

Bath and James Quin

BY OTIS SKINNER

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE THEATRE COLLECTION, HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY



"CITY lulled asleep by the chime of the passing years" is Swinburne's description of the town of Bath, and, in truth, "England's Florence" is so old that its be-

ginnings are lost in myth.

During the ninth century B. C. it was given an immense advertising boom by a prince of Britain, Bladud, who, after being deported from court as a leper, turned swineherd and rolled with his pigs in the mud of its springs, returned to royal society completely cured, and became the father of King Lear. Score one for Bath, first factor in the creation of one of the greatest plays ever written!

Here the Romans sought the fountain of youth and built, in A. D. 45, an enduring structure over the warm and healing waters. The fifteenth-century abbey, with its weather-worn angels forever ascending and descending ladders of crumbly sandstone, speaks of a time when townspeople gave their lives to building, and abbots planted Gothic beauty throughout England.

But Bath, despite its antiquity, persists irrevocably, delightfully Georgian. Its eighteenth-century Royal Pump-Room stands triumphant on the old Roman structure, and in the stately Georgian hall Beau Nash, noble of paunch and double of chin, with foot advanced and head thrown back, gazes benignly from his pedestal on the drinkers of a two-pennyworth of warm spring water. I had not been astonished had I suddenly heard, from a corner, the voices of Doctor Johnson and Sheridan in dispute, or Garrick jibing the pair with witty flings.

The corridors around the central hall of the Pump-Room building are lined with framed engravings of eighteenth-century actors, playbills, and manuscript scores of

old operas and concertos, for Bath was a music centre and many noted composers and conductors directed its orchestra.

Beau Nash was a martinet. His formulas of social amenities for those frequenting the Pump-Room still hang upon its wall, and their strictures applied as well to the patrons of the theatre. It may be judged how much the manners of the time needed discipline when one reads some of the Beau's regulations. He was indefatigable in his insistence upon elegance of deportment and politeness.

Rule 5. That no gentleman give his ticket to the balls to any but gentlewomen. N. B.—Unless he has none of his acquaintance.

Rule 6. That gentlemen crowding before ladies at the ball show ill manners, and that none do so for the future—except such as respect nobody but themselves.

Rule 7. That no gentleman or lady take it ill that another dances before them—except such as have no pretense to dance at all.

Rule 9. That the young ladies take notice how many eyes observe them. N. B.—This does not extend to the Have-at-alls.

Rule 10. That whisperers of lies and scandal be taken for their authors.

One of Nash's chief regulations was the ending of festivities at an early hour. If Bath was to thrive as a health resort, people must early to bed. At eleven o'clock he held up his hand and all music and dancing ceased upon the instant. On one occasion George II's daughter, the Princess Amelia, besought him to allow one dance more, but the Beau's rule was of iron. Amelia might be of royal blood, but he was King of Bath. While the festivities were on, however, he was the life of the party; spirits were not permitted to flag. Once, at a ball, upon overhearing a young lady decline the invitation of a gallant under the plea that "she did not chuse to dance," Nash shouted out: "G—d—n you, madam! What business have you here if you do not dance?" The affrighted miss tremblingly took her place in the minuet.

Alas! those Assembly Rooms built for balls and routs, where royalty was entertained, banquets held, political intrigue hatched, fortunes lost or won at high stakes on the gaming-tables—that hall with its panelled walls, its graceful mirrors and chandeliers, now houses a cinema entertainment, and at the entrance I beheld a lurid lithograph of Tom Mix in a Wild West film.

Primarily Bath lured its visitors by the curative waters of the Pump-Room, but there were strong counter-attractions in the Assembly Room diversions and in the concerts, while for many the real attraction was the theatre. Actors of the provinces, struggling for recognition, often found welcome here before the autocratic managers of London opened their metropolitan doors. Occasionally one of these magnates would journey to Bath to see an unknown player, the rumor of whose genius had been reported to him. I picked up in a curio shop a brass disk stamped "Bath Theatre, Pit," that had been used for admission or "pass-out" purposes. I like to think it has been through the hands of many a spectator who crowded into the pit to applaud the triumph of some of these old actors. Mrs. Siddons, Kean, Macready, Elliston. They all had great nights there.

It is with some reluctance that I leave the Assembly Rooms and the Pump-Room. The ghosts of forgotten perfumes hang about them, and their suggestion of patches, powder, panniers, and periwigs is somewhat overpowering. I half expect to see a swaggering red-coated captain arm in arm with a ribboned dandy of the town swing by. But the Abbey waits.

Here the daily service drew a goodly portion of the frivolous society of the eighteenth century. Their perfume must have mingled oddly with the odor of sanctity. Whether or no they were attracted by godly pursuit may be judged

by these lines from "A Description of Bath, 1734:"

"Now for pure worship
is the church designed,
O, that the Muse could
say to that confin'd!
Ev'n there by meaning
looks and cringing
bows,
The female Idol her
Adorer knows.
Fly hence, Prophane,
nor taint this sacred
place,
Mock not thy God to
flatter Celia's face."

I passed beneath
the acrobatic angels
of the portal, and
soon found myself
reading the names
of knights, baronets,
archbishops,
and benefactors of
the parish on tablets
lining the walls
and slabs paving
the floor.

Here, in the nave, I found Quin. No slab more prominent. I had forgotten that he was buried here, and the discovery gave me a distinct thrill. I recoiled from the lettered stone, for I had almost fancied a sepulchral whisper warned me to tread lightly. Quin! The dean of Drury Lane Theatre! The boast of the British stage before Garrick's meteor flashed on London town. Yet there it was:

HERE LIES THE BODY OF
MR. JAMES QUIN

The scene is chang'd. I am no more.
Death's is the Last Act. Now all is o'er.
R. F.

I am reminded with what kind reverence England has dealt with her departed actors. Among kings, princes, soldiers, scholars, and makers of empire, reposing in the mellow shadows of Westminster



James Quin.

Engraved by Bromley after a painting by
Thomas Hudson.

Abbey one reads the names of Garrick, Kemble, Sarah Siddons, Barton Booth, Anne Bracegirdle, Anne Oldfield, Irving, and others. Even in Charing Cross Road, within sight of the monument to Edith Cavell, is the statue of Sir Henry Irving, erected to his memory by his fellow players. Throughout England houses in which the illustrious ones of the British stage have lived are marked with tablets. It was doubly pleasant to visit a friend in Half-Moon Street, in London, because in going there I passed the house in which Edmund Kean had dwelt.

James Quin was, in many ways, one of the most striking figures in the long list of favorites of the London theatres. Drama began for him at his birth, for his young mother, after a turbulent matrimonial exploit, was deserted by the harum-scarum fellow who had been her husband. Believing him dead, she again married, this time a prosperous Irish lawyer, and in 1693 James was born. After many years husband number one turned up, demanded his lawful wife, and carried her off. This made little James Quin illegitimate, and he found himself without inheritance, vocation, or education. His first experience of the stage was at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, after which he obtained an opening at Drury Lane, acting minor parts with grace, force, and discretion. His rise was rapid. By 1719 his *Macbeth*, *Brutus*, *Falstaff*, *Bajazet*, and *Sir John Brute* were loudly praised in the coffee-houses, and by the general London public.

Adventure dogged his footsteps. Drawn into a dispute with a low-come-

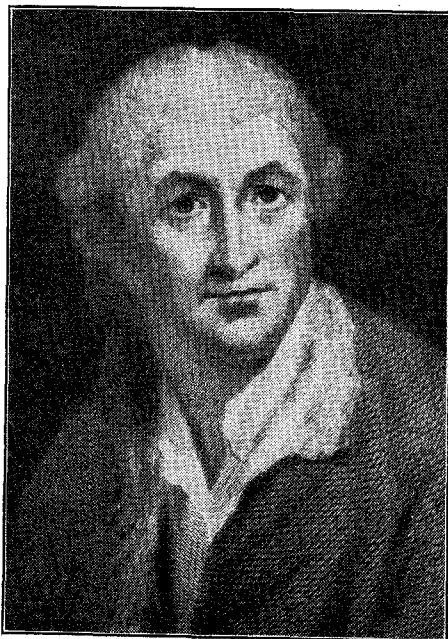
dian named Bowen for his too free criticism of the latter's performance in "The Libertine," Bowen managed to get the young actor alone in a tavern room, and there charged upon him with a sword. Quin defended himself, endeavoring to

keep his adversary away; but Bowen was blind with rage and actually ended his own life by rushing upon Quin's rapier. Before he died he took the blame of the affair upon himself, a circumstance that secured the acquittal of Quin at his trial for manslaughter.

His hot Celtic blood got him into constant trouble. He was as full of quarrel as an egg is full of meat. One of his brawls was with Macklin, the Irish actor—the first to redeem *Shylock* from the ranks of low comedy. Nettled by some broadly comic "business" which

Macklin unwarrantably introduced when they were together in a scene, Quin hurled a mouthful of the munched apple he was eating into Macklin's face, whereat the latter seized the tragedian and pommelled him into speechlessness. Quin promptly despatched a challenge, but Macklin apologized. The memory of the affair rankled for years, but was finally patched up in a tavern drinking-bout following the funeral of a fellow actor, and Macklin carried Quin home to his lodgings on his shoulders, sound asleep.

A player named Williams was so provoked by Quin's treatment of him in a scene of Addison's "Cato" that he waylaid the tragedian after the play under the arches of Covent Garden and compelled him to a duel. The contest began at once, and before the roused watch could intervene, Williams, run through the body,

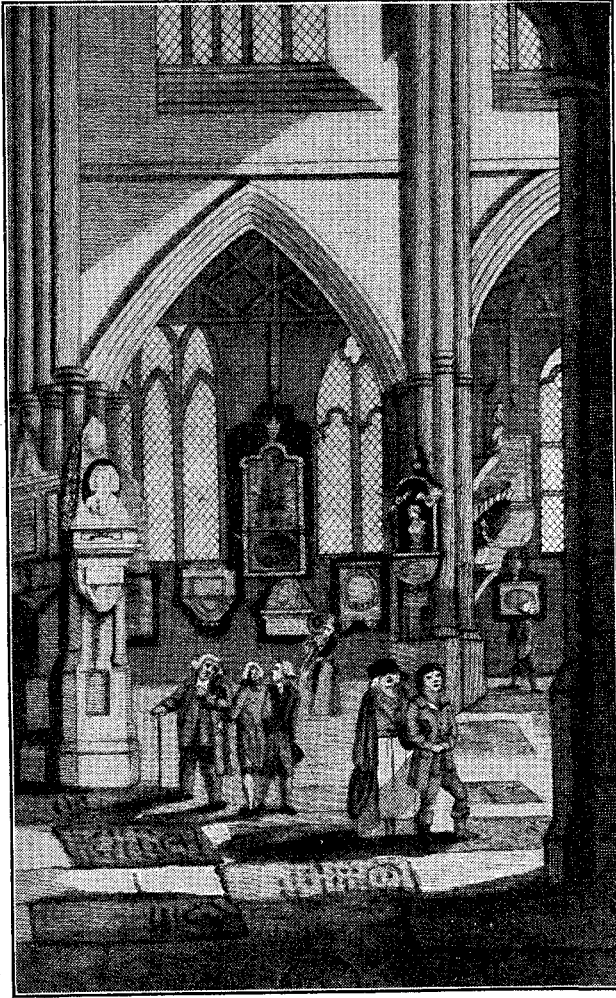


David Garrick.

Engraved by Charles Warren after a painting by Robert Edge Pine.

was lifeless on the ground. Again Quin was acquitted, but it is to his credit that his anguish and remorse never left him. And yet another quarrel with Theophilus

high place in the public's regard. Ponderous of movement and impressive in manner, he suited, in his grandiloquence, the taste of the time, giving "true weight



Quin's Monument, Bath.

From an engraving published July 1, 1790.

and dignity to sentiment by a well-regulated tone of voice, judicious elocution, and easy deportment." He sang well. One of his successes was *Captain Macheath* in Gay's "Beggar's Opera."

His most genuine triumphs, according to an old critic, were won in "characters of singular humor, of dignified folly, of blunt and boisterous demeanor, of treacherous art, contemptuous spleen, and even pleasing gravity." In them none claimed to be his rival. A somewhat different estimate is given by Churchill, the satirist, who evidently disliked his acting: he pilloried the player in a merciless lampoon in the "Rosciad," which began:

"His eyes, in gloomy socket
taught to roll,
Proclaimed the sullen 'habit of
his soul,'
Heavy and phlegmatic he trod
the stage,
Too proud for tenderness, too
dull for rage."

With Quin's gruffness, irascibility, and quick Irish temper, were a sociability and generosity that endeared him to his fellows. No one went empty-handed away from him. He adored the good things

Cibber about Cibber's wife. Swords were out and there was slashing of arms and fingers, but this time interference from bystanders prevented a fatal issue.

Doubtless the estimation in which Quin was held as an actor was of great influence in warding off punishment for his brawls. He represented the crowning achievement of the British stage. Many strove to rival him, but none could unseat him from his

of the table, once declaring in praise of his favorite fish, John Dory, that truly to enjoy it, "one should have a gullet from here to the antipodes and a palate all the way." Garrick, who never spared a friend or enemy whom he could make the subject of an epigram or satire, made Quin's gormandizing the burden of a jingle that became popular. He represented the fat player as standing before the tomb

of Duke Humphrey at St. Albans and thus soliloquizing:

"A plague on Egypt's art, I say!
 Embalm the dead? On senseless clay
 Rich wines and spices waste?
 Like sturgeon, or like brawn shall I
 Bound in a priceless pickle lie
 Which I can never taste?
 Let me embalm this flesh of mine
 With turtle fat and Bordeaux wine
 And spoil the Egyptian trade!
 Than good Duke Humphrey happier I,
 Embalmed alive old Quin shall die,
 A mummy ready made."

Quin's wit was not so polished as Garrick's—but it was ever ready. Well known is his reply to Peg Woffington, who, on coming off the stage in male attire as *Sir Harry Wildair*, declared that she knew one-half of the house thought she was a man. "Believe me, my dear," said Quin, "the other half can tell them that you are not." In all his rough jests there was never real malice, and often they covered a true tenderness of heart. There is a story of his discovering an obscure actor named Winston, out of an engagement and lying ill in a Covent Garden lodging-house. He came in with an attendant carrying a decent suit of clothes. "Get up, Dick," he commanded, "and go to rehearsal." The actor dressed himself in the new apparel, bewildered and exceedingly hungry. He was without the price of breakfast. Confiding this fact to his benefactor, Quin replied: "Nay, Dick, you must put your hand in your own pocket now." Winston thought this a sorry joke until he did as he was bade to do, and there he found a ten-pound note.

His habits of self-indulgence were notorious. During his holidays he was wont to make excursions into the country with some lady who became Mrs. Quin for the time being. When his money gave out he would return to London, give the lady a supper at the "Bedford Head," and present her with a substantial token of his appreciation, with some such valedictory as this:

"Madam, for our mutual convenience I have given you the name of Quin for some time past. There is no reason for our carrying on this farce here in town; and now, madam, give me leave to un-Quin you, and restore you to your own name for the future."

But all was changed when the town was aroused by the little man who had journeyed down to London from Litchfield with Doctor Johnson. 'Tis said that the pair covered the entire distance with but one horse between them, each walking or riding a stage alternately, Johnson with his doleful tragedy, "Irene," in his wallet and David Garrick with nothing in his but "three halfpence and his hopes."

The old order was swept away. In vain Quin and his fellows brought up their heavy batteries of declamation, portentous pauses, and deliberation. "It seemed," wrote Cumberland, "as if a whole century had been stepped over in the passage of a single scene: old things were done away, and a new order was at once brought forth, bright and luminous." Macklin said that "in a half-dozen of characters the little fellow secured his



Mr. Macklin as Shylock

Mr. Macklin as *Shylock*.

From an engraving by N. C. Goodnight.

immortality," and that the cabal of players against him was "a puff against thunder."

The rumble of the old school grew more

feeble, and with Garrick's rise it became moribund. Quin had viewed with dismay the onslaught on ancient traditions of this extraordinary young man who was dubbed "Roscius" by the town. There is infinite pathos and helplessness in his "If he is right, then I and all the old actors are wrong." It was a trial to Quin's soul when he went to Drury Lane to see his rival's performance of "Othello." He was in a state of disparaging groans. He compared him to Hogarth's black boy and said to Doctor Hoadley, his box companion: "Here's Pompey, by God! Where's his lamp and teakettle?"

But Quin could read the writing on the wall. If he was driven into retirement he went with full honors and colors flying, carrying with him to Bath the comfortable fortune he had amassed through a frugality he had practised in spite of his habits of lavish living. His public regretted him, and he left with them the memory of the greatest of all *Falstuffs*. His period of dominance had been long. For twenty years his word had been law in the theatre, and his reign despotic.

But Bath was no St. Helena. The evening of his life was spent in the city of his own choice, and he went there saying he knew "no better city for an old cock to roost in." No doubt he found other fowls of his feather perching there.

Let us take a run down to Bath and have a look at Pierrepont Street. I was sure of it! The old fellow is just stepping from his house, No. 3 (next door to the birthplace of "The Maid of Bath," who became the wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan), for a stroll on the North Parade, and to drop in on Oliver Goldsmith at No. 11. He won't mind if we follow. His carriage is so erect and his appearance so distinguished that at court he would be taken for nothing less than an ambassador or a prime minister. If the poet is not at home, he continues on to the South Parade, where Landor heard "as many nightingales as ever there were in the bowers of Shiraz," and where Doctor Johnson saw "Bath Belles tripping lightly over hot pavements on cork soles and a clear conscience." If the day is fair, and his gouty legs permit, he will walk as far as the Circus—that huge wheel of stately homes which some one described as "the finest piece of architecture of its kind in

Europe." Here he may catch a glimpse of the Earl of Chatham's coach arriving at the statesman's door; or the painter Gainsborough, at No. 24, with whom, should he not be engaged on one of his famous portraits, he will pass the time of day. Next door to the painter, at No. 22, an urchin of a dozen years is gazing pensively through the window of the ground floor. His face lights up at the sight of the celebrated person passing ponderously along, and the veteran returns him a genial smile, little dreaming that one day that delicate-faced lad would lose his life in America—condemned as a spy. His name is John André.

If a strong east wind is stirring, Quin wraps himself more tightly in his great-coat and muffler and returns, before long, for his glass of curative waters (for does not the pediment of the Pump-Room proclaim in letters of gold and characters of Greek that "Water is Best"?), and discourses to his town acquaintance on the glories of Drury Lane and Covent Garden; or, better still, if a visiting company is having an engagement at the theatre, talks shop with his cronies over port and pipes at The Bull or The Three Tuns. Be niggardly with the port, James, it plays the very devil with your gout! Much better you stick to the waters. Remember what happened last night! Or perhaps you do not remember that you reeled into Lord Chesterfield before the two chairmen managed to stuff your huge body into your sedan-chair.

"Who is that stout gentleman?" inquires his lordship.

"Only Mr. Quin, milord," replies his servant, "going home from The Three Tuns."

"I think," quoth milord, "Mr. Quin is taking one of the three tuns home with him under his waistcoat!"

The belles and beaux no doubt look upon the renowned player with amusement and condescension, while he, in turn, regards them with an easy contempt; he was never of the fashion, in spite of the tale they tell of his attempt to supplant Beau Nash as dictator.

This fop, now, swaggering along, ogling the pedestrians through his quizzing glass—a very "macaroni"—who should he be? With vast pretense at solicitude he makes inquiry after Quin's health. "Fa-



Mr. Quin in the character of *Sir John Falstaff*.

From an engraving by John McArdell.

mously," growls the glaring actor; "getting along famously."

"But how distressing to grow old!" persists the fopling. "What would you give to be as young as I am?"

"I would almost be content to be as foolish," says Quin.

If this imposing gentleman in clerical garb just turning the corner from the Terrace Walk should happen to be the noted Bishop Warburton, he will not especially relish an encounter with Mr.

Quin. He will remember that at Mr. Allen's house, not long since, he undertook to set down the actor in an argument concerning the justice of the execution of King Charles, and that Quin, whose mental powers he affected to despise, set his reverend head a-spinning with the quickness and the sting of his retort. There is no love lost between them, but Quin will quite relish the mock deference and sweeping bow he will bestow on the divine, and proceed on his way, chuckling.

To the townspeople there is always a greeting; a nod to a shopman, a courtly lift of his hat to a peer's wife, a smile to a pretty miss, and even an exchange of pleasant words with the Bishop of Bath and Wells. To them he is a sweet, kindly old gentleman, and they honor him.

There was, however, a crumpled rose-leaf in his bed of ease at Bath: Garrick! The continuous laudation of "Roscius" in London found its way down to him through pamphlet and report. It rankled. Why should Garrick be the only wearer of the laurel? His own are as fresh and worn with a statelier grace. To Rich, the manager of Covent Garden, he despatched a note, a marvel of suggestion and brevity:

"I am at Bath. Quin."

The answer was immediate and even more to the point:

"Stay there and be damned. Rich."

But it was the true kindliness that lay beneath the rough husk of Quin which after years of none too cordial relation won over Garrick. Davey had never been so supremely sure of his eminence as to be free from jealousy. He had unseated Quin, it is true, but Quin had been too long a supreme favorite to lose entirely his popularity, and Garrick frequently writhed under the praise of his rival. Quin "died hard." Indeed, after Garrick's complete dominance at Drury Lane had been established, Quin was receiving a thousand pounds a season at Covent Garden—a much larger sum than that paid to "Roscius," and the largest, at that time, that had ever been paid to an English actor for a season's service. But no one could forever remain Quin's enemy, and doubtless in his retirement he ceased to look formidable to Garrick. Their friendship became so well established that Quin was a guest at Garrick's house at Hampton when he was stricken with his fatal illness.

For nearly a year he is fighting for his life at his home in Bath. He is not afraid, for the habit of the warrior is strong, and his marvellous constitution defies the Reaper. Hosts of his old friends, and even his enemies, hasten down from London to sit at his bedside and listen to the lively stories he never tires of telling. Every morning his door is the scene of inquiries of the good people of Bath, anxious to

know how Mr. Quin fares to-day. His poise and self-control now never leave him.

To-night he seems drowsy and not inclined to much talk. A friend or two speaks quietly in the shrouded light of the chamber. In a corner the doctors are discussing his condition.

"I don't like the rise in his temperature. His skin is too dry. If we could only make him sweat."

Quin half opens his eyes, and beckons them over with a feeble wave of the hand on the coverlid. "What's that you said about me?" he asks.

"We think that if we could give you something to make you sweat, 'twould be a relief to you."

There is a pause; then a slight smile on Quin's face. "Gadzooks! That's easy enough! Send in your bills and it's done!"

Presently he says he is hungry. What could he not do to a breakfast of John Dory and claret if he were well! "I've often wished my mouth were as large as the centre arch of Westminster Bridge and that the river ran claret." A few sips of his gruel and some brandy are all he can swallow, but he brightens.

They are speaking of the King, George III. He has that week delivered his speech in Parliament.

"Did he do it well?" queries the sick man. Excellently well, they tell him.

"I knew he would!" Quin exclaims. "It was I who taught the boy to speak. Frederick, Prince of Wales, appointed me instructor to the young princes and princesses in elocution, and they appeared in plays at Leicester House under my direction, gentlemen." And he adds with pride that the King had not been ungrateful. He had placed his old master's name as beneficiary on the civil list.

Some one speaks of angling. "A cruel sport, gentleman," says Quin. "Suppose now, a being as much my superior as I am to those poor fish were to say, 'Tis a fine evening, I'll go Quinning! If he were to bait his hook with a haunch of venison I should gorge. And how should I like to be dragged from Richmond to Kingston floundering and flouncing with a hook in my gullet?' This has been a long speech: too long. He laughs a little at his own fantasy, then sinks back in his pillows with a little sigh.

*Chas.
Pinfold*



At the Particular Desire of several Ladies of Quality.
By HIS MAJESTY's Company of Comedians,
At the THEATRE ROYAL in *Drury-Lane*,
This present Monday being the Seventh Day of February,
will be presented the Tragedy of

M A C B E T H.

Written by SHAKESPEAR.

The Part of *Macbeth* by Mr. QUIN,

<i>Macduff</i> by Mr. Millward,		<i>Lenox</i> by Mr. Cibber,	
<i>Banquo</i> by Mr. Mills,		<i>Lady Macbeth</i> by Mrs. Butler,	
Duncan, Mr. Beman,	Seyton, Mr. Berry,	The	Mr. Miller,
Malcolm, Mr. Croft,	1st Murderer, Mr. Harper,	Three	Mr. Griffin,
Seyward, Mr. Winslow,	<i>Lady Macduff</i> , Miss Hollyday,	Witches	Mr. Shepard,

Hecate by Mr. JOHNSON.

With all the *Scenes*, *Machines*, *Musick*, and *Decorations*,
proper to the *Play*.

The Vocal Parts by Mr. *Stoppelaar*, Mrs. *Clive*, and others.

To which will be added a New Dramatic Tale, call'd

The KING and the MILLER of Mansfield.

Written by the AUTHOR of the TOY-SHOP.

The King by Mr. CIBBER,

The Miller by Mr. MILLER,

Lord Iurewell by Mr. Effe,	Peggy by Mrs. Pritchard,
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Richard by Mr. Berry,	Margery by Mrs. Bennet,
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Joe by Mr. Stoppelaar,	Kate by Mrs. Croft.
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Attendants by Mr. *Winslow*, Mr. *Croft*, and Mr. *Hill*.

Forsters by Mr. *Turbitt*, Mr. *Leigh*, and Mr. *Marshall*.

Places to be had at Mr. Moor's, Box-Book-keeper, for the Play, Youle Passage,

Boxes 5 s. Pit 3 s. First Gallery 2 s. Upper Gallery 1 s.

To begin exactly at Six o' Clock.

Vicini Rex et Regia.

N. B. The *Tempest* is defer'd till *Thursday*, it being impossible
to finish the *Machinery*, &c. before that Day.

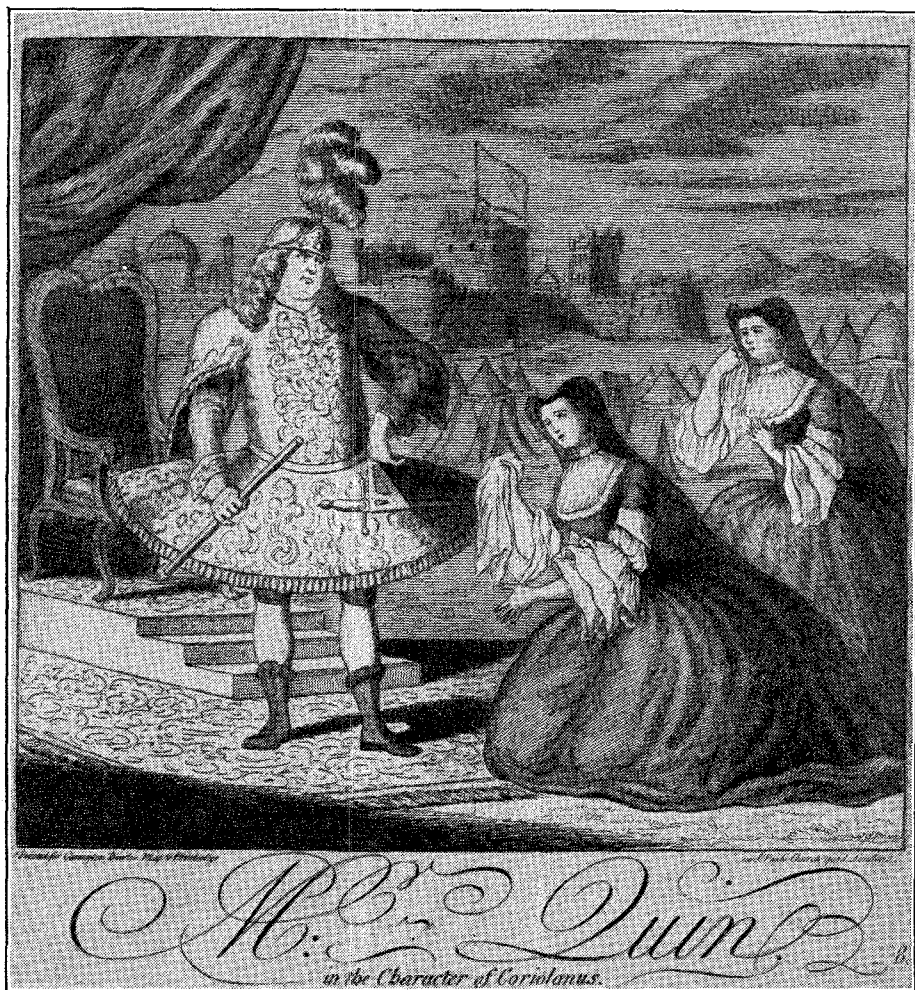
Facsimile of playbill of Quin as *Macbeth*, February 7, 1737 or 1743.

Now his wits begin to wander. Broken speeches from *Cato* and *Sir John Brute* come from his lips. He is back on the stage of Old Drury, acting to an enraptured throng. "Hark at them," he murmurs, "how they applaud!" His voice trails away into silence and he sleeps. His breathing is very light.

Toward morning he wakes. "I wish,"

he says in a voice still distinct and with a faint echo of the music that rang in his tones of *Macbeth*, his *Bajazet*, and his *Cato*—"I could wish that this last tragic scene were over, and I hope that I may be able to meet and pass through it with dignity."

Did King Charles say a finer thing than that? Did his "Gentlemen, I fear I am an unconscionable time a-dying," speak a



Mr. Quinn in the character of *Coriolanus*.

greater bravery and courtesy on the threshold of the dark portal? I vow not.

To-morrow or the next day his will is to be read, and we shall learn something even finer about this rough, caustic duelist, actor, humorist, and epicure, something of his benevolence and kindness of heart. No one who has ever had a claim to his friendship has been forgotten, and the list is an exceedingly long one. To an individual whom he did not like he bequeaths his watch, "in accordance with an imprudent promise."

Garrick owed him the eloquent tribute of the epitaph in the Abbey. The tablet is in the wall which separates the choir from the left aisle. Beneath the sculp-

tured face of the actor, round and assertive in its canopy of a full ringleted wig, one reads the lines:

"That tongue which set the table on a roar
And charmed the public ear is heard no more:
Closed are those eyes, the harbingers of wit,
Which spake before this tongue, what SHAKESPEARE writ:

Cold is that hand, which living was stretched forth
At friendship's call to succor modest worth:
Here lies JAMES QUIN: deign reader to be taught,
Whate'er thy strength of body, force of thought,
In nature's happiest mould however cast,
To this complexion thou must come at last."

D. GARRICK.

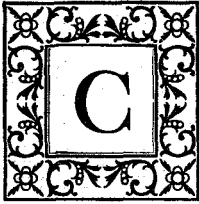
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ÆTAT LXXIII.

Was David sincere? Let us hope so. He could well afford to be!

Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James

WITH SOME LETTERS OF MRS. R. L. S.

EDITED BY SIR SIDNEY COLVIN



CLEARING out not long ago a number of papers that had remained on my hands when the task of writing the official "Life" of Stevenson was transferred (with my entire consent and approval) from me to his cousin Sir Graham Balfour, I found among them the letter which Henry James wrote to Stevenson's widow in the hour when he first learned the fact of her widowhood. Stevenson had died suddenly in his Samoan home on the evening of December 3, 1894. When the news first reached England by way of Auckland, a few of his friends clung desperately to doubts of its truth, and among them was Henry James. My wife remembers his coming to her that afternoon in an agony of distress, and crying as he cast his arms about her shoulders, "It isn't *true*, it isn't *true*, say it isn't true!" Some ten days later he himself received by way of San Francisco a telegram from the widow which put the tragedy past question. Under the immediate stress of the blow James answered her in the letter of which I have spoken. It is a letter memorable both in itself and as adding the final, the crowning touch to the story, interesting and attractive as it was already, of the relations in which these two of the finest of all artists among English writers stood to one another. So far as I know, it has been published nowhere but in the "Life of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson" by her sister, Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez. Accordingly I make no apology for printing it in full here.

MY DEAR FANNY STEVENSON;

What can I say to you that will not seem cruelly irrelevant or vain? We have

been sitting in darkness for nearly a fortnight but what is our darkness to the extinction of your magnificent light? You will probably know in some degree what has happened to us—how the hideous news first came to us via Auckland, etc., and then how, in the newspapers, a doubt was raised about its authenticity—just enough to give one a flicker of hope; until your telegram to me via San Francisco—repeated also from other sources—converted my pessimistic convictions into wretched knowledge. All this time my thoughts have hovered round you all, around you in particular, with a tenderness of which I could have wished you might have, afar off, the divination. You are such a visible picture of desolation that I need to remind myself that courage, and patience, and fortitude are also abundantly with you. The devotion that Louis inspired—and of which all the air about you must be full—must also be much to you. Yet as I write the word, indeed, I am almost ashamed of it—as if anything could be "much" in the presence of such an abysmal void. To have lived in the light of that splendid life, that beautiful, bountiful thing—only to see it from one moment to the other, converted into a fable as strange and romantic as one of his own, a thing that has been and has ended, is an anguish into which no one can enter fully and of which no one can drain the cup for you. You are nearest to the pain, because you were nearest the joy and the pride. But if it is anything to you to know that no woman was ever more felt with and that your personal grief is the intensely personal grief of innumerable hearts—know it well, my dear Fanny Stevenson, for during all these days there has been friendship for you in the very air. For myself, how shall I tell

you how much poorer and shabbier the whole world seems, and how one of the closest and strongest reasons for going on, for trying and doing, for planning and dreaming of the future, has dropped in an instant out of life. I was haunted indeed with a sense that I should never again see him—but it was one of the best things in life that he was there, or that one had him—at any rate one heard of him, and felt him and awaited him and counted him into everything one most loved and lived for. He lighted up one whole side of the globe, and was in himself a whole province of one's imagination. We are smaller fry and meaner people without him. I feel as if there was a certain indelicacy in saying it to you, save that I know that there is nothing narrow or selfish in your sense of loss—for himself, however, for his happy name and his great visible good fortune, it strikes one as another matter. I mean that I feel him to have been as happy in his death (struck down that way, as by the gods, in a clear glorious hour) as he had been in his fame. And, with all the sad allowances in his rich full life, he had the best of it—the thick of the fray, the loudest of the music, the freshest and finest of himself. It isn't as if there had been no full achievement and no supreme thing. It was all intense, all gallant, all exquisite from the first, and the experience, the fruition, had something dramatically complete in them. He has gone in time not to be old, early enough to be so generously young and late enough to have drunk deep of the cup. There have been—I think—for men of letters few deaths more romantically right. Forgive me, I beg you, what may sound cold-blooded in such words—or as if I imagined there could be anything for you “right” in the rupture of such an affection and the loss of such a presence. I have in my mind in that view only the rounded career and the consecrated work. When I think of your own situation I fall into a mere confusion of pity and wonder, with the sole sense of your being as brave a spirit as he was (all of whose bravery you shared) to hold on by. Of what solutions or decisions you see before you we shall hear in time; meanwhile please believe that I am most affectionately with you. . . . More than I can say, I hope

your first prostration and bewilderment are over, and that you are feeling your way in feeling all sorts of encompassing arms—all sorts of outstretched hands of friendship. Don't, my dear Fanny Stevenson, be unconscious of mine, and believe me more than ever faithfully yours,
HENRY JAMES.

To form and fix the strong love and affection between the two men thus movingly attested, it had taken but two years and a half of habitual personal intercourse, and that carried on almost entirely under difficulties, by means of visits paid by James to Stevenson's sick-room at Bournemouth between December, 1884, and August, 1887, and supplemented, when opportunity offered, by meetings at my house at the British Museum. I have called them two of the finest of all artists in English letters. They were at the same time two of the most contrasted and unlike. The contrast was not less in the tenor and conditions of their lives than in the choice and handling of their themes and the measure and history of the welcome their works severally received from the public—the early tales and novels of James being received with keen appreciation by at least the critical portion of that public, and the work of his latter years with relative and at last almost complete neglect; while of Stevenson's much briefer career the first products made their way slowly, but the acclamation which followed on the appearance, first, of “Treasure Island” and then of “Jekyll and Hyde” continued to greet almost all his so versatile and various work until the end. Time flies and memories are short: will readers forgive me if by some prefatory words of reminiscence and quotation I seek to make the circumstances both of the friendship and the contrast freshly present to their minds?

Two things about Stevenson that were innate, ingrained, and ineradicable were his Scotchness and his passion for outdoor life and activity. He himself speaks somewhere of his Scotchness as “tending to intermittency”; and no doubt his adventurous readiness to adapt himself to new environments, his frequentation of France and America and absorbing pursuit of letters, not merely as a vocation

or means of self-expression or appeal, but as a fine art deliberately practised in the spirit and familiar company of artists, had done something to modify it in unessentials—had superficially tempered the Scot in him with alien elements. But elsewhere he writes of himself as haunted about the heart all the while, even in the midst of the distractions and delights of his new tropical home, by yearnings after “that cauld, auld huddle of bare hills,” his true stern and naked motherland. And not only did he remain frankly Scotch to the end in the accent of his speech and the racy, full-blooded human quality of his humor; in the vital depths of his being he was the true descendant of his stern-conscienced, indomitably hardy and strenuous, coast-haunting, light-house-building Northern forebears; only by a perversity of Fate a descendant physically incapable of following their vocation. Troubles of nutrition and nerve and lung and artery kept him during most of his earlier years for long periods a prisoner in the sick-room; but this restraint, as he has himself told us, he would never allow to color his view of life, so that, although during many a bout of hemorrhage he was driven to wonder whether it might not be his last, he was always, and that not piningly but lustily, living in imagination the life of hardihood and adventure.

When at intervals during these semi-invalid years he was able to get out and about, the company he most cared for was at no time that which was to be found in drawing-rooms. Charmer though he could be among his equals, he as a rule cared to mix only with such among them as either presented to his discernment experiences or faculties for experience beyond the common, or such as followed pursuits akin to his own, writers and artists or trained lovers of books and of the arts. A chosen few of these he attached warmly to himself, but he had no inclination to follow them into the ordinary haunts of polite society, and the average members of that society, those having no special gift or attainment or experience to recommend them, he let go by him, as he has somewhere said, “like seaweed.” Elemental and unsophisticated human nature, the seaman and the husbandman

and the shepherd and the smith, and all such as feel the daily pinch and stress of life, down to the cadger, the chimney-sweep, thief, vagrant, and prostitute—these, and the variegated company with which he peopled in imagination the historic past, were all more real and more significant to him than were the majority among the comfortable classes of his contemporaries. Neither by gift nor choice had he the makings of an attentive student of these, with their uneventful ways of life—uneventful at any rate on the surface—with their passions and tragedies, supposing them to have any, decorously cloaked and veiled, their niceties and *nuances* of smooth every-day intercourse and incident, their pettinesses of social competition and intrigue, their intricacies and delicacies of reticent pathos and subdued romance and emotion conventionally schooled and harnessed.

To Henry James, on the other hand, it was just the intense perception and assiduous study of these niceties and *nuances*, these subtle emotional half-tones of contemporary life in polite cosmopolitan circles, which gave, but for one or two experimental exceptions (among which I should point to “The Princess Casamassima” as at once the widest in range and most elaborate in handling), the motive and inspiration of his art. American by birth, European and predominatingly French by early habit and training, and finally by choice and domestication deliberately and determinedly English, he had no deep-seated primary cast of mind and temperament corresponding to that Scottishness of Stevenson. Neither had he, so far as was apparent from his course of life, anything of Stevenson’s instinctive craving for action and zest for whatever consequences action might entail, but was rather both congenitally and by choice a looker-on. He has conferred many of his own characteristics, only as exercised in a more ideal and romantic *milieu*, on the personage of Benvolio in his early story so named. That story, as many of my readers will remember, narrates with characteristic subtlety of analysis and charm of style the “hesitancies” of one in whose nature the passion to observe replaces the passion to possess, and who until almost too late is content to watch

and study, without claiming her for his own, the woman in whom he discerns "a divine embodiment of all the amenities, the refinements, the complexities of life."

It is recorded of James how in the pursuit of this branch of human study, in the earlier days of his London career, he dined out in the course of a single twelve-month not less than a hundred and eight times. During my intimacy with Stevenson I cannot remember that he ever once made an appearance at a set dinner party or in dress clothes, though in early Edinburgh days there is evidence of his having occasionally made so much sacrifice of his Bohemian habits in order to please his parents.

With all these contrasts between them of origin, of experience, of temperament, of predilection, the two men had nevertheless much in common. Both were spirits essentially lovable, affectionate, and generous; both, as their admirably frank and untouchy criticisms of each other stand to prove, were signally free from all taint of jealousy and meanness: both—though in the case of Henry James it needed intimate knowledge to realize as much—were men of exceptionally intense feeling, of an emotional nature doubly and trebly as strong as the common run of mankind. But the main resemblance, and that which probably first drew close the links which were to bind them, was their common attachment to the same pursuit, their studious and passionate devotion to the art of letters as art. Even here a marked contrast is to be noted between their several methods and ideals as artists, Stevenson both by nature and choice aiming constantly at compression and simplification, at getting the utmost out of the single, the one revealing and vivifying word, and at the ruthless cutting down of the non-essential; James, on the other hand, ever more and more inclined to yield to his love of particularity both in analysis and description, and to pursue every clue of thought and motive to its subtlest involutions, its most entangled ramifications. Their letters to each other already printed illustrate vividly their consciousness of such contrast, and constitute one of the most interesting examples extant of the critical appreciation of two gifted artists by each other. But

James's tendency to excesses of the kind I have indicated did not reach its extreme until after Stevenson's death. In these relatively early years his shorter tales, "Daisy Miller" and "An International Episode" and "The Madonna of the Future" and "The Diary of a Man of Fifty" and "The Pension Beaurepas" and "Longstaff's Marriage" and "Ben-volio" and the rest, were still marked by a compactness, a concinnity of style and execution, which rivals that of any of his best French models, Guy de Maupassant or Edmond de Goncourt or Alphonse Daudet; and even his—as it seems to me much less successful—long novels like "Rod-erick Hudson," "The Americans," and "The Europeans," although more elaborated and thin-beaten and long-drawn-out than their motives will well bear, are so in a relatively simple and straightforward manner of writing. It is not on points of style as such that the debate between James and Stevenson mainly turns, but rather on the degree to which written narrative should seek after pictorial effect and try to make visible to the mind's eye of the reader the material setting of the actions and passions which it relates—should or should not, as Stevenson phrases it, appeal to the optic nerve. "Death to the optic nerve," I find him crying once in reply to his correspondent's petition for its indulgence; and again, "War to the adjective"; and again, "How to get over, how to escape from, the besetting *particularity* of fiction. 'Roland approached the house; it had green doors and window blinds; and there was a scraper on the upper step.' To hell with Roland and the scraper!" James, on the other hand, pleads earnestly for that satisfaction of the visual imagination which Stevenson would refuse it. Here is one such plea out of many: "I read with un-restrictive relish the first chapters of your prose volume, and I loved 'em and blessed them quite. But I *did* make one restriction—I missed the *visible* in them—I mean, as regards people, things, objects, faces, bodies, costumes, features, gestures, manners, the introductory, the *personal* painter-touch. It struck me that you either didn't feel—through some accident—your responsibility on this article quite enough; or, on some theory of your

own, had declined it. No theory is kind to us that cheats us of seeing."

The discussion between them is always carried on in the most sincere and genuine spirit of mutual admiration. (I do not choose to admit the permanency of that debasement, which cynical usage has introduced, of a phrase needed to denote one of the most honorable of mental attitudes—one just as honorable as "mutual confidence" or "mutual esteem".) I am not sure that the practice of either artist always conforms very strictly to his theory. Many a reader of Stevenson's "Catriona" besides myself must have a memory haunted, for instance, by the actual vision of the chamber where the lover finds his discarded gifts to the heroine cast aside after their quarrel: "I gave them good measure of time; it was my one fear that I might see Catriona again, because tears and weakness were ready in my heart, and I cherished my anger like a piece of dignity. Perhaps an hour had gone by; the sun had gone down, a little wisp of a new moon was following it across a scarlet sunset; already there were stars in the east, and in my chambers, when at last I entered them, the night lay blue. I lit a taper and reviewed the rooms; in the first there remained nothing so much as to awake a memory of those who were gone; but in the second, in a corner of the floor, I spied a little heap that brought my heart into my mouth. She had left behind at her departure all that ever she had of me. It was the blow that I felt sorest, perhaps because it was the last; and I fell upon that pile of clothing and behaved myself more foolish than I care to tell of." It would be easy to cull from the works of Henry James many descriptions of visible objects and backgrounds infinitely more particular in detail than this, but none, I think, where the sentiment of the scene is more inseparably bound up with its visible setting. . . .

But I am letting myself be lured into embarking on a critical comparison, for which this is not the place, between the work of two beloved friends and artists; and must go back to the original motive and purpose with which I set out in these remarks. The rereading of James's letter above quoted called up freshly to my mind the image of her to whom it was

addressed and set me thinking that more should be done than has been done yet to make lovers of Stevenson familiar with the personality of his wife. It was one able to hold its own un eclipsed by the light of his; and she deserves to be known by the reading world for what she was in herself, and not only for her tendance of and treasured companionship with the man of genius her mate, charmingly acknowledged as these are in many passages of amused or grateful tenderness in his letters, as well as with deeper notes of heartfelt devotion in his poems. One notable evidence of her quality was her very capable collaboration with him in imaginative work; another was the unjealous way in which, having come into his life entirely from outside, she knew how to attach to herself—with I think but a single exception—the closest and most critically inclined of his earlier friends. With these thoughts in my mind, I turned to the packets of her letters which both my wife and myself have still by us. Two or three of these letters I have already printed in their due place and order among Stevenson's own correspondence from the South Seas; the rest had hitherto been kept private. Private it is fitting that the bulk of them should remain, simply as being taken up with trivial matters—with momentary needs or casual movements, or else with monotonous anxieties on behalf of her invalid. But enough are left to illustrate vividly her ways of being and feeling and expressing herself; and of these, with her son's leave and approval, I now propose to print some specimens, adding such brief notes as may be needed to make circumstances and allusions clear.

The letters I have chosen are taken chiefly from two different periods of the Stevensons' married life; a first group from their relatively commonplace cribbed and cabined invalid-and-nurse days at Bournemouth in 1884-87; a second from their contrasted days of free cruising and roughing it, often not without both risk and hardship, in the South Seas. Under both sets of circumstances Mrs. Stevenson showed herself the most eagerly capable and sympathetic of helpmates. In a general way no more exempt than other people from moods and variabilities, she was as immovably firm in friendship for

his friends as toward his unfriends she was vehement in aversion. There were few things he wanted (always excepting music) which she could not deftly make or do with her hands, whether indoors or out; her activities were generally accompanied with a delightfully personal, quaint, and stimulating vein of talk; and when she put pen to paper, whether as a correspondent or in formal composition, she showed the gifts of a born writer. In the letters which follow, it will be noticed that her tone is often one of loving womanly laughter at vehemences or exaggerations or perversities on her husband's part; but that is precisely the tone in which genius at home needs, for its good, oftenest to be treated; and to find it so treated and no offense taken is to witness the surest proof of all being fundamentally right between a married pair.

Here follows the first of the Bournemouth group of letters. It is addressed not to me but to my wife, and dates from the days when the couple had first settled into the house which Thomas Stevenson bought for them in Branksome Park after a winter's trial had seemed to prove the climate suitable, and which they named after the Skerryvore lighthouse, one of the most famous of the engineering works of the Stevenson family. R. L. S. had been working much lately in collaboration—at play-writing with Henley, and with his wife at a second series of the “New Arabian Nights,” the plan of which seemed to call for some modification by reason of the actual contemporary facts of the Fenian dynamite outrages. “Valentine” was a very capable and devoted French servant whom they had brought to England from Hyères: “Bogue” is the equally devoted, incurably pugnacious black Scotch terrier which had been given them by Sir Walter Simpson and was originally named after him, the name passing by degrees from “Walter” to “Wattie” and through “Woggie” and “Woggs” to “Bogue.” “Oscar” is of course Oscar Wilde.

To Mrs. Sitwell (Lady Colvin)

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH
[Spring, 1885]

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Many thanks for your kind and pleasant letter. It is very comfortable to

know that we have a house really and truly, and will no more be like Noah's dove, flying about with an olive branch and trying to pretend that we have found a bit of dry ground to perch upon. I do hope that you will be able to come and visit us in it. I never saw a place that seemed arranged so exactly to suit our requirements as this place, which is to be called “Skerryvore.” There is even a little studio for me to dabble paints in, and the garden is delicious. When we are rich enough (if I am not too fat by that time) there is a stable all ready for my horse, and a fine dog-house also waits my Bogue.

We have just had a visit from Beer-bohm Tree, whose name, I am sorry to say, is treated with shocking levity by Louis. He seems a very nice, modest, pleasant fellow, and we were much pleased with him. I see that the great Oscar is coming here in a fortnight. I rather wish he would come to see us; I feel slightly curious to look upon the disciple of the aesthete. A French paper that Louis got this morning describes his personal appearance as being like a “white malady.” It sounds very dreadful indeed, and I hope is not absolutely correct. I read “Otto” to Mrs. Stevenson, and do you know she objected and applauded precisely where you did. I shall have to go to Hyères soon now, to settle our affairs, but how to leave Louis, for I shall have to take Valentine with me, I do not know.

What a dreadful thing these explosions have been. Our Arabian Tales have been a good deal knocked over by them, but Louis is remodelling when it is necessary as hard as he can. It is a great advertisement, if one may be allowed to say so. I cannot tell you how I admire the English policeman. I want Louis to write an article about them. It is lucky I am not a housemaid or a cook. At the first sight of a policeman I should be a lost woman. They are expected to be braver than a general and wiser than Mr. Gladstone; and the expectation is verified. I wonder if the dynamiters will come blowing up Louis and me, and our Valentine and our Bogue? It wouldn't be so very surprising. I feel no vocation towards being made a martyr, but I do not believe anything could happen more to the point than

for them to blow up a young French girl, an American woman, and a romantic young author. The thing I should mind the most would be leaving my boy penniless. I want to see you awfully. London must be dismal. Couldn't you just come down to me for a few days? It would be such a delight and joy. In this request Louis joins with all his heart. And again with much love

As ever your

FANNY.

The next letter was written in the course of an illness which overtook Stevenson at Exeter and put a premature stop to a trip to Dartmoor on which the couple had started, pausing on the way at Dorchester to meet and make personal acquaintance with Mr. Thomas Hardy and his wife. Letters from Stevenson himself telling of this expedition are lacking. The new novel by Henry James of which the opening is here discussed was "The Princess Casamassima." I do not remember ever hearing whether Stevenson's judgment of the finished work corresponded to the high opinion he and his wife had formed of the opening chapters. To my mind it has always been the least successful of all James's books, and that for the very reason for which they were prepared to admire it, namely that much of it ranges among scenes of rude and criminal life with which he was neither by experience nor imagination well qualified to deal.

New London Hotel,
EXETER.

[August or September, 1885]

MY DEAR MR. COLVIN,

Louis had been very ill indeed with a serious hemorrhage, the worst that he has had except the one at Hyères. As usual, it was very sudden, and in the night, but the people of the house had a doctor, ice, and all that I needed in ten minutes. Katharine and Sam were with me, awfully frightened but still useful. The people of the house had had the same thing, a hemorrhage I mean, befall a daughter, so they knew how to be of efficient help. The next day Lady Shelley, who was at Torquay, and Miss Taylor came and stayed till they were assured that the worst was over. Lady Shelley has sent Louis all sorts of things for his comfort, a

bed-rest, and bed-table upon which he is this moment going to have his dinner. She also wanted to lend me a nurse, but I refused. Dr. Scott wrote and offered to come, "as a friend," he said in brackets, if it would be any comfort to me. By that time Louis was better, so I declined with a heart filled with gratitude. Such an offer as that gives me a feeling of security that nothing else could. The doctor we got is a very nice gentleman, and I should imagine a good rider, but not a person to inspire confidence as a medical adviser. I had already done all that could be done before he got here, and then he came three times a day for some time, did nothing but smile very sweetly, and talk about his horses and hot-houses.

Dr. Scott advises a move a week after the hemorrhage ceases. We think of simply going back to Dorchester for a few days. It is not for the lung trouble, but the brain that Scott wanted a change. We saw Hardy the novelist when we were there and liked him exceedingly. I have been reading the beginning of Henry James's new novel. Most excellent, I think it, and altogether a new departure—not but that I have always liked his other work; but this is different, with the thrill of life, the beating of the pulse that you miss in the others.—I have been over to take a look at Louis, and he certainly looks better than since the hemorrhage.

My dear love to you all. Louis cannot write letters, but can read them.

FANNY.

From about this time "Custodian" became a name by which the couple habitually called me, in recognition of the odds and ends of practical service or advice they were used to receive from me. "The small dwarf madwoman" is of course the writer herself. The "gallant captain" is the landlord from whom they were renting the house of which they proposed to change the name from Sea View to Skerryvore. Mr. Hammond is Basil Hammond, at that time fellow and historical lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge, who had met the couple by chance and had an opportunity to render them I forget what service. Henry James in these days was frequently at Bournemouth on visits to an invalid sister, and used the

opportunity to see much of the Stevensons and closely cement his friendship with them.

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH.
[Spring 1885]

DEAREST AND BEST OF CUSTODIANS,

Just a word to let you know we still live. Louis is much better bodily, but mentally more or less an idiot. As for myself, I am more than ever sure that it is softening of the brain.

The small dwarf chairs suit the small dwarf madwoman admirably. The colour is out, the room really demanding blue, which I have not as yet found of the right shade,—to say nothing of the money to pay for them. I think I had better get your letter and answer questions in order as they come. To begin, Louis is the better for the moving, it having the same effect as a change of climate. The name of Sea View still remains, according to the gallant captain's taste, and Skerryvore is as yet but whispered between vulgar Scots and their relations by marriage. (That is me; for if I am not Louis's relation by marriage, then what am I?)

H. J. did find us, Louis was well enough to see him, we are devoted to him, and he comes to us every evening after dinner. I think there is no question but that he likes Louis; naturally, I have hardly been allowed to speak to him, though I fain would. He seems very gentle and comfortable, and I worship in silence—enforced silence.

Pray remember me with many kind messages to the providential Hammond. I think you mean he is full of writing to Louis, and not me; as I said to Sargent, "I am but a cipher under the shadow;" to which he too eagerly assented. It is only kind custodians who write to me; and now and then a lonely Symonds, or a savage Henley who attacks me. I am much taken up with the thought of the Spanish *Treasure Island*; Louis means to write to Mr. Hammond and find out how to get it. Having got it, he hopes to learn Spanish by its means. I am glad indeed that you like *Otto*. I have begged to have a few things marked out, not much. My hand has been laid upon him in no spirit but that of kindness,—upon *Otto* I mean, not Louis, to whom I am often unkind though always, I hope unintentionally. Love to you and to all others,

FANNY.

"The Family" in the following are Stevenson's father and mother, not always awake to the degree to which his health, at moments of lung crisis, needed absolute quiet and abstention from talk. Mrs. Jenkin is the widow of Professor Fleeming Jenkin, the wisest and most appreciative among Stevenson's senior friends at Edinburgh, and herself a woman of notable character and gifts, especially as an accomplished and impressive actress in classic drama. "Mommy" is a sort of pet diminutive for "Monument," and means the official house I then inhabited at the British Museum. "Bob" and "Katharine" are Stevenson's first cousins, R. A. M. Stevenson the painter-critic and his sister Mrs. de Mattos. The pilgrim whom I was accompanying part of the way to her son's burial place at Davos is Mrs. Sitwell, my wife that was to be.

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH.
Summer 1885.

BEST OF CUSTODIANS,

Our conduct, as usual, has been horrid; but you, as usual, I trust will prove forgiving. I begin to believe that Louis and I are both suffering, not from softening of the brain, but ossification of the intellect. We are able to eat and sleep and behave rudely, that is all. I am glad you are having such a complete change, though it does seem to remove all chance of a visit here, which we would love. However, I suppose we, or one of us, will go to the "mommy," as you say we may. We have had a good deal of wearing company for some time; our own house was full, and we had also a couple of dependencies in the neighbourhood. Since mother and father were here, Aunt Alan, and Miss Ferrier, and Henley, we have also had Teddy Henley for a couple of nights. Bob and his family, and Katharine and hers, are also in the neighbourhood. It has been such a difficult party that I quite broke down under the strain.

Through it all the dear Henry James remained faithful, though he suffered bitterly and openly. He is gone now, and there is none to take his place. After ten weeks of Henry James the evenings seem very empty, though the room is always full of people. As the time passed we came to have a real affection for him, and parted from him with sincere regret.

We have started more or less of an intimacy with the Taylors; that is, the daughters, Sir Henry himself being almost too beautiful and refined and angelic for ordinary people like us. Also we are rather intimate with the Shelleys. Lady Shelley is delicious; naturally no longer young, suffering from the effects of a terrible accident that has left her a hopeless invalid, but with all the fire of youth, and as mad as some other people you know, and ready to plunge into any wild extravagance at a moment's notice. Sir Percy is an odd creature! Do you know him? He is the poet's son only in being so exceedingly curious. I think we will come to be very fond of him. They have a lovely little theatre at their place here and give very delightful entertainments, which will be pleasant for us. They have a bust of Mary Wollstonecraft done from a death-mask, over which Louis raves; and justly, for it is the most interesting thing ever seen. I think we are very lucky to find two such pleasant families in Bournemouth; other people pour in on us in droves, but they are all alike, and I find none to interest or amuse. After speaking of the weather and kindred topics, they generally observe, "Your husband is quite literary, I understand." Now what should one say? I murmur vaguely, "I dunno m'sure," at which they show faint surprise, and slightly bridle. But I can think of no other formula.

I suppose from what you say that you are not yourself going to Davos, but will remain in the neighbourhood. I am glad at heart that it is not the dreadful winter time, and that the grass will be green and the flowers blooming. I know of nothing more crushing to the mind than that cemetery of boys and girls. My sympathy and love to the sad pilgrim. I had hoped you might see Mr. Symonds. Perhaps you may. The last I heard from him, he had symptoms of scrivener's paralysis, but I thought there was a cure for that. I asked him if he could get me some yellow brocade for curtains, but I am told now that it would be a fearful expense, so I should like to take it back—I mean my request. Mrs. Campbell told me, and I believe Mrs. Jenkin, that I could get enough for a pair of curtains for five pounds, but it seems that was a mistake. She offered to send and ask young

Brown, of the Venice book, to get it. I cannot get used to Jenkin's death; it is a thing impossible to believe or realise. After that, anything may happen. I am afraid now to open letters. My dear love to you all.

FANNY.

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH.
Summer 1885.

DEAREST AND MOST ILL-TREATED OF
CUSTODIANS,

I feel that I, too, am in a manner of speaking a custodian of a small neat house in the country. The family want another change, and I think prefer Bournemouth. Louis has had a slight hemorrhage, and the doctor says he must have no excitement and no bother; that now is his chance for recovery. I am always in such a state of trepidation and worry that I have no heart to write. I shall fight hard, this time, for my temper, nerves, patience, all have given way since the last strain, and I am not safe to behave like an angel under certain provocations such as another illness for Louis. . . .

I send with this a note for Mrs. Jenkin, which I beg you to post for me, as I have entirely lost her address, and don't know what else to do. Her son, Frewen, took some photographs of Louis, one of which is rather like the ever-beautiful Christ walking on the water, as Lady Shelley said. Dear old Sir Percy took a number, one or two of which I think really very good. As soon as I can get some, I will send you the best of each. It is very odd that while one represents an angel, the devil must have posed for another, so ghastly, impishly wicked and malignant is it. Plainly Jekyll and Hyde.

Do you ever see our dear friend, Henry James? He was in the country when I last heard from him. We think most highly of the new novel as it goes on. I hope all this holiday junketing will do it no harm. Our dear love to you, and all others.

FANNY V. DE G. STEVENSON.

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH.
1885.

DEAREST CUSTODIAN,

I begin by saying that Louis is better, the parents are in Torquay, and I, though more of an idiot than when you were here,

am an improvement upon what I have been. My head whirled, and I could not walk, and I became deaf. Dr. Scott then came to the conclusion that I had had an overdose of salicylate (if that is the proper distribution of i's and y's) and not of the other thing; a cessation of the poisonous drug and the "exhibition" of antidotes has already done me an immensity of good. Dr. Scott has known or has heard of people who became temporarily insane through indulging, not wisely, but in the use of the insidious Salycen—no—Salicylate; I believe they are not the same, though equally unpleasant and dangerous for people with what Dr. Scott calls a "funny head". He speaks in that disrespectful way of *my* head. . . .

I found desperate courage yesterday, and gave warning to the Irishwoman. Did I tell you that we had discovered she is only a waxwork? That is why she couldn't cook, poor thing, and why she has glass eyes. And we never had a key, though perhaps that is as well, for had we been able to wind her up and set her going, any sort of awkward thing might have happened. She may be Madame Tussaud's idea of a wholesale murderess, and then where should we all be? I tried to encourage Valentine by telling her she (Bertha) was only a vampire, but it seemed to make her no happier. Smeuroch, Mrs. Stevenson's dog, now lives with us. She is a cat killer; imagine how I enjoy her society with my poor Ginger, (who, by the way, is a dog-killer) walking stiff-legged and big-tailed about the house. Louis told me that he had sent off an envelope with no letter. I came back here, and found that I had done exactly the same thing. In case I get this in an envelope, and properly sent off, we both send our love to the Monument and all who care for the Monument.

F. V. DE G. STEVENSON.

The Stevensons had just gone home to Bournemouth after a visit to me at the official house I inhabited at the British Museum. Stevenson was an eager lover of music and keenly interested in musical theory; at various times of his life he tried to learn the practice of this or that instrument, but the frailty of his health prevented the attempt ever being carried far.

SKERRYVORE, BOURNEMOUTH,
September or October 1886.

DEAR CUSTODIAN,

We arrived very comfortably indeed, and the journey seemed to do Louis good, but I am afraid the piano is *not* good for him. In the morning he gets up feeling very well indeed, and at about ten sits to the piano where he stays till three or after, drinking his coffee, even, at the instrument, but there or thereabouts he breaks down altogether, gets very white and is extremely wretched with exhaustion until the next morning again. I do not know what to do about it. He always says that the first thing is to cut off his pleasures, which is pretty true; and I haven't the heart to try and stop the piano. It was that he wanted to come home for, and it is now wearing him out entirely. He seems much weaker now than when at the Monument, which should not be, as he is really better. I wish, if you see Dr. Brown or Chepmell, you could ask if too much piano is not harmful—no, better than that, I will go down to Scott and get him to check it. I shall go now, so excuse this sudden stop. Much love to all.

Ever truly,

F. V. DE G. STEVENSON.

Stevenson's own way of telling me how this sudden fit of musical zeal had fallen on him soon after his recovery from a hemorrhage was as follows:—

DEAR CUSTODIAN,

I have turned my bottom on Bloody-Jackery, and am now gay, free and obnoxious. Je ne vis que pour le piano; on the which I labour like an idiot as I am. You should hear me labouring away at Martini's celebrated, beroomed Gavotte, or Boccherini's beroomed famous minuet. I have "beroomed" on the brain, and sign myself,

Sir,

THE BEROOMED STEVENSON.

To the Highly-Geboren
Beroomed
Custodian

THESE

in a hell of a hurry
Spur! Spur! Spurry!
Where is now the Père Martini?

Where is Bumptious Boccherini?
Where are Hertz and Crotch and Batch?
—Safe in bed in Colney Hatch!

SKERRYVORE,
BOURNEMOUTH,
Spring, 1887.

DEAR FRIEND,

The following is from Edinburgh, whither Stevenson, not without risk to his own health had gone in order to be present at the last hours of his father, the recent loss of whose faculties made his release an event to be welcomed rather than deplored.

EDINBURGH,
May 1887.

DEAREST FRIEND,

We have just arrived to find our dear old man passing away painlessly. We thought he should have been gone last night, but the doctor says it may be days yet, (not many), also any moment. He is bleeding internally, and is entirely unconscious, not knowing Louis in the least degree. We made the journey by way of Bath, resting the night at York. Louis caught cold in his tooth (the best place for it), and his face is very much swollen and uncomfortable. What our movements for the future are to be we have no knowledge. Mrs. Stevenson seems wonderful; I don't know whether she may not break down when her hands are empty. I cannot help but feel thankful that the painful struggle is about over. Would you believe it that the old man is up and dressed every day? Until yesterday he went downstairs for the day. He has always said that no man who respected himself should die in a bed, and unless he passes off in the night he will die "as a gentleman should," according to his own creed. Louis is taking it very well; at least just now. But really the bitterness of death was past long ago. We both send you our love.

Ever affectionately,
F. V. DE G. STEVENSON.

The next letter tells of the preparation for that migration of Stevenson and his wife to the Far West which was meant to be for one winter only but from which they were destined never to come back. They were planning a few days' stay with me at the "Monument" while making the arrangements for their departure.

I shall try to answer your letter, as far as I can, at least. To begin with, Louis's second cold is better after the usual business of pleurisy. Yesterday he was pretty bad, but looks feebly up again today. What, what, *what*, a climate is this? I do believe the world is out of her course, and we shall come plump down upon something dreadful soon; a comet, let us pray, if there is any heat in them, which I believe some people deny. You ask what was the bother about. I do not think Louis wishes to speak of his father's will to anyone but you, therefore I do not suppose there is any harm in my telling you in confidence something about it. . . . There are some small legacies, or annuities to servants, five hundred pounds to some sort of Magdalen society, a hundred and fifty pounds to a nephew, and then, I think it is, you may say that we have a legacy in John. He was so kind to his master, and such a pleasant young fellow that Mrs. Stevenson wished us to keep him on. Of course his wages are as much as we pay the two women together, and his work is really not much needed. I am teaching him to garden, however, and mean to do all I can with him. As I write he is working in my sight in the garden, and I am giving directions from this window, which I fear destroys all clearness in my statements. As to our going away; Mrs. Stevenson will this year get some money from the business, so she proposes to stand all the expense she can of a winter in Colorado. She, Louis, Lloyd, and me, accompanied by Valentine and John. We should go in August. Do you know a couple of elderly quiet people who would like to take our house at a high price while we are gone; this couple must love cats tenderly, and take Ginger to their bosom. Also Agnes, as housemaid and attendant upon the cat. Does such a couple as this exist? If not, please have them prepared for us at once, or no more call yourself guardian angel. Mrs. Stevenson will let her house and when we come back (if we do) from Colorado, she will, or we will, make an addition to Skerryvore, and she will take up her abode henceforth and forever, at Skerryvore; after

having first despoiled the house at Edinburgh of its best furniture and belongings. Then 17 Heriot Row will be sold, as it is part of the general capital. I should be more glad than words could express if you could see us for a day or two. If Louis is well enough we want to come to you; but the weather must be good in London, and the man must be

reasonably good in health, the man and poet, I mean; for no such shabby trick is to be played upon you again as was done last year. Let me know how the weather goes, and whether you want us when we can come. Our dear love to all and everyone.

F. V. DE G. STEVENSON.

We are just dying for the Keats.

("More Letters of Mrs. R. L. Stevenson" will be published in the April number.)

Moonlight in a Museum

BY THEDA KENYON

COME from the walls and cases; ye who live
For aye and aye are beautiful! Leap down,
Thou pale lost Pleiad, swinging through the sky
With goddess freedom! . . . And ye slant-eyed elves,
Mischieving 'neath your toadstools, scamper out,
A faery frolic is afoot to-night!
Cold, lofty maiden, weeping on your urn,
Forget your age-old grief, and let your cheeks
Flush through their marble pallor with new youth!

Diana, floating down a moonbeam, gleams
Barefooted on the cold mosaic floor,
With gentle plash, like distant waterfalls. . . .
And Isis, throwing back her cerements,
Scatters enchantment with faint ambergris,
And sandalwood, upon the summer air. . . .

Ah, Shepherdess and Duchess, leave your fans,
Your delicate, flower-wreathèd coquetry,
Your world of mother-of-pearl; trip gently out,
And join a roundel with the sturdy swain
Who has swung his flail in yonder tapestry
For half a thousand years, untired, unsung!

Come—live with me again! The summer moon
Hangs like a lanthorn in the purple sky;
So has she hung for you a million times,
Sending her shafts of midnight witchery
To waken you again. . . . Come—live with me
This little hour—and then, when I am gone,
Whisper among yourselves, on other nights,
That you *did* live again . . . within my heart!