R. L. STEVENSON
& ROMANCE

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND ROMANCE

His Attitude Towards Life and His Confidence in the Essential Goodness of Man as Revealed in His Romances.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION - BACKGROUND

A survey of British history of the nineteenth century must embrace a multitude of events. A growing population, broader ideas, and industrial development of necessity led to new needs and new wants. Stirred by the revolutionary spirit prevalent in Europe at the close of the previous century the country was the scene of political turmoil. Legislation enacting religious, political and social reform was demanded and during the first half of the century a series of measures was carried out partially abating the popular agitation. Progress was made towards religious equality when the discrimination against the Protestant Dissenters and the Roman Catholics was removed. Radical changes were brought about in the electorial system and additional reforms took place in municipal government. But it is on the latter half of the century that attention is here directed.

In this thesis I shall attempt to discuss the beliefs and ideals of Robert Louis Stevenson as exemplified in his romances and to trace, if possible, their relation with the various movements of the age in which he was born and the time in which he wrote. It will naturally not be possible, nor would it be wise to enter here into a detailed consideration of these various movements. But a brief outline of their character is necessary to a correct understanding of Stevenson's view of life and of his contribution to English literature, apart altogether from his literary craftsmanship. For Stevenson was a product of his age, and in all the critical analyses of his work the significance of his ideals within the age has been too frequently ignored, or has not sufficiently been emphasized. I shall therefore consider first the background against which Stevenson the man, his beliefs and his ideals stand out in sharp relief.

The country was passing through a critical period in its history. As in the previous half of the century many and varied reform movements were demanding attention. After long and violent agitation extension of the franchise was finally granted in 1867, whereupon rose the question of educating the so-called new masters of the country. In the following year an act (1) was passed providing for

(1) Education Bill 1870 - Introduced by Forster

compulsory elementary education in England and Wales. Government school boards were to be established, existing schools adopted and financial assistance to be given. Immediately a controversy arose over sectarian schools and religious teaching. The discussion centred around such questions as whether sectarian schools should receive government assistance, whether there should be religious instruction in the schools and if so, whether it should be of a dogmatic nature. Finally, religious teaching exclusive of dogma was provided for and a conscience clause inserted whereby the adopted secular schools were to regard scrupulously the religious susceptibilities of the parents and children. The struggle while it lasted was bitter in the extreme and left in its wake the first signs of disruption in the government of the time.

Radical measures were introduced to remedy the deplorable industrial conditions. In 1875 after years of adverse public opinion and legislation trades unions obtained the sanction of the law to some extent, while co-operative methods in commerce and in industry also gained recognition.

Corresponding to the political and social upheavals

of the time, one finds a spirit of unrest in matters of religion. Equality among Christian denominations had been achieved in 1829 and in 1858 as act was passed placing the Jews in the same status. Toleration was extended still further eleven years later when the Irish Church bill was passed abolishing the established Church of Ireland and there also permitting religious equality. The setting up in Ireland of a State Church had long been a source of bitter grievance and a symbol of clumsy oppression. This legislation then, was a step forward in the understanding and amelioration of the Irish cause.

In addition to the political aspect of the religious upheaval there were numerous ecclesiastical storms during the '60's and '70's. Most of these however, were of the tea cup species and all were overshadowed by the bitter encounter between the High Anglican and evangelical parties.

The history of the Church during the latter half of the nineteenth century is inseparably bound up with the scientific revolution of the time. Taking the offensive in a struggle against Science, the Church was soon plunged into a seething turmoil during which the ecclesiastical parties co-operated in the face of what was considered to be a common foe.

Darwin's "Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" published on November 24th 1859 provoked an eruption which lasted in all its fury well into the next three decades, gradually subsiding with the spasmodic rumblings heard even today. The book was fiercely assailed by the Church and orthodox public, and passionately defended by enthusiastic scientific disciples.

Thomas Huxley and John Tyndall were the foremost champions of Darwin and they endeavoured with much forbearance to educate the age to accept the new scientific outlook as part and parcel of the standpoint of life. Both were attacked from all sides by a thoroughly alarmed Church and public and the subsequent battle succeeded in holding attention for years to come.

Huxley became especially prominent in his participation in the controversies over theological problems. It was at the Oxford Meeting of the British Association in 1860 that Bishop Wilberforce asserted that Darwin's views were opposed to the revelation of God in the Scriptures, that his theory of development drove out the belief in the Creator. On the same occasion occurred the startling incident when the Bishop turned to Huxley and sneeringly asked him whether it was through his grandfather or his

grandmother that he was descended from a monkey. Huxley at once replied that if it were a question of shame, he would not be as ashamed to possess a monkey for an ancestor as to have been descended from a man who prostituted the gifts of culture and eloquence in the service of prejudice and falsehood. The effect on the meeting has been described as being "electrical" and after his subsequent defence of the scientific standpoint Huxley won the respect if not the sympathy of many who were present.

In 1874 at the Belfast meeting of the association Tyndall delivered his presidential address which constituted a bold uncompromising statement of the position of science. The speech created a vast discussion and Tyndall immediately became the target of a furious onslaught. On the contrary however, Huxley's address on the same occasion was very well received, an entirely unexpected outcome under the circumstances. In addition to the wide admiration he had gained, perhaps this was partly due to his reputation as an able fighter.

The controversy was centered not so much upon the scientific principles alone, as upon their supposed relation to the doctrines of religion. At the same time the question of Man's primitive or natural moral character was involved in the discussion. As will be seen later

it is with this phase particularly that Stevenson may be associated.

The scientists were earnestly endeavouring to improve conditions and were subjected to fierce and misdirected attacks on the part of an equally sincere Church and section of the public. Both of these for the most part were woefully ignorant of the details of the subject and merely grasped such salient features as the kinship between human beings and higher apes, the opposition to the teaching of the Bible and a tendency towards "atheism".

Many one might have expected would have intelligently grasped the new theories, almost ridiculously, certainly pitifully, closed their eyes to the truth in their religious fervour. Men of unquestionable intelligence and intellectual brilliance deliberately turned their backs on reason and yielded to the servitude of superstition. Huxley indeed carried on a controversy for some time with Gladstone who attempted to show that the order of creation given in Genesis 1 is supported by evidence of science.

One grants that there must have been great difficulty and perplexity in reconciling the new teaching to that which had been handed down for centuries. There is no doubt that the Church and public suffered a rude jolting

by the scientific revelations. Nevertheless it was lamentable that they fought so desperately to maintain their position in a veritable rut of bigoted piety.

As is the case in most quarrels neither side was wholly faultless. If the scientists were attacked by the wilfully ignorant and narrow-minded, on the other hand they numbered among their defenders many who participated merely for the sake of argument, and who had little or no knowledge of the real facts of the case.

It is small wonder that the intolerance, the bigotry and the pettiness of the time produced in many, disappointment and bitterness and caused the less robust to turn aside wearily and seek comfort in a world of their own imagination and dreams. Others who sought in legislative reform a panacea for every ill were able to see behind it all great achievement and promise for a glorious future. It was into such a world of controversy that Robert Louis Stevenson was born, and in which his work was produced. He stands out between the extremes as one who possessed an exhilarating love of life and a triumphant confidence in man's essential goodness. This belief however was not based on the virtue arising from organized methods of mutual benevolence but rather on his firm conviction of the natural inborn goodness of his fellow men.

CHAPTER 11.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

In this consideration of Robert Louis Stevenson it is necessary to recall a few facts from the story of his life. He was born in Edinburgh in 1850 and died forty-four years later in Samoa after a life remarkable in its fullness and variety. Throughout his life his personality revealed a curious blending of ancestral traits which modified and transformed one another. On his father's side he was descended from a long line of intrepid Scotchmen, a family of engineers whose greatest achievement was the building of the lighthouses that endure upon the Scottish coast. While his maternal ancestors were a family of ministers - "the gentle-blooded Balfours."

There was little of the stolid, practical scientist about Stevenson. Yet from the lighthouse builders, the men who had risked their all in a life of danger and hardship, he inherited an exuberant joy in life

and a love of activity and adventure. His father was a man of apparent inconsistencies, one "with a blended sterness and softness that was wholly Scottish." A man of passionate attachments and passionate prejudices, he was one of extremely rigid religious beliefs and with all was a profound sense of Celtic melancholy. He was a brilliant engineer, devoted to his profession, shrewd and practical; yet he had his romantic side. Robert Louis Stevenson relates that his father every night of his life made up stories by which he put himself to sleep, dealing with "ships, roadside inns, robbers, old sailors and commercial travellers before the era of steam". The son inherited the same romantic spirit, inherited it to such a degree that it drew him away from the family profession his father so dearly wished him to follow.

From his mother Stevenson derived, in addition to physical frailty, a certain cheerful fortitude and tenacity which relieved to a great extent his share of "the family evil, despondency". It has been remarked "All his sulky looks melted away when he grew out of his teens. Merry of soul he was and merry of soul he remained to the end." (1) Nevertheless in looking at his

(1) "Robert Louis Stevenson's Edinburgh Days" - E.B. Simpson.

letters it would appear that he was frequently haunted by the spectre of melancholy, though indeed it was overcome by sheer courage and strength of will. Among his companions he stood out as an inimitable figure of high spirits and humour.

His parents were profoundly religious, his father being especially uncompromising in his beliefs, yet Stevenson's "Covenanting Childhood" is probably due to his nurse, Alison Cunningham. As an unrelenting adherent to the straitest of doctrines she filled her small charge with a wholesome respect for the writings of the Covenanters and an "extreme terror of Hell". Stevenson recalls an occasion when he and his nurse united in fervent prayer for his parents who were engaged in a game of family whist.

Later on, the question of religion became one of the most difficult Stevenson had to face. He was of an inquiring intellect and could not accept as a matter of course the conventional beliefs of his forbears. Searching for a wider conception of life, as a youth he revolted against the doctrines held in blind fidelity by his father. Questioning where his father deemed it impious, the first real discord arose between the two.

Doubtless his views were "strongly tinctured with the shortsighted, overbearing intolerance of youthful inexperience", but later he became more mellowed in character, and a deep religious element formed an integral part of his life. At a time when scientific disclosures were making people think for themselves it was natural that Stevenson would question the scheme of things; particularly when mixing with all types of people in the democratic atmosphere of the university. Perhaps his contact with his fellow men was unusually wide for a student. His parents in their best intention for his welfare restricted him to a decidedly small allowance so that he was forced to adopt his haunts to his means. He writes;-

> "My monthly pound was usually spent before the evening of the day on which I received it; as often as not it was forestalled; and for the rest of the time I was in rare fortune if I had five shillings at once in my possession. Hence my acquaintance was of what would be called a very low order. Looking back upon it, I am surprised at the courage with which I first ventured alone into the society in which I moved; I was the

> companion of seamen, chimney-sweeps, and thieves; my circle was being continually changed by the action of the police magistrate."

Throughout his life he came into contact with people in all walks of life when at college, while travelling on the continent and as an emigrant to America. Observation of human nature had a particular appeal for him in a life where he was debarred from physical activity by bodily weakness. He always delighted in companionship and in encountering new types of people. His stepson Lloyd Osbourne recalls a typical occasion in Mexico in 1879 when Robert Louis Stevenson was seen walking confidently along the streets of Monterey with the town drunkard who happened to be in one of his rare moments of sobriety. On another occasion he was found reading aloud to a poor outcast Genoese while visiting a hospital.

Where he was by nature melancholy, and assailed by physical weakness, poverty and many disappointments, and with his knowledge of the seamy side of life, one would perhaps expect bitterness and pessimism. Yet through it all he emerges more confident and more at peace. In a letter to his father from Paris in 1878,

written in the midst of illness and hardship, he says:-

> "I feel every day as if religion had a greater interest for me; but that interest is still settled on the little rough-and-tumble world in which our fortunes are cast for the moment. I cannot transfer my interests, not even my religious interests, to any different sphere .... I have had some sharp lessons and some very acute sufferings in these last seven-and-twenty years ..... but I still have a good heart, and believe in myself and my fellow-men and the God who made us all ... I am lonely and sick and out of heart. Well I still hope; I still believe; I still see the good in the inch, and cling to it. It is not much, perhaps, but it is always something."

Perhaps no where else are his melancholy and fortitude better illustrated. Though here one sees his faith in his fellow men, of a certainty there is no trace of an exuberance in life. Nevertheless throughout his work there runs an irrepressible joy in life and this is especially true of his romances. Through them all one sees this spirit and it is perhaps their most

characteristic feature. It is not the enthusiasm of a romantic imagination for an ethereal world, but rather a boyish love for our own earthly world, with all its joys and its pains and above all, its adventures.

He had inherited the daring spirit of the light-house builders but it was intensified by his romantic temperament. Always he yearned for life with a risk. By nature a rover, he was indefatigable in his wanderings. Besides roaming about in Europe, he crossed the Atlantic as an emigrant and later spent a winter as a "Silverado Squatter". For three years near the close of his life he and his family cruised about the South Seas, in the midst of its beauties and its dangers. His travels of course were chiefly prompted by the necessity of finding a climate suitable to his extreme ill-health, but at the same time they were perhaps his greatest delight in life. In his preference for Samoa as a place of residence, where he was destined to spend the remaining three years of his life, one sees this same zest for adventure. "I chose Samoa instead of Honolulu for the simple and eminently satisfactory reason that it is less civilized. Can you not conceive

that it is awful fun"? (1)

The same fervent spirit which yearned for a full and vigorous life is revealed again in his attitude towards death. "If only I could secure a violent death, what a fine success! I wish to die in my boots; no more Land of Counterpane for me. To be drowned, to be shot, to be thrown from a horse, ay, to be hanged, rather than pass through that slow dissolution". (2) In "Aes Triplex" he expresses the same idea:- "Does not life go down with a better grace, foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably struggling to an end in sandy deltas?" A victim of tuberculosis, his fear of dying a prolonged death "between the sheets" was justified. Yet his hope was realized when in November 1894 in the midst of success and ambitious hope for the future he suffered a fatal stroke.

In passing to a consideration of his faith in man one sees that it is not the robust optimistic belief in man's power and ultimate achievement. Rather is it a deep-set confidence in his inherent goodness, in spite of his many weaknesses. His attitude is that of one who has regarded his fellow-beings from aloof and watched with sympathetic eyes, their eternal but

(1) A conversation reported in Cassells' Magazine.
(2) Vailima Letters. May 27th 1892.

ineffectual efforts in life. "You will always do wrong: try to get used to that my son," (1) he says and at the same time "Our business in this life is not to succeed but to fail, in good spirits." (2) That through all the vicissitudes of life man is eternally struggling and his efforts are forever rewarded by failure, is at first thought an utterly hopeless conception. Yet in Stevenson this belief was combined with a resolute faith in man's inborn goodness. Though men are born to failure they are eternally striving to be true to their ideals. "All their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter." (3) In "Pulvis et Umbra" we find perhaps the keynote of his belief. To convey correctly his idea it is necessary to quote a portion of this essay. "Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right, but all continue to strive. It matters not where we look, in what stage of society, depth of ignorance, burthened with what erroneous morality, true to his virtues, honest up to his lights. Everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere the ensign of man's ineffectual goodness."

Stevenson was not a pessimist nor was he an idealist.

(1) and (2) "Reflections and Remarks on Human Life."
(3) "Pulvis et Umbra" 11.

He was perfectly aware of the baseness and treacheries of this world yet he was able to discount them in his estimate of man. No man is wholly good, he knew, but on the other hand he was convinced that no man is wholly bad. Considered with the cold eye of analysis man is but a monster. Regarded more closely and with sympathy, he is found to possess surprising attributes. "You yourself are compacted of infirmities, perfect, you might say, in imperfection, and yet you have something in you lovable and worth preserving." (1)

In his early years his judgments were not as kindly but later through experience and contact with men his understanding was broadened with his sympathy. His intolerant attitude in his essay on Burns has aroused the righteous indignation of many readers. He himself later admitted his harshness and in the preface to "Familiar Studies" stated that he realized he had not done justice to the noble qualities of the poet. Commenting on a certain review of Burns, he wrote that it was with the profoundest pity that he had studied the man's desperate efforts to do right. "If Burns ..... is to be called a bad man, I question very much whether I or the writer in the Review have

(1) Virginibus Puerisque.

ever encountered what it would be fair to call a good one."

Though Stevenson's attitude towards man was the result of detached observation he did not rank himself apart from his fellows. He knew his weaknesses, he also was one of the poor ineffectual fighters and wished to merit the epitaph expressed in his "Chrismas Sermon": "Here lies one who meant well, tried a little, failed much" - "a Faithful Failure".

In the midst of the industrial and social miseries of his time and the clamour for reform, Stevenson did not place his faith in legislation alone but was convinced of the necessity for individual effort. Writing on Society he reflects that surely we should all endure a little weariness to make one face look brighter or one hour go more pleasantly in such a mixed world. "Our right to live, to eat, to share in mankind's pleasures, lies precisely in this: that we must be persuaded we can on the whole live rather beneficially than hurtfully to others." (1)

(1) "Reflections and Remarks".

CHAPTER III

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON AND ROMANCES

Part I

It is necessary to consider briefly the literature contemporary with Robert Louis Stevenson in order to comprehend the relationship between his writings and those of the epoch.

When perplexity and dejection marred religious thought, when advancement of knowledge was viewed with suspicion, and when unfulfilled promises of Democracy had infused the age with depression, it was natural that literature should be turned to for guidance and comfort. With such an opportunity many rose to the occasion and the nineteenth century was not only one of great literary activity but one of great literary value.

Perhaps the greatest moral force of the period was Thomas Carlyle. With his dogmatic creed and positive assurance he exerted a stabilizing influence upon his age. Gloomy he frequently was, yet with his doctrine of Work and his scorn for the fear that science might

undermine man's faith in the unseen, he acted as a tonic to those who faltered in uncertainty At the same time Matthew Arnold was commanding attention with his ironical criticism of society. Yet he was pessimistic and completely joyless in his declaration that "we are struggling between two worlds, one dead and the other powerless to be born " With Ruskin the two men exerted a profound impression upon the intellectual life of the time. And it is this very predominance of intellect over the heart that particularly distinguishes their work.

With Tennyson and Browning for instance, both of whom were influential in their age, there was not the same intellectual profoundity, there was no aloofness and superiority. Tennyson was one with his fellows. He also was passing through the conflict of doubt and hope. And by his courage and triumphant faith he imparted re-assurance and comfort. The same thing may be said of Browning with his cry of

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world."

Though at times his thought was profound and intangible, he acted as a stimulant with his appeal to reason and his buoyant temperament.

Then, as literature seeks to reproduce or to negative life, there were those who attempted to defeat the spirit of the age only by fleeing away from their

surroundings. Swinbourne, with his pessimism and his unsparing condemnation of the dogmas held most dear by his countrymen, was an unswerving idealist. Morris and the pre-Raphaelites were all remote from life yet at the same time they were acutely conscious of life with its misery and trouble. Tennyson himself had once fled from life to the unhealthy atmosphere and excessive sentiment of the "Idylls of the King".

Perhaps the object of most interest. and in this consideration of Stevenson's romances, of most relevance, is the nineteenth century novel. It is this branch of literature that most clearly reveals the reaction which took place corresponding to the intellectual and social development of the time. It was a reaction directed against the tendencies of the romantic school To the novelists the chief purpose was the portrayal of life as it really was; the life and actions, and the intellectual and moral conditions of society. There was little thought of the now familiar aim of entertaining the public. For the most part the work was of a didactic or philosophical purpose. The political economy novels of Mrs. Gaskell, for instance, were distinctly of the first type. Dealing with the social problems of the time, their purpose was wholly to stimulate philanthropic ardour. Dickens was not

intent upon instructing but he went out of his way to expose the miserable social conditions. The work of George Eliot was characterized by a deep moral significance but that of the Brontes was one that belonged to neither type. Later again and actually contemporary with Stevenson, were the philosophic novels of George Meredith.

One does not wish to convey the impression of unrelenting affliction in the life of the nineteenth century. Yet as a whole, the intellectual side of life was clouded with gloom and difficulty. In catering to this there was little suggestion of the light-hearted deterrant or antidote in the literature of the time. The general tone was intensely earnest in its consideration of life. It contained little that was joyful and much that was morbid. Against this spirit the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, with its exhilaration and its revelation of enjoyment of life, stands out in bold contrast.

He was not an intellectucal type of man. He was essentially one of a brave heart, and with no disparagement to those of philosophic profoundity, of a sane mind. Life was taken at its intrinsic value without the detraction of morbid analysis. At a time when people were brooding over the mystery of existence and depressed

by social conditions, the manliness and the healthy disposition of Stevenson was gratefully turned to for warmth and sunshine.

It is not to be inferred that the public was given a stone in their request for bread, nor yet was the contribution of the "intellectuals" in the nature of cold pudding. Yet one can appreciate the eagerness in which the offering of Robert Louis Stevenson was seized by those who were suffering from melancholy and spiritual fatigue. One cannot for a moment draw a just comparison between the work of Stevenson and the contemporary literature already mentioned,because the two were of an essentially different temperament and value. Nor does one but realize that the more profound works of the day were those contributing to the greater things of life. Here amidst the literary achievements of the nineteenth century, one merely points to a work that was outstanding in individuality and in its inherent value.

The originality and the romance of Stevenson's novels was not the product of one who ignored the affairs of his time and the opinions of his fellows, but was rather the result of a personality that was simply impregnable to surrounding circumstances. Before his life in the South Seas he did not actually engage in the controversies and problems of the time, and indeed in few of his works he

refers to contemporary events. It is true he once entertained an idea of going to Ireland with his family with the purpose of being murdered, and thus attracting widespread attention to the deplorable condition of that country in 1887. Yet for one who achieved prominence and widespread popularity, he is singularly aloof from the immediate life of the time. No doubt however, his apparent unconcern was for the most part due to his frequent absence from the country and to the fact that it was only during the period between 1884 and 1887 that he resided in England.

Stevenson in his literary work was "singularly aloof from the immediate life of the time", but never was he aloof from life as a whole. He knew his fellow men and in their study was absorbed. As a youth at college he had declared he did not "care to understand the strain on a bridge"; his great interest lay in human nature. His was a simple belief in the goodness of man's primitive character. And in life, though he was adjusted to a sense of physical failure, there was for him infinite comfort in the fact that man persists in his efforts to do right. Man must perform his duty, whatever it may be, and in that though he fails to achieve his object, he justifies his existence.

While Stevenson was a preacher, - he declared he would rise from the dead to deliver a sermon - his novels were not written for a didactic purpose. As a preacher, his essays were the medium for his sermons, Nevertheless,

in his narratives, though he did not set out with the purpose of proclaiming his beliefs they are unconsciously revealed. If there was a purpose in his romances besides that of bringing "fire. food and wine to a deserving family", it was that of bringing happiness into the lives of his fellows. "My duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy - if I may." (1)

The spirit of his novels was something that lifted people from the complexity of life into aland of romance, yet one that was essentially real. It was a spirit that took "tired men in cities" back to all the glory and exuberance of their youth. His work has been called a return to nature, but it is one that is essentially remote from that of Rousseau. The romantic atmosphere of his tales is set within the life we know. with its conventions and its artificialities; a decided contrast to the idealistic community of the "Nouvelle Heloise". Yet it is a return to nature in its portrayal of man's character; man in a healthy, unsophisticated attitude of mind.

Part II

In a discussion of the novels of Robert Louis Stevenson it is necessary to consider his theories of romance; for in perceiving his attitude towards his tales one comprehends the design upon which he worked

(1) "Christmas Sermon

To Stevenson the true aim of romance was "to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of day-dream." (1) And it was with this mark before him that he accomplished his work. One realizes at the outset that in his novels Stevenson was not catering to the intellectual or moral aspect of man but to his heart.

In the writing of tales, though they are to obey the ideal laws of day-dreams, they must be essentially real. Genuine romance has nothing to do with a visionary and ethereal world but is derived from the things of life; even from objects of the most pedestrian realism. It is this belief that is the very essence of Stevenson's romantic art. The most summary glance at his novels reveals the fact that his land of romance is after all invariably one of realism. Even the fantasy in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is within our own earthly world. The life in "Treasure Island" is not precisely of one's experience but in "obeying the ideal laws" the general tone is essentially realistic. Stevenson's tales embrace life as we know it, but they are infused with a highly romantic spirit; with an irrepressible youthfulness and zest for adventure

It was natural for Stevenson to obtain romance from the things of life. One might almost say that he possessed divining-rod properties in seeking adventure. Where other men would pass by, engrossed in their own concerns,

(1) "A Gossip on Romance"

Stevenson would find unlimited interest; perhaps in talking to a waiter, to a sailor, or for that matter, to the town drunkard.

Not only did Stevenson seek in life the incidents for his stories, but perhaps the most striking thing in his authorship is his association of places with romance. It has been pointed out (1) that the germ of all his narratives lies in the idea that every landscape has a soul and in that soul is a story. To Stevenson the sight of some particular locality immediately suggested the possibility of an appropriate tale. Concerning the old "Hawes Inn" at the Queen's Ferry he wrote in 1882: 'There is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete which must express the meaning of that inn more fully"... "Some day I think a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo " (2) And in a book written four years later it was from here that David Balfour was carried, a helpless prisoner on "The Covenant".

"In an elementary novel of adventure, the characters need to be presented with but one class of qualities - the warlike and the formidable." It was according to this dictum that Stevenson created his tales of pure incident. Moreover not only are the characters daring and masterful but the stories are particularly enthralling in their sensational action. There are innumerable

(1) "Varied Types" G.K. Chesterton.
(2) "A Gossip on Romance" - Memories and Portraits.

murders and violent deaths within his tales but Stevenson cannot be accused of a gruesome or morbid temperament. It has been aptly remarked that it "was not that Stevenson loved men less but that he loved clubs and pistols more" (1 This "homicidal tendency" was a necessary feature of the book and must be taken as a matter of course. "Others touch the heart, I clutch the throat", Stevenson once remarked; and it was in this spirit that his tales of adventure were written.

Stevenson's romances were not all written in the highly romantic tone of "Treasure Island", or even of the more moderate "Kidnapped". There are some that while "clutching the throat", at the same time "touch the heart". To Stevenson there was an eternal source of interest in the study of Man and his life; not upon the things man choses to do, but upon the way he does them; "not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life."(2) Here was an immense wealth of material from which it was possible to build "the most joyous of verses" and the most buoyant and inspiring tales.

(1) "Varied Types" G.K. Chesterton
(2) "A Gossip on Romance"

"Vital - that's what I am at first: wholly vital, with a buoyancy of life. Then lyrical, if it may be, and picturesque, always with an epic value of scenes, so that the figures remain in the mind's eye for ever." (1) Thus it was the Stevenson stressed the need of incident in a novel. It need not necessarily be extravagant, but there should be some desirable incident which would create an impression upon the mind, there to be treasured for future thought.

A story of adventure is not to be disparaged. Because there is no declared moral significance, it does not necessarily mean that there is no value. A novel of intellectual purpose and one of adventure are essentially different. Each has its separate sphere. To Stevenson, man's desire for meat was hardly more natural than a demand for striking incident. A love for adventure is simply another element in man's nature.

"I wonder exceedingly if I have done anything at all good; and who can tell me? and why should I wish to know? ...And yet,- and yet,- one would like to leave an image for a few years upon men's minds - for fun." (2) Stevenson's wistful hope that all had not been useless was fully realized. Undoubtedly his essays have secured lasting distinction and about his romances there is a charm which will long endure.

(1) Vailima Letters. Sept.,1892.
(2) Vailima Letters. June, 1893.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMANCES

In introducing "Treasure Island" (1) Stevenson writes the following notice:

"To the Hesitating Purchaser":

> If sailor tales to sailor tunes,
> Storm and adventure, heat and cold,
> If schooners, islands and maroons
> And Buchaneers and buried gold,
> And all the old romance, retold
> Exactly in the ancient way,
> Can please, as me they pleased of old ...
> So be it, and fall on!"

and we may safely say that the tale entirely fulfils the estimate of its character as well as the supposition.

According to a map found in the late Billy Bones' sea-chest the treasure is to be found in "Skeleton Island, E.S.E. and by E", in the direction of a "tall tree, spy-glass shoulder bearing a point to the N of N.N.E.". The good ship "Hispaniola" is chartered and sets sail bearing the hero who acts as cabin boy, the Doctor and the Squire, a trustworthy captain and a villainous crew. Upon arriving at the island the ship's company mutiny and raise the Jolly

(1) Written 1881, published 1883.

Roger. True, no one walks the plank, but matters seem to progress sufficiently well without it, since by the end of the story nineteen men have been killed, two wounded and three marooned. It is needless to add that after much treachery and more fighting the treasure is eventually discovered and divided among the six survivors. Perhaps the most essential detail lies in the fact that the hero of the tale is a lad about sixteen years of age.

In his delightful essay "My First Book -'Treasure Island'" (1) Stevenson relates an account of the original motive for writing this tale. When in the company of a young boy he had once drawn,at first haphazardly,an imaginary island Then fascinated by the suggestive harbours and streams and its rocky coasts, he became fired with a desire to build up a story centering about this child of his fancy. It was to be a story for boys, women would be excluded, and there would be no need of psychology or "fine writing". To Stevenson the map was the whole plot. Everything was created in relation to it, and it was there he derived his inspiration.

The characters are drawn with evident relish, particularly the former pirates, Billy Bones, Blind Pew and Long John Silver. One can scarcely attempt a serious consideration of them however as exponents of Stevenson's faith in man; though indeed they have their good points in spite

(1) "Later Essays"

of many shortcomings. Long John Silver with all his unscrupulous and blackguardly schemes is an excellent fellow, true to his word, genial and admirably brave. One is even tempted to excuse him his numerous murders in grasping his conscientious philosophy - "Dooty is dooty, mates. I give my vote - death." But Stevenson did not attempt a deep character study in "Treasure Island", he merely carried into practice his theory that in a novel of pure adventure the chief requirement is that the characters be warlike and formidable. He purported to write a story that would please "the kids", as he called them; one that would involve the world of their imagination, as he so vividly recalled it from the dreams of his own childhood. Thus we do find a noticeable reflection of Stevenson in the book. It is in the story as a whole, in the general plan, that an excellent example of Stevenson's boyish love for adventure and his zest in life is presented.

"Treasure Island" although primarily a boy's book in which Stevenson hoped to "catch the kids", goes much deeper in its philosophy of life. The central serious idea is John Silver's cry "Dooty is dooty". The characters may be wandering sailors or treasure seeking pirates always ready to cut a throat in the achieving of their desires, but their inspiration lies in the splendid belief in the glory of the task that lies nearest. Stevenson's conviction is that in all men, bandit or saint,

the primitive impulse is essentially good. This conviction so obviously expressed in "Treasure Island" is summed up in his reference to himself, "I am a combination of preacher and pirate, but the preacher has the strangle hold."

"The Black Arrow" written two years later is another tale of somewhat the same type, in that Stevenson has not attempted a deep character study but has written the story purely as one of adventure. In other respects the books are as opposite as the two poles. Here a heroine is introduced, the plot is far more involved and the tale is the only one among Stevenson's many that is written against a historic English background. There is little or none of the freshness and vigor of "Treasure Island", yet one takes comfort in beholding once more the same fine disregard for bloodshed and a hero of tender years.

In looking for the revelation of Stevenson's spirit in his romances, however, perhaps nowhere is it better seen than in "Kidnapped".(1)This tale is also written as an adventure story for boys but it is of a more sober nature than "Treasure Island". Though the incidents are not of such a highly romantic nature they are none the less dramatic. The kidnapping of David Balfour on board the brig "Covenant" by the order of his miserly uncle; the intent of his being sold to the planters in Carolina;

(1) 1886

the escape of Alan Breck Stewart from his sinking boat; David and Alan's defence of the ship's round-house in the face of the entire crew; the wreck off the coast of Mull; the Appin murder and the subsequent flight from the law, all undoubtedly testify to Stevenson's youthful love of adventure and thrilling incident. Yet in this story Stevenson has included something more - a deep character study. Though primarily a tale of adventure, half the value of the book must be attributed to the characters themselves. Through them all are reflected Stevenson's insight into human nature and his confidence in man.

David Balfour leaves no doubt in our minds. He is an honest practical youth, well schooled in Whiggish and Covenanting principles. Sometimes, perhaps, he is rather priggish and yet as Alan said "there come other whiles when ye show yoursel' a mettle spark; and it's then, David, that I love ye like a brother." In remaining with Alan throughout the hardship and misery of their flight when Alan's company was a real peril to his life, David showed a fine spirit of dogged courage. Yet one cannot help feeling that it is Alan Breck Stewart who is the author's favorite in the tale. He is a fascinating combination of man and child, "a bold, desperate customer" yet one of surprising fears. He is daring, resourceful, kindly and with it all he has immeasurable pride and conceit. There is nothing at which he would hesitate for the sake of his clan or comrades and yet he is infinitely

childish in his wounded vanity Banished after the rebellion of '45,he is engaged in smuggling rents from Scotland to his exiled chief in France and through it all he revels in his life of a hunted criminal.

In the scene after the defence of the "Covenant's" round-house one has perhaps the best expression of Stevenson's inimitable personality as well as a veritable etching of Alan. After routing the ship's crew, Alan exulting in victory turned to embrace his companion, "David", said he, "I love you like a brother." "And, O, man", he cried in a kind of ecstasy, "am I no a bonny fighter?" Alan, indeed, is the embodiment of all Stevenson's exuberance in life and love of reckless courage.

One must not dwell upon those,. however, who are"not wholly good", to the exclusion of the "not wholly bad", on whom, after all, one's attention is to be directed. It is true that there is little to commend itself in the character of Ebenezer Balfour but then he was a man depraved in his miserliness. Captain Hoseason and Shuan and Riach, the officers of the "Covenant", are three rascally characters, all devoted to drink and not adverse to murdering Alan Breck for his gold. In a fit of drunken rage Shuan murdered the cabin boy and yet it was said there was something pitiful about him in his sane moments when "he wouldn't hurt a fly" He proved himself more courageous than his fellows too in the attack on the round-house though it was

only to meet death for his pains. Riach, kind only when drunk, was the one man to whom David could turn for comfort during his captivity. In spite of conniving at the highlander's murder, he later somewhat redeemed himself in assisting Alan to escape from his assailants. "There's none such an entirely bad little man, yon little man with the red head .... He has spunks of decency." Riach and his captain did not acquit themselves particularly well in the round-house fracas and yet when the ship was in danger, they showed themselves "brave in their own trade"; and David was especially filled with admiration on this occasion in seeing the white anxious face of Alan Breck Stewart.

In David's description of the ship's crew one is given the very creed of Stevenson. "No class of man is altogether bad; but each has its own faults and virtues; and these ship-mates of mine were no exception to the rule. Rough they were, sure enough; and bad, I suppose; but they had many virtues. They were kind when it occurred to them, simple even beyond the simplicity of a country lad like me, and had some glimmerings of honesty " Both in the treatment of characters and in the action then, there is every evidence of the spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson, himself a "bonny fighter" with many "spunks of decency."

"Catriona" (1) or "David Balfour" the sequel to "Kidnapped" is written in a less venturous strain. The story of David Balfour is supposedly resumed about three minutes

(1) Published in 1892

after the conclusion of "Kidnapped" and yet as Stevenson himself said he felt that David had gained at least three years in the interval. Attention is directed more to David this time and in the responsibility of his new position he displays a maturer and more independent spirit. Alan enters the story but seldom and then because of his greater experience in the world, it is usually in the guise of an advisor to his former companion.

The thrilling adventures in "Kidnapped" of David and Alan are gradually suspended here, but then it would be excessively inconsiderate for us to relegate these heroes to a perpetual life of hair-raising adventures. Whereas "Kidnapped" was suddenly concluded in the midst of action an without a forecast of the future, "Catriona" is more satisfactory in finally conducting them to quiet waters with every indication of happiness for the remainder of their lives. However, in comparison to "Kidnapped", the interest is not sustained to the same extent and on the whole "Catriona" suffers as an anti-climax.

In this book however more attention is directed towards the characters. Two women play important parts in the tale and in introducing them Stevenson attempts the unusual. He possessed a ready faculty for portraying men of various types but with women his power ended. Aware of his inability he had long avoided giving them any serious consideration, but here not to be defeated

he boldly plunges in and emerges with two of his most famous women characters, Catriona, and Barbara Grant. Writing to Sir Sidney Colvin in June 1892 from Vailima Stevenson says: "I am very curious to see what you will think of my two girls. My own opinion is quite clear; I am in love with both."

In referring to the characters as they reveal Stevenson's belief in man's inherent goodness one might first regard the rascally father of Catriona, James More. He was a type of man who was utterly selfish and false, so much so that he was almost oblivious of being either. He possessed little or no sense of paternal duty towards his daughter. Frequently he left her to the tender mercy of friends or chance acquaintances, and all too often he would turn up at unexpected moments to carry off what lucrative assistance his loyal child could provide. In order to bring about his release from prison he obligingly submitted false testimony in the Appin murder trial. It would undoubtedly strain the thesis in pointing out much that was good in James More. Yet he was not a sinister figure of evil but rather, a weak creature, absolutely selfish and egotistical. David Balfour grudgingly admits that there were times when his father-in-law displayed genuine affection for his daughter and sometimes suffered real moments of dejection.

The Lord Advocate Preston Grange was considered by Stevenson to be "a strong sketch of a very difficult character." He was of a crafty intriguing nature but there was a certain aspect of kindliness about him. One feels that his interest in David is not prompted by purely ulterior motives. Yet he had a genuine affection for the boy, and in preventing him from testifying at the Appin trial he saved him from the death certain to have been meted out by a prejudiced court of justice. Simon Fraser, the blustering unscrupulous Master of Lovat, presents a sinister figure in the tale and yet to quote Alan Breck, "to give the deil his due ... he is a most respectable person on the field of war ... as brave as my steel sword." So one sees again and again some redeeming feature in Stevenson's darkest characters. Finally, there is in these two books a revelation of Stevenson, but with a difference. In "Kidnapped" his spirit is vividly manifested in all its exuberance and vigor, while in "Catriona" it is of a much quieter, more tranquil tone.

One might ask why it is that "Treasure Island", "Kidnapped" and "Catriona" have lived. They are tales of adventure and contribute little or nothing towards solving life's problems. But they have lived with such enduring freshness because they are infused with the personality of

Robert Louis Stevenson. His most successful romances are those in which his individuality is most present and here it is reflected in all its vigour and charm. The author is present but he does not intrude. It is his spirit coursing through the romances that gives them their essential vitality. The action in "The Master of Ballantrae" (1) takes place contemporaneously with that of "Kidnapped" and "Catriona"; the course of events is deeply influenced by the rebellion of '45 and indeed an amusing episode of an encounter with Alan Breck Stewart forms a connecting link between the three; hence its inclusion here. It is a story of two brothers, one whose evil and malicious personality completely dominates the life of the other. The sinister figure of the Master of Ballantrae hangs relentlessly over his weaker brother, bringing bitterness and unhappiness into his domestic life and finally causing his ruin. Well might doubt be raised over the possibility of there being any trace of inherent goodness in the character of the Master of Ballantrae. He is unceasing in his persecution of his brother and the latter's household is perpetually haunted by an indefinable sense of his evil personality Stevenson himself said "The Master is all I know of the devil" But he is rather one of the same type as Satan in "Paradise Lost" and in coming to denounce one cannot help but admire

(1) Published in 1889

He was completely possessed by a causeless grievance against his younger brother, Lord Durrisdeer, and throughout his life his whole energy was directed towards bringing about his destruction. "I live for an idea ....I care only for one thing and that I shall have" - the complete ruin of Lord Durrisdeer. By his infuriating hypocrisy in the presence of others and his insidious manoeuvring, he did eventually succeed in goading his brother into an absolute frenzy of hatred. There was no limit to his perfidy. He turned traitor and became a Government spy, played foul in a duel with his brother, and he treacherously murdered a comrade who lay helpless in a bog. Yet with all this formidable array of evidence before us, Stevenson has so drawn the brothers that we continually wobble in our sympathy.

Lord Durrisdeer had been"an honest, solid sort of lad", not very bad or very able and as a kind and perhaps too dutiful son he became a family drudge. With a bitter heart he forever played the foil to his brother,who with all his brilliance and magnetism was the centre of admiration and affection in the community. Continually misrepresented he suffered in silence and cherished the while an unbreakable pride and chafing spirit. The tragedy of the story lies in the transformation that was brought about in his character at the conclusion of his life.

Gradually forced to the end of his resources by the Master's unrelenting persecution he finally became a maniac in his insatiable hatred

Of the two, the Master of Ballantrae has the stronger personality An as arch-villain he has his attractions. "I assure you I am human too and have my virtues like my neighbours ..A bad man am I? Ah! but I was born for a good tyrant!...I have a kingly nature, that is my loss." It is his kingly nature that we admire as we do Milton's Satan. He was aptly described as having noble qualities as Hell might have noble flames and those who hated and feared him most were forced to admiration. Lord Durrisdeer on the other hand is virtuous but misunderstood. Yet he is egotistical and cold and frequently repels one's sympathy.

Throughout the tragedy there is no lack of highly dramatic situations. To escape from the sombre, chilly atmosphere Stevenson provides numerous romantic incidents. The Master of Ballantrae and a comrade join the crew of a pirate ship and pursue their adopted profession with all the ardour of veterans. Then, there is their thrilling escape through the swamps; the Master's revolting murder of their guide; the duel scene in Durrisdeer; the meeting of the brothers in America, and finally the treasure hunt at the conclusion of the tale, which without a doubt considerably detracts from the brilliance of the

novel. Stevenson felt that the conclusion degraded the beginning and it is probable that he considered it so in regard to the moral point of view as well as to the action.

The general tone of the book with all its gloom and sense of evil has been the basis of certain adverse criticism of Stevenson. The Master of Ballantrae succeeds in ruining his brother's life and eventually drags him down to his own despicable level. Has Stevenson therefore no faith in the triumph of right? Of course he has. The morbid pessimistic note sounded in "The Master of Ballantrae" cannot be taken as a revelation of Stevenson's philosophy. He did not enjoy the book himself He said it "lacked all pleasureableness and hence was imperfect in essence". His other tales do reveal his belief because they repeat the sentiments expressed in his essays and elsewhere; he entered into their composition with enjoyment and enthusiasm knowing he was expressing his own healthy faith in the goodness of things. Here one must take into account Stevenson's essay on "The Genesis of the Master of Ballantrae" (1) where he relates the details of the original conception of the tale and its gradual formation. His method was first to choose a certain legendary subject to act as the centre-point around which the story was to be erected. The strange case of a buried and resuscitated fakir was decided upon, and about this as about the map of Treasure Island, Stevenson wove his tale. A good man he felt would be unsuitable for the part and therefore an

(1) Later Essays

evil genius must be created; one to be led through many disappearances and to be restored finally from a grave in the midst of an American wilderness. Numerous additional characters were of necessity introduced and thus the plot developed. In its complete form however the course of the tale has considerably deviated from the original starting-point,and in fact the intended centre has been forced into a position approaching insignificance.

One realizes that a consideration of this essay is essential in regarding "The Master of Ballantrae" as it reveals the spiritual side of Stevenson. The sinister figure of the Master was not the result of an overwrought and morbid imagination, but rather a necessary means to meet the requirements of the story. Certain incidents were decided upon for the same reason,and with his remarkable powers of variation Stevenson presented the book to his readers as a novel of adventure and character. In its creation he found little that was pleasant and therefore one cannot accept the book as an indication of a morbid philosophy.

The same accusation of pessimism in Robert Louis Stevenson was aroused by "The Strange Tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" which was published in 1806, three years before "The Master of Ballantrae". Here also vice overcomes virtue. Dr. Jekyll's evil personality finally dominates his good. Undoubtedly the book is morbid in

its conceptiom of the frailty of virtue, yet it cannot be taken as a permanent illustration of Stevenson's philosophy. In 1880 he and William Ernest Henley collaborated in writing "Deacon Brodie, or the Double Life", a play which was produced in London four years later. The story dealt with the same question of the duality of man's nature, and here also, in spite of Deacon Brodie's pitiful struggles, his evil personality triumphs over the good. In 1887 Stevenson commenting upon this play stated, "we were both young when we did that, and I think we had an idea that bad heartedness was strength." One cannot perhaps apply this criticism to the story of "Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" since it was made only one year after its publication, but at the same time one cannot deduce from this book that Stevenson was of a pessimistic nature. It was written as a result of a vivid dream and it was not until Stevenson had written it a second time that the allegory was included. He had seen much of the misery of life but it was only occasionally that he suffered from gloomy reflection.

That Stevenson's philosophy was not one of permanent gloom is seen in reading "Markheim", a short tale which he wrote during the period between "Deacon Brodie" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". Once more he deals with the problem of man's two-fold nature but he does so in a more hopeful tone. By circumstances a man has been dragged

down in life and finally driven to murder Yet he asks whether his worst side shall continue to override his better and here the answer is "no". His virtues may be condemned to be without effect yet he still clings to his hatred of evil and the tale concludes with the final triumph of his good personality.

Is not this after all the expression of Stevenson's reconciliation to the belief that "whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed"? (1) Man is destined to failure in his efforts to do right but nevertheless he is a figure for admiration. This moral side of Stevenson is not the stern morality of a stoic. He is full of hope. We may fail in life but after all "we are not damned for doing wrong, but for not doing right." A negative morality is not to be admired. Virtue will not help us and was never intended to. "Virtue is not even its own reward"; except to the self-centred. It is in his ceaseless effort to do right that man merits commendation. It has been pointed out that if a lesson is to be derived here, it is that good is not to be worshipped for its triumphs or its power; but for itself, its own essential value.

Apart from its moral significance, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" has long acquired popularity as a story of adventure. Judged with the literary works of Stevenson's

(1) The following three quotations are taken from "The Christmas Sermon"

contemporaries what a contrast is seen! Here is a tale which seeks to entertain, not by drawing people away from life but rather by relating the highly romantic incidents in the life of a fellow man. With the introduction of the supernatural element there is the same fascinating interest that is to be found in "The Merry Men", "Thrawn Janet", Will o' the Mill" and others of his shorter tales

In touching upon "The Wrecker" it is difficult to keep from wandering into the paths of literary criticism. The structure of the book is an innovation, that is of course, in this consideration of Stevenson's romances. It takes the form of a story within a story and later an additional narrative is included Stevenson classified it as "a long tough yarn with some pictures of the manners of today in the greater world - not the shoddy sham world of cities, clubs and colleges but the world where men still live a man's life." It is replete with incident, generally of a violent, dark kind but it is especially valuable for its study of human nature. Here particularly Stevenson has introduced a multitude of strange personages from all walks of life. A long distance has been covered between "Kidnapped" and "The Wrecker". The tone of the latter is essentially different and one finds in the book a far deeper study of character.

There is the American sailor, Nares, who commanded the "Norah Creina" on Loudon Dodd's expedition in the Pacific to the wreck of the "Flying Scud". At first his petty vanity and brutal treatment of his subordinates exasperated and disgusted Dodd almost beyond endurance. Later through common experience and hardship his failings were accepted in their place, and even regarded as a picturesque side of the man. As a headstrong youth the captain had run away from home, and later he always treasured a rather wistful gratitude for the old lady who had befriended him on his return from his voyages; an old lady whose ordhards he had previously been in the habit of robbing. He was a veritable tyrant and had earned the reputation of being one of the greatest brutes upon the ocean. He took immeasurable pride in his fame, or ill-fame, and had no compunction in telling Dodd a story against himself, of his being paid off at a price of three months' wages by a former captain who feared for the safety of his crew and considered the transaction cheap at the price. He was jealous of his authority and would have preferred death to advice. Unscrupulous in many ways, he was essentially just and held strictly to his own ideals of honesty. His coarseness and brutality did not entirely hide his finer side; he was rigid in his loyalty and there could be none braver. He was a type that Stevenson loved to draw

and though the book was written in collaboration, Nares was entirely Stevenson's invention

In the wretched figure of Bellairs the dis-barred lawyer, we have a decided contrast and with Nares the two present an excellent example of Stevenson's range in character drawing. Bellairs was a man of a shabby, cringing order. He had been ejected from his profession for despicable practices and during the story was principally engaged in straining every effort to secure his prey for blackmailing purposes. Yet once more Loudon Dodd by being thrown into involuntary companionship with another, was forced to change his original impressions. He had fully expected to detest the miserable Bellairs and much to his chagrin he found himself beginning to like him. He was moved to pity for the unfortunate wretch whose downfall had been brought about principally through self-sacrifice. Weak and spiritless, he had been imposed upon by a grasping wife who after reducing him to bankruptcy, finally deserted him. Stevenson's sympathy naturally went out to a heroic character and it is seen even here with Bellairs who devoid of courage, seemed to possess a "quivering heroism" prompted by abject despair. Contemptible figure though he was, one is forced to compassion.

In his travels Stevenson accumulated material for several tales of the South Seas "The Beach of Falesa" which is included in "The Island Nights' Entertainments", is a narrative of a South Sea trader. As would be supposed it is more the type of "The Wrecker" than of Stevenson's earlier romances. Here again is an expression of his love of adventure and one dannot but realize that the tale has been led away from the morbid by Stevenson's essentially robust nature. The principal character is Wiltshire the trader and the tale embraces his adventures on an island where he has lately taken up his post. At the outset he becomes the butt of the underhand dealings of a rival and for the remainder of the tale he is engaged in outwitting his opponent.

Wiltshire himself is of a rascally nature and was seldom loath to employ doubtful methods in his business. According to a not unusual practice among the traders, he weakly suffered himself to be led into a mock marriage with a native. Later however, his conscience did succeed in attracting his attention, and upon the subsequent visit to the island of a missionary a legal marriage was secured. With all his blameworthy conduct he stood by his supposed wife in the face of boycott and certain ruin, the result of some superstitious fear instigated among the credulous natives.

Case the rival trader was an utter scoundrel, rather the type of the Master of Ballantrae with few or none of his attractions By the most villainous methods he had succeeded in disposing of his previous competitors and had frightened the natives into awed submission. Yet once more here is an example of Stevenson's belief which perhaps is best expressed by direct quotation: "He had the courage of a lion and the cunning of a rat; and if he's not in hell today, there's no such place" yet "I knpw one good point to the man - he was fond of his wife and kind to her." Again and again is seen this same spirit in Stevenson's works

In"The Ebb-Tide" more than in any of his novels Stevenson has undertaken a definite character study It is another tale of the South Seas and was also written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne. There is the same lawless type of life with its misery and degradation as in"The Beach of Falesa" and "The Wrecker", but in the slight action and in the predominance of psychology there is a definite contrast.

As might be supposed, Part I of "The Ebb-Tide , a Trio and a Quartette"centres about the lives of three individuals They are men of essentially uncongenial temperaments who are thrown together by circumstance.

Stranded as outcasts upon one of the islands they are in the lowest depths of misfortune. A change of condition however is promised when they are given the opportunity of conducting a trading-ship to Sydney. In desperation they seize the offer with the intention of taking over the ship and selling the cargo for their own purposes; vainly hoping to secure a foothold in their former status in life. In Part II "a Quartette" is the account of their arrival and the subsequent events on a privately owned island in the Pacific, and it is here that the fourth member of the group is introduced. The entire tale is concentrated upon an analysis of these four men, each a distinct type in himself.

Herrick was the son of an intelligent London business man. He had been educated at Oxford and high hopes were held for his future. Misfortune befell his family however, and in order to prove of most ready assistance he relinquished his own ambitions and accepted a position as a clerk in New York; a career which he despised and for which he was quite unsuited His course was one of unbroken shame brought about by absolute incompetence. Dismissed from one office after another, he ceased communication with his family and sank further and further into an utter lack of self-respect. Finally, in desperation he adopted an alias and set out for the South Seas "a skulker from life's battles" and his duty, in

the hope of ekeing out an indolent existence in the tropics. If failure was to be his portion in life, then it was to be one of pleasure; yet even in this he failed. He had found himself incapable of success and here he found it impossible to stoop to the degradation of his fellow outcasts. He stormed against his frailty and yet something within him revolted against moral degradation. He was an object of complete self-contempt; "broken crockery", existing in perpetual horror and repugnance of himself.

Through misfortune he was brought into comradeship with two outcasts, Davis a former sea-captain and Hmish a London clerk. Davis, alias Brown, was an excellent seaman but had fallen into disgrace and ruin through intemperance. Yet while he and his companions were in the lowest depths of misery he exhibited an indomitable valour and comforting cheerfulness. It was his infallible love for his family that inspired him in his efforts to regain a position of trust and respectability. In the desperate dash to freedom, full of courageous hope, Davis was doomed to fall once more into ignominy. The vigorous seaman and tender-hearted parent again became the drunken sot. - Yet it is in his ceaseless efforts to do right that man is admirable. Davis' sterling qualities of affection and courage made him a man at least, "one whose hand you could take without a blush." To Herrick there seemed to be no redeeming feature in his other companion, in the white face

and toothless smile of the vulgar and bad-hearted cockney clerk." He had been an able worker in his way and yet had been discharged from one position after another. Repulsive to all, he was shunned by comrade and employer alike.

The three outcasts had desperately resolved upon the murder of the fourth member of "the quartette" but it was Huish who devised and insisted upon the revolting method of carrying out their purpose. In his ineffectual attempt on the life of Attwater by acid throwing, it is true that he exhibited a certain villainous daring. "Murder ain't genteel, it ain't easy, it ain't safe, and it tykes a man to do it. 'Ere's the man." One can almost picture him flushed with pleasure in his abominable vanity. "There is no one but has some virtue; that of the clerk was courage", Stevenson wrote, and this courage of his was not entirely repulsive. In his pitiful sufferings, racked by influenza and starvation he shocked his repelled companions into respect by his relentless bravado and endurance.

Attwater presents an extraordinary personality and perhaps is the only character within these novels that is difficult to accept. He was an English university man who had come out to the islands with the hope of encountering romance and with an interest in missions.

It is the intense religious element in his character that dispossesses him of plausibility. Behind the sneering cold demeanour one is prepared to find his cynicism and hard nature But the sudden transformation to religious fervour is almost more than one can comprehend. He disliked men and hated women, yet at times his accustomed ironical mask would glow with religious ecstasy. His unsympathetic nature was coupled with a peculiar cultured cruelty, yet in spite of his relentless severity he had won the unquestioning fidelity of the natives. Herrick, he believed in and encouraged to regain his self-respect, though at other times the unfortunate vagabond was forced to cringe beneath his scathing onslaught.

It is in the trio that the interest of this study is centred and one cannot but admire Stevenson's sympathetic treatment and his psychology. Each one had passed through a steady downward course, had complied with the ebb-tide in man's affairs and been carried away. Each had been shamed into adopting an alias yet through the misery and degradation suffered as "beach-combers", not one had given cause for an appearance in a court of justice. The subsequent proposal to murder Attwater was not based on purely criminal motives but rather arose from a desperate choice between invaluable pearls and hope for the future on the one hand, and starvation and shame on the other. Herrick was forced to acquiesce in the plot, bound to his

two companions by their common experience. It was Huish who, unknown to Herrick, devised the diabolical method and insisted in attempting to carry it out,in defiance of the horror of Davis. At the conclusion of the tale, Huish is killed, a scoundrel yet "gyme all through", as he described himself. Herrick, we are led to believe, is facing better conditions and Davis under the care of Attwater, becomes a humiliating spectacle of abject penitence.

Stevenson deals with the characters in a remarkable fashion. There is sympathy in every aspect. One is granted an insight into their very minds and there is no lack of evidence of Stevenson's confidence in man's inborn virtue. There is a contrast here however with the romantic element of his other tales. As has been stated there is little action in the tale and in the projected murder for instance, there is none of the same light-hearted adventureus spirit, if murder can be committed in such! No longer does one accept violent death as a matter of course, in a do-it-as-soon-as-possible-and-say-no-more-about-it- frame of mind. As in"The Master of Ballantrae" a certain gruesome atmosphere surrounds such details. Because the tale is primarily one of character it does not contain an outstanding zest in life. Nevertheless, Stevenson's attitude towards life, his acceptance of man's ineffectual struggles to do good, and his sympathy for man is completely embodied within the entire story

At the time of his death Stevenson was engaged in writing "Weir of Hermiston" and although only a portion of the story was completed, it gives every promise of being one of his greatest novels. The plot is full of incident but the tale is rather one of character than adventure. In this treatment of Stevenson's novels the fragment we have is particularly arresting in the remarkable figure of Adam Weir. Lord Braxfield, notorious in Scotland in the eighteenth century as "The Hanging Judge", furnished the conception of this character but in other respects had little or nothing to do with the tale.

One cannot but notice the similarity between the Lord Justice-Clerk and Nares. There is the same brutality and coarseness, yet with it a certain nobility, and here to a greater extent than in the sea-captain of "The Wrecker". Professionally, Weir earned the reputation of being an admirable lawyer and a highly unpopular judge. He was essentially honest and could not affect, had he so endeavoured, an appearance of impartiality. Though unquestionably just, the cruelty of his administration was revolting. On the bench, with all the freedom of the tavern, he revelled in vile jests at the expense of the helpless culprits, and it was impossible to ignore his evident gusto in condemning the guilty unfortunates Despite this it was stated by a quite

uncongenial colleague: "There is no man I more respect. He is two things of price. He is a great lawyer, and he is upright as the day "

As Lord Justice-Clerk he inspired admiration, fear or hatred but as the man, Adam Weir, he was scarcely known. A peculiar example of complete sufficiency, he lived entirely within himself. Affection was never sought and never desired by him. In his timid wife he inspired only unquestioning respect and a pitiful desire to please. To his son there was not the slightest display of fondness, with a resultant complete lack of sympathy between the two. Young Weir, sensitive and rebellious, impetuously denounced his father in the streets of Edinburgh; but later in spite of himself, was forced to contrite admiration. Perhaps one of the most striking scenes within these novels is that of the meeting between Adam Weir and his son after the latter's vehement outburst. Instead of being a target for bitter reproof or brutal anger, Archie found himself stript of his contempt and repugnance in the presence of the truly great personality of his father. A despicable jester and a repelling administrator, though humiliated and disillusioned by his son's disloyalty, Adam Weir stood out magnificent and generous in his innate justice. Beneath his forbidding countenance lay a deep love for

his child of which perhaps he himself was unconscious. Coarse and brutal he was, yet he compelled admiration by his rugged nobility and honesty of soul

It was possible for Stevenson to execute such a figure because of his extreme sympathy with man. His characters are not mere puppets jerked into movement at the hands of a controller. He was able to place himself in their position and to plot out their behaviour as he himself might have acted under like conditions. The land may be remote and the scenery strange but the characters of what ever type are real,red-blooded men. They are not only visible but they are living,and they have virtues as well as their apparent frailties

In this chapter on the romances of Stevenson, perhaps one should offer an explanation for the omission of the novels "St.Ives" and "Prince Otto" If where Stevenson's personality is most present his tales attain the greatest success, then one is justified in not considering these two books here. Though there is a certain attraction about them, when compared with his other works one is struck by the surprising absence of Stevenson's personality. "Prince Otto" is a pronounced departure from the usual tone of his novels,and it does not approach the same success in the treatment of either the characters or the action. Of the other,Stevenson

wrote,"'St. Ives' is unintellectual, and except as an adventure novel, dull" (1), then later, "It is a mere tissue of adventures ... no philosophy, no destiny, to it. ... 'Tis my most prosaic book".(2)

Finally, reference should be made to the shorter tales and fantasies of Stevenson. They have not been selected as illustrations of his attitude to life and his belief in man because of the unlimited amount of the material,and because the tales of greater length have been considered adequate, if not more satisfactory. Moreover it is only to a certain extent that these short tales reveal Stevenson. While there is a certain amount of action and frequently, thrilling adventure, there is not the same psychological study, so that it is virtually within these stories as a group that an expression of Stevenson is to be sought. They are the work of a man who wrote with the whole-hearted desire of providing entertainment and of lightening a few hours in the midst of the common round and seriousness of life's business. Thus Stevenson is revealed by the adventure tales and his "bogey stories" in that they exemplify his love for realistic romance.

In his novels Robert Louis Stevenson's faith in man is repeatedly illustrated. In the weakest or most degraded character there is some standard of good, some

(1) Vailima Letters, August 1893.

(2) June 1894

glowing ember of virtue For Herrick,the helpless victim of circumstance,one has compassion and with the Master of Ballantrae, evil as he is, a certain sympathy is possible. Nares and Adam Weir are brutal yet they command admiration. Even in the contemptible creatures, Bellairs and Huish there is some redeeming feature. Through them all are revealed Stevenson's sympathy and tolerance for his fellows and his serene confidence in their inborn virtue.

Towards life Stevenson's attitude was one of a participant, not a spectator. For him life was not a temporary state of sorrow and misery to be endured with as much resignation as possible. It was something to be lived,courageously,not brooded over. One must derive joy and confidence, not fear and shame. It is not life we should love but living! If one may single out a character as the illustration of this healthy outlook, then it is Alan Breck Stewart. But it is in the spirit of his novels, in their romanticism and exhilaration,that Robèrt Louis Stevenson's whole-hearted enjoyment of life is manifested

His emphasis is not upon the end of life but upon the method of reaching that end. Man is a sentry at his post, "he is on duty here; he knows not how or why, and does not need to know " And it is inaccordance

with the performance of his duty that reward is made. Man's most coveted epitaph is "Well done, thou good and faithful servant", and here the emphasis is not upon the kind of service but upon the fact that it is done well and faithfully Success is not necessary but constancy. The man to be admired is he who persists in spite of defeat - a Faithful Failure

CHAPTER V

STEVENSON AND ROUSSEAU

In conclusion it might be of interest to contrast Robert Louis Stevenson's faith in man and its revelation in his romances with that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although these two men were separated by a century and lived in a widely different environment, there was something that they held in common. Because of the divergence in their temperaments however this bond assumed a different aspect in both cases.

Rousseau's belief in the goodness of man was not a belief in the virtue of his immediate fellow-beings. That is to say, unlike Stevenson he did not believe in the inherent goodness of his neighbour. Rather, he believed that man had been good originally but had deteriorated through the ages with the introduction and progress of civilization. In his primitive state before the pursuit of the arts and sciences man was rude but at the same time he was good. As soon as he emerged from the happy state of ignorance in which he was first situated one finds the beginning of all the world's evil and misfortune. Indeed, according to Rousseau, the belief that man was created in

a state of sin and misery is but a disparagement of the hand of Nature.

In 1749 the Academy of Dijon proposed the question "Has the restoration of the sciences contributed to purify or to corrupt manners?" Rousseau's paper on the subject was awarded the prize and with his subsequent works exerted a profound influence upon his contemporaries and successors. It must be realized however that Rousseau is not a relentless pursuer of truth nor are his works scientific expositions. He is essentially theoretical and for the most part illogical and inconsistent. Rousseau's whole argument is based upon his belief of there once having been a state of complete innocent virtue.

In his first essay he roughly formulates his belief That man was good by nature and by institution only has he become bad, is his main thesis. He vigorously attacks the sciences for having introduced all the baseness and treacheries of life under a cloak of refinement. No longer is man left to his simple impulses and self-sufficing life. He has become a slave of laws and of all the hypocrisy and deception of society. Apparently nothing beneficial has resulted from civilization, nothing but the degradation of mankind.

In his second "Discours" Rousseau replies to the question "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?" He describes the

primitive state of man as he conceives it to have been and discusses the causes and results of inequality. Virtually he did not believe that men were born equal and he admitted that originally there were certain physical differences. Later with man's desire for property, artificial inequalities crept in and these have been fostered by the present social order. Here however in his antipathy to society he is far more concerned with the results of inequality than with the origin. "The first source of evil is inequality; from inequality come riches .... from riches are born luxury and idleness, from luxury come the fine arts and from idleness the sciences". (1)Both "Discours" constitute a violent attack on the general order of society and to Rousseau civilization has done nothing but destroy man's original felicity and substitute abuse and misery.

Rousseau's belief in man then, was a belief in an ideal. The man he loved was a member of an ideal community, one that had been untouched by civilization. His is a decided contrast to the robust healthy faith of Stevenson The latter in his observation of his fellows was touched by their frailty. They may be wretched perhaps but nevertheless they are fighting for "some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls." They may be miserable and

(1) "Rep. au Roi de Pologne".

degraded but they are not wholly bad, and there is something pitiful in their efforts to hold to their own ideal of decency. Above all, Stevenson in his sympathy for men sought and gloried in their companionship. Rousseau, on the other hand, in contemplating man was filled with bitterness and anger. Man had been good originally but falling a victim to society he had become wretched and debased. Happy in his primitive simplicity and innocence,he had later become inflicted with all the fear and hate, the suspicion and deception of civilization.' In his depression and resentment Rousseau retired within the confines of his imagination and sought the consolation of his dreams. In his subsequent devotion to the ideal he lost touch with the actual As he advanced in years he grew to shun society more and more and, Morley remarks, learned "to love men most when he saw men least" One sees therefore that though Stevenson and Rousseau both believed in the essential goodness of man, their reaction to their belief was of a totally different nature.

In turning to romance one sees a further contrast between the two men. For the most part Rousseau's literary works were treatises devoted to questions concerning man's estate. In addition to the two "Discours" in 1762 he wrote the "Contrat Social" and "Emile". In both of these one sees that his antagonistic attitude

towards civilization has become considerably modified. Even in his only romance the "Nouvelle Heloise", written just six years after the "Discours", there are indications of a slightly more tolerant attitude. In turning to romance Rousseau considerably deviated from his usual method of literary expression. "After so many biting invectives against the effeminate books that breathed love and soft delights, could anything be imagined more shocking, more unlooked-for, than to see me inscribe myself with my own hand among the very authors on whose books I had heaped this harsh censure?" It is true that in after years he was ashamed of the "Nouvelle Heloise" regarding it as a result of a passing weakness; nevertheless it is considered to be as truly a monument of his whole scheme as his most profound work.

In 1756 Rousseau had retired to Montmorency in his desire to quit the misery of the world. Here his extremely emotional temperament reacted to the natural beauty of the countryside, and he built for himself an imaginary world in which he gloried with all the intensity of his passionate nature. "I made a golden age to please my own fancy." "Forgetting absolutely the whole human race, I invented for myself societies of perfect creatures, as heavenly for their virtues as their beauties." In his passion for this imaginary world Rousseau conceived his idea of writing the "Nouvelle Heloise" It was to be

(1) Confessions IX

the vehicle for the literary expression of his ecstatic ideal.

The scheme of the romance is defined as being an attempt "to rehabilitate human nature in as much of the supposed freshness of primitive times as the hardest crust of civil institutions and social use might allow." His ideal characters possess all the virtues of his conception of primitive man but they live in an age contemporaneous with the author. Too often however, they combine noble sentiments and fine speeches with an ugly life. In their ideal community they are not bound by the conventions of society though in their natural simplicity they hold to a certain code of discipline Thus one notices a change in his attitude from that of the "Discours", partly due to his natural inconsistancy and partly to the modification of his views. His previous work had been a furious attack on the general order of society and an exaltation of the simplicity of the primitive state. Here in constructing an ideal life he has placed it within a community that is virtually more disciplined than the society about him. Rousseau was disgusted with the corruption resulting from civilization and in the extremely degraded moral conditions of his time, his book is an attempt to infuse his readers with a desire for a serene, unsophisticated life. Permeated by an extreme sensibility there is little within the "Nouvelle Heloise" that is not essentially artificial.

In this treatment however one cannot justly compare Rousseau's romance with those of Stevenson from a literary standpoint, because both were at different stages in the development of the novel. The former was written at a time when the novel was first coming into popularity, contemporary with Richardson and Fielding in England, when for the most part the action was simple and the characters stiff and unreal. In regarding Rousseau's and Stevenson's use of romance as a medium of expression however, one may point out a contrast.

The "Nouvelle Heloise" was written with a definite idea of setting forth Rosseau's philosophy, his belief in man, and the action was subordinate to the thought. While Stevenson's romances were written to relate some tale or incident in life, and through them all we see the infusion of his belief, his joy in life and his faith in man It is this spirit permeating his work that is the source and essence of its vitality. On the one hand Rousseau believed that man had been good originally but had become corrupted by laws, and that if once these laws were removed or modified, man would return to his natural virtue. In his romance he embodies his belief in the characters who are members of an ideal community, one that is remote from actual life and is essentially imaginary. On the otherhand Stevenson believed that his fellows were

inherently good, in spite of their frailties they each possessed some spark of virtue. The characters of his tales are real people of flesh and blood, compacted of good and evil and living a life with all its joys and wrongs and above all, its adventures. They are real people in a real life, one that is essentially romantic. Thus as the "Nouvelle Heloise" expresses Rousseau's faith and temperament, so do Stevenson's romances reveal his.

Finally, the romances of Stevenson will never be ranked among the great novels of time; nevertheless they do maintain a rock-firm position entirely their own. Amongst the work of his contemporaries they stand out, striking in their individuality and inspiring in their expression of the enjoyment of life. They will long be a recourse to youthful cravings for adventure and will provide an unfailing appeal to hearts of riper years. Above all they possess an enduring charm in their reflection of the spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson, his glorious zest in life and his triumphant faith in his fellow men.

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