. A good breeze rustled and shivered in the rows of trees that bordered the canal. The leaves flickered in and out of the light in tumultuous masses. It seemed sailing weather to eye and ear; but down between the banks, the wind reached us only in faint and desultory puffs. There was hardly enough to steer by. Progress was intermittent and unsatisfactory. A jocular person, of marine antecedents, hailed us from the tow-path with a "*C'est vite, mais c'est long.*"

The canal was busy enough. Every now and then we met or overtook a long string of boats, with great green tillers; high sterns with a window on either side of the rudder, and perhaps a jug or a flower-pot in one of the windows; a dinghy following behind; a woman busied about the day's dinner, and a handful of children. These barges were all tied one behind the other with tow ropes, to the number of twenty-five or thirty; and the line was headed and kept in motion by a steamer of strange construction. It had neither paddle-wheel nor screw; but by some gear not rightly comprehensible to the unmechanical mind, it fetched up over its bow a small bright chain which lay along the bottom of the canal, and paying it out again over the stern, dragged itself forward, link by link, with its whole retinue of loaded skows. Until one had found out the key to the enigma, there was something solemn and uncomfortable in the progress of one of these trains, as it moved gently along the water with nothing to mark its advance but an eddy alongside dying away into the wake.

Of all the creatures of commercial enterprise, a canal barge is by far the most delightful to consider. It may spread its sails, and then you see it sailing high above the tree-tops and the windmill, sailing on the aqueduct, sailing through the green corn-lands: the most picturesque of things amphibious. Or the horse plods along at a foot-pace, as if there were no such thing as business in the world; and the man dreaming at the tiller sees the same spire on the horizon all day long. It is a mystery how things ever get to their destination at this rate; and to see the barges waiting their turn at a lock affords a fine lesson of how easily the world may be taken. There should be many contented spirits on board, for such a life is both to travel and to stay at home.

The chimney smokes for dinner as you go along; the banks of the canal slowly unroll their scenery to contemplative eyes; the barge floats by great forests and through great cities with their public buildings and their lamps at night; and for the barge, in his floating home, "travelling abed," it is merely as if he were listening to another man's story or turning the leaves of a picture-book in which he had no concern. He may take his afternoon walk in some foreign country on the banks of the canal, and then come home to dinner at his own fireside.

There is not enough exercise in such a life for any high measure of health; but a high measure of health is only necessary for unhealthy people. The slug of a fellow, who is never ill nor well, has a quiet time of it in life, and dies all the easier.

I am sure I would rather be a barge than occupy any position under heaven that required attendance at an office. There are few callings, I should say, where a man gives up less of his liberty in return for regular meals. The barge is on shipboard—he is master in his own ship—he can land whenever he will—he can never be kept beating off a lee-shore a whole frosty night when the sheets are as hard as iron; and, so far as I can make out, time stands as nearly still with him as is compatible with the return of bed-time or the dinner-hour. It is not easy to see why a barge should ever die.

Half-way between Willebroek and Villevorde, in a beautiful reach of canal like a squire's avenue, we went ashore to lunch. There were two eggs, a junk of bread, and a bottle of wine on board

the *Arethusa*; and two eggs and an Etna cooking apparatus on board the *Cigarette*. The master of the latter boat smashed one of the eggs in the course of disembarkation; but observing pleasantly that it might still be cooked *à la papier*, he dropped it into the Etna, in its covering of Flemish newspaper. We landed in a blink of fine weather; but we had not been two minutes ashore before the wind freshened into half a gale, and the rain began to patter on our shoulders. We sat as close about the Etna as we could. The spirits burned with great ostentation; the grass caught flame every minute or two, and had to be trodden out; and before long, there were several burnt fingers of the party. But the solid quantity of cookery accomplished was out of proportion with so much display; and when we desisted, after two applications of the fire, the sound egg was little more than loo-warm; and as for *à la papier*, it was a cold and sordid *fricassée* of printer's ink and broken egg-shell. We made shift to roast the other two, by putting them close to the burning spirits; and that with better success. And then we uncorked the bottle of wine, and sat down in a ditch with our canoe aprons over our knees. It rained smartly. Discomfort, when it is honestly uncomfortable and makes no nauseous pretensions to the contrary, is a vastly humorous business; and people well steeped and stupefied in the open air are in a good vein for laughter. From this point of view, even *egg à la papier* offered by way of food may pass muster as a sort of accessory to the fun. But this manner of jest, although it may be taken in good part, does not invite repetition; and from that time forward, the Etna voyaged like a gentleman in the locker of the *Cigarette*.

It is almost unnecessary to mention that when lunch was over and we got aboard again and made sail, the wind promptly died away. The rest of the journey to Villevorde, we still spread our canvas to the unfavouring air; and with now and then a puff, and now and then a spell of paddling, drifted along from lock to lock, between the orderly trees.

It was a fine, green, fat landscape; or rather a mere green water-lane, going on from village to village. Things had a settled look, as in places long lived in. Crop-headed children spat upon us from the bridges as we went below, with a true conservative feeling. But even more conservative were the fishermen, intent upon their floats, who let us go by without one glance. They perched upon sterlings and buttresses and along the slope of the embankment, gently occupied. They were indifferent, like pieces of dead nature. They did not move any more than if they had been fishing in an old Dutch print. The leaves fluttered, the water lapped, but they continued in one stay like so many churches established by law. You might have trepanned every one of their innocent heads, and found no more than so much coiled fishing-line below their skulls. I do not care for your stalwart fellows in india-rubber stockings breasting up mountain torrents with a salmon rod; but I do dearly love the class of man who plies his unfruitful art, for ever and a day, by still and depopulated waters.

At the last lock, just beyond Villevorde, there was a lock-mistress who spoke French comprehensibly, and told us we were still a couple of leagues from Brussels. At the same place the rain began again. It fell in straight, parallel lines; and the surface of the canal was thrown up into an infinity of little crystal fountains. There were no beds to be had in the neighbourhood. Nothing for it but to lay the sails aside and address ourselves to steady paddling in the rain.

Beautiful country houses, with clocks and long lines of shuttered windows, and fine old trees standing in groves and avenues, gave a rich and sombre aspect in the rain and the deepening dusk to the shores of the canal. I seem to have seen something of the same effect in engravings: opulent landscapes, deserted and overhung with the passage of storm. And throughout we had the escort of a hooded cart, which trotted shabbily along the tow-path, and kept at an almost uniform distance in our wake.

THE ROYAL SPORT NAUTIQUE

The rain took off near Laeken. But the sun was already down; the air was chill; and we had scarcely a dry stitch between the pair of us. Nay, now we found ourselves near the end of the Allée Verte, and on the very threshold of Brussels, we were confronted by a serious difficulty. The shores were closely lined by canal boats waiting their turn at the lock. Nowhere was there any convenient landing-place; nowhere so much as a stable-yard to leave the canoes in for the night. We scrambled ashore and entered an *estaminet* where some sorry fellows were drinking with the landlord. The landlord was pretty round with us; he knew of no coach-house or stable-yard, nothing of the sort; and seeing we had come with no mind to drink, he did not conceal his impatience to be rid of us. One of the sorry fellows came to the rescue. Somewhere in the corner of the basin there was a slip, he informed us, and something else besides, not very clearly defined by him, but hopefully construed by his hearers.

Sure enough there was the slip in the corner of the basin, and at the top of it two nice-looking lads in boating clothes. The *Arethusa* addressed himself to these. One of them said there would be no difficulty about a night's lodging for our boats; and the other, taking a cigarette from his lips, inquired if they were made by Searle and Son. The name was quite an introduction. Half a dozen other young men came out of a boat-house bearing the superscription ROYAL SPORT NAUTIQUE, and joined in the talk. They were all very polite, voluble, and enthusiastic; and their discourse was interlarded with English boating terms, and the names of English boat-builders and English clubs. I do not know, to my shame, any spot in my native land where I should have been so warmly received by the same number of people. We were English boating-men, and the Belgian boating-men fell upon our necks. I wonder if French Huguenots were as cordially greeted by English Protestants when they came across the Channel out of great tribulation. But, after all, what religion knits people so closely as a common sport?

The canoes were carried into the boat-house; they were washed down for us by the Club servants, the sails were hung out to dry, and everything made as snug and tidy as a picture. And in the meanwhile we were led upstairs by our new-found brethren, for so more than one of them stated the relationship, and made free of their lavatory. This one lent us soap, that one a towel, a third and fourth helped us to undo our bags. And all the time such questions, such assurances of respect and sympathy! I declare I never knew what glory was before.

"Yes, yes; the *Royal Sport Nautique* is the oldest club in Belgium."

"We number two hundred."

"We"—this is not a substantive speech, but an abstract of many speeches, the impression left upon my mind after a great deal of talk; and very youthful, pleasant, natural, and patriotic it seems to me to be—"We have gained all races, except those where we were cheated by the French."

"You must leave all your wet things to be dried."

"O! *entre frères!* In any boat-house in England we should find the same." (I cordially hope they might.)

"*En Angleterre, vous employez des sliding-seats, n'est-ce pas?*"

"We are all employed in commerce during the day; but in the evening, *voyez-vous, nous sommes sérieux.*"

These were the words. They were all employed over the frivolous mercantile concerns of Belgium during the day; but in the evening they found some hours for the serious concerns of life. I may have a wrong idea of wisdom, but I think that was a very wise remark. People connected with literature and philosophy are busy all their days in getting rid of second-hand notions and false standards. It is their profession, in the sweat of their brows, by dogged thinking, to recover their old fresh view of life, and distinguish what they really and originally like, from what they have only

learned to tolerate perforce. And these Royal Nautical Sportsmen had the distinction still quite legible in their hearts. They had still those clean perceptions of what is nice and nasty, what is interesting and what is dull, which envious old gentlemen refer to as illusions. The nightmare illusion of middle age, the bear's hug of custom gradually squeezing the life out of a man's soul, had not yet begun for these happy-starred young Belgians. They still knew that the interest they took in their business was a trifling affair compared to their spontaneous, long-suffering affection for nautical sports. To know what you prefer, instead of humbly saying Amen to what the world tells you you ought to prefer, is to have kept your soul alive. Such a man may be generous; he may be honest in something more than the commercial sense; he may love his friends with an elective, personal sympathy, and not accept them as an adjunct of the station to which he has been called. He may be a man, in short, acting on his own instincts, keeping in his own shape that God made him in; and not a mere crank in the social engine-house, welded on principles that he does not understand, and for purposes that he does not care for.

For will any one dare to tell me that business is more entertaining than fooling among boats? He must have never seen a boat, or never seen an office, who says so. And for certain the one is a great deal better for the health. There should be nothing so much a man's business as his amusements. Nothing but money-grubbing can be put forward to the contrary; no one but

Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From Heaven,

durst risk a word in answer. It is but a lying cant that would represent the merchant and the banker as people disinterestedly toiling for mankind, and then most useful when they are most absorbed in their transactions; for the man is more important than his services. And when my Royal Nautical Sportsman shall have so far fallen from his hopeful youth that he cannot pluck up an enthusiasm over anything but his ledger, I venture to doubt whether he will be near so nice a fellow, and whether he would welcome, with so good a grace, a couple of drenched Englishmen paddling into Brussels in the dusk.

When we had changed our wet clothes and drunk a glass of pale ale to the Club's prosperity, one of their number escorted us to an hotel. He would not join us at our dinner, but he had no objection to a glass of wine. Enthusiasm is very wearing; and I begin to understand why prophets were unpopular in Judea, where they were best known. For three stricken hours did this excellent young man sit beside us to dilate on boats and boat-races; and before he left, he was kind enough to order our bedroom candles.

We endeavoured now and again to change the subject; but the diversion did not last a moment: the Royal Nautical Sportsman bridled, shied, answered the question, and then breasted once more into the swelling tide of his subject. I call it his subject; but I think it was he who was subjected. The *Arethusa*, who holds all racing as a creature of the devil, found himself in a pitiful dilemma. He durst not own his ignorance, for the honour of Old England, and spoke away about English clubs and English oarsmen whose fame had never before come to his ears. Several times, and, once above all, on the question of sliding-seats, he was within an ace of exposure. As for the *Cigarette*, who has rowed races in the heat of his blood, but now disowns these slips of his wanton youth, his case was still more desperate; for the Royal Nautical proposed that he should take an oar in one of their eights on the morrow, to compare the English with the Belgian stroke. I could see my friend perspiring in his chair whenever that particular topic came up. And there was yet another proposal which had the same effect on both of us. It appeared that the champion canoeist of Europe (as well as most other champions) was a Royal Nautical Sportsman. And if we would only wait until the Sunday, this infernal paddler would be so condescending as to accompany us on our next stage. Neither of us had the least desire to drive the coursers of the sun against Apollo.

When the young man was gone, we countermanded our candles, and ordered some brandy and water. The great billows had gone over our head. The Royal Nautical Sportsmen were as nice young fellows as a man would wish to see, but they were a trifle too young and a thought too nautical for us. We began to see that we were old and cynical; we liked ease and the agreeable rambling of the human mind about this and the other subject; we did not want to disgrace our native land by messing an eight, or toiling pitifully in the wake of the champion canoeist. In short, we had recourse to flight. It seemed ungrateful, but we tried to make that good on a card loaded with sincere compliments. And indeed it was no time for scruples; we seemed to feel the hot breath of the champion on our necks.

AT MAUBEUGE

Partly from the terror we had of our good friends the Royal Nauticals, partly from the fact that there were no fewer than fifty-five locks between Brussels and Charleroi, we concluded that we should travel by train across the frontier, boats and all. Fifty-five locks in a day's journey was pretty well tantamount to trudging the whole distance on foot, with the canoes upon our shoulders, an object of astonishment to the trees on the canal side, and of honest derision to all right-thinking children.

To pass the frontier even in a train is a difficult matter for the *Arethusia*. He is somehow or other a marked man for the official eye. Wherever he journeys there are the officers gathered together. Treaties are solemnly signed, foreign ministers, ambassadors, and consuls sit throned in state from China to Peru, and the Union Jack flutters on all the winds of heaven. Under these safeguards, portly clergymen, schoolmistresses, gentlemen in grey tweed suits, and all the ruck and rabble of British touristy pour unhindered, "Murray" in hand, over the railways of the Continent, and yet the slim person of the *Arethusia* is taken in the meshes, while these great fish go on their way rejoicing. If he travels without a passport, he is cast, without any figure about the matter, into noisome dungeons: if his papers are in order, he is suffered to go his way indeed, but not until he has been humiliated by a general incredulity. He is a born British subject, yet he has never succeeded in persuading a single official of his nationality. He flatters himself he is indifferent honest; yet he is rarely taken for anything better than a spy, and there is no absurd and disreputable means of livelihood but has been attributed to him in some heat of official or popular distrust....

For the life of me I cannot understand it. I, too, have been knolled to church, and sat at good men's feasts; but I bear no mark of it. I am as strange as a Jack Indian to their official spectacles. I might come from any part of the globe, it seems, except from where I do. My ancestors have laboured in vain, and the glorious Constitution cannot protect me in my walks abroad. It is a great thing, believe me, to present a good normal type of the nation you belong to.

Nobody else was asked for his papers on the way to Maubeuge; but I was, and although I clung to my rights, I had to choose at last between accepting the humiliation and being left behind by the train. I was sorry to give way; but I wanted to get to Maubeuge.

Maubeuge is a fortified town, with a very good inn, the *Grand Cerf*. It seemed to be inhabited principally by soldiers and bagmen; at least, these were all that we saw, except the hotel servants. We had to stay there some time, for the canoes were in no hurry to follow us, and at last stuck hopelessly in the custom-house until we went back to liberate them. There was nothing to do, nothing to see. We had good meals, which was a great matter; but that was all.

The *Cigarette* was nearly taken up upon a charge of drawing the fortifications: a feat of which he was hopelessly incapable. And besides, as I suppose each belligerent nation has a plan of the other's fortified places already, these precautions are of the nature of shutting the stable door after the steed is away. But I have no doubt they help to keep up a good spirit at home. It is a great thing if you can persuade people that they are somehow or other partakers in a mystery. It makes them feel bigger. Even the Freemasons, who have been shown up to satiety, preserve a kind of pride; and not a grocer among them, however honest, harmless, and empty-headed he may feel himself to be at bottom, but comes home from one of their *cœnacula* with a portentous significance for himself.

It is an odd thing, how happily two people, if there are two, can live in a place where they have no acquaintance. I think the spectacle of a whole life in which you have no part paralysis personal desire. You are content to become a mere spectator. The baker stands in his door; the colonel with his three medals goes by to the *café* at night; the troops drum and trumpet and man the ramparts, as bold as so many lions. It would task language to say how placidly you behold all this. In a place where you have taken some root, you are provoked out of your indifference; you have a hand in the game; your friends are fighting with the army. But in a strange town, not small enough to grow too soon

familiar, nor so large as to have laid itself out for travellers, you stand so far apart from the business that you positively forget it would be possible to go nearer; you have so little human interest around you, that you do not remember yourself to be a man. Perhaps, in a very short time, you would be one no longer. Gymnosophists go into a wood, with all nature seething around them, with romance on every side; it would be much more to the purpose if they took up their abode in a dull country town, where they should see just so much of humanity as to keep them from desiring more, and only the stale externals of man's life. These externals are as dead to us as so many formalities, and speak a dead language in our eyes and ears. They have no more meaning than an oath or a salutation. We are so much accustomed to see married couples going to church of a Sunday that we have clean forgotten what they represent; and novelists are driven to rehabilitate adultery, no less, when they wish to show us what a beautiful thing it is for a man and a woman to live for each other.

One person in Maubeuge, however, showed me something more than his outside. That was the driver of the hotel omnibus: a mean enough looking little man, as well as I can remember; but with a spark of something human in his soul. He had heard of our little journey, and came to me at once in envious sympathy. How he longed to travel! he told me. How he longed to be somewhere else, and see the round world before he went into the grave! "Here I am," said he. "I drive to the station. Well. And then I drive back again to the hotel. And so on every day, and all the week round. My God, is that life?" I could not say I thought it was—for him. He pressed me to tell him where I had been, and where I hoped to go; and as he listened, I declare the fellow sighed. Might not this have been a brave African traveller, or gone to the Indies after Drake? But it is an evil age for the gypsily inclined among men. He who can sit squarest on a three-legged stool, he it is who has the wealth and glory.

I wonder if my friend is still driving the omnibus for the *Grand Cerf*? Not very likely, I believe; for I think he was on the eve of mutiny when we passed through, and perhaps our passage determined him for good. Better a thousand times that he should be a tramp, and mend pots and pans by the wayside, and sleep under trees, and see the dawn and the sunset every day above a new horizon. I think I hear you say that it is a respectable position to drive an omnibus? Very well. What right has he, who likes it not, to keep those who would like it dearly out of this respectable position? Suppose a dish were not to my taste, and you told me that it was a favourite amongst the rest of the company, what should I conclude from that? Not to finish the dish against my stomach, I suppose.

Respectability is a very good thing in its way, but it does not rise superior to all considerations. I would not for a moment venture to hint that it was a matter of taste; but I think I will go as far as this: that if a position is admittedly unkind, uncomfortable, unnecessary, and superfluously useless, although it were as respectable as the Church of England, the sooner a man is out of it, the better for himself, and all concerned.

ON THE SAMBRE CANALISED

TO QUARTES

About three in the afternoon the whole establishment of the *Grand Cerf* accompanied us to the water's edge. The man of the omnibus was there with haggard eyes. Poor cage-bird! Do I not remember the time when I myself haunted the station, to watch train after train carry its complement of freemen into the night, and read the names of distant places on the time-bills with indescribable longings?

We were not clear of the fortifications before the rain began. The wind was contrary, and blew in furious gusts; nor were the aspects of nature any more clement than the doings of the sky. For we passed through a stretch of blighted country, sparsely covered with brush, but handsomely enough diversified with factory chimneys. We landed in a soiled meadow among some pollards, and there smoked a pipe in a flaw of fair weather. But the wind blew so hard, we could get little else to smoke. There were no natural objects in the neighbourhood, but some sordid workshops. A group of children headed by a tall girl stood and watched us from a little distance all the time we stayed. I heartily wonder what they thought of us.

At Hautmont, the lock was almost impassable; the landing-place being steep and high, and the launch at a long distance. Near a dozen grimy workmen lent us a hand. They refused any reward; and, what is much better, refused it handsomely, without conveying any sense of insult. "It is a way we have in our countryside," said they. And a very becoming way it is. In Scotland, where also you will get services for nothing, the good people reject your money as if you had been trying to corrupt a voter. When people take the trouble to do dignified acts, it is worth while to take a little more, and allow the dignity to be common to all concerned. But in our brave Saxon countries, where we plod threescore years and ten in the mud, and the wind keeps singing in our ears from birth to burial, we do our good and bad with a high hand, and almost offensively; and make even our alms a witness-bearing and an act of war against the wrong.

After Hautmont, the sun came forth again and the wind went down; and a little paddling took us beyond the ironworks and through a delectable land. The river wound among low hills, so that sometimes the sun was at our backs, and sometimes it stood right ahead, and the river before us was one sheet of intolerable glory. On either hand, meadows and orchards bordered, with a margin of sedge and water flowers, upon the river. The hedges were of great height, woven about the trunks of hedgerow elms; and the fields, as they were often very small, looked like a series of bowers along the stream. There was never any prospect; sometimes a hill-top with its trees would look over the nearest hedgerow, just to make a middle distance for the sky; but that was all. The heaven was bare of clouds. The atmosphere, after the rain, was of enchanting purity. The river doubled among the hillocks, a shining strip of mirror glass; and the dip of the paddles set the flowers shaking along the brink.

In the meadows wandered black and white cattle fantastically marked. One beast, with a white head and the rest of the body glossy black, came to the edge to drink, and stood gravely twitching his ears at me as I went by, like some sort of preposterous clergyman in a play. A moment after I heard a loud plunge, and, turning my head, saw the clergyman struggling to shore. The bank had given way under his feet.

Besides the cattle, we saw no living things except a few birds and a great many fishermen. These sat along the edges of the meadows, sometimes with one rod, sometimes with as many as half a score. They seemed stupefied with contentment; and when we induced them to exchange a few words with us about the weather, their voices sounded quiet and far away. There was a strange diversity of opinion among them as to the kind of fish for which they set their lures; although they were all agreed

in this, that the river was abundantly supplied. Where it was plain that no two of them had ever caught the same kind of fish, we could not help suspecting that perhaps not any one of them had ever caught a fish at all. I hope, since the afternoon was so lovely, that they were one and all rewarded; and that a silver booty went home in every basket for the pot. Some of my friends would cry shame on me for this; but I prefer a man, were he only an angler, to the bravest pair of gills in all God's waters. I do not affect fishes unless when cooked in sauce; whereas an angler is an important piece of river scenery, and hence deserves some recognition among canoeists. He can always tell you where you are after a mild fashion; and his quiet presence serves to accentuate the solitude and stillness, and remind you of the glittering citizens below your boat.

The Sambre turned so industriously to and fro among his little hills, that it was past six before we drew near the lock at Quartes. There were some children on the tow-path, with whom the *Cigarette* fell into a chaffing talk as they ran along beside us. It was in vain that I warned him. In vain I told him, in English, that boys were the most dangerous creatures; and if once you began with them, it was safe to end in a shower of stones. For my own part, whenever anything was addressed to me, I smiled gently and shook my head as though I were an inoffensive person inadequately acquainted with French. For indeed I have had such experience at home, that I would sooner meet many wild animals than a troop of healthy urchins.

But I was doing injustice to these peaceable young Hainaulters. When the *Cigarette* went off to make inquiries, I got out upon the bank to smoke a pipe and superintend the boats, and became at once the centre of much amiable curiosity. The children had been joined by this time by a young woman and a mild lad who had lost an arm; and this gave me more security. When I let slip my first word or so in French, a little girl nodded her head with a comical grown-up air. "Ah, you see," she said, "he understands well enough now; he was just making believe." And the little group laughed together very good-naturedly.

They were much impressed when they heard we came from England; and the little girl proffered the information that England was an island "and a far way from here—*bien loin d'ici*."

"Ay, you may say that,—a far way from here," said the lad with one arm.

I was as nearly home-sick as ever I was in my life; they seemed to make it such an incalculable distance to the place where I first saw the day.

They admired the canoes very much. And I observed one piece of delicacy in these children, which is worthy of record. They had been deafening us for the last hundred yards with petitions for a sail; ay, and they deafened us to the same tune next morning when we came to start; but then, when the canoes were lying empty, there was no word of any such petition. Delicacy? or perhaps a bit of fear for the water in so crank a vessel? I hate cynicism a great deal worse than I do the devil; unless perhaps the two were the same thing! And yet 'tis a good tonic; the cold tub and bath-towel of the sentiments; and positively necessary to life in cases of advanced sensibility.

From the boats they turned to my costume. They could not make enough of my red sash; and my knife filled them with awe.

"They make them like that in England," said the boy with one arm. I was glad he did not know how badly we make them in England nowadays. "They are for people who go away to sea," he added, "and to defend one's life against great fish."

I felt I was becoming a more and more romantic figure to the little group at every word. And so I suppose I was. Even my pipe, although it was an ordinary French clay, pretty well "trouserred," as they call it, would have a rarity in their eyes, as a thing coming from so far away. And if my feathers were not very fine in themselves, they were all from over seas. One thing in my outfit, however, tickled them out of all politeness; and that was the bemired condition of my canvas shoes. I suppose they were sure the mud at any rate was a home product. The little girl (who was the genius of the party) displayed her own sabots in competition; and I wish you could have seen how gracefully and merrily she did it.

The young woman's milk-can, a great amphora of hammered brass, stood some way off upon the sward. I was glad of an opportunity to divert public attention from myself, and return some of the compliments I had received. So I admired it cordially both for form and colour, telling them, and very truly, that it was as beautiful as gold. They were not surprised. The things were plainly the boast of the countryside. And the children expatiated on the costliness of these amphorae, which sell sometimes as high as thirty francs apiece; told me how they were carried on donkeys, one on either side of the saddle, a brave caparison in themselves; and how they were to be seen all over the district, and at the larger farms in great number and of great size.

PONT-SUR-SAMBRE

WE ARE PEDLARS

The *Cigarette* returned with good news. There were beds to be had some ten minutes' walk from where we were, at a place called Pont. We stowed the canoes in a granary, and asked among the children for a guide. The circle at once widened round us, and our offers of reward were received in dispiriting silence. We were plainly a pair of Bluebeards to the children; they might speak to us in public places, and where they had the advantage of numbers; but it was another thing to venture off alone with two uncouth and legendary characters, who had dropped from the clouds upon their hamlet this quiet afternoon, sashed and be-knived, and with a flavour of great voyages. The owner of the granary came to our assistance, singled out one little fellow and threatened him with corporalities; or I suspect we should have had to find the way for ourselves. As it was, he was more frightened at the granary man than the strangers, having perhaps had some experience of the former. But I fancy his little heart must have been going at a fine rate; for he kept trotting at a respectful distance in front, and looking back at us with scared eyes. Not otherwise may the children of the young world have guided Jove or one of his Olympian compeers on an adventure.

A miry lane led us up from Quartes with its church and bickering windmill. The hinds were trudging homewards from the fields. A brisk little woman passed us by. She was seated across a donkey between a pair of glittering milk-cans; and, as she went, she kicked jauntily with her heels upon the donkey's side, and scattered shrill remarks among the wayfarers. It was notable that none of the tired men took the trouble to reply. Our conductor soon led us out of the lane and across country. The sun had gone down, but the west in front of us was one lake of level gold. The path wandered a while in the open, and then passed under a trellis like a bower indefinitely prolonged. On either hand were shadowy orchards; cottages lay low among the leaves, and sent their smoke to heaven; every here and there, in an opening, appeared the great gold face of the west.

I never saw the *Cigarette* in such an idyllic frame of mind. He waxed positively lyrical in praise of country scenes. I was little less exhilarated myself; the mild air of the evening, the shadows, the rich lights and the silence, made a symphonious accompaniment about our walk; and we both determined to avoid towns for the future and sleep in hamlets.

At last the path went between two houses, and turned the party out into a wide muddy high-road, bordered, as far as the eye could reach on either hand, by an unsightly village. The houses stood well back, leaving a ribbon of waste land on either side of the road, where there were stacks of firewood, carts, barrows, rubbish-heaps, and a little doubtful grass. Away on the left, a gaunt tower stood in the middle of the street. What it had been in past ages I know not: probably a hold in time of war; but nowadays it bore an illegible dial-plate in its upper parts, and near the bottom an iron letter-box.

The inn to which we had been recommended at Quartes was full, or else the landlady did not like our looks. I ought to say, that with our long, damp india-rubber bags, we presented rather a doubtful type of civilization: like rag-and-bone men, the *Cigarette* imagined. "These gentlemen are pedlars?—*Ces messieurs sont des marchands?*"—asked the landlady. And then, without waiting for an answer, which I suppose she thought superfluous in so plain a case, recommended us to a butcher who lived hard by the tower, and took in travellers to lodge.

Thither went we. But the butcher was flitting, and all his beds were taken down. Or else he didn't like our look. As a parting shot, we had "These gentlemen are pedlars?"

It began to grow dark in earnest. We could no longer distinguish the faces of the people who passed us by with an inarticulate good-evening. And the householders of Pont seemed very economical with their oil; for we saw not a single window lighted in all that long village. I believe it

is the longest village in the world; but I daresay in our predicament every pace counted three times over. We were much cast down when we came to the last auberge; and looking in at the dark door, asked timidly if we could sleep there for the night. A female voice assented in no very friendly tones. We clapped the bags down and found our way to chairs.

The place was in total darkness, save a red glow in the chinks and ventilators of the stove. But now the landlady lit a lamp to see her new guests; I suppose the darkness was what saved us another expulsion; for I cannot say she looked gratified at our appearance. We were in a large bare apartment, adorned with two allegorical prints of Music and Painting, and a copy of the law against public drunkenness. On one side, there was a bit of a bar, with some half-a-dozen bottles. Two labourers sat waiting supper, in attitudes of extreme weariness; a plain-looking lass bustled about with a sleepy child of two; and the landlady began to derange the pots upon the stove and set some beefsteak to grill.

"These gentlemen are pedlars?" she asked sharply. And that was all the conversation forthcoming. We began to think we might be pedlars after all. I never knew a population with so narrow a range of conjecture as the innkeepers of Pont-sur-Sambre. But manners and bearing have not a wider currency than bank-notes. You have only to get far enough out of your beat, and all your accomplished airs will go for nothing. These Hainaulters could see no difference between us and the average pedlar. Indeed, we had some grounds for reflection while the steak was getting ready, to see how perfectly they accepted us at their own valuation, and how our best politeness and best efforts at entertainment seemed to fit quite suitably with the character of packmen. At least it seemed a good account of the profession in France, that even before such judges we could not beat them at our own weapons.

At last we were called to table. The two hinds (and one of them looked sadly worn and white in the face, as though sick with over-work and under-feeding) supped off a single plate of some sort of bread-berry, some potatoes in their jackets, a small cup of coffee sweetened with sugar-candy, and one tumbler of swipes. The landlady, her son, and the lass aforesaid, took the same. Our meal was quite a banquet by comparison. We had some beefsteak, not so tender as it might have been, some of the potatoes, some cheese, an extra glass of the swipes, and white sugar in our coffee.

You see what it is to be a gentleman—I beg your pardon, what it is to be a pedlar. It had not before occurred to me that a pedlar was a great man in a labourer's alehouse; but now that I had to enact the part for an evening I found that so it was. He has in his hedge quarters somewhat the same pre-eminency as the man who takes a private parlour in a hotel. The more you look into it, the more infinite are the class distinctions among men; and possibly, by a happy dispensation, there is no one at all at the bottom of the scale; no one but can find some superiority over somebody else, to keep up his pride withal.

We were displeased enough with our fare. Particularly the *Cigarette*, for I tried to make believe that I was amused with the adventure, tough beefsteak and all. According to the Lucretian maxim, our steak should have been flavoured by the look of the other people's bread-berry. But we did not find it so in practice. You may have a head-knowledge that other people live more poorly than yourself, but it is not agreeable—I was going to say, it is against the etiquette of the universe—to sit at the same table and pick your own superior diet from among their crusts. I had not seen such a thing done since the greedy boy at school with his birthday cake. It was odious enough to witness, I could remember; and I had never thought to play the part myself. But there again you see what it is to be a pedlar.

There is no doubt that the poorer classes in our country are much more charitably disposed than their superiors in wealth. And I fancy it must arise a great deal from the comparative indistinction of the easy and the not so easy in these ranks. A workman or a pedlar cannot shutter himself off from his less comfortable neighbours. If he treats himself to a luxury he must do it in the face of a dozen who cannot. And what should more directly lead to charitable thoughts?... Thus the poor man, camping out in life, sees it as it is, and knows that every mouthful he puts in his belly has been wrenched out of the fingers of the hungry.

But at a certain stage of prosperity, as in a balloon ascent, the fortunate person passes through a zone of clouds, and sublunary matters are thenceforward hidden from his view. He sees nothing but the heavenly bodies, all in admirable order, and positively as good as new. He finds himself surrounded in the most touching manner by the attentions of Providence, and compares himself involuntarily with the lilies and the skylarks. He does not precisely sing, of course; but then he looks so unassuming in his open landau! If all the world dined at one table, this philosophy would meet with some rude knocks.

PONT-SUR-SAMBRE

THE TRAVELLING MERCHANT

Like the lackeys in Molière's farce, when the true nobleman broke in on their high life below stairs, we were destined to be confronted with a real pedlar. To make the lesson still more poignant for fallen gentlemen like us, he was a pedlar of infinitely more consideration than the sort of scurvy fellows we were taken for: like a lion among mice, or a ship of war bearing down upon two cock-boats. Indeed, he did not deserve the name of pedlar at all: he was a travelling merchant.

I suppose it was about half-past eight when this worthy, Monsieur Hector Gilliard of Maubeuge, turned up at the alehouse door in a tilt cart drawn by a donkey, and cried cheerily on the inhabitants. He was a lean, nervous flibbertigibbet of a man, with something the look of an actor, and something the look of a horse-jockey. He had evidently prospered without any of the favours of education; for he adhered with stern simplicity to the masculine gender, and in the course of the evening passed off some fancy futures in a very florid style of architecture. With him came his wife, a comely young woman with her hair tied in a yellow kerchief, and their son, a little fellow of four, in a blouse and military *képi*. It was notable that the child was many degrees better dressed than either of the parents. We were informed he was already at a boarding-school; but the holidays having just commenced, he was off to spend them with his parents on a cruise. An enchanting holiday occupation, was it not, to travel all day with father and mother in the tilt cart full of countless treasures; the green country rattling by on either side, and the children in all the villages contemplating him with envy and wonder? It is better fun, during the holidays, to be the son of a travelling merchant than son and heir to the greatest cotton-spinner in creation. And as for being a reigning prince—indeed I never saw one if it was not Master Gilliard!

While M. Hector and the son of the house were putting up the donkey, and getting all the valuables under lock and key, the landlady warmed up the remains of our beefsteak, and fried the cold potatoes in slices, and Madame Gilliard set herself to waken the boy, who had come far that day, and was peevish and dazzled by the light. He was no sooner awake than he began to prepare himself for supper by eating galette, unripe pears, and cold potatoes—with, so far as I could judge, positive benefit to his appetite.

The landlady, fired with motherly emulation, awoke her own little girl; and the two children were confronted. Master Gilliard looked at her for a moment, very much as a dog looks at his own reflection in a mirror before he turns away. He was at that time absorbed in the galette. His mother seemed crestfallen that he should display so little inclination towards the other sex; and expressed her disappointment with some candour and a very proper reference to the influence of years.

Sure enough a time will come when he will pay more attention to the girls, and think a great deal less of his mother: let us hope she will like it as well as she seemed to fancy. But it is odd enough: the very women who profess most contempt for mankind as a sex, seem to find even its ugliest particulars rather lively and high-minded in their own sons.

The little girl looked longer and with more interest, probably because she was in her own house, while he was a traveller and accustomed to strange sights. And besides there was no galette in the case with her.

All the time of supper, there was nothing spoken of but my young lord. The two parents were both absurdly fond of their child. Monsieur kept insisting on his sagacity: how he knew all the children at school by name; and when this utterly failed on trial, how he was cautious and exact to a strange degree, and, if asked anything, he would sit and think—and think, and if he did not know it, "my faith, he wouldn't tell you at all—*ma foi, il ne vous le dira pas*": which is certainly a very high degree

of caution. At intervals, M. Hector would appeal to his wife, with his mouth full of beefsteak, as to the little fellow's age at such or such a time when he had said or done something memorable; and I noticed that Madame usually pooh-poohed these inquiries. She herself was not boastful in her vein, but she never had her fill of caressing the child; and she seemed to take a gentle pleasure in recalling all that was fortunate in his little existence. No schoolboy could have talked more of the holidays which were just beginning and less of the black school-time which must inevitably follow after. She showed, with a pride perhaps partly mercantile in origin, his pockets preposterously swollen with tops and whistles and string. When she called at a house in the way of business, it appeared he kept her company; and whenever a sale was made, received a sou out of the profit. Indeed they spoiled him vastly, these two good people. But they had an eye to his manners for all that, and reproved him for some little faults in breeding, which occurred from time to time during supper.

On the whole, I was not much hurt at being taken for a pedlar. I might think that I ate with greater delicacy, or that my mistakes in French belonged to a different order; but it was plain that these distinctions would be thrown away upon the landlady and the two labourers. In all essential things we and the Gilliards cut very much the same figure in the alehouse kitchen. M. Hector was more at home, indeed, and took a higher tone with the world; but that was explicable on the ground of his driving a donkey-cart, while we poor bodies tramped afoot. I daresay the rest of the company thought us dying with envy, though in no ill sense, to be as far up in the profession as the new arrival.

And of one thing I am sure: that every one thawed and became more humanized and conversible as soon as these innocent people appeared upon the scene. I would not very readily trust the travelling merchant with any extravagant sum of money; but I am sure his heart was in the right place. In this mixed world, if you can find one or two sensible places in a man—above all, if you should find a whole family living together on such pleasant terms,—you may surely be satisfied, and take the rest for granted; or, what is a great deal better, boldly make up your mind that you can do perfectly well without the rest, and that ten thousand bad traits cannot make a single good one any the less good.

It was getting late. M. Hector lit a stable lantern and went off to his cart for some arrangements; and my young gentleman proceeded to divest himself of the better part of his raiment, and play gymnastics on his mother's lap, and thence on to the floor, with accompaniment of laughter.

"Are you going to sleep alone?" asked the servant lass.

"There's little fear of that," says Master Gilliard.

"You sleep alone at school," objected his mother. "Come, come, you must be a man."

But he protested that school was a different matter from the holidays; that there were dormitories at school; and silenced the discussion with kisses: his mother smiling, no one better pleased than she.

There certainly was, as he phrased it, very little fear that he should sleep alone; for there was but one bed for the trio. We, on our part, had firmly protested against one man's accommodation for two; and we had a double-bedded pen in the loft of the house, furnished, beside the beds, with exactly three hat-pegs and one table. There was not so much as a glass of water. But the window would open, by good fortune.

Some time before I fell asleep the loft was full of the sound of mighty snoring: the Gilliards, and the labourers, and the people of the inn, all at it, I suppose, with one consent. The young moon outside shone very clearly over Pont-sur-Sambre, and down upon the alehouse where all we pedlars were abed.

ON THE SAMBRE CANALISED

TO LANDRECIES

In the morning, when we came downstairs, the landlady pointed out to us two pails of water behind the street-door. "*Voilà de l'eau pour vous débarbouiller,*" says she. And so there we made a shift to wash ourselves, while Madame Gilliard brushed the family boots on the outer doorstep, and M. Hector, whistling cheerily, arranged some small goods for the day's campaign in a portable chest of drawers, which formed a part of his baggage. Meanwhile the child was letting off Waterloo crackers all over the floor.

I wonder, by-the-bye, what they call Waterloo crackers in France; perhaps Austerlitz crackers. There is a great deal in the point of view. Do you remember the Frenchman who, travelling by way of Southampton, was put down in Waterloo Station, and had to drive across Waterloo Bridge? He had a mind to go home again, it seems.

Pont itself is on the river, but whereas it is ten minutes' walk from Quartes by dry land, it is six weary kilomètres by water. We left our bags at the inn, and walked to our canoes through the wet orchards unencumbered. Some of the children were there to see us off, but we were no longer the mysterious beings of the night before. A departure is much less romantic than an unexplained arrival in the golden evening. Although we might be greatly taken at a ghost's first appearance, we should behold him vanish with comparative equanimity.

The good folk of the inn at Pont, when we called there for the bags, were overcome with marveling. At sight of these two dainty little boats, with a fluttering Union Jack on each, and all the varnish shining from the sponge, they began to perceive that they had entertained angels unawares. The landlady stood upon the bridge, probably lamenting she had charged so little; the son ran to and fro, and called out the neighbours to enjoy the sight; and we paddled away from quite a crowd of rapt observers. These gentlemen pedlars, indeed! Now you see their quality too late.

The whole day was showery, with occasional drenching plumps. We were soaked to the skin, then partially dried in the sun, then soaked once more. But there were some calm intervals, and one notably, when we were skirting the forest of Mormal, a sinister name to the ear, but a place most gratifying to sight and smell. It looked solemn along the riverside, drooping its boughs into the water, and piling them up aloft into a wall of leaves. What is a forest but a city of nature's own, full of hardy and innocuous living things, where there is nothing dead and nothing made with the hands, but the citizens themselves are the houses and public monuments? There is nothing so much alive, and yet so quiet, as a woodland; and a pair of people, swinging past in canoes, feel very small and bustling by comparison.

And surely of all smells in the world, the smell of many trees is the sweetest and most fortifying. The sea has a rude, pistolling sort of odour, that takes you in the nostrils like snuff, and carries with it a fine sentiment of open water and tall ships; but the smell of a forest, which comes nearest to this in tonic quality, surpasses it by many degrees in the quality of softness. Again, the smell of the sea has little variety, but the smell of a forest is infinitely changeful; it varies with the hour of the day, not in strength merely, but in character; and the different sorts of trees, as you go from one zone of the wood to another, seem to live among different kinds of atmosphere. Usually the resin of the fir predominates. But some woods are more coquettish in their habits; and the breath of the forest of Mormal, as it came aboard upon us that showery afternoon, was perfumed with nothing less delicate than sweetbrier.

I wish our way had always lain among woods. Trees are the most civil society. An old oak that has been growing where he stands since before the Reformation, taller than many spires, more stately

than the greater part of mountains, and yet a living thing, liable to sicknesses and death, like you and me: is not that in itself a speaking lesson in history? But acres on acres full of such patriarchs contiguously rooted, their green tops billowing in the wind, their stalwart younglings pushing up about their knees: a whole forest, healthy and beautiful, giving colour to the light, giving perfume to the air: what is this but the most imposing piece in nature's repertory? Heine wished to lie like Merlin under the oaks of Broceliande. I should not be satisfied with one tree; but if the wood grew together like a banyan grove, I would be buried under the tap-root of the whole; my parts should circulate from oak to oak; and my consciousness should be diffused abroad in all the forest, and give a common heart to that assembly of green spires, so that it also might rejoice in its own loveliness and dignity. I think I feel a thousand squirrels leaping from bough to bough in my vast mausoleum; and the birds and the winds merrily coursing over its uneven, leafy surface.

Alas! the forest of Mormal is only a little bit of a wood, and it was but for a little way that we skirted by its boundaries. And the rest of the time the rain kept coming in squirts and the wind in squalls, until one's heart grew weary of such fitful, scolding weather. It was odd how the showers began when we had to carry the boats over a lock, and must expose our legs. They always did. This is a sort of thing that readily begets a personal feeling against nature. There seems no reason why the shower should not come five minutes before or five minutes after, unless you suppose an intention to affront you. The *Cigarette* had a mackintosh which put him more or less above these contrarities. But I had to bear the brunt uncovered. I began to remember that nature was a woman. My companion, in a rosier temper, listened with great satisfaction to my Jeremiads, and ironically concurred. He instanced, as a cognate matter, the action of the tides, "which," said he, "was altogether designed for the confusion of canoeists, except in so far as it was calculated to minister to a barren vanity on the part of the moon."

At the last lock, some little way out of Landrecies, I refused to go any farther; and sat in a drift of rain by the side of the bank to have a reviving pipe. A vivacious old man, whom I take to have been the devil, drew near and questioned me about our journey. In the fullness of my heart I laid bare our plans before him. He said it was the silliest enterprise that ever he heard of. Why, did I not know, he asked me, that it was nothing but locks, locks, locks, the whole way? not to mention that, at this season of the year, we should find the Oise quite dry? "Get into a train, my little young man," said he, "and go you away home to your parents." I was so astounded at the man's malice that I could only stare at him in silence. A tree would never have spoken to me like this. At last I got out with some words. We had come from Antwerp already, I told him, which was a good long way; and we should do the rest in spite of him. Yes, I said, if there were no other reason, I would do it now, just because he had dared to say we could not. The pleasant old gentleman looked at me sneeringly, made an allusion to my canoe, and marched off, wagging his head.

I was still inwardly fuming, when up came a pair of young fellows, who imagined I was the *Cigarette's* servant, on a comparison, I suppose, of my bare jersey with the other's mackintosh, and asked me many questions about my place and my master's character. I said he was a good enough fellow, but had this absurd voyage on the head. "O no, no," said one, "you must not say that; it is not absurd; it is very courageous of him." I believe these were a couple of angels sent to give me heart again. It was truly fortifying to reproduce all the old man's insinuations, as if they were original to me in my character of a malcontent footman, and have them brushed away like so many flies by these admirable young men.

When I recounted this affair to the *Cigarette*, "They must have a curious idea of how English servants behave," says he, dryly, "for you treated me like a brute beast at the lock."

I was a good deal mortified; but my temper had suffered, it is a fact.

AT LANDRECIES

At Landrecies the rain still fell and the wind still blew; but we found a double-bedded room with plenty of furniture, real water-jugs with real water in them, and dinner: a real dinner, not innocent of real wine. After having been a pedlar for one night, and a butt for the elements during the whole of the next day, these comfortable circumstances fell on my heart like sunshine. There was an English fruiterer at dinner, travelling with a Belgian fruiterer; in the evening at the *café* we watched our compatriot drop a good deal of money at corks, and I don't know why, but this pleased us.

It turned out we were to see more of Landrecies than we expected; for the weather next day was simply bedlamite. It is not the place one would have chosen for a day's rest; for it consists almost entirely of fortifications. Within the ramparts a few blocks of houses, a long row of barracks, and a church, figure, with what countenance they may, as the town. There seems to be no trade; and a shopkeeper from whom I bought a sixpenny flint-and-steel was so much affected that he filled my pockets with spare flints into the bargain. The only public buildings that had any interest for us were the hotel and the *café*. But we visited the church. There lies Marshal Clarke. But as neither of us had ever heard of that military hero, we bore the associations of the spot with fortitude.

In all garrison towns, guard-calls and *réveilles*, and such like, make a fine romantic interlude in civic business. Bugles, and drums, and fifes are of themselves most excellent things in nature; and when they carry the mind to marching armies, and the picturesque vicissitudes of war, they stir up something proud in the heart. But in a shadow of a town like Landrecies, with little else moving, these points of war made a proportionate commotion. Indeed, they were the only things to remember. It was just the place to hear the round going by at night in the darkness, with the solid tramp of men marching, and the startling reverberations of the drum. It reminded you that even this place was a point in the great warfaring system of Europe, and might on some future day be ringed about with cannon smoke and thunder, and make itself a name among strong towns.

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