

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE

VOL. LXXIV

NOVEMBER, 1923

NO. 5

An Intimate Portrait of R L S by His Stepson, Lloyd Osbourne

[A NEW and personal portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson is presented by his stepson, and collaborator on several novels, Lloyd Osbourne, who shared his life from 1876 until its end in 1894, and who for the first time gives his impressions and recollections. Osbourne has grouped his impressions round what might be called the pivotal years of Stevenson's life, and, in a series of vivid little vignettes of the great author at different ages, traces the developments and changes of his character. The chapters begin with "Stevenson at Twenty-six," and end with "The Death of Stevenson," at forty-four. They will be published in four numbers of the Magazine.]

STEVENSON AT TWENTY-SIX

IT was at the old inn at Grèz-sur-Loing that I first saw Robert Louis Stevenson. I was eight years old, a tousled-haired, barefooted child who was known to that company of artists as "Pettifish." Though I sat at the long *table d'hôte* I was much too insignificant a person to be noticed by this wonderful new arrival, whose coming had caused such a stir.

But after the meal when we all trooped down to the riverside to see the *Cigarette* and the *Arethusa*—the two canoes that had just finished the "Inland Voyage"—the stranger allowed me to sit in his, and even went to the trouble of setting up the little masts and sails for my amusement. I was very flattered to be treated so seriously—R L S always paid children the compliment of being serious, no matter what mocking light might dance in his brilliant brown eyes—and I instantly elected him to a high place in my esteem.

While the others talked I appraised him silently. He was tall and slight, with light brown hair, a small golden mustache, and a beautiful ruddy complexion; and was so gay and buoyant that he kept every one in fits of laughter. He wore a funny-looking little round cap, such as

schoolboys used to have in England; a white flannel shirt, dark trousers, and very neat shoes. Stevenson had very shapely feet; they were long and narrow with a high arch and instep, and he was proud of them. However shabbily he might be dressed he was always smartly shod. I remember being much impressed by his costume, which was in such contrast to that of his cousin, "Bob," who had preceded him to Grèz, and whom I already knew quite well. Bob was attired in a tattered blue jersey such as fishermen wore, trousers that needed no Sherlock Holmes to decide that he was a landscape-painter, and wooden *sabots* of the slightly superior order.

All these lads—for they were scarcely more—were gloriously under the spell of the *Vie de Bohème*; they wanted to be poor, improvident, and reckless; they were eager to assert that they were outcasts and rebels. One of the Americans, who had an ample allowance, found enjoyment in wearing an old frock-coat and fez; another, equally well provided for, always wore expensive rings so as to have the extreme enjoyment of pawning them; but to some poverty was no masquerade,

and was bitter enough. I doubt if poor little Bloomer had more than a spare shirt to his name, or ever enough buttons for his one shabby suit. Once he had been refused admission to the Luxembourg Gallery as "indecently clothed." It was supposed to be a wonderful joke, but Bloomer's fine, sensitive face always winced when it was repeated in his presence.

It was the custom of them all to rail at the respectable and well-to-do; R L S's favorite expression was "a common banker," used as one might refer to a common laborer. "Why, even a common banker would renig at a thing like that"—"renig" being another favorite word. I got the impression that people with good clothes, and money in their pockets, and pleasant, big houses were somehow odious, and should be heartily despised. They belonged to a strange race called Philistines, and were sternly to be kept in their place. If any had dared install themselves in the Hotel Cheillon they would have found it a nest of hornets.

R L S always said he hoped to die in a ditch. He must have dwelt on it at great length, and with all his matchless humor, for while I have forgotten the details, the picture of him as a white-haired and expiring wanderer is ineffaceably fixed in my mind. It cost me many a

pang that such was to be his end while common bankers jingled by in shining equipages, oblivious and scornful. But the tragedy that hung over Bob was even worse. Bob had divided his modest patrimony into ten equal parts, and after spending one of these every year was to commit suicide at the end. I never saw him lay out a few coppers for tobacco without a quivery feeling that he had shortened his life.

Young as I was I could not help noticing that R L S and my mother were greatly attracted to each other; or rather how they would sit and talk interminably on either side of the dining-room stove while everybody else was out and busy. I grew to associate them as always together, and in a queer, childish way I think it made me very happy. I had grown to love Luly Stevenson, as I called him; he used to read the "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Tales of a Grandfather" to me, and tell me stories "out of his head"; he gave me a sense of protection and warmth, and though I was far too shy ever to have said it aloud, he seemed so much like *Greatheart* in the book that this was my secret name for him.

When autumn merged into early winter and it was time for us to return to Paris, I was overjoyed when my mother said to me: "Luly is coming, too."

STEVENSON AT TWENTY-EIGHT

I WAS ten when my mother left Paris and came to London, to spend several months before sailing for New York on the way to California. R L S was away somewhere, and it was his cousin "Bob" who met us at Dover, and took us to our lodgings at 7 Radnor Street, Chelsea.

It was a mean little house in a mean little street, and was as dingy and depressing as cheap London lodgings usually are. But the Turners, who kept the place, were extremely pleasant people. Mrs. Turner was a big, jolly matronly woman who used to call me "little Frenchie," and give me tremendous hugs. Mr. Turner, who was the original of William Dent Pitman in the "Wrong Box," contributed nothing to the family exchequer except the shavings from his wood-carving, and many moralizations

about "h'Art" as a career. He was really a very odd and charming person, with possibly more ability than we gave him credit for. Later on at least he became comparatively affluent and achieved a modest fame.

When R L S finally came I was conscious of a subtle change in him; even to childish eyes he was more assured, more mature and responsible. I was quite awed by his beautiful blue suit with its double-breasted coat, and the new stiff felt hat he threw on one side; and there was much in his eager talk about "going to press," and "closing the forms," and Henley "wanting a middle" about such and such a subject. He was now connected with a new weekly, called *London*, and evidently found the work very congenial and amusing. He was con-

stantly dashing up in cabs, and dashing away again with the impressive prodigality that apparently journalism required. Indeed, he seemed extraordinarily happy in his new occupation, and was full of zest and high spirits.

I was greatly fascinated by the cane he carried. In appearance it was just an ordinary and rather slender walking-stick, but on lifting it one discovered that it was a steel bludgeon of considerable weight. R L S said it was the finest weapon a man could carry, for it could not go off of itself like a pistol, nor was it so hard to get into action as a sword-cane. He said that in a tight place there was nothing to equal it, and somehow the impression was conveyed that journalism often took a man into very dangerous places. When he forgot it, as he often did, I was always worried until he returned.

One evening, with a kind of shyness he never outgrew, he produced a manuscript from his pocket, and read aloud "Will o' the Mill." Though I understood very little of it, its melodious cadence affected me profoundly, and I remember being so pleased with my mother's enthusiasm. R L S beamed with pleasure; he loved to have his work praised; and he put several questions, as he was always wont to do, for the sheer delight of prolonging such precious moments. Unlike most authors he read aloud incomparably well, endowing words and phrases with a haunting quality that lingered in one's ears afterward. I have never heard any one to equal him: the glamour he could give, the stir of romance, the indescribable emotion from which one awoke as though from a dream.

At Grèz a young Irish painter had once presented a new arrival to the assembled company after dinner, and in doing so had mockingly labelled the various *habitués*. R L S he had described as "Louis Stevenson—Scotch literary mediocrity." The phrase had stung R L S to the quick; it was one of the very few slights he kept alive in his memory. I remember that after he had finished "Will o' the Mill" and was still in the glow of my mother's praise, he murmured something about its not being so bad for "Scotch literary mediocrity."

Later he brought a story that was the germ of the "Suicide Club," and was about a stranger who had taken a train for some commonplace destination, and who, falling into conversation with his talkative and very queer fellow passengers, suddenly discovered that they were a band of would-be suicides. The train in an hour or more was to fly at full speed over a precipice. The point of the tale was less its sensationalism than the startling conversation of men suddenly freed from all reticences.

My principal recollection of it was the unquenchable laughter it provoked; it was unheard of at that epoch to take such liberties with fiction; everybody was convulsed except my rather wondering little self, who was in a shiver about the unfortunate man who thought he was going to Canterbury or some such place, and who was being persuaded, very much against his will—but with incontrovertible logic—that life was a failure, and that he was very lucky to be on such a train.

From this sprang the "Suicide Club" series which R L S wrote shortly afterward, and which he read aloud to us in our cheerless sitting-room. Although Stevenson enjoyed them hugely he attached no importance to them; it was enough that they filled a few empty columns of *London*, and brought in a few pounds. They attracted no notice whatever, and in the bottom of his heart I believe R L S was just a little ashamed of them. I know at least that when it was suggested a few years later to publish them in book form he emphatically demurred on the ground that it might hurt his reputation.

Meanwhile the hour of parting was drawing near. I had not the slightest perception of the quandary my mother and R L S were in, nor what agonies of mind their approaching separation was bringing; and doubtless I prattled endlessly about "going home," and enjoyed all our preparations, while to them that imminent August spelled the knell of everything that made life worth living. But when the time came I had my own tragedy of parting, and the picture lives with me as clearly as though it were yesterday. We were standing in front of our compart-

ment, and the moment to say good-bye had come. It was terribly short and sudden and final, and before I could realize it R L S was walking away down the long length of the platform, a diminishing figure in a brown ulster. My eyes fol-

lowed him, hoping that he would look back. But he never turned, and finally disappeared in the crowd. Words cannot express the sense of bereavement, of desolation that suddenly struck at my heart. I knew I would never see him again.

STEVENSON AT TWENTY-NINE

MONTEREY in 1879 was a sleepy old Mexican town, with most of its buildings of sun-dried bricks, called *adobe*. Fashionable people could be told by the amount of silver embellishments on their saddles, bridles, and spurs, and how richly they jingled as they passed. The principal street—Alvarado Street—named after Cortez's redoubtable, golden-haired lieutenant, and down which it was always a point of honor to gallop at breakneck speed, no matter how trifling your business, was decorated at the corners by half-buried old Spanish cannon, which with the breeches uppermost, served as hitching-posts for horses.

A whale's jaw, in the shape of a gigantic wish-bone—or an inverted V—often enframed a garden-gate; and the vertebræ were the favorite paving of those who took pride in their houses or shops. It was Mexico's last stronghold in the *irredenta* of California; and as its only industries were the catching of an occasional whale by Genoese with silver earrings, and the export of dried fish to China by Chinese with pigtailed and the ability to withstand the smell, it offered no inducements to young Americans coming West to seek their fortune.

Our home was a small, two-storied, rose-embowered *adobe* cottage fronting on Alvarado Street; my mother rented it from two old Spanish ladies named Bonifacio, who lived in an upper part of it in a seclusion comparable to that of the Man with the Iron Mask. The only time they ever betrayed their existence was when the elder would scream at me in Spanish from an upper window to leave the calf alone. Our back yard pastured this promising young animal, and it was an inspiring pastime to lasso it, especially from the back of my pony when my mother and grown-up sister were absent. But Señora Bonifacio was never absent, though always slow in coming into ac-

tion. Perhaps it was to dress herself in the funeral-black dress and *mantilla* that I grew to associate as an inseparable part of playing with the calf.

It was here one morning in our sitting-room that my mother looked down at me rather oddly, and, with a curious brightness in her eyes, said: "I have news for you. Luly's coming."

I think R L S must have arrived the next day. I remember his walking into the room, and the outcry of delight that greeted him; the incoherence, the laughter, the tears; the heart-welling joy of reunion. Until that moment I had never thought of him as being in ill health. On the contrary, in vigor and vitality he had always seemed among the foremost of those young men at Grèz; and though he did not excel in any of the sports he had shared in them exuberantly. Now he looked ill, even to my childish gaze; the brilliancy of his eyes emphasized the thinness and pallor of his face. His clothes, no longer picturesque but merely shabby, hung loosely on his shrunken body; and there was about him an indescribable lessening of his alertness and self-confidence.

This fleeting impression passed away as I grew more familiar with him in our new surroundings. Certainly he had never seemed gayer nor more light-hearted, and he radiated laughter and good spirits. His talk was all about the people he was meeting, and he gave me my first understanding of the interest to be derived from human nature. The Genoese, for instance, whom I had always regarded as dangerous monsters, and whose only English phrase was in reference to cutting little boys' livers out, were revealed as the kindest sort of people, who were always helping any one in distress. That he should visit one of this despised race in hospital, and read aloud to him a newspaper in his own gibberish, at first horri-

fied me; and that he should be seen walking confidentially along the street with the town drunkard, even were it in one of Bob Hammil's rare moments of sobriety, was another shock; and when one night, in all stealth and secrecy he helped to print and paste up everywhere a small broadside denouncing the Spanish priest, "Father Two-Bits," for his heartlessness and rapacity, I was a good deal more overcome, I imagine, than the scoundrelly old victim himself. Young as I was I knew how men could be waylaid and stabbed in those unlit streets at night, and I trembled for Luly, and wished he had more sense.

His concluding enormity was to set the woods on fire, and though he was very conscience-stricken about it he had no realization of the summary punishment that might be meted out to him. There was a tradition in Monterey of a man having been lynched for this offense, and my hair nearly stood on end. I shall never forget my relief when he promised my mother, with appropriate solemnity, though with a twinkle in his eyes, that never, never, never so-help-him-God, would he ever let as much as a whisper of this crime pass his lips.

I was old enough to appreciate how poor he was, and it tore at my boyish heart that he should take his meals at a grubby little restaurant with men in their shirt-sleeves, and have so bare and miserable a room in the old *adobe* house on the hill. Conceive my joy, therefore, when one day he burst in with the news of a splendid job, and prolonged the suspense by making us all try to guess what it was; and my crushing disappointment when it turned out to be as a special reporter on the local paper at two dollars a week.

It was supposed to be a great joke, and I laughed with the rest; but on my part it was a sad and wondering pretence. Two dollars meant eight meals at the fishermen's restaurant. What was to become of poor Luly, who daily looked thinner and shabbier? But afterward my mother reassured me, and I was thrilled to hear of what "experience" meant to a writer, and how in reality Monterey was a kind of gold mine in which Luly was prospering extraordinarily, little though he looked it. Then

my father came down for a short stay, his handsome, smiling face just a little clouded, and with a curious new intonation in his voice during his long closeted talks with my mother. He was a tall, very fine-looking man, with a pointed golden beard, and a most winning and lovable nature; I loved him dearly, and was proud of his universal popularity. But he had two eccentricities of which I was much ashamed—he took a cold tub every morning, and invariably slept in pajamas.

The only other person I had ever known to wear pajamas was our Chinese cook, and I regarded my father's preference for them as a dreadful sort of aberration. In comparison the daily cold bath shrank into merely a minor breach of the conventions.

I had looked forward eagerly to his visit, and it was disconcerting to find him so preoccupied, and with so little time to devote to me. He seemed forever to be talking with my mother in a seclusion I was not allowed to disturb. Once as I was studying my lessons in an adjoining room and felt that strangely disturbing quality in their subdued voices—reproaches on her side and a most affecting explanation on his of his financial straits at the time of my little brother's death—I suddenly overheard my mother say, with an intensity that went through me like a knife: "Oh, Sam, forgive me!"

I knew nothing of what all this meant until shortly afterward as I was taking a walk with Stevenson. He was silent and absorbed; I might not have been there at all for any attention he paid me. Ordinarily a walk with him was a great treat, and a richly imaginative affair, for at a moment's notice I might find myself a pirate, or a redskin, and a young naval officer with secret despatches for a famous spy, or some other similar and tingling masquerade. But this walk had been thoroughly dull; we had remained ourselves, and not a breath of romance had touched us; and Luly's pace had been so fast besides, that my little legs were tired.

All at once he spoke, and here again was this strange, new intonation, so colorless and yet so troubling, that had recently affected the speech of all my elders.

"I want to tell you something," he said. "You may not like it, but I hope you will. I am going to marry your mother."

I could not have uttered a word to save my life. I was stricken dumb. The question of whether I were pleased or not did not enter my mind at all. I walked on in a kind of stupefaction, with an uncontrollable impulse to cry—yet I did not cry—and was possessed of an agonizing

feeling that I ought to speak, but I did not know how, nor what.

But all I know is that at last my hand crept into Luly's, and in that mutual pressure a rapturous sense of tenderness and contentment came flooding over me. It was thus we returned, still silent, still hand in hand, still giving each other little squeezes, and passed under the roses into the house.

STEVENSON AT THIRTY-ONE

DAVOS in 1881 consisted of a small straggling town where nearly all the shops were kept by consumptives. It possessed a charity sanitarium, and three large hotels, widely separated from one another, in which one could die quite comfortably. It was then the "new Alpine cure" for tuberculosis; and its altitude, its pine woods, and its glorious winter sunshine were supposed to work wonders. For five months of the year—"the season"—it was buried in snow, and rimmed about with dazzling white peaks. Snow, snow, snow; icicled trees; a frozen little river; a sense of glinting and sparkling desolation—such was the place we had come to.

The visitors at the hotels were nearly all English, and though a considerable proportion of them died, it was amazing what a gay and animated life they led. The uncertain tenure of life engendered recklessness even in the staidest. There were wild love affairs, tempestuous jealousies, cliques and coteries of the most belligerent description, and an endless amount of gossip and backbiting. In our hotel besides, were eleven English clergymen of every shade of orthodoxy, who made a really remarkable amount of commotion out of their differences.

The dead were whisked away very unobtrusively. You might meet Miss Smith coming out of room 46, say—and then suddenly realize that this had been Mrs. Robinson's room, and that you had not seen her for some time. People you had not seen for some time could usually be found in the cemetery, though their intervening travels had been marvellously screened from notice. The only note of tragedy that was ever apparent was at the weekly weighing of patients. This was

done in public, and one had but to look at the faces to read the verdict of the scales—consternation in those who were losing; anxiety in the stationary; an elation that was almost childish amongst the gainers, who would shout out "two pounds," or whatever it was, with offensive triumph in their voices, and oblivious of the baleful glances cast at them.

Fortunately R L S stood the weekly ordeal very creditably. Davos agreed with him; he steadily gained weight, and was unquestionably better. My mother and he kept themselves somewhat aloof from the others, and though friendly and approachable were never drawn into the passionate enmities and intimacies of the place. Stevenson was never much at ease with ordinary, commonplace English people, possibly because they always regarded him with suspicion. He had untidy hair, untidy clothes, unconventional convictions, no settled place—at that time—in the scheme of things; and was moreover married to a *divorcée*. The Hotel Belvidere thought very little of him, one way or the other, and his only real friend was Christian, the head waiter, who like many Swiss of mediocre position was an extremely intellectual man, with an understanding and outlook far above the average. Together they would pace the empty dining-room for an hour at a time in profound and interminable discussions while the tables were being spread for the next meal.

This was a thoroughly boring and unprofitable winter for Stevenson. His small bedroom was not conducive to work, and he was terribly lacking besides in any incentive. In a sort of desperation he began a novel for my amusement, called "The Squaw Man," but it never

got beyond three chapters. This was the only time in his life when I remember his having anything like mental inertia. It is true he wrote; he was always writing; but fruitlessly, laboriously, and without any sustaining satisfaction. He often had an air of not knowing what to do with himself, and it was in this humor that he often came to my room to join me at play with my tin soldiers, or to interest himself in my mimic enterprises. I had a small printing-press, and used to earn a little money by printing the weekly concert programmes and other trifling commissions; and growing ambitious I became a publisher. My first venture was "Black Canyon, or Life in the Far West," a tiny booklet of eight pages, and both the spelling and the matter were entirely original; my second was "Not I, and Other Poems by R L Stevenson," price sixpence. How thunderstruck we should have been to know that forty years afterward these were to figure in imposing catalogues as: STEVENSONIANA, EXCESSIVELY RARE, DAVOS PRESS, and be priced at sixty or seventy guineas apiece.

Once we were caught in the act of playing with our soldiers on the floor by a visitor who had come to see me "on business." He was a robust, red-faced, John Bull sort of person, and I shall never forget his standing there in the doorway and shaking with tremendous guffaws at finding R L S thus employed. Stevenson crimsoned to the ears, and though he pretended to laugh too, our play was spoiled for the morning.

One of the inmates of the hotel was a gaunt, ill-dressed, sallow young woman, the wife of a dying clergyman, who used to waylay me and ask in the most frightening way whether I loved Jesus; and by degrees this embarrassing inquiry was enlarged to include Stevenson, with an urgent desire for information about his spiritual welfare. I tried my best to

elude her, but I couldn't. She was always pouncing out of the unlikeliest places to grab my arm before I could escape. Later she made a point of descending to the dining-room at the very early and unfrequented hour that Stevenson breakfasted, and started the habit of passing him little notes—all about his soul, and the sleepless nights his spiritual danger was causing her.

Stevenson was as polite and considerate as he was to every one; too polite and considerate, for one morning another breakfast—*a young man who habitually sat near us*—detected the transfer of one of these little notes, and that night, swelling with self-righteousness, pointedly ignored Stevenson, and made a stage-play of speaking only to my mother.

This led to an explanation in our bedroom. The young man was sent for, the notes were shown him in the presence of my mother, I gave my childish evidence, and R L S was exonerated. But my principal recollection was his zest in the whole little drama—the unjust accusation, the conspicuous public affront borne in silence, the thumping vindication with its resultant apologies and expressions of regret, and finally the stinging little sermon on scandal and scandal-mongers.

For a month afterward he never went down to breakfast without me; and I was told—vastly to my pride and self-importance—to interpose myself between him and the sallow young lady, and make it impossible for her to slip any more notes into his hand. But she did not give up easily. Though she wrote no more notes, and soon afterward went away at her husband's death, she sent me post-cards for nearly a year—post-cards quite palpably intended for my stepfather. She was still sleepless, and in a greater torment than ever; and the word "love"—always in reference to Jesus—was invariably underscored.

STEVENSON AT THIRTY-TWO

OUR second winter at Davos was infinitely pleasanter than the first. We were now installed in a *châlet* of our own, with a cook, and plenty of room for all of us. R L S had brought back the half-finished manuscript of "Treasure Island,"

begun that summer at Braemar, and with it a revived ardor for work. The *châlet* was bathed in sunshine, and had a delightful outlook over the whole valley; and its seclusion was the more welcome after the crowded hotel, and the enforced

intimacy with uncongenial people. R L S seemed to expand in this homelike atmosphere, and his contentment and satisfaction were most apparent.

Before leaving Scotland he had applied for the vacant and highly paid professorship of English literature at Edinburgh University; and full of this new ambition—which had he achieved it would have quickly ended his life in that harsh climate—he gave me a course of trial lectures to see how well he could acquit himself. No wonder that my mother used to smile! He would walk up and down sonorously addressing the class—which was I, very self-conscious and uncomfortable—and roll out with daunting solemnity such phrases as: “Gentlemen, before we proceed further I must beg your special attention to one of the most significant phases . . .” “Gentlemen, before we can review the condition of England in the year 1337, we should first envisage the general culture of Europe as a whole.” “Gentlemen, I hope none of you will make the fatal mistake of undervaluing the great share, the gigantic share that the Church, in spite of its defects . . .”

I was overwhelmed by his commendation.

“I have no fear now,” he said to my mother. “Lloyd has shown me that I have the ability to hold a class’s attention and interest; some of it has been over his head, of course, but I can feel that he has grasped my essential points, and has followed me with quite a remarkable understanding.”

In spite of my pride I felt a dreadful little hypocrite. Except for the word “gentlemen,” and some sanguinary details of mediæval life, the lectures had slid off me like water off a duck’s back.

It was about this time I noticed how much darker R L S’s hair was becoming. It had turned to a dark brown, and was so lank that at a little distance it appeared almost black. The hair has a curious way of reflecting one’s physical condition; and judging by this criterion R L S must have been very ill. He no longer tobogganed with me, and seldom walked as far as the town—about a mile distant. Usually he contented himself with pacing up and down his veranda, or descending

to the foot of our hill to drop in on John Addington Symonds.

I remember Symonds very clearly; of medium height, trimly bearded; in his later thirties; he wore well-cut clothes, and had an aristocratic air that was reserved without being disdainful. His evident respect and affection for Stevenson, as well as the cordial way he always included me in his greeting, quite won my heart. His friendship seemed to confer distinction, and I was conscious that we were the only people in Davos to be similarly honored. He always came primed for a talk—the carry-over of a previous conversation—and one could almost see the opening paragraph forming itself on his lips.

But the influence of such men—academic, and steeped in the classics—was always subtly harmful to Stevenson, who had what we would call now an “inferiority complex” when in contact with them. Their familiarity with the ancient Greeks and Romans seemed to emphasize his own sense of shortcoming; made him feel uneducated, and engaged in unimportant tasks; put him out of conceit with himself and his work. Even as a boy I could feel the veiled condescension Symonds had for him; and Stevenson’s acquiescent humility at his own lack of a university training. If Symonds had read the early part of “Treasure Island”—now conceded to be one of the great masterpieces of English—I doubt if he would have found anything to admire in it; but rather a renewed concern that so brilliant and unschooled a mind should waste itself. In his ardor to academize Stevenson, and make him classically respectable, he even ferreted out a scarcely known Greek author, and suggested that R L S should collate all the scraps of information about him and write a “Life.”

All Stevenson’s creative work was done in the morning, though in those days before typewriters an author had an interminable amount of writing to do that was merely copying, and involved no mental effort. The writers of to-day never have “scrivener’s cramp,” which pursued R L S all his life, and which caused him often to hold his pen between his second and third fingers when the index-finger was useless. His preference

was for white, ruled foolscap paper, chosen because it approximated in his writing to a "*Cornhill* page" of five hundred words. His first essays had been taken by the *Cornhill Magazine*, and its page established for him a measure of computation. He calculated the length of all his work in "*Cornhill* pages" long after he had ceased all connection with the magazine itself; and indeed as long as he lived.

I think he found rewriting a very soothing pastime, and would not have thanked anybody for a mechanical short-cut; it was an equivalent and a much pleasanter one for the knitting and bead-stringing that doctors nowadays so often enforce on their patients; and it had the agreeable quality that he could pause as long as he liked over a word or a phrase that was not quite to his liking, and polish endlessly. Those who criticise R L S for his excessive particularity are mistaken in their judgment. It was this rewriting and polishing that helped to keep him alive.

But in our second winter in Davos he wrote too little to have much of this aftermath, and was thrown very much on me for the distraction of his afternoons. A more delightful playfellow never lived; my memory of that winter is one of extraordinary entertainment. He engraved blocks and wrote poems for the two tiny books I printed on my press; he painted scenery for my toy theatre—a superb affair, costing upward of twenty pounds and far beyond our purse—that had been given me on the death of the poor lad who had whiled away his dying hours with it at the Belvidere; helped me to give performances and slide the actors in and out on their tin stands, as well as imitating galloping horses, or screaming screams for the heroine in distress. My mother, usually the sole audience, would laugh till she had to be patted on the back, while I held back the play with much impatience for her recovery. But best of all were our "war games," which took weeks to play on the attic floor.

These games were a naïve sort of "kriegspiel," conceived with an enormous elaboration, and involving six hundred miniature lead soldiers. The attic floor was made into a map, with mountains, towns, rivers, "good" and "bad" roads,

bridges, morasses, etc. Four soldiers constituted a "regiment," with the right to one shot when within a certain distance of the enemy; and their march was twelve inches a day without heavy artillery, and four inches with heavy artillery. Food and munitions were condensed in the single form of printers' "M's," twenty to a cart, drawn by a single horseman, whose move, like that of all cavalry, was the double of the infantry. One "M" was expended for every simple shot; four "M's" for every artillery shot—which returned to the base to be again brought out in carts. The simple shots were pellets from little spring-pistols; the artillery shots were the repeated throws of a deadly double sleeve-link.

Here absurdity promptly entered, and would certainly have disturbed a German staff-officer. Some of our soldiers were much sturdier than others and never fell as readily; on the other hand there were some dishearteningly thin warriors that would go down in dozens if you hardly looked at them; and I remember some very chubby and expensive cavalymen from the Palais Royal whom no pellets could spill. Stevenson excelled with the pistol, while I was a crack shot with the sleeve-link. The leader who first moved his men, no matter how few, into the firing range was entitled to the first shot. If you had thirty regiments you had thirty shots; but your opponent was entitled to as many return shots as he had regiments, regardless of how many you had slaughtered in the meanwhile.

This is no more than a slight sketch of the game, which was too complicated for a full description, and we played it with a breathlessness and intensity that stirs me even now to recall. That it was not wholly ridiculous but gave scope for some intelligence is proved by the fact that R L S invariably won, though handicapped by one-third less men. In this connection it may be interesting to know what a love of soldiering R L S always had. Once he told me that if he had had the health he would have gone into the army, and had even made the first start by applying for a commission in the Yeomanry—which illness had made him forego. On another occasion he asked me whom of all men I should most prefer to

be, and on my answering "Lord Wolseley," he smiled oddly as though somehow I had pierced his own thoughts, and admitted that he would have made the same choice.

One conversation I heard him have with a visitor at the *châlet* impressed me irrevocably. The visitor was a fussy, officious person, who after many preambles ventured to criticise Stevenson for the way he was bringing me up. R L S, who was always the most reasonable of men in an argument, and almost over-ready to admit any points against himself, surprised me by his unshaken stand.

"Of course I let him read anything he wants," he said. "And if he hears things you say he shouldn't, I am glad of it. A child should early gain some perception of what the world is really like—its baseness, its treacheries, its thinly veneered brutalities; he should learn to judge people, and discount human frailty and weakness, and be in some degree prepared and armed for taking his part later in the battle of life. I have no patience with this fairy-tale training that makes ignorance a virtue. That was how I was

brought up, and no one will ever know except myself the bitter misery it cost me."

Certainly this frankness gave a great charm to our intercourse and a mental stimulation I shall always be grateful for. But some of Stevenson's fancies I absorbed with the soberer facts of life. One in particular was his ineradicable conviction that gold spectacles were the badge of guile. Like Jim Hawkins being warned about the one-legged sea-cook I was bidden to be watchful of people in gold spectacles. They were deceitful, hypocritical, and flourished on spoliation; they were devoid of all honor and honesty; they went about masked with gold spectacles and apparent benevolence to prey on all they could. I often felt what a good thing it was that they were so plainly marked.

What a story must lie behind this fantasy of Stevenson's! One asks oneself who was this man with the gold spectacles, and what dire part had he played in R L S's past? Perhaps a Lenôtre of some future generation will dig him out of his hiding-place, and hold him up—gold spectacles and all—to the odium of our descendants.

(To be continued.)

SKETCHES BY MUIRHEAD BONE

IMPRESSIONS OF NEW YORK DRAWN
BY THE WELL-KNOWN BRITISH
DRAFTSMAN AND ETCHER DURING
HIS RECENT VISIT HERE

[SHOWN ON THE EIGHT PAGES FOLLOWING]