

PERSONAL MEMORIES OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

IN setting down my recollections of Louis Stevenson, I desire to confine the record to what I have myself known and seen. His writings will be mentioned only in so far as I heard them planned and discussed. Of his career and character I shall not attempt to give a complete outline; all I purpose to do is to present those sides of them which came under my personal notice. The larger portrait it will be his privilege to prepare who was the closest and the most responsible of all Stevenson's friends; and it is only while we wait for Mr. Sidney Colvin's biography that these imperfect sketches can retain their value. The most that can be hoped for is that they may have a niche in his gallery. And now, pen in hand, I pause to think how I can render in words a faint impression of the most inspiring, the most fascinating human being that I have known.

I.

It is nearly a quarter of a century since I first saw Stevenson. In the autumn of 1870, in company with a former school-fellow, I was in the Hebrides. We had been wandering in the Long Island, as they name the outer archipelago, and our steamer, returning, called at Skye. At the pier of Portree, I think, a company came on board — "people of importance in their day," Edinburgh acquaintances, I suppose, who had accidentally met in Skye on various errands. At all events, they invaded our modest vessel with a loud sound of talk. Professor Blackie was among them, a famous figure that calls for no description; and a voluble, shaggy man, clad in homespun, with spectacles forward upon nose, who, it was whispered to us, was Mr. Sam Bough, the Scottish Academician, a water-color painter of some repute, who was to die in 1878. There were also several engineers of prominence. At the tail of this chatty, jesting little crowd of invaders came a youth of about my own age, whose appearance, for some mysterious reason, instantly attracted me. He was tall, preternaturally lean, with longish hair, and as restless and questing as a spaniel. The party from Portree fairly took possession of us; at meals they crowded around the captain, and we common tourists sat silent, below the salt. The stories of Blackie and

Sam Bough were resonant. Meanwhile, I knew not why, I watched the plain, pale lad who took the lowest place in this privileged company.

The summer of 1870 remains in the memory of western Scotland as one of incomparable splendor. Our voyage, especially as evening drew on, was like an emperor's progress. We stayed on deck till the latest moment possible, and I occasionally watched the lean youth, busy and serviceable, with some of the little tricks with which we were later on to grow familiar — the advance with hand on hip, the sidewise bending of the head to listen. Meanwhile darkness overtook us, a wonderful halo of moonlight swam up over Glenelg, the indigo of the peaks of the Cuchullins faded into the general blue night. I went below, but was presently aware of some change of course, and then of an unexpected stoppage. I tore on deck, and found that we had left our track among the islands, and had steamed up a narrow and unvisited fiord of the mainland — I think Loch Nevis. The sight was curious and bewildering. We lay in a gorge of blackness, with only a strip of the blue moonlit sky overhead; in the dark a few lanterns jumped about the shore, carried by agitated but unseen and soundless persons. As I leaned over the bulwarks, Stevenson was at my side, and he explained to me that we had come up this loch to take away to Glasgow a large party of emigrants driven from their homes in the interests of a deer-forest. As he spoke, a black mass became visible entering the vessel. Then, as we slipped off shore, the fact of their hopeless exile came home to these poor fugitives, and suddenly, through the absolute silence, there rose from them a wild kerning and wailing, reverberated by the cliffs of the loch, and at that strange place and hour infinitely poignant. When I came on deck next morning, my unnamed friend was gone. He had put off with the engineers to visit some remote lighthouse of the Hebrides.

This early glimpse of Stevenson is a delightful memory to me. When we met next, not only did I instantly recall him, but, what was stranger, he remembered me. This voyage in the *Clansman* was often mentioned between us, and it has received for me a sort of consecration from the fact that in the very last letter that Louis wrote, finished on the day of his death, he made a reference to it.

II.

IN the very touching "Recollections" which our friend Mr. Andrew Lang has published, he says: "I shall not deny that my first impression [of Stevenson] was not wholly favourable." I remember, too, that John Addington Symonds was not pleased at first. It only shows how different are our moods. I must confess that in my case the invading army simply walked up and took the fort by storm. It was in 1877, or late in 1876, that I was presented to Stevenson, at the old Savile Club, by Mr. Sidney Colvin, who thereupon left us to our devices. We went down-stairs and lunched together, and then we adjourned to the smoking-room. As twilight came on I tore myself away, but Stevenson walked with me across Hyde Park, and nearly to my house. He had an engagement, and so had I, but I walked a mile or two back with him. The fountains of talk had been unsealed, and they drowned the conventions. I came home dazzled with my new friend, saying, as Constance does of Arthur, "Was ever such a gracious creature born?" That impression of ineffable mental charm was formed at the first moment of acquaintance, and it never lessened or became modified. Stevenson's rapidity in the sympathetic interchange of ideas was, doubtless, the source of it. He has been described as an "egotist," but I challenge the description. If ever there was an altruist, it was Louis Stevenson; he seemed to feign an interest in himself merely to stimulate you to be liberal in your confidences.

Those who have written about him from later impressions than these of which I speak seem to me to give insufficient prominence to the gaiety of Stevenson. It was his cardinal quality in those early days. A childlike mirth leaped and danced in him; he seemed to skip upon the hills of life. He was simply bubbling with quips and jests; his inherent earnestness or passion about abstract things was incessantly relieved by jocosity; and when he had built one of his intellectual castles in the sand, a wave of humor was certain to sweep in and destroy it. I cannot, for the life of me, recall any of his jokes; and written down in cold blood, they might not be funny if I did. They were not wit so much as humanity, the many-sided outlook upon life. I am anxious that his laughter-loving mood should not be forgotten, because later on it was partly, but I think never wholly, quenched by ill health, responsibility, and the advance of years. He was often, in the old days, excessively and delightfully silly — silly with the silliness of an inspired school-boy; and I am afraid that our laughter sometimes sounded ill in the ears of age.

A pathos was given to his gaiety by the fra-

gility of his health. He was never well, all the years I knew him; and we looked upon his life as hanging by the frailest tenure. As he never complained or maundered, this, no doubt,— though we were not aware of it,— added to the charm of his presence. He was so bright and keen and witty, and any week he might die. No one, certainly, conceived it possible that he could reach his forty-fifth year. In 1879 his health visibly began to run lower, and he used to bury himself in lonely Scotch and French places, "tinkering himself with solitude," as he used to say.

My experience of Stevenson during these first years was confined to London, upon which he would make sudden piratical descents, staying a few days or weeks, and melting into air again. He was much at my house; and it must be told that my wife and I, as young married people, had possessed ourselves of a house too large for our slender means immediately to furnish. The one person who thoroughly approved of our great, bare, absurd drawing-room was Louis, who very earnestly dealt with us on the immorality of chairs and tables, and desired us to sit always, as he delighted to sit, upon hassocks on the floor. Nevertheless, as arm-chairs and settees straggled into existence, he handsomely consented to use them, although never in the usual way, but with his legs thrown sideways over the arms of them, or the head of a sofa treated as a perch. In particular, a certain shelf, with cupboards below, attached to a book-case, is worn with the person of Stevenson, who would spend half an evening, while passionately discussing some great question of morality or literature, leaping sidewise in a seated posture to the length of this shelf, and then back again. He was eminently peripatetic, top, and never better company than walking in the street, this exercise seeming to inflame his fancy. But his most habitual dwelling-place in the London of those days was the Savile Club, then lodged in an inconvenient but very friendly house in Savile Row. Louis pervaded the club; he was its most affable and chatty member; and he lifted it, by the ingenuity of his incessant dialectic, to the level of a sort of humorous Academe or Mouseion.

At this time he must not be thought of as a successful author. A very few of us were convinced of his genius; but with the exception of Mr. Leslie Stephen, nobody of editorial status was sure of it. I remember the publication of "An Inland Voyage" in 1878, and the inability of the critics and the public to see anything unusual in it.

Stevenson was not without a good deal of innocent oddity in his dress. When I try to conjure up his figure, I can see only a slight, lean lad, in a suit of blue sea-cloth, a black

shirt, and a wisp of yellow carpet that did duty for a necktie. This was long his attire, persevered in to the anguish of his more conventional acquaintances. I have a ludicrous memory of going, in 1878, to buy him a new hat, in company with Mr. Lang, the thing then upon his head having lost the very semblance of a human article of dress. Aided by a very civil shopman, we suggested several hats and caps, and Louis at first seemed interested; but having at last hit upon one which appeared to us pleasing and decorous, we turned for a moment to inquire the price. We turned back, and found that Louis had fled, the idea of parting with the shapeless object having proved too painful to be entertained. By the way, Mr. Lang will pardon me if I tell, with an added detail, a story of his. It was immediately after the adventure with the hat that, not having quite enough money to take him from London to Edinburgh, third class, he proposed to the railway clerk to throw in a copy of Mr. Swinburne's "Queen-Mother and Rosamond." The offer was refused with scorn, although the book was of the first edition, and even then worth more than the cost of a whole ticket.

Stevenson's pity was a very marked quality, and it extended to beggars, which is, I think, to go too far. His optimism, however, suffered a rude shock in South Audley street one summer afternoon. We met a stalwart beggar, whom I refused to aid. Louis, however, wavered, and finally handed him sixpence. The man pocketed the coin, forbore to thank his benefactor, but, fixing his eye on me, said in a loud voice, "And what is the other little gentleman going to give me?" "In future," said Louis, as we strode coldly on, "I shall be 'the other little gentleman.'"

In those early days he suffered many indignities on account of his extreme youthfulness of appearance and absence of self-assertion. He was at Inverness,—being five or six and twenty at the time,—and had taken a room in a hotel. Coming back about dinner-time, he asked the hour of table d'hôte, whereupon the landlady said, in a motherly way: "Oh, I knew you would n't like to sit in there among the grown-up people, so I've had a place put for you in the bar." There was a frolic at the Royal Hotel, Bathgate, in the summer of 1879. Louis was lunching alone, and the maid, considering him a negligible quantity, came and leaned out of the window. This outrage on the proprieties was so stinging that Louis at length made free to ask her, with irony, what she was doing there. "I'm looking for my lad," she replied. "Is that he?" asked Stevenson, with keener sarcasm. "Weel, I've been lookin' for him a' my life, and I've never seen him yet," was

the response. Louis was disarmed at once, and wrote her on the spot some beautiful verses in the vernacular. "They're no bad for a beginner," she was kind enough to say when she had read them.

The year 1879 was a dark one in the life of Louis. He had formed a conviction that it was his duty to go out to the extreme west of the United States, while his family and the inner circle of his friends were equally certain that it was neither needful nor expedient that he should make this journey. As it turned out, they were wrong, and he was right; but in the circumstances their opinion seemed the only wise one. His health was particularly bad, and he was ordered, not West, but South. The expedition, which he has partly described in "The Amateur Emigrant" and "Across the Plains," was taken, therefore, in violent opposition to all those whom he left in England and Scotland; and this accounts for the mode in which it was taken. No one would give him any money to be spent in going to California, and it was hoped that the withdrawal of supplies would make the voyage impossible. But Louis, bringing to the front a streak of iron obstinacy which lay hidden somewhere in his gentle nature, scraped together enough to secure him a steerage passage across the Atlantic.

The day before he started he spent with my wife and me—a day of stormy agitation, an April day of rain-clouds and sunshine; for it was not in Louis to remain long in any mood. I seem to see him now, pacing the room, a cigarette spinning in his wasted fingers. To the last we were trying to dissuade him from what seemed to us the maddest of enterprises. He was so ill that I did not like to leave him, and at night—it was midsummer weather—we walked down into town together. We were by this time, I suppose, in a pretty hysterical state of mind, and as we went through Berkeley Square, in mournful discussion of the future, Louis suddenly proposed that we should visit the so-called "Haunted House," which then occupied the newspapers. The square was quiet in the decency of a Sunday evening. We found the house, and one of us boldly knocked at the door. There was no answer and no sound, and we jeered upon the door-step; but suddenly we were both aware of a pale face—a phantasm in the dusk—gazing down upon us from a surprising height. It was the caretaker, I suppose, mounted upon a flight of steps; but terror gripped us at the heart, and we fled with footsteps as precipitate as those of schoolboys caught in an orchard. I think that ghostly face in Berkeley Square must have been Louis's latest European impression for many months.

III.

ALL the world now knows, through the two books which I have named, what immediately happened. Presently letters began to arrive, and in one from Monterey, written early in October, 1879, he told me of what was probably the nearest approach of death that ever came until the end, fifteen years later. I do not think it is generally known, even in the inner circle of his friends, that in September of that year he was violently ill, alone, at an Angora-goat ranch in the Santa Lucia Mountains. "I scarcely slept or ate or thought for four days," he said. "Two nights I lay out under a tree, in a sort of stupor, doing nothing but fetch water for myself and horse, light a fire and make coffee, and all night awake hearing the goat-bells ringing and the tree-toads singing, when each new noise was enough to set me mad." Then an old frontiersman, a mighty hunter of bears, came round, and tenderly nursed him through his attack. "By all rule this should have been my death; but after a while my spirit got up again in a divine frenzy, and has since kicked and spurred my vile body forward with great emphasis and success."

Late in the winter of 1879, with renewed happiness and calm of life, and also under the spur of a need of money, he wrote with much assiduity. Among other things, he composed at Monterey the earliest of his novels, a book called "A Vendetta in the West," the manuscript of which seems to have disappeared. Perhaps we need not regret it; for, so he declared to me, "It was about as bad as Ouida, but not quite, for it was not so eloquent." He had made a great mystery of his whereabouts; indeed, for several months no one was to know what had become of him, and his letters were to be considered secret. At length, in writing from Monterey, on November 15, 1879, he removed the embargo: "That I am in California may now be published to the brethren." In the summer of the next year, after a winter of very serious ill health, during which more than once he seemed on the brink of a galloping consumption, he returned to England. He had married in California a charming lady whom we all soon learned to regard as the most appropriate and helpful companion that Louis could possibly have secured. On October 8, 1880,—a memorable day,—he made his first appearance in London since his American exile. A post-card from Edinburgh had summoned me to "appoint with an appointment" certain particular friends; "and let us once again," Louis wrote, "lunch together in the Savile Halls." Mr. Lang and Mr. Walter Pollock, and, I think, Mr. Henley, graced the occasion, and the club cellar produced a bottle of

Chambertin of quite uncommon merit. Louis, I may explain, had a peculiar passion for Burgundy, which he esteemed the wine of highest possibilities in the whole Bacchic order; and I have often known him descend on a Pommard or a Montrachet in terms so exquisite that the listeners could scarcely taste the wine itself.

Davos-Platz was now prescribed for the rickety lungs; and late in that year Louis and his wife took up their abode there, at the Hôtel Buol, he carrying with him a note from me recommending him to the care of John Addington Symonds. Not at first, but presently and on the whole, these two men, so singular in their generation, so unique and so unlike, "hit it off," as people say, and were an intellectual solace to each other; but their real friendship did not begin till a later year. I remember Stevenson saying to me next spring that to be much with Symonds was to "adventure in a thornwood." It was at Davos, this winter of 1880, that Stevenson took up the study of Hazlitt, having found a publisher who was willing to bring out a critical and biographical memoir. This scheme took up a great part of Louis's attention, but was eventually dropped; for the further he progressed in the investigation of Hazlitt's character the less he liked it, and the squalid "*Liber Amoris*" gave the *coup de grâce*. He did not know what he would be at. His vocation was not yet apparent to him. He talked of writing on craniology and the botany of the Alps. The unwritten books of Stevenson will one day attract the scholiast, who will endeavor, perhaps, to reconstruct them from the references to them in his correspondence. It may, therefore, be permissible to record here that he was long proposing to write a life of the Duke of Wellington, for which he made some considerable collections. This was even advertised as "in preparation," on several occasions, from 1885 until 1887, but was ultimately abandoned. I remember his telling me that he intended to give emphasis to the "humour" of Wellington.

In June, 1881, we saw him again; but he passed very rapidly through London to a cottage at Pitlochry in Perthshire. He had lost his hold on town. "London," he wrote me, "now chiefly means to me Colvin and Henley, Leslie Stephen and you." He was now courting a fresh literary hare, and set Mr. Austin Dobson, Mr. Saintsbury, and me busily hunting out facts about a certain Jean Cavalier, a romantic eighteenth-century adventurer whose life he fancied that he would write. His thoughts had recurred, in fact, to Scottish history; and he suddenly determined to do what seemed rather a mad thing—namely, to stand for the Edinburgh professorship of history, then just vacant. We were all whipped up for testi-

monials, and a little pamphlet exists, in a pearl-gray cover,—the despair of bibliophiles,—in which he and a strange assortment of his friends set forth his claims. These required nimble treatment, since, to put it plainly, it was impossible to say that he had any. His appeal was treated by the advocates, who were the electing body, with scant consideration, and some worthy gentleman was elected. The round Louis was well out of such a square hole as a chair in a university.

But something better was at hand. It was now, and in the peace of the Highlands, that Louis set out to become a popular writer. The fine art of "booming" had not then been introduced, nor the race of those who weep by week discover coveys of fresh geniuses. Although Stevenson, in a sporadic way, had written much that was delightful, and that will last, he was yet—now at the close of his thirty-first year—by no means successful. The income he made by his pen was still ridiculously small; and Mr. John Morley, amazing as it sounds to-day, had just refused to give him a book to write in the "English Men of Letters" series, on the ground of his obscurity as an author. All this was to be changed, and the book that was to do it was even now upon the stocks. In August the Stevensons moved to a house in Braemar—a place, as Louis said, "patronized by the royalty of the Sister Kingdoms—Victoria and the Cairngorms, sir, honouring that country-side by their conjunct presence." Hither I was invited, and here I spent an ever memorable visit. The house, as Louis was careful to instruct me, was entitled, "The Cottage, late the late Miss McGregor's, Castleton of Braemar"; and so I obediently addressed my letters until Louis remarked that "the reference to a deceased Highland lady, tending as it does to foster unavailing sorrow, may be with advantage omitted from the address."

To the Cottage, therefore, heedless of the manes of the late Miss McGregor, I proceeded in the most violent storm of hail and rain that even Aberdeenshire can produce in August, and found Louis as frail as a ghost, indeed, but better than I expected. He had adopted a trick of stretching his thin limbs over the back of a wicker sofa, which gave him an extraordinary resemblance to that quaint insect, the praying mantis; but it was a mercy to find him out of bed at all. Among the many attractions of the Cottage, the presence of Mr. Thomas Stevenson—Louis's father—must not be omitted. He was then a singularly charming and vigorous personality, indignantly hovering at the borders of old age ("Sixty-three, sir, this year; and, deuce take it! am I to be called 'an old gentleman' by a cab-driver in the streets of Aberdeen?"), and, to my grati-

tude and delight, my companion in long morning walks. The detestable weather presently brought all the other members of the household to their beds, and Louis in particular became a wreck. However, it was a wreck that floated every day at nightfall; for at the worst he was able to come down-stairs to dinner and spend the evening with us.

We passed the days with regularity. After breakfast I went to Louis's bedroom, where he sat up in bed, with dark, flashing eyes and ruffled hair, and we played chess on the coverlid. Not a word passed, for he was strictly forbidden to speak in the early part of the day. As soon as he felt tired—often in the middle of a game—he would rap with peremptory knuckles on the board as a signal to stop, and then Mrs. Stevenson or I would arrange his writing-materials on the bed. Then I would see no more of him till dinner-time, when he would appear, smiling and voluble, the horrid bar of speechlessness having been let down. Then every night, after dinner, he would read us what he had written during the day. I find in a note to my wife, dated October 3, 1881: "Louis has been writing, all the time I have been here, a novel of pirates and hidden treasure, in the highest degree exciting. He reads it to us every night, chapter by chapter." This, of course, was "Treasure Island," about the composition of which, long afterward, in Samoa, he wrote an account in some parts of which I think that his memory played him false. I look back to no keener intellectual pleasure than those cold nights at Braemar, with the sleet howling outside, and Louis reading his budding romance by the lamp-light, emphasizing the purpler passages with lifted voice and gesticulating finger.

IV.

HARDLY had I left the Cottage than the harsh and damp climate of Aberdeenshire was felt to be rapidly destroying Louis, and he and his wife fled for Davos. Before the end of October they were ensconced there in a fairly comfortable chalet. Here Louis and his stepson amused themselves by setting up a hand-press, which Mr. Osbourne worked, and for which Louis provided the literary material. Four or five laborious little publications were put forth, some of them illustrated by the daring hand of Stevenson himself. He complained to me that Mr. Osbourne was a very ungenerous publisher—"one penny a cut, and one halfpenny a set of verses. What do you say to that for Grub street?" These little diversions were brought to a close by the printer-publisher breaking, at one fell swoop, the press and his own finger. The little "Davos Press"

issues now fetch extravagant prices, which would have filled author and printer with amazement. About this time Louis and I had a good deal of correspondence about a work which he had proposed that we should undertake in collaboration—a retelling, in choice literary form, of the most picturesque murder cases of the last hundred years. We were to visit the scenes of these crimes, and turn over the evidence. The great thing, Louis said, was not to begin to write until we were thoroughly alarmed. “These things must be done, my boy, under the very shudder of the goose-flesh.” We were to begin with the “Story of the Red Barn,” which indeed is a tale preëminently worthy to be retold by Stevenson. But the scheme never came off, and is another of the dead leaves in his Vallombrosa.

We saw him in London again, for a few days, in October, 1882; but this was a melancholy period. For eight months at the close of that year and the beginning of 1883 he was capable of no mental exertion. He was in the depths of languor, and in nightly apprehension of a fresh attack. He slept excessively, and gave humorous accounts of the drowsiness that hung upon him, addressing his notes as “from the Arms of Porpus” (Morpheus) and “at the Sign of the Poppy.” No climate seemed to relieve him, and so, in the early spring of 1883, a bold experiment was tried. As the snows of Davos were of no avail, the hot, damp airs of Hyères should be essayed. I am inclined to dwell in some fullness on the year he spent at Hyères, because, curiously enough, it was not so much as mentioned, to my knowledge, by any of the writers of obituary notices at Stevenson’s death. It takes, nevertheless, a prominent place in his life’s history, for his removal thither marked a sud-

¹ Since our friend Mr. Gosse has mentioned the matter, let us once for all correct this unpleasing error. Before starting across the continent, Stevenson spent one wet and dreary day in New York in the manner described in “The Amateur Emigrant.” He went, unknown, to several publishing houses, but describes his visit to only one book-store, where he was first treated brusquely by a clerk, and then most cordially. This is not the visit (referred to by Mr. Gosse) to the office of the old “Scribner’s,”—now THE CENTURY,—on the upper floors of 743 Broadway. What happened there the present writer once tried to find out from Stevenson himself.

He seems to have appeared at a small window in the business department, and asked a clerk whether he might write for the magazine. He brought no credentials or manuscripts. If he saw any of the editorial corps, none of them had any remembrance of it, nor did he seem himself to have carried away any impression of any editorial conversation. Certainly he remembered no rudeness.

Doubtless the angel Gabriel may any day suffer the same fate at any little window of any publisher’s, and no one be to blame.

It is just such a possibility as this, however, and the fact that every editor knows in his heart how often he

den and brilliant, though only temporary, revival in his health and spirits. Some of his best work, too, was written at Hyères, and one might say that fame first found him in this warm corner of southern France.

The house at Hyères was called “La Solitude.” It stood in a paradise of roses and aloes, fig-marigolds and olives. It had delectable and even, so Louis declared, “sub-celestial” views over a plain bounded by “certain mountains as graceful as Apollo, as severe as Zeus”; and at first the hot mistral, which blew and burned where it blew, seemed the only drawback. Not a few of the best poems in the “Underwoods” reflect the ecstasy of convalescence under the skies and perfumes of La Solitude. By the summer Louis could report “good health of a radiant order.” It was while he was at Hyères that Stevenson first directly addressed an American audience, and in writing for an American review I may record that, in September, 1883, he told me to “beg G—— your prettiest for a gentleman in pecuniary sloughs.” Mr. G—— was quite alive to the importance of securing such a contributor, although when the Amateur Emigrant had entered the office of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE in 1879 he had been very civilly but coldly shown the door. (I must be allowed to tease my good friends in Union Square by recording that fact! ¹) Mr. G—— asked for fiction, but received instead “The Silverado Squatters,” which duly appeared in the magazine.²

It was also arranged that Stevenson should make an ascent of the Rhone for THE CENTURY, and an artist was to accompany him to make sketches for the magazine. But Stevenson’s health failed again: the sudden death of a very dear old friend was a painful shock to him, and the winter of that year was not pro-

duces disastrous things in his own proper person, and not by proxy, that keep him in a perpetual state of anxiety, and make him waste precious time over possible angel Gabriels who are so often nothing but poor (literary) sinners.

Shall the present writer ever forget the bad quarter of five minutes that Stevenson once gave him, out of pure devilry? “Now whom *did* you see there that day, Stevenson?” said he. Stevenson looked his questioner straight in the face. “Come to think of it, I believe it was you. Yes, it *was* you!” If ever blood ran cold, it did then. “Now let us get at the date,” quoth the accused. Ah, the date! That settled it! A protracted sick-leave, a European “alibi,” released his victim from torment!

It was during that same visit abroad that the writer first heard of Stevenson, and, fitly enough, from Gosse himself. If a happy fate ever brings him back to London, he thinks he can go to the very spot in the very street where the author of these “Personal Memories” spoke to him the name of his friend, with quiet and sure conviction of his unique genius. It is a pleasure to remember that THE CENTURY was the first American monthly magazine to welcome him to its pages.

—R. W. G.

² See THE CENTURY for Nov. and Dec., 1883.

pitious. Abruptly, however, in January, 1884, another crisis came. He went to Nice, where he was thought to be dying. He saw no letters; all his business was kindly taken charge of by Mr. Henley; and again, for a long time, he passed beneath the penumbra of steady languor and infirmity. When it is known how constantly he suffered, how brief and flickering were the intervals of comparative health, it cannot but add to the impression of his radiant fortitude through all these trials, and of his persistent employment of all his lucid moments. It was pitiful, and yet at the same time very inspiring, to see a creature so feeble and so ill equipped for the struggle bear himself so smilingly and so manfully through all his afflictions. There can be no doubt, however, that this latest breakdown vitally affected his spirits. He was never, after this, quite the gay child of genius that he had previously been. Something of a graver cast became natural to his thoughts; he had seen Death in the cave. And now for the first time we traced a new note in his writings—the note of “*Pulvis et Umbra.*”

After 1883 my personal memories of Stevenson became very casual. In November, 1884, he was settled at Bournemouth, in a villa called Bonaltie Towers, and there he stayed until in March, 1885, he took a house of his own, which, in pious memory of his grandfather, he named Skerryvore. In the preceding winter, when I was going to America to lecture, he was particularly anxious that I should lay at the feet of Mr. Frank R. Stockton his homage, couched in the following lines:

My Stockton if I failed to like,
It were a sheer depravity;
For I went down with the “Thomas Hyke,”
And up with the “Negative Gravity.”

He adored these tales of Mr. Stockton's, a taste which must be shared by all good men. To my constant sorrow, I was never able to go to Bournemouth during the years he lived there. It has been described to me, by those who were more fortunate, as a pleasure that was apt to tantalize and evade the visitor, so constantly was the invalid unable, at the last, to see the friend who had traveled a hundred miles to speak with him. It was therefore during his visits to London, infrequent as these were, that we saw him at his best, for these were made at moments of unusual recovery. He generally lodged at what he called the “Monument,” this being his title for Mr. Colvin's house, a wing of the vast structure of the British Museum. I recall an occasion on which Louis dined with us (March, 1886) because of the startling interest in the art of strategy which he had developed—an interest which delayed the meal with arrangements of serried bottles coun-

terscarped and lines of cruets drawn up on horseback ready to charge. So infectious was his enthusiasm that we forgot our hunger, and hung over the embattled table-cloth, easily persuaded to agree with him that neither poetry nor the plastic arts could compete for a moment with “the finished conduct, sir, of a large body of men in face of the enemy.” It was a little later that he took up the practice of modeling clay figures as he sat up in bed. Some of these compositions—which needed, perhaps, his eloquent commentary to convey their full effect to the spectator—were not without a measure of skill of design. I recollect his saying, with extreme gravity, “I am in sculpture what Mr. Watts is in painting. We are both of us preoccupied with moral and abstract ideas.” I wonder whether any one has preserved specimens of these allegorical groups in clay.

The last time I had the happiness of seeing Stevenson was on Sunday, August 21, 1887. He had been brought up from Bournemouth the day before in a wretched condition of health, and was lodged in a private hotel in Finsbury Circus, in the City, ready to be easily moved to a steamer in the Thames on the morrow. I was warned, in a note, of his passage through town, and of the uncertainty whether he could be seen. On the chance, I went over early on the morrow, and, very happily for me, he had had a fair night, and could see me for an hour or two. No one else but Mrs. Stevenson was with him. His position was one which might have daunted any man's spirit, doomed to exile, in miserable health, starting vaguely across the Atlantic, with all his domestic interests rooted up, and with no notion where, or if at all, they should be replanted. If ever a man of imagination could be excused for repining, it was now. But Louis showed no white feather. He was radiantly humorous and romantic. It was church time, and there was some talk of my witnessing his will, which I did not do, because there could be found no other reputable witness, the whole crew of the hotel being at church. This set Louis off on a splendid dream of romance. “This,” he said, “is the way in which our valuable city hotels—packed, doubtless, with rich objects of jewelry—are deserted on a Sunday morning. Some bold piratical fellow, defying the spirit of Sabbatarianism, might make a handsome revenue by sacking the derelict hotels between the hours of ten and twelve. One hotel a week would suffice to enable such a man to retire into private life within the space of a year. A mask might, perhaps, be worn for the mere fancy of the thing, and to terrify kitchen-maids, but no real disguise would be needful to an enterprise that would require nothing but a brave heart and a careful study of the

City Postal Directory." He spoke of the matter with so much fire and gallantry that I blushed for the youth of England and its lack of manly enterprise. No one ever could describe preposterous conduct with such a convincing air as Louis could. Common sense was positively humbled in his presence.

The volume of his poems called "Underwoods" had just appeared, and he inscribed a copy of it to me in the words "at Todgers's, as ever was, chez Todgers, Pecksniff street." The only new book he seemed to wish to carry away with him was Mr. Hardy's beautiful romance, "The Woodlanders," which we had to scour London that Sunday afternoon to get hold of. In the evening Mr. Colvin and I each returned to "Todgers's" with the three volumes, borrowed or stolen somewhere, and wrapped up for the voyage next day. And so the following morning, in an extraordinary vessel called the *Ludgate Hill*, as though in compliment to Mr. Stockton's genius, and carrying, besides the Stevensons, a cargo of stallions and monkeys, Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson and Mr. Lloyd Osbourne steamed down the Thames in search of health across the Atlantic and the Pacific. The horses, Louis declared, protruded their noses in an unmannerly way between the passengers at dinner, and the poor little gray monkeys, giving up life as a bad job on board that strange, heaving cage, died by dozens, and were flung contemptuously out into the ocean. The strangest voyage, however, some time comes to an end, and Louis landed in America. He was never to cross the Atlantic again; and for those who loved

him in Europe he had already journeyed more than half-way to another world.

v.

It is impossible to deal, however lightly, with the personal qualities of Robert Louis Stevenson without dwelling on the extreme beauty of his character. In looking back over the twenty years in which I knew him, I feel that, since he was eminently human, I ought to recall his faults, but I protest that I can remember none. Perhaps the nearest approach to a fault was a certain want of discretion, always founded on a wish to make people understand each other, but not exactly according to wisdom. I recollect that he once embroiled me for a moment with John Addington Symonds in a manner altogether bloodthirsty and ridiculous, so that we both fell upon him and rended him. This little weakness is really the blackest crime I can lay to his charge. And on the other side, what courage, what love, what an indomitable spirit, what a melting pity! He had none of the sordid errors of the man who writes — no sick ambition, no envy of others, no exaggeration of the value of this ephemeral trick of scribbling. He was eager to help his fellows, ready to take a second place, offended with great difficulty, perfectly appeased by the least show of repentance. Stevenson was the most exquisite English writer of his generation; but those who lived close to him are apt to think less of that than of the fact that he was the most unselfish and the most lovable of human beings.

Edmund Gosse.

THE PASSING OF THE SPIRIT.

THE wind, the world-old rhapsodist, goes by,
 And the great pines, in changeless vesture gloomed,
 And all the towering elm-trees, thatched and plumed
 With green, take up, one after one, the cry;
 And as their choral voices swell and die,
 Catching the infinite note from tree to tree,
 Others far off, in long antistrophe,
 With swaying arms and surging tops reply.
 So to men's souls, at sacred intervals,
 Out of the dust of life takes wing and calls
 A spirit that we know not, nor can trace;
 And heart to heart makes answer with strange thrill:
 It passes, and a moment, face to face,
 We dream ourselves immortal, and are still.

Archibald Lampman.