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The Literary Development of  
Robert Louis Stevenson

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By  
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C. The following works of Robert Louis Stevenson were used for a study of his style:

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Treasure Island,	" "	"
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E. For comparison of style see:

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J. Bunyan,	Pilgrims Progress
H. D. Thoreau,	Walden Pond
	A Week on Concord and Merrimac Rivers
J. R. Lowell,	My Study Windows
J. Brown,	Rab and His Friends
G. Meredith	Harry Richmond
P. Merimee,	Short Stories
A. Daudet,	Short Stories
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M. Montaigne,	Essais

## The Literary Development of Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson is a stylist. There are authors who, to a far greater degree, have inspired and touched our hearts by their genuine sympathy, instilling into us by their honest sincerity lessons which we hoard as gifts from the All Giver; but never has there been such a subtle artist in prose construction. To express a thought with precision, sincerity, elegance, and simplicity requires the stroke of a master hand. Such is the art of this author who appropriates sound and color to his best thought; whose subject matter is always fit, in which there is nothing trivial, nothing illicit, nothing unworthy of the workmanship of a master hand. Perfect accord between sound and sense, perfect euphony, perfect freshness, and a very masculine vigor are the qualities of his prose style.

There has never been an author more charmingly frank and ready to discuss his style than Robert Louis Stevenson. In fact, with such ingenuousness has he acknowledged his obligations, even his plagiarisms, that

one is likely to wonder if he be not too modest and sparing of his own merit. For, as a man and an author he was endowed with exceptional ability. His father, Thomas Stevenson, possessed a disposition wholly Scottish in its mildness and sternness; a man who, tho strong in the Calvinistic doctrine of his church, loved science and nature no less than literature and art. When one combines with a highly developed sense of right and wrong, and with an inheritance both practical and aesthetic, an infinite gift of perpetual boyhood and a nice understanding of harmony and rhythm, one can understand the growth of a nature so deep, so rich and so versatile as was Robert Louis Stevenson's.

Tho he inherited no musical ability, he devoted himself to the study of music with much zeal and enjoyment and it is due to his keen ear for music that he recognized the ideal of prose to be harmony and of poetry, melody. So fully has he exemplified this, that he has been called a prose Horace and his literary symphonies are studied the world over. Furthermore, being endowed with an ar-



tistic love of the beautiful, Stevenson has with his eloquent brush and rich colors, painted word pictures unsurpassed in beauty, delicacy, and splendid hues. Thus having considered Stevenson's tastes, both inherent and acquired, it is easy to see whence came those elements in his works which make him essentially one of the greatest stylists in English literature.

With characteristic frankness he has made the whole world his confidant, in considering with utmost simplicity wherein his technique lay. Of the value and euphony of words he had the acutest appreciation. In one of his letters he confessed the peculiar charm of the Latin, saying: "The Latin language of which I profess myself a devotee, is so extraordinarily different from our own, and is capable of suggesting such extraordinary and enchanting effects that it gives a man spurs and wings to his fancy." He has shown his profound skill in using the sonorous Latin words appropriately and with an ear sensitive to harmony. It was this "love of lovely words," as he wrote in another letter, which led him to combine

the full toned Latin with the racy, vivid and virile Anglo Saxon. Thru such a union he worked out a theory of the technic of prose which enabled him to produce some of the most musical prose in English Literature. His pages are full of such passages as this, rich in the absolute loveliness of melody and cadence: "Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming, Minnesota and the Carolinas: there are few poems with a nobler music for the ear: a songful tuneful land; and if the new Homer shall arise from the Western continent, his verse will be enriched, his pages, spontaneously" —

To understand his theory of prose which he treats at length in the essay, "Technical Elements of Style in Literature", one must consider the devices he employed, which tho obvious, from their very simplicity, are often overlooked. As he candidly relates in the oft quoted passage in the "College Magazine", not content with a mere extensive vocabulary he set about by means of a notebook to learn the felicitous use of words. And thus it was that he learned the many devices which he practised.

The most obvious of them might be termed the use of novel and piquant forms of speech. Stevenson was ever on the lookout for the novel rather than the new; and with such handling old words in new combinations become strangely effective. Closely akin to this skillful use of old words is his discerning use of adjectives. What could be more striking and vivid than the following sentence? "His eyes came coasting around me." In his unique combination of words Stevenson's pithy similes are especially efficacious; one has only to glance over his pages to find many remarkable in their distinction as: "My mind is flying like a weaver's shuttle". In addition to his skillful blending of words and phrases, he has learned the power repetition and reiteration have, when guided by a master hand. Obviously, the repetition of phrases such as; "he said," not only increases the euphony but rivets the reader's attention. Here, as in everything he put his hand to, this master artist juggles his phrases continuously tossing and only catching them when he wishes to hold the readers attention. But, repetition, in all its varied forms, would prove monotonous

were it not that Stevenson in passages of heightened emotion, employs the effective use of reiteration. The rhythmic combination of words of which he is a skillful artist, the slightly unusual phrasing, and the unexpected inversion of the word order show a mind alert in its expression, and give the sting of novelty even to the common places of his narrative and his conversation.

Stevenson's own testimony concerning those outward influences which left their impress on his work and his particular efforts to cultivate a perfect style, has thrown much light on the character of his productions. When in that well known passage, "I have played the sedulous ape", with charming simplicity he confides to us, that Hazlitt, Lamb, Sir Thomas Browne, Defoe, Hawthorne, Montaigne, Baudelaire, and Oberman, each in his turn lighted his path, we marvel at his confession. When we turn to, "Books which have Influenced me," we find that he has added one name after another to the interesting and fascinating list of potent influences; Dumas and The Bible even as Bunyan, Shakespeare, and Scott, enriched, as time wore on, by Whitman, Spenser, and Meredith,

were ever his intimates. In this connection it is worthy of note that his books obviously reveal many characteristics of those selfsame authors under whose inspiration he was at the time of their writing. Nor are we without proof; many of his letters bear this out. The fact that he spent so many years of his life casting about for a style, imitating to a certain measure, first one writer and then another, has led to his being called a veritable mimic, who trained himself to reproduce every thing that struck his fancy. While this is true to a certain extent, no one realized his unsettled state more than the author himself, as he frankly admitted in his letters. During the year 1877 he wrote to a friend: "Vividness and not style are in my line. Style is all very well, vividness is the real line of the country."

And in 1880 he added concerning his first short stories: "and then, I'll stick to stories, I am not frightened. I know my mind is changing and I suppose I'm fumbling for a new vein". Of "Merry Men" in 1881, he said, "If I ever shall make a hit I have the line now." It is to Archer in the year 1885 that he wrote. "It seems to me

that you have read my works in terms of the earliest. My aim, even in style, has quite changed in the last six years".

In discussing this subtle artist's style, it is my purpose to consider the creations of his genius in five periods which are marked off by salient changes, either in manner or subject matter, or both. The earlier productions, inclusive of "Child's Play", which was published September 1881, and which mark the first period are distinctive for the close resemblance they bear to other authors. With the exception of "Will O' the Mill," "A Lodging for the Night," and "Sieur de Maletroit's Door" which were published near the close of this period, the essay proved his chief medium. His early endeavors, the four articles written for the College Magazine during his student days are distinguished by that clearness of thought and style which he was ever master of. While it is hard to distinguish the work of Ferrier from that of Stevenson in "The Philosophy of Umbrellas", the change of style in the conclusion is evident; either the work

was hurried or a less gifted hand finished it. The work of this group has form and charm, shapeliness and delicacy, simplicity and grace indicative of the perfection attained in "Weir of Hermiston". That his youthful flights had not carried him far into the realm of perfection, he realized full well as he wrote in one of his letters. "The time was not ripe nor the man ready and to work I went again."

His next attempt "Roads" written not long after shows the broadening effect of his close association with authors. The observant student will recognize in the title and thruout the essay a suggestion of Ruskin. A short time before the publication of this essay, in the year 1873, Stevenson had found a new friend in Walt Whitman; and it is in, "Roads" that he essayed to combine the wholesome breeziness of Whitman with the rhythmic swing and exquisite grace of Ruskin. This brief citation will serve to show Stevenson's skill in blending of two distinct styles: "A footpath across a meadow in all its human waywardness and unaccountability, in all the grata protervitas of its varying direction — will

always be more to us than a railroad well engineered through a difficult country."

There is much, also, to remind one of Ruskin in that perfect and irresistibly delightful essay, "Ordered South," the only one written from an invalid's point of view. But the style differs from that of the earlier essay. Walt Whitman has surrendered his throne to Hazlitt who reigns supreme for several years. Many critics have assigned the chief power of this period to Addison. If we are to take Stevenson's own testimony in one of his letters written in 1879 in which he said, "By the way I've tried to read the Spectator which they all say I imitate and its very wrong of me, I know — but I can't. Its all very fine but it's vapid," or if in another letter in which he recommended books to be read, "And I suppose Addison tho I've never read him myself;" or in that frank confession during this period, "I'm a Hazlittine; there's a lot of style in Hazlitt;" if Stevenson's own testimony counts for aught we must ultimately admit that directly the "Spectator papers" had little bearing on his first volumes of essays. And yet



no where is he completely dominated by any one author; there's too much originality about him for that. Only so far as power or effect is gained does he immitate; from constant association with many of his intimates he assimilated characteristic qualities of each. Here is a trace of Hazlitt, a fashion of Thoreau, a picture from Defoe and a feeling of Sir Thomas Browne. One may truly say his style has leaves from many rose-trees, sprinkled with a spice of his own; it is a sort of a pot-pourri, delicate, pungent and quaint flavored. Such, then, is the style of "Ordered South."

In all these attempts and many to follow, Stevenson was casting about for a style of his own. Of his early essays, "Victor Hugo's Romances" marks the beginning; there is less tendency to the exuberancy shown in the earlier essay, a greater growth, a greater surety; all due, in some measure, to his engrossing interest in "Table Talk" and its author. About the time of this essay and for several years following Stevenson had in mind writing a comprehensive treatise on Hazlitt as he wrote in 1881, "You know I'm a fervent Hazlitte. I mean

to write an essay regarding him as the English writer who has the scantiest justice." With this in view, he studied Hazlitt until he attained a complete understanding of that author. In addition, the thought and style of the French literature of the fifteenth century, at this time, drew his careful attention and potently influenced him. His close absorption in this century, no less than his love for the sunny mellow land of France has his pen revealed with perfect clearness and competence of words; and in "Victor Hugo's Romances", he shows the first glimpse of this influence which is later fully developed thru the magic handling of such an artist.

On turning to "Walking Tours" there is much a true "Hazlitt" would recognize. In this sketch Stevenson has closely followed the subject-matter and the style of Hazlitt's "On Going a Journey". One has only to compare the two essays to be convinced. Could any quotation remind one more of that essay from "Table Talk" than this? "If the evening be fine and warm there is nothing better in life than to lounge before the inn door in the sunset, or lean over the parapet of the

bridge, to watch the weeds and the quick fishes." "Walking Tours" is also suggestive of Lamb. Here is an excellent example of his whimsical playfulness: "I know a village where there are hardly any clocks; where no one knows more of the days than by a sort of instinct for the fete on Sundays and where only one person can tell you the day of the month and she is probably wrong." We see also, in this, for the first time, perhaps, that Stevenson has begun to put his theory of prose into practice. Already he has learned how to combine sounds, as this skillful blending of s and t will illustrate; "His heart rises against those who drink their ou<sup>r</sup>aca<sup>a</sup> in liqueur glasses when he himself will swill it down in a brown john. He will not believe that the flavor is more delicate in the smaller dose."

The first four essays in "<sup>n</sup>Virgil<sup>i</sup>bus Pue<sup>i</sup>sque", in which he with such youthful enthusiasm chats with the "gentle reader" on love, marriage, and intercourse, while imitative to a large degree show us <sup>no</sup> new departure. There are whole pages, here, as in everything he puts his hand to, which in harmony, power and glow are unequalled in

The whole range of his prose. The conclusion of the second chapter of the first essay, a brave and noble passage, is much akin to Emerson's "Domestic Life". The simplicity in it is inspiring.

Stevenson's "fumbling for a new vein takes a new form," the short story. Altho each story of this period is entirely different in thought and treatment yet each is truly a masterpiece. The famous "A Lodging for a Night" is the tour de force of the volume. In the rapid but trenchant pen and ink portraits of four of the gang with whom Villon hunted we are forcibly reminded of Poe. The tone color the setting and the style of this, are indicative of the genius of this artist. As we shudder when we read Poe so here we are moved with the uncanniness as we follow this grim sketch to the striking climax of the murder to hear Villon say, "Damn his fat head; it sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?" Could anything be more gruesome? But after all is it not masterly and is it not truly Stevensonian?

After reading "A Lodging for a Night," we are forcibly struck by the great difference in the style of "Will O' the Mill". As a philosophic idyll it is perfect. Here, as every where, Stevenson's versatility is manifest; with the slightest turn of his finger he has created "A Lodging for a Night" in the manner of Poe; in the next turn with no apparent effort he has sketched a story in the style of Hawthorne. Surely, thruout the whole gamut of Hawthorne's tales, none present a more exquisite and symbolic picture of the "Coming of Death than "Will O' the Mill." It is wrought with moving tenderness in the last scene in the Arbor of Will's inn. "The wafted scent of the heliotropes which had never been planted since Marjorie's death, the light in the room that had been hers, prelude the arrival at the gate of the stranger's carriage with the black pine tops, standing above it like plumes. And "Will O' the Mill makes the acquaintance of the friend and goes at last upon his travels." Stevenson has painted a mood picture in such a manner as to equal anything Hawthorne ever did — realism, romanticism, and mysticism blended only with master

\* Walter Raleigh "Robert Louis Stevenson."

skill make it possible to maintain the key of "Will O' the Mill."

Entirely different is "Sieur de Maletroit's Door". Once more the French influence crops out for here is a fascinating short story embodying the same idea as a French play of one act in verse. Stevenson's version is almost as good as the original. Any one familiar with the French Short Story will recognize the distinctive elements of that highly developed form of literature which Stevenson has incorporated into "Sieur de Maletroit's Door." In considering this gifted author's acrobatic feats of style it is worth while to bear in mind the great scope of his literary power; he has produced three short stories, each one as unique and entirely different from the other as if penned by three authors.

Some critics, I believe, attribute the suggestions for "Aes Triplex" to DeQuincey's, "A Vision of Sudden Death"; more striking, however, is its resemblance to Hazlitt's "On fear of Death"; closely connected in style the one is the prototype of the other. One illustra-

tion of many I shall mention. Hazlitt mentions Samuel Johnson; Stevenson does likewise. The former praises the "fortitude of that wonder-Dictator in bearing pain," and the other speaks of "the heroism which in spite of his limitations carried him triumphantly through to the end." Stevenson borrowed lavishly. To find in "Aes Triplex" or any of his essays a page free from such gems as — "trumpets blowing, trailing clouds of glory, having a key to the situation," — would be inconceivable. In fact every page is additional proof of his admirable power to absorb the best out of much material and return it as perfect as he received it.

Perhaps of the four, "A Plea for Gas Lamps", "Eldorado", "English Admirals" with its strong tincture of Emerson and "Child's Play", the style of the latter has more particularly for its model the "Essays of Elia." Some critic has said that Stevenson was such an expert imitator of Lamb that when he chose he could write better than Lamb himself. Be this as it may, the fact still remains that the slippered ease and gentle, bubbling over-humor of that charming essayist has for once found its

equal in Stevenson. When one reads, "or sends the immortal war god whimpering to his father and innocence no more than philosophy can protect him from the sting," or, "when he comes to ride with king's pardon he must bestride a chair which he will so hurry and belabor and on which he will so furiously demean himself that the messenger will arrive if not bloody with spurring at least

with haste." — he desires no more convincing proof of the magic likeness of "Child's Plays" to those exquisite "Essay of Elia."

Stevenson saw more to conquer with each new vision of his future. These fresh sallies into fresh fields I have chronicled in this second period beginning with the last half of 1878 and concluding with 1881. It is thru these divisions that I hope to show his close communion with fellow authors, at home and abroad and to trace the maturity which his "sedulous aping" finally resulted in. The observant student will notice that in this period his attempts are more varied, comprising essays, six short stories both novel and unique, a story of adventure, and two delightful stories of travel which have never been



excelled. He will also, observe the first two periods as I have marked them off to be formative; the third transitory, preparing the way for the fourth and fifth. In discussing this artist's achievement in style it is not my purpose to treat every production of his pen but to consider those works remarkable for their imitative style or their departure from it. The French influence noticeable in the preceding period is again discernible here. His interest still centered on the literature of sunny France, he turned his attention to two specialized forms, the drama and the short story. In 1878, he wrote to a friend, "What an inconceivable cheese Alfred Musset is! His comedies are the best of French work of Literature," and "The best of French novelists seems to be Daudet." Stevenson knew Daudet as he knew Dumas and Hugo. His knowledge of French literature reveals itself in his first story of this period, "Providence and the Guitar," which might have been written by Daudet himself — so true is the likeness. The theme, the setting, the style, the vivid touches of realism all, are French.

We are dealing with two entirely different prose

works when we consider "Travels with a Donkey" and "An Inland Voyage" — both exquisite stories of travel, altho they both look to Sterne's, "Sentimental Journey" in general plan and style, they are not so over done as that delightfully whimsical book of the eighteenth century. In commenting on them Stevenson said that the style of "An Inland Voyage" was thin, mildly cheery and strained and that "Travels with a Donkey" contained nothing but fresh air and a certain style. Now this "certain style" is characterized by the remarkable blending of the fanciful, playful manner of Sterne with his own simple vivid and spontaneous manner of writing. In them there are passages which have hardly been matched for beauty developed thru the touch of an artistic mind which gives so pleasant a twang of Mother Earth to so many of his pages and makes him to some extent a Wordsworth in prose. While "Travels with a Donkey" and "An Inland Voyage" like the "Sentimental Journey" entertain the "gentle reader" with that same delightful whimsical artlessness, they also teach <sup>him</sup> to "find sermons in stones, books in running brooks, tongues in trees and good in everything."

In "The Amateur Emigrant" we are reminded again of Sterne but Stevenson has gained a new effect by combining with the air of Sterne the suggestive style of Thoreau. While working on "The Amateur Emigrant, Stevenson had begun his study of Thoreau partly for his intended essay on that American Recluse, which was also written in this same period, and partly for his own interest. Hence it is not in the least strange, that there are many touches suggestive of "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers."

It is generally thought that of his earlier books, "Across the Plains" contains examples of his most natural style. To a certain extent this is true. If one compares this sketch with his letters he will find a similar style especially in his descriptions. In this charming description of his journey across the wild plains of United States Stevenson has at times written with apparent simplicity, artlessness and originality what the careful student will trace to the writers of the eighteenth century or even earlier. With studied nonchalance he relates "how a bet was liquidated at the bar". Of this Professor Raleigh says, "This is perhaps an excess of

virtue but it is an excess to be found plentifully in Milton." Owing to his intimate relation with the literateurs of the eighteenth century he learned their style and their art, but Stevenson was however too skillful a workman to make use of any artful device learned from his teachers unless it produced for him a desired and studied effect. No artificer cut and polished his gems more than did Stevenson, his thot expressions. There are pages in "Across the Plains" which are artless and charming in their natural style but yet throw forth a hundred sparkling rays because of the polish our author has given them. It would be hard to find a better example of this smooth and sparkling elegance of style than this:

"By afternoon we were at Sacramento, the city of gardens in a plain of corn; and the next day before dawn we were lying to upon the Oakland side of San Francisco Bay. The day was breaking as we crossed the ferry; the fog was rising over the citted hills of San Francisco; the bay was perfect — not a ripple scarce a stain upon its blue expanse; everything was waiting breathless, for the sun. A spot of cloudy gold lit first upon the head

Tamalpais; and then widened downward from its shapely shoulder; the air seemed to awaken and began to sparkle; and suddenly

"The tall hills Titan discovered," and the city of San Francisco, and the bay of gold and corn were lit from end to end with summer day light."

In his next publication, "Henry David Thoreau", the influence of that "sunny ascetic" is clearly manifest. After Stevenson began his study of the great naturalist he said, "I have scarce written ten sentences since introduced to Thoreau but his influence might be detected by a close observer." And no confession could be truer; every page of this period smacks of him. Professor Japp who has made a study of that American for the book, "The Life and Aims of Thoreau", and who, intimately acquainted with Stevenson, visited him in California, says; "So the Thoreau influence on Stevenson was as if a tart American wild apple had been grafted on an English pippin and produced a wholly new kind, with flavors of both. The direct result was the essay in Cornhill" — but more of this Thoreau influence later.

During this period Stevenson produced his first story of pure adventure, "Treasure Island," destined to win him everlasting fame. Concerning its style and plot he has been exceptionally frank. In the preface to "Treasure Island" we find: "It is my debt to Washington Irving that exercises my conscience and justly so, for I believe plagiarism was rarely carried farther. I chanced to pick up "The Tales of a Traveller" some years ago with a view to an anthology of prose narrative and the book flew up and struck me. Billy Bones, his chest, his company in the parlor, the whole inner spirit and a good deal of the material detail of my first chapters all were there, all were the property of Washington Irving".....

..."I broke into the gallery of Mr. Poe and stole Flint's painter .....a few reminiscences of Poe, Defoe, Washington Irving, a copy of Johnson's *Buccaneers*," the name of the Dead Man's chest from Kingsley's "At Last", some recollections of canoeing on high seas, a cruise in a fifteen ton schooner and the map itself, with its infinite, eloquent suggestion, made up the whole of my materials." On hearing comments concerning the similar-

ity of his style to Defoe's he wrote: "I have read "Robinson Crusoe," "Colonel Jack," "Moll Flanders," "Memoirs of a Cavalier". If "Treasure Island" is at all like it, it will be delightful. "Treasure Island" came out of Kingsley's "At Last" where I got the Dead Man's chest — and that was the seed — and out of great Captain Johnson's "History of Notorious Pirates". The scenery is Californian in part and part Ohio." Such is his testimony and yet undoubtedly "Treasure Island" reflects the style of "Pilgrim's Progress", "Gulliver's Travels" and "Robinson Crusoe." It is possible for this to be essentially true and not contradict his own confession. From continuous reading he steeped himself in the work of the Age of Johnson until he knew it as well as he knew his alphabet. Was it any wonder then, that in maintaining the key for his plot, he unconsciously, as it were, adopted the homespun of Swift, the homely vernacular realism of Defoe, and the marvellous narrative simplicity of Bunyan? Stevenson used his note book and began his "sedulous copying" at such an early age that it would be exceedingly wonderful were the style of these good masters to crop

out only at will.

Short is this next period, comprising only the years 1882-4. While this period includes two novels, and several short stories, it marks a new departure in the essay, as is seen in some of "Memories and Portraits". The keynote struck, we may say, is of a more personal tone. It is, in fact, a point of grace with any writer and especially the essayist, that he should be able to speak often of himself without offense, as did Montaigne for instance. He takes us into his secret, making us his companions and intimates. The French influence, marked in the earlier periods, becomes again manifest chiefly in his essays and short stories. In these essays he tried his hand at following models or having none, as his fancy struck him. There are pages for example in that animated essay, "Talk and Talkers", teeming with the sprightly style of the eighteenth century; might this not have been written by Addison? "Cockshot is a different article, but vastly entertaining and has been meat and drink to me for many a long evening. His manner is dry, brisk and pertinacious and the choice of words not much. The point above him is



his extraordinary readiness of spirit. You can propound, but he has either a theory about it already made or will have one instantly, on the stocks and proceed to lay the timbers and launch it in your presence."

Soon after this, there appears on the horizon an entirely different meteor than stories of adventure, namely, "New Arabian Nights". In general outline it follows the manner of "Arabian Night's Entertainments" but the motifs and style of the several individual sketches have other patterns. Speaking indirectly of "New Arabian Nights" he wrote to a friend who had heard it alleged that Stevenson had complained about his plots being borrowed: "I complain that some one had borrowed the idea of the story ("New Arabian Nights") from me — as if I had not borrowed the ideas of one half my own". Obviously enough, DeQuincy's "Murder as a Fine Art" suggested the "Suicide Club". The style of Stevenson's "New Arabian Nights" is most like and as good as the original.

Then, he returned to the plain story of travel, relating with fine charm, uniting with the manner of Thoreau his own whimsical humor — his adventures in

California. When one runs across stray bits of philosophy in the course of a superb description in "The Silverado Squatters" one recognizes the spirit of that literary recluse as exemplified in "Walden Pond". Most delectable are the many passages of nature description studded with this delicate reflection.

"The Treasure of Franchard" is the only one of this period to reflect the French atmosphere. The theme is an old one; Daudet might have written it himself. As we become acquainted with the old philosophical Doctor Desprez we feel almost as if we were conversing with some resurrected character of old French fiction. After this we notice the dominance of English influence and he brings the author of "Rab and His Friends" very markedly to our notice. Compare if you will the "Character of Dogs" and its prototype "Dogs" and convince yourself. The two extracts quoted from Brown and Stevenson serving only as meager illustrations. "He killed cats, astonished beggars, kept his own in his garden and came off victorious in several well fought battles but he was not quarrelsome or fool hardy. It was very odd how his carriage changed

holding his head up and how much pleasanter he was at home." Striking is the similarity of the following from Stevenson: "He stole no more, he hunted no more cats and conscious of his collar ignored his old companions. Yet the canine upper class was never brought to recognize the upstart and from that hour except for human countenance he was alone." In one of his letters he confessed his fondness for Brown; as a result a number of his later essays have suggestive touches of him. "Penny Plain and Twopence Colored" illustrates this interesting tincture of style as does "Old Mortality". One must be convinced of the indelible imprint of John Brown's style when he reads the following passage in "Old Mortality". "One such face I now remember, one such blank some half dozen of us labor to dissemble. In his youth he was a most beautiful person, most serene and genial by disposition, full of racy words and quaint thots. Laughter attended his coming..... But in his face there was the light of knowledge that was new to it. Of the wounds of his body he was never healed: died of them gradually with clear eyed resignation."

The atmosphere in "Fontainebleau" changes; touches of Ruskin, suggestions of Thoreau, and hints of Brown make the air bracing and clear. In many places we find the glowing texture of Ruskin, always a favorite with Stevenson. Could any passage be more indicative in its full toned resonant quality of "Sesame and Lilies" than this? "And as one generation passes on and renovates the field of tillage for the next. I entertain a fancy that when the young men of to-day go forth into the forest, they shall find the air still vitalized by the spirits of their predecessors, and, like, those "unheard melodies" that are sweetest of all, the memory of our laughter shall still haunt the field of trees."....."One generation after another fall like honeybees upon this memorable forest, rifle its sweets, pack themselves with vital memories, and when the theft is consummated depart again into life richer, but poorer also." His description of the hermit in the second chapter of "Fontainebleau" is singularly like similar character sketches in "A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers". And thus he describes him: "I had the pleasure of his acquaintance; he

appeared grossly stupid, not in his perfect wits, and interested in nothing but small change; for that he had great avidity. In the course of time he proved to be a chicken-stealer, and vanished from his perch; and perhaps from the first he was no true votary of forest freedom, but an ingenious, theatrically minded beggar, and his cabin in the tree was only stock in trade to beg withal."

The fourth period which embraces the four years thru 1889 shows a more marked change; and yet it is also true that the style of many of his contributions bears a direct likeness to other books. The personal tone of his essays he has effectively combined with his own spontaneous manner of phrasing. It is probably thru the essay that the greatest step toward originality is realized; for in many respects the three novels of this period as do his short stories bear marked resemblance to those of other authors.

Such is the case with his novel, "Prince Otto". No one book reflects the influence of an author and friend more than this. As an intimate friend and contemporary author Stevenson was much interested in and enthusiastic

over the work of George Meredith. Some one has aptly said, "In the novel, "Prince Otto," the province of George Meredith has been taken captive." Nothing could be truer. Every character has that air of brilliant unreality like those of Meredith. The situations in "Prince Otto" are almost identical with those in "Harry Richmond", the airy, fairy, petty court with its diplomatic atmosphere thru which the delightfully unreal Dresden China men and women. The style is as perfect as it is charming. Stevenson worked long and hard to polish this, sometimes rewriting a single chapter as many as six times. The description of the flight of the princess is one of the most perfect things he ever wrote. The forest with its listening silence save only for the twitter of the birds, the rustle of the leaves and the occasional eddying of the brook, thru the touch of an artist charm and fascinate us. Then, add to the picture a princess in gaudy, cheap frills, bedrabbled frock, old and torn, rushing heedlessly on, falling over trees and stumps until at last exhausted she sinks down to sleep. And thus, he describes the scene: "The stars alone, cheerful whispers confer with each of

us like friends; they give ear to our sorrows smilingly like wise old men rich in tolerance; and by their double scale so small to the eye, so vast to the imagination, they keep before the mind the double character of man's nature and fate. And there in the meanwhile her body lay exposed by the high wayside in tattered finery and on either hand from the woods the birds came flying by and calling upon one another, debated in their own tongue this strange appearance." Could anything be more perfect? That "Harry Richmond" has no chapter as perfect as this is true; yet the chapter, while essentially Stevensonian is Meredithian too; to be convinced one has only to read those idyllic scenes in "Richard Feverel" where nature is of Heaven's own choosing. In no other book of Stevenson is the influence of Meredith so apparent, tho there are subtle touches of that manner in a number of his writings. There is the apt use of an occasional archaic or unusual word, the short strong description and the striking metaphor combined with the somewhat staccato fashion of speech—all of which are Meredithian. However Stevenson has surpassed his model in lucidity, in grace, and re-

straint of his eccentricities with the result that Prince Otto contains the most graceful and melodious prose found any where.

The two short stories produced in this period, "Markheim" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" bear a strong resemblance to Poe. For such studies in conscience the manner of Poe is well adapted and Stevenson has availed himself of Poe's *modus operandi*. In "A Chapter on Dreams" he says on the subject of the two-fold nature of man: "I had long been trying to write a story on this subject, to find a body, a vehicle for that strong sense of man's double being which at times came in upon and overwhelms the mind of every thinking creature." It is evident that the subject for which he was seeking a vehicle was suggested to him by Poe's psychological story, "William Wilson. After a comparison of the two we must admit that Stevenson has surpassed his model.

In "Ollala" we are carried back to the mellow inland of France where we bask in a soft Carmen-like sunshine. The pattern this time was furnished by Merimee whose "Lokis", the story of the crazed countess given to mysterious screaming furnishes the chief idea for Ollala's



mother. That he says in "A Chapter on Dreams": "Here the court, the mother, the mother's niche, Ollala, Ollala's chamber, the meetings on the stair, the broken window, the ugly scene of the bite, were all given me in bulk and detail as I have tried to unite them"— does not refute the theory that Merimeé was his inspiration. For as is generally recognized, we may dream out a whole story of our own from the slightest suggestion given us in our wakeful moments.

His novel of note in this period is the Scotch story, "Kidnapped". While it is based on the "Waverly novels" and while there is some resemblance in plot yet great is the difference in style, which for the most part is original. Scott artlessly and at random poured forth the treasures of his knowledge, invention, humor, pathos from an exhaustless store-house of imagination. Stevenson did not have a prolific fancy but collected his materials with pains and sifted them laboriously. In "Kidnapped" he used the happy faculty of combining with his own originality, suggestions of many authors. He skilfully blended the incident of the curse of Jennet Clouston upon the

house of Shows, which he has transferred almost literally from "Guy Mannering" with the serene grace of Addison and the realism of Defoe. Most wonderful is this blending of the words and idioms of the Scottish dialect of his time, with those of the eighteenth century. In one of his letters for the year 1881 he requested a friend to procure for him the "Trial of James Stuart in Appin for the murder of Campbell of Glenure 1750" which he stated was for the further study for "Kidnapped." This accounts for the fact that the following is taken almost word for word from the State pamphlets: "Some went bare," says David Balfour, "only for a hanging sacque or great coat and carried their trousers on their backs like a useless burden. Some had an imitation of tartan with little parti colored stripes patched together like an old wife's guilt."

Of the several essays which follow, "Books which have Influenced Me" shows plainly its kinship to Montaigne's essay, "Books" in style and arrangement of subject matter. During these later years of his life he grew to be very fond of that French essayist, who is always so intimate with us. This is Stevenson's confession

in "A gossip on a Novel of Dumas" written in the period preceding: "There are besides a certain number that look at me with reproach as I pass by them on my shelves; books that I once thumbed and studied: houses which were once like home to me, but where I now rarely visit. I am on these sad terms (and I blush to confess it) with Wordsworth, Horace, Burns, and Hazlitt. One or two of Scott's novels, Shakespeare, Moliere, Montaigne, The Egoist and Vicomte de Bragelonne form the inner circle of my intimates." This idea is further brought out by his acknowledgment in "Books Which have Influenced Me." "A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, tho I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing for it is a book not easily out-lived; the "Essais of Montaigne."

A new influence which later grew in power, now becomes apparent for the first time in his life in "Fables." We have seen the strong attachment he formed for French literature and certain phases of the English and here we come face to face with the Celtic in no other form than

the "Sagas." "The House of Eld", "The Touchstone," "The Poor Thing" and "The Song of Tomorrow" recall to us the beauty and sublimity of that Celtic form of Literature. Stevenson's interest in this Literature grew as we know from a letter written in 1892 to E. L. Burlingame in which he said: "And I hope you will keep your bookshop alive to supplying me continuously with the Saga Le hany. I can not get enough of Sagas. I wish there were nine thousand, talk about realism!" In his essay "Books Which Have Influenced Me" he says: "The next book, in order of time, to influence me, was the New Testament and in particular the gospel according to St. Matthew". On almost any page of Stevenson one finds something Biblical; and yet no where is the style of the Parable more prominent than in some of his shorter "Fables".

Each one of the essays in "Across the Plains," published during this period is as varied and charming in style as it is unique and entertaining in theme. The first of these to be published, "A Chapter on Dreams," was probably suggested by Hazlitt's "Dreams" and later developed after a manner of his own. He, like Montaigne,

lets us into the secrets of his heart. A brief citation from this essay will perhaps, in some measure, give an idea of his charming frankness. "For my part, it will be seen, my Brownies are somewhat fantastic; like their stories hot and hot, full of passion and the picturesque alive with animating incident and they have no prejudice against the supernatural. But the other day they gave me a surprise, entertaining me with a love story, a little April Comedy which I ought certainly to hand over to our author of a "Chance Acquaintance" for he could write it as it should be written and I am sure (altho I mean to try) that I cannot—But who would have supposed a Brownie of mine should invent a tale for Mr. Howell's?"

In that majestic and serious essay, "Pulvis et Umbra" very appropriate, indeed, is the style of Sir Thomas Browne, to the quaint vision which is its theme and the blending of Stevenson's own individuality. Speaking of this essay a critic has said, "There is a tincture of Carlyle in this mixture. There are a good many pages of Gothic type in his later essays, for Stevenson thought it the proper tone in which to speak of Death, duty and

Immortality and such subjects as that." Stevenson said in one of his letters: "Pulvis et Umbra I call it: I might have called it a Darwinian Sermon, if I had wanted." In reading Stevenson one realizes the fact that an artist was never more gifted in striking and maintaining a key than he. Clearly and easily it is held in a novel, a fable, a short story and an essay. Notice the virile, vibrating tone in, "A Letter to a Young Gentleman. "Will any one say this has not the energetic note of James Russell Lowell?" It is true that in a certain esoteric journal the author (for instance) is duly criticised and that he is often praised a great deal more than he deserves, sometimes for the qualities which he has prided himself on eschewing and sometimes by ladies and gentlemen who have denied themselves the privilege of reading his work."

"A Christmas Sermon" is original. Seven years before the publication of this tender essay Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a Christmas letter to his mother, part of which the expanded and somewhat changed is to be found in the essay. The close resemblance of this short quotation

from the letter will readily be seen when compared with the essay: "I wonder if you or my father ever thought of the obscurities that lie upon human duty from the negative form in which the Ten Commandments are stated or how Christ was so continually substituting affirmations "Thou shalt not" is but an example "Thou shalt" is the law of God. It was this that seems meant in the phrase: "Not one jot nor tittle of the law should pass."

For "The Master of Ballantrae" our author has again borrowed from Scott. How effective are the opening chapters of "The Master of Ballantrae". They have the same glamour seen in the "Antiquary" and "The Heart of Midlothian;" yet there is much of the style and the story which is original. Stevenson widened out in later life, his literary results being more unrestricted. Whether he has absorbed them until they have become his own or whether he has entirely freed himself is a question difficult to settle.

The consideration of "The Master of Ballantrae" brings us to the fifth and last period, which comprises the remaining four years of his life. It has been the

purpose of this treatise to show the stages of the growth of the style of Robert Louis Stevenson by tracing the outer influences which are reflected in his works. Many and varied are the authors who have had their share in his fame. In his earlier attempts he was eclectic; and undoubtedly it is thru his careful assorting and pains taken in the use of materials that he reached the culmination of his genius in this last period. Stevenson absorbed and assimilated characteristic qualities of his companions until he ultimately attained his aim, namely, an individual style. What it might have been had he lived longer we can only surmise.

"The Epistle to Father Damien" with straight forward style, "Vailma Letters" and "The South Seas" are illustrative of this latest manner. "Catriona" or "David Balfour", the sequel to "Kidnapped" is of more than passing importance since it reveals the ultimate development of Stevenson's own individual style and since it was destined to be the forerunner of "Weir of Hermiston". Stevenson knew his own limitations; he felt that he had not attained that breadth and depth characteristic of the



world's greatest authors. In one of his letters written in 1894 he criticized "Catriona" thus: "I think "David Balfour" a nice little book and very artistic and just the thing to occupy the leisure of a busy man; but for the top floor of a man's life it seems to me inadequate. Small is the word. It is a small age and I'm it."

To make a comprehensive study of the style of such an artist it is necessary to consider that grim and gruesome book, "Ebb Tide". Like the "Wrong Box" it was written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne but unlike it, "Ebb Tide" is singularly Stevensonian in plot and particularly in style. In Stevenson's letters little is said of Osbourne's share in the story, which leads the careful student to conclude that "Ebb Tide" is in the main the work of that artist who was ever so ready to acknowledge "from whence cometh his help"; but he has commented a number of times on his weary struggles with its style. The longest criticism he made concerning it is this: "Ebb Tide", a dreadful grimy business in the third person where the strain between a vilely, realistic dialogue and a narrative style pitched about (in phrase) "four notes

higher" than it should have been, has sown my head with grey hairs or I believe so — if my head escaped my heart has them." In another letter Stevenson wrote to a friend: "The grimness of that story ("Ebb Tide") is not to be depicted in words". "Ebb Tide" is a stronger book than its predecessors and vastly important since it is the immediate forerunner of "Weir of Hermiston". There are passages in "Ebb Tide" that in the direct, sufficient and strong style equal any thing Stevenson has ever done. Is not the effect of the epithets in the following quotation magical in beauty and suggestion?

"It was now the fourth month completed and still there was no change or sign of change. The moon, racing thru a world of flying clouds of every size and shape and density, some black as ink stains; some delicate as lawn threw the marvel of her Southern brightness over the same lovely and detested scene,— the island mountains crowned with perennial island cloud, the embowered city studded with rare lamps, the masts in the harbor, the smooth mirror in the lagoon and the mole of the barrier —reef on which the breakers whitened."

I need not quote the page which describes the ar-  
allone's entry into the lagoon; he who has read "Ebb Tide"  
will always remember it as truly of Stevenson's own hand-  
one skilled in the craft of weaving the intricate web of  
words.

If Stevenson felt the grimy gruesomeness of "Ebb  
Tide", he also felt the strength, breadth and charm of  
"Weir of Hermiston", his last and unfinished creation.  
In his letters written during the latter part of his life  
one finds comments such as these: "Weir of Hermiston" is  
a much greater undertaking and the plot is not good I  
fear; but the Lord Justice ought to be a plum. ——"It  
will be excellent I expect it to be my masterpiece."

English criticism divides at the present day over  
the question whether "Weir of Hermiston" is an example of  
his most original style or whether it marks his most  
skillfully imitated style, one critic of this school  
maintaining that it is "English ten times distilled".  
But, strangely those who insist upon this "sedulous aping"  
to the very last are the most reluctant to indicate the  
prototype, imperceptible to duller eyes, which divides

the natural from the imitated. Every writer of skill learns to observe in all his creations, the necessity of the triple stylistic demand of sound, sense and association. No one knew its value more than Robert Louis Stevenson who made it the corner stone of everything he wrote. The fragment, "Weir of Hermiston" is Stevenson at his very best as if the fire of his genius had blazed up more brightly than ever, for a moment before it was finally quenched. Every year Stevenson gained more facility, more concentration, more experience, until in "The Lord Justice" he has achieved the culmination of his powers. It is thru the breadth and force characteristic of this unfinished masterpiece that the true genius of his style becomes apparent. In no other work is his style as mellow, as deep and as rich; chastity of color and noble justice of composition are sustained thruout with due dignity. Nothing feeble or jarring disturbs its equality of exultation; in this serious mood story not a tone of color, not a note of form is misplaced or dispensible. That Stevenson has at last come to his own in a style whose tones and effects are pure, lucid, aerial any of

the descriptive and decorative beauties of this romance verify. For supple style, light and strong, buoyant with beauty it would be hard to find a more perfect example than this:

"On this particular Sunday, there was no doubt but that spring had come at last. It was warm with a latent shiver in the air that made the warmth only the more welcome. The shallows of the stream glittered and tinkled among the bunches of primrose. Vagrant scents of the earth arrested Archie by the way with moments of ethereal intoxication. The grey, Quakerish dale was still only awakened in places and patches from the sobriety of its wintry colouring; and he wondered at its beauty; an essential beauty of the old earth it seemed to him, not resident in particulars but breathing to him from the whole".

It was by his careful and sincere efforts to reproduce the style of another that he acquired that copious vocabulary of choicest English by which in a peculiar fashion of his own he clothed his thoughts and gave them to the world in clear flowing sentences which never lack

charm and feeling. Nor was he the only one to imitate authors. Burns, Keats and Macaulay developed their skill by the same method but critics pass them by because they were not so frank in revealing their habits. Reading and writing do not come by nature; they must be cultivated and the methods used will depend largely on the individual himself. While it is not in the least essential to all writing that the author care for words, he must have a fine sense of sound and association, of harmony and proportion. Stevenson possessed in addition to all these a grace and daintiness of diction, a vivid imagination and a keen interest in life which enabled him, if he could not equal Poe in the command of the eerie and fantastic, Dumas in grouping on the broad canvas or Scott in genial humor, to clothe with individual charm everything he took.

A bird's eye view of the growth of Stevenson's literary career shows us the following: When we survey the first period in which Stevenson began the serious work of his life we are impressed by his close adherence to models. "Virginibus Puerisque" his first volume of essays

strongly savors of Hazlitt. The short stories, "Will O' the Mill", "A Lodging for the Night" and "Sieur de Male-troit's Door" reveal his versatility in producing three successive stories after the manner of Hawthorne and Daudet. The second period shows a wider range and a greater growth in style: six short stories, two stories of travel, one of adventure and a number of essays. The English influences of the eighteenth century is shown in "An Inland Voyage", "Travels with a Donkey" and "Treasure Island"; the English combined with the Thoreau manner in "An Amateur Emigrant"; the French in "Providence and the Guitar." The third period marks a more personal tone in his style. In his essays he has taken his readers into his confidence after the manner of Montaigne but no where does he follow one model, sometimes it is John Brown, sometimes, Thoreau, Ruskin or Daudet. The fourth stage of his growth shows imitation to a less degree; with the exception of "Prince Otto" indicative of the Thoreau influence, "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", "Markham" both after the manner of Poe, "Ollala", based on Merimee's "Lokis", "Kidnapped" with its gentle suggestion of Scott,

"Fables" based on the "Saga's and the Parables." His remaining productions show his own individual style. The fifth period, short as it is, marks the breadth and scope of the author's genius. After many attempts and continuous effort he has now attained his most perfect and original style. Finally, as we peruse the pages of "Weir of Hermiston" his "swan song", we note a style purely Stevensonian in its every aspect; a flower, which at last has matured and unfolded its rare beauty to the world.

I remember seeing an interesting page of reproduced photographs. The page contained pictures of types of several different races arranged around one in the center which was the composite reproduction of them all. In the outer circle were pictures of the Indian with his eagle eye and straight hair, the white skinned Caucasian, the almond eyed Mongolian, the thick lipped Turk, the Negro with dilated nostrils, the Greek type with its delicate beauty of line, and the Roman with his strength and virility. In the center the large composite photograph was that of a strong energetic and intellectual face. That of the typical American gentleman. So grew Robert Louis



Stevenson's literary ability. Now he schooled himself in the virile characteristics of one author; now he strove to imitate the delicate beauty found in the pages of a second; now he copied the clever method of treatment attained by a third; now he studied the artful touches of still another. Coming to the consideration of Stevenson in his last years one asks, "Who is the pattern author?" "What is the type?" In answer to these we must say we have found the "composite" of his life work. We must admit that Stevenson in the height of his literary achievement has given the world a new and individual diction, an artistic literary treatment entirely his own. The result of the harmonious blending and deft interlacing of all that was strong, beautiful and artistic in his masters is the rare and fascinating style we call Stevensonian.