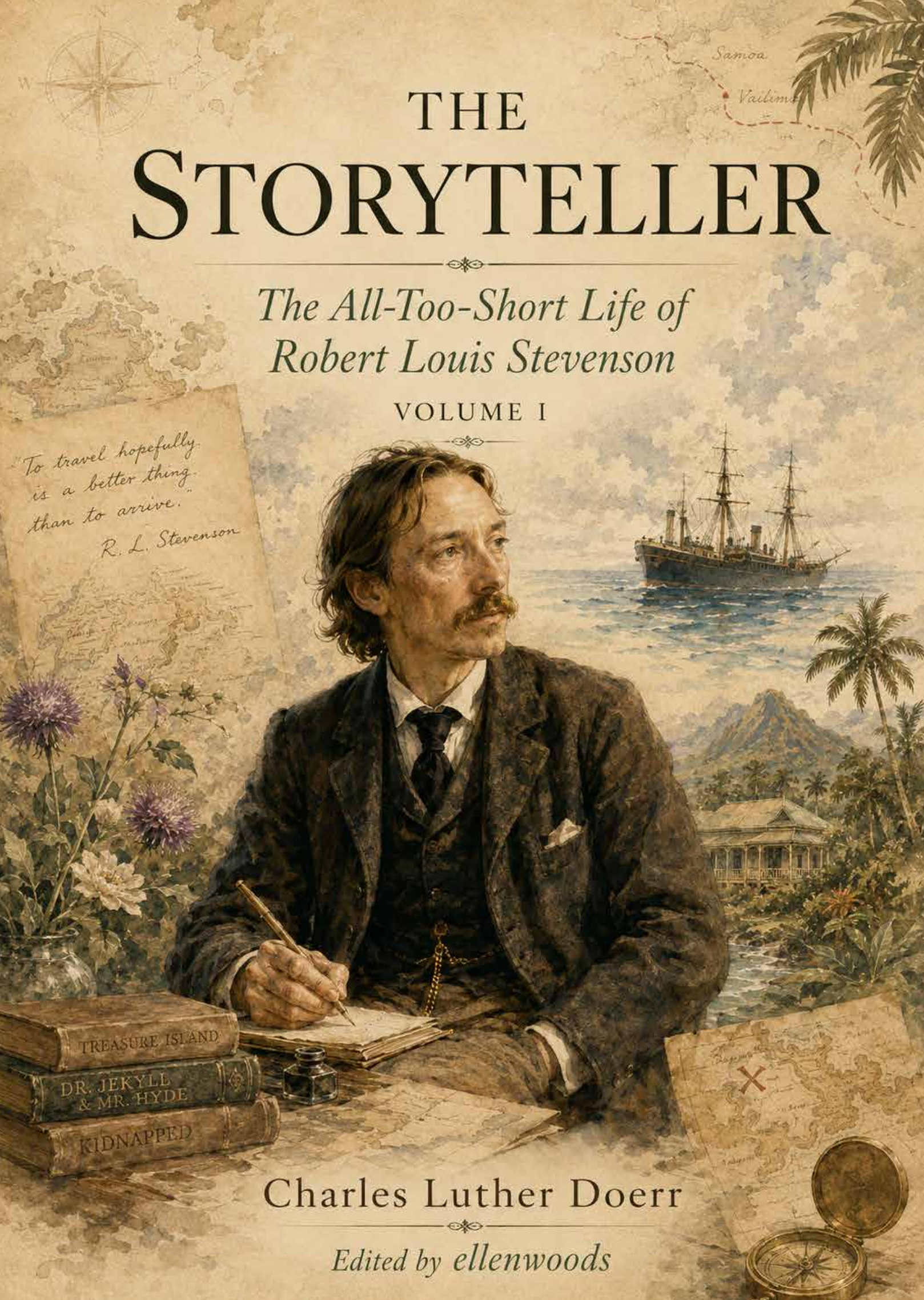




# THE STORYTELLER

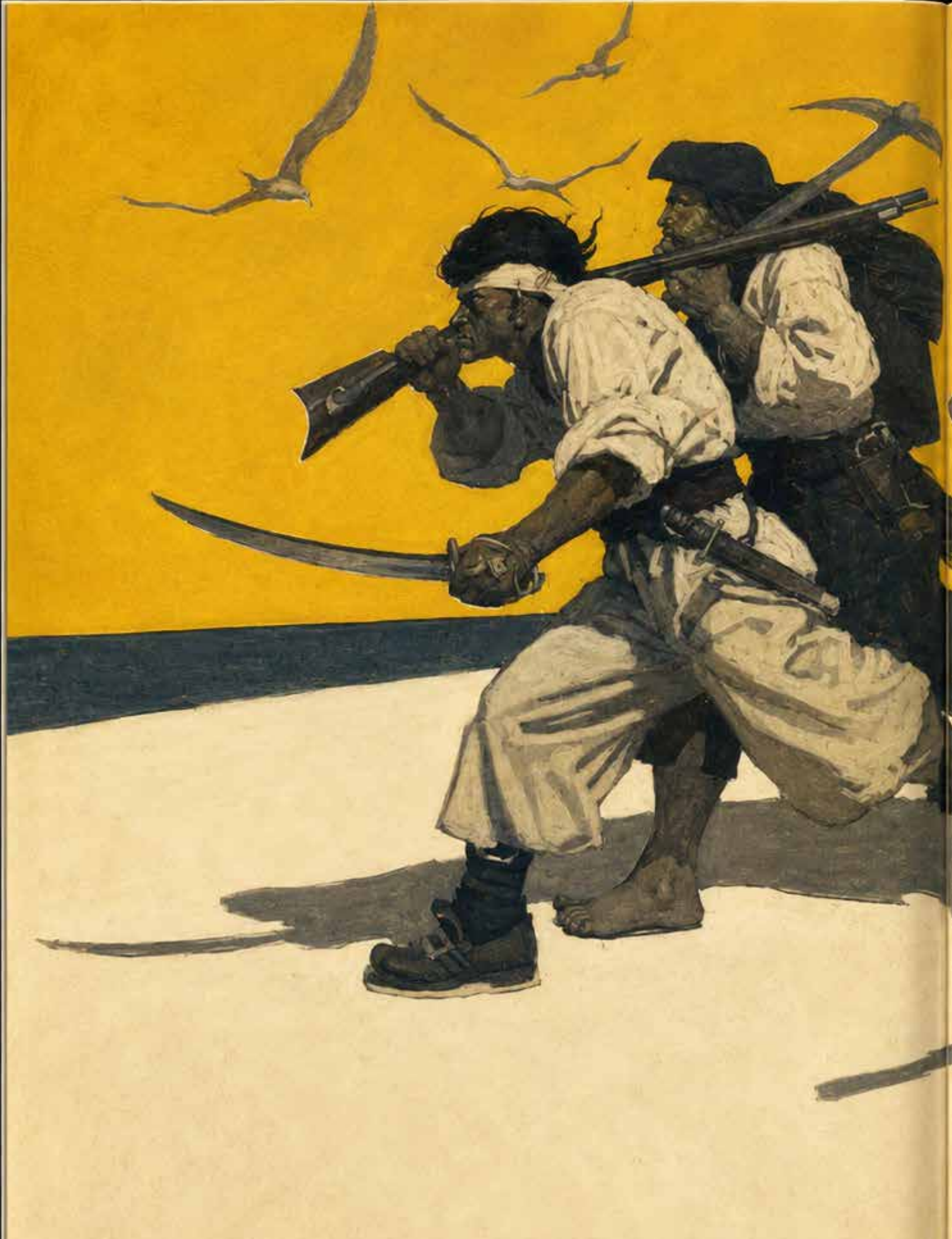
*The All-Too-Short Life of  
Robert Louis Stevenson*

VOLUME I

*"To travel hopefully  
is a better thing  
than to arrive."  
R. L. Stevenson*

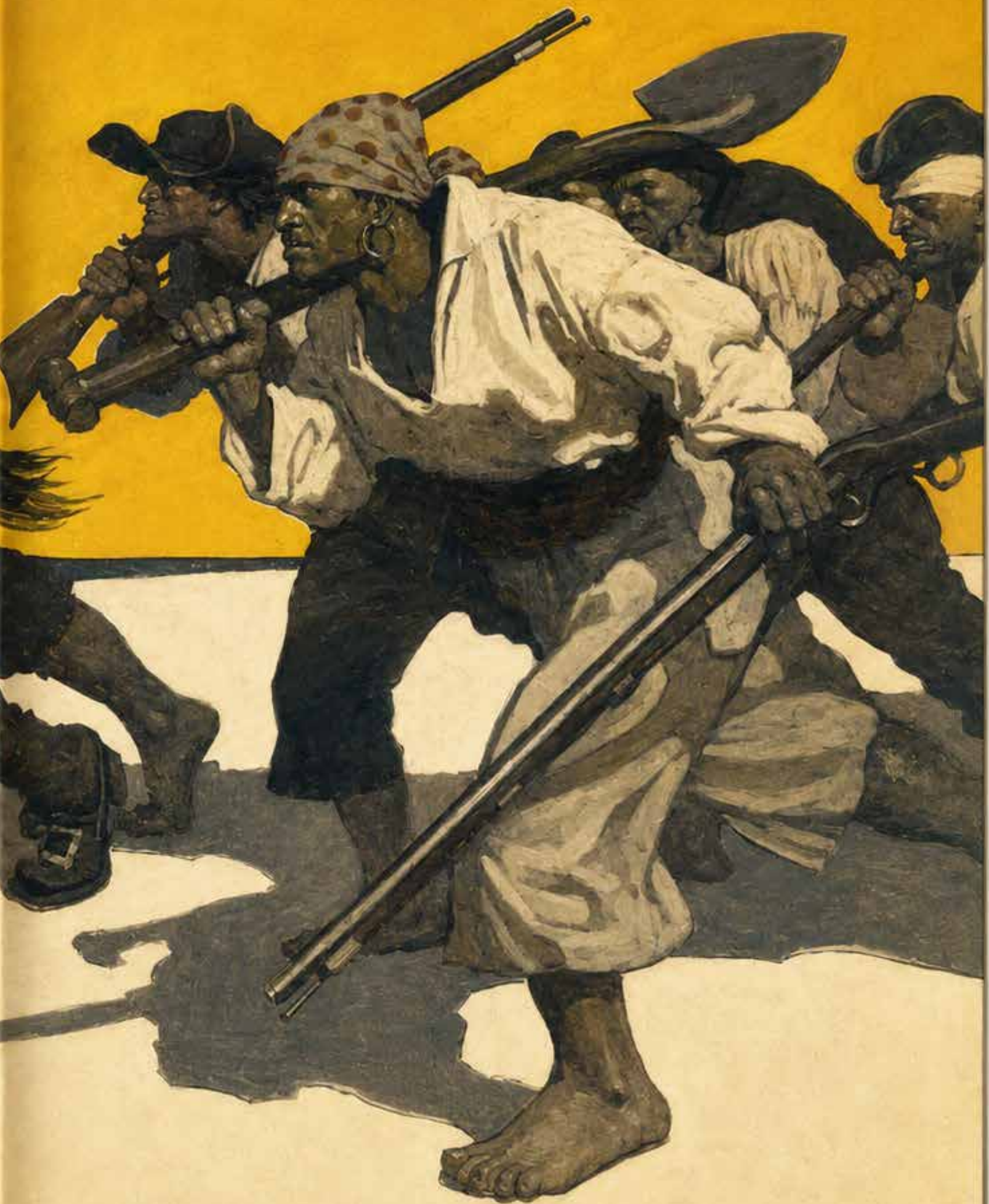
Charles Luther Doerr

*Edited by ellenwoods*



After N. C. Wyeth: Pirates on Treasure Island, 1911.

AI-assisted reconstruction and extension of an illustration from Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1911.



## **VOLUME I – THE STORYTELLER**

### **The Far Too Short Life of Robert Louis Stevenson**

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## STATION 2

AUDIO FEATURE



STATION 3

# Wie eine Landkarte die Schatzinsel schrieb

Von der Skizze zum Mythos

Eine vergilbte Karte. Ein paar hastige Notizen.  
Und die Vorstellung von Abenteuer.  
So beginnt 1881 eine Geschichte,  
die Generationen prägen wird.  
Begleiten Sie Robert Louis Stevenson  
auf der Reise von den Südeestranden  
zur Schatzinsel.



The island was a map  
of the imagination,  
drawn in ink and  
washed in adventure.  
R. L. S.



Abenteuer, Freiheit und  
Geschichten, die weitertragen.



Am Weg nach Vailima, Samoa.

1889.

To \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ OC  
Berth \_\_\_\_\_ ZWI  
Ne \_\_\_\_\_ A  
NOT TRA

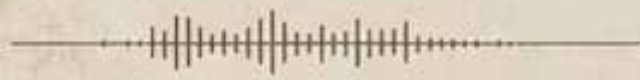




*"Ich muss fort,  
ich werde die Welt sehen."  
— R. L. S.*



HÖREN SIE STATION 2  
Dauer ca. 7 Min.

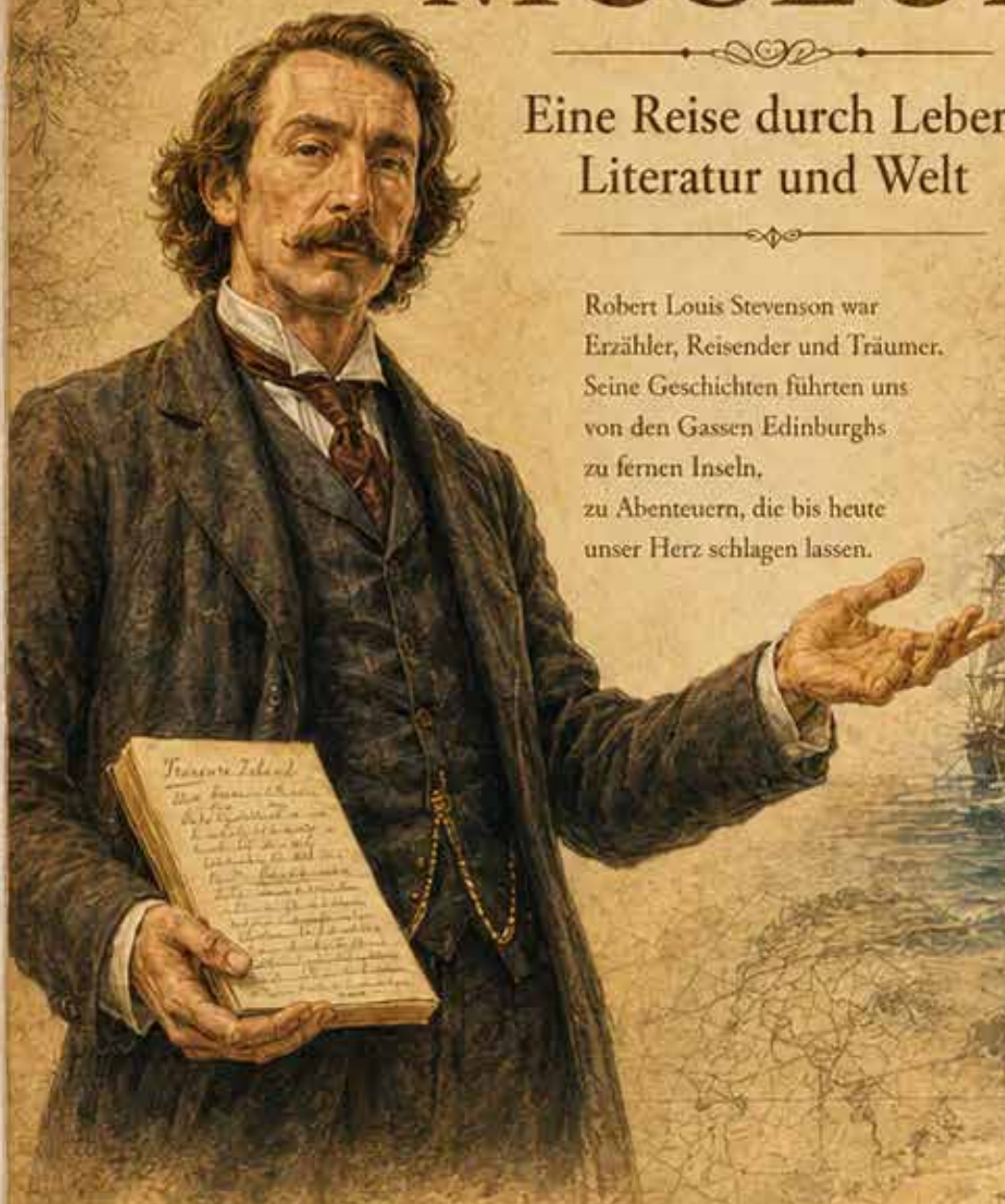


Robert Louis Stevenson  
Edinburgh, 1850 - 1894

# STEVENSON MUSEUM

Eine Reise durch Leben,  
Literatur und Welt

Robert Louis Stevenson war  
Erzähler, Reisender und Träumer.  
Seine Geschichten führten uns  
von den Gassen Edinburghs  
zu fernen Inseln,  
zu Abenteuern, die bis heute  
unser Herz schlagen lassen.



*"To travel hopefully  
is a better thing  
than to arrive."*

*R. L. Stevenson*

*Vailima,  
Samoa*



## PROLOGUE

# The Storyteller

## The Far Too Short Life of Robert Louis Stevenson

A fountain pen is an unusual reason to take a closer look at a writer. In this case, it proved to be a rather good one.

Montblanc has dedicated a Writers Edition to Robert Louis Stevenson. Look closely at the writing instrument and you encounter an entire arsenal of allusions: crosses like those on a treasure map, the planking of the Hispaniola, a compass rose, a spyglass, pirate symbols. Almost everything points to the book that made Stevenson world-famous and that still determines what most people associate with his name: *Treasure Island*. Yet another word is engraved on the nib. Tusi-tala. It is the name by which Stevenson became known in Samoa. It means: storyteller. That was the point at which things became interesting. Because of course I knew Stevenson. Or at least I thought I did. I knew Long John Silver, the one-legged pirate with the parrot; I knew Jim Hawkins, the map, the treasure, the Admiral Benbow inn. I knew Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, those two names that long ago migrated out of literature and became a figure of speech. Anyone who calls a person “Jekyll and Hyde” need never have read the book. Stevenson created a character who outlived his author and now belongs to the common currency of our language.

But what did I know about Stevenson himself?

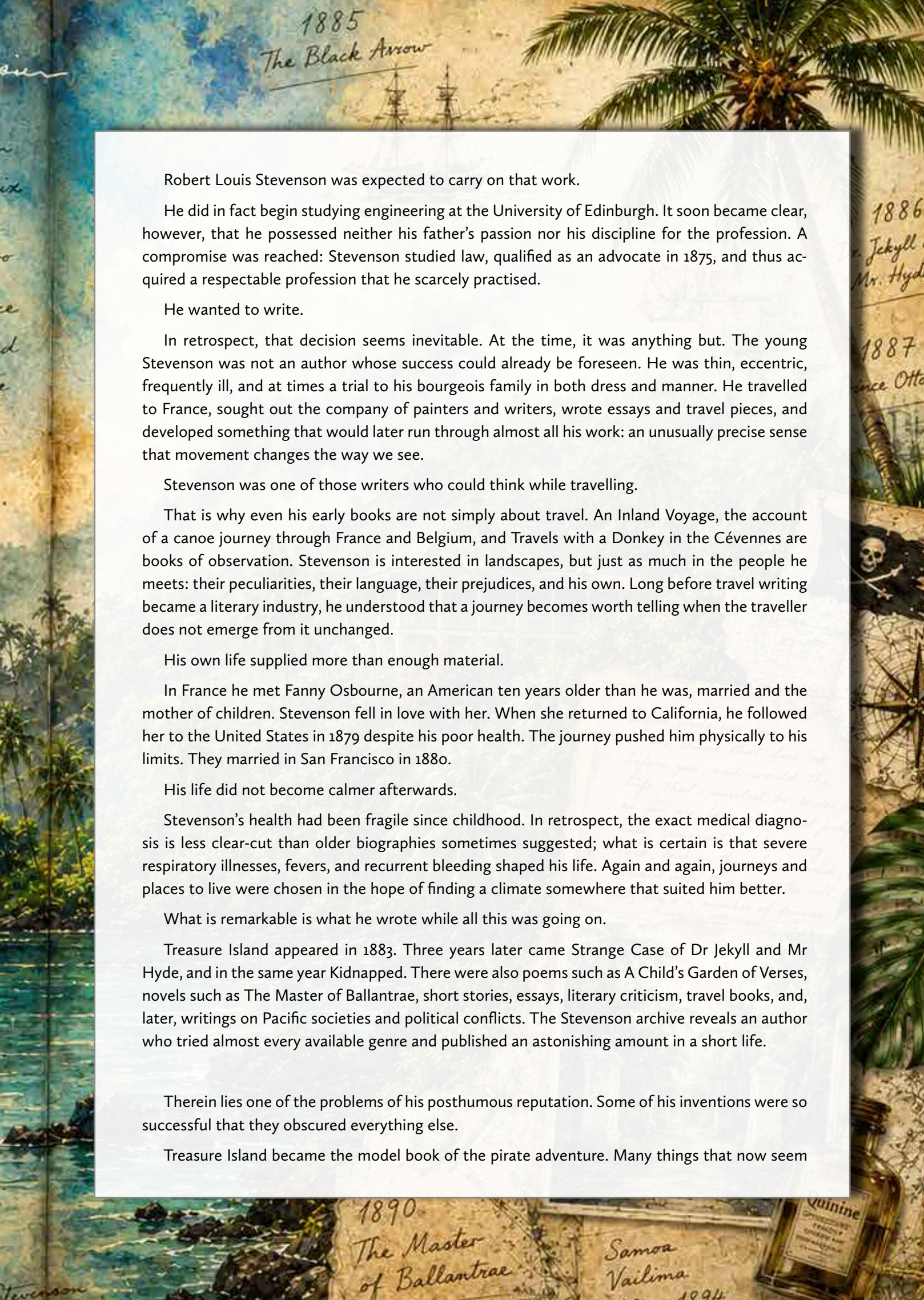
Surprisingly little.

What had this man written apart from the two or three books that still carry his name? How did he live? Where did his stories come from? Why did a Scotsman of the Victorian age spend a considerable part of his life travelling and finally settle in the South Pacific? How did the son of a respected Edinburgh engineering family become a writer who moved through Europe among French artists, followed a married American woman to California, walked through the Cévennes with a donkey, sailed across the Pacific, and, near the end of his life, involved himself in political disputes in Samoa?

And above all: how could a man who lived to only forty-four leave behind a body of work whose characters, more than 130 years after his death, still belong so naturally to our cultural furniture?

Those are the questions from which this book grew.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on 13 November 1850. In his family, a son's professional future was more or less prescribed. The Stevensons were among Scotland's great lighthouse builders. Robert's father Thomas was an engineer, as was his grandfather; uncles and cousins designed structures that stood off the Scottish coast in places where sensible people would rather not have built a house at all. Their work combined mathematics, experience, courage, and technical stubbornness. They built against storms, rocks, and darkness.



Robert Louis Stevenson was expected to carry on that work.

He did in fact begin studying engineering at the University of Edinburgh. It soon became clear, however, that he possessed neither his father's passion nor his discipline for the profession. A compromise was reached: Stevenson studied law, qualified as an advocate in 1875, and thus acquired a respectable profession that he scarcely practised.

He wanted to write.

In retrospect, that decision seems inevitable. At the time, it was anything but. The young Stevenson was not an author whose success could already be foreseen. He was thin, eccentric, frequently ill, and at times a trial to his bourgeois family in both dress and manner. He travelled to France, sought out the company of painters and writers, wrote essays and travel pieces, and developed something that would later run through almost all his work: an unusually precise sense that movement changes the way we see.

Stevenson was one of those writers who could think while travelling.

That is why even his early books are not simply about travel. *An Inland Voyage*, the account of a canoe journey through France and Belgium, and *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* are books of observation. Stevenson is interested in landscapes, but just as much in the people he meets: their peculiarities, their language, their prejudices, and his own. Long before travel writing became a literary industry, he understood that a journey becomes worth telling when the traveller does not emerge from it unchanged.

His own life supplied more than enough material.

In France he met Fanny Osbourne, an American ten years older than he was, married and the mother of children. Stevenson fell in love with her. When she returned to California, he followed her to the United States in 1879 despite his poor health. The journey pushed him physically to his limits. They married in San Francisco in 1880.

His life did not become calmer afterwards.

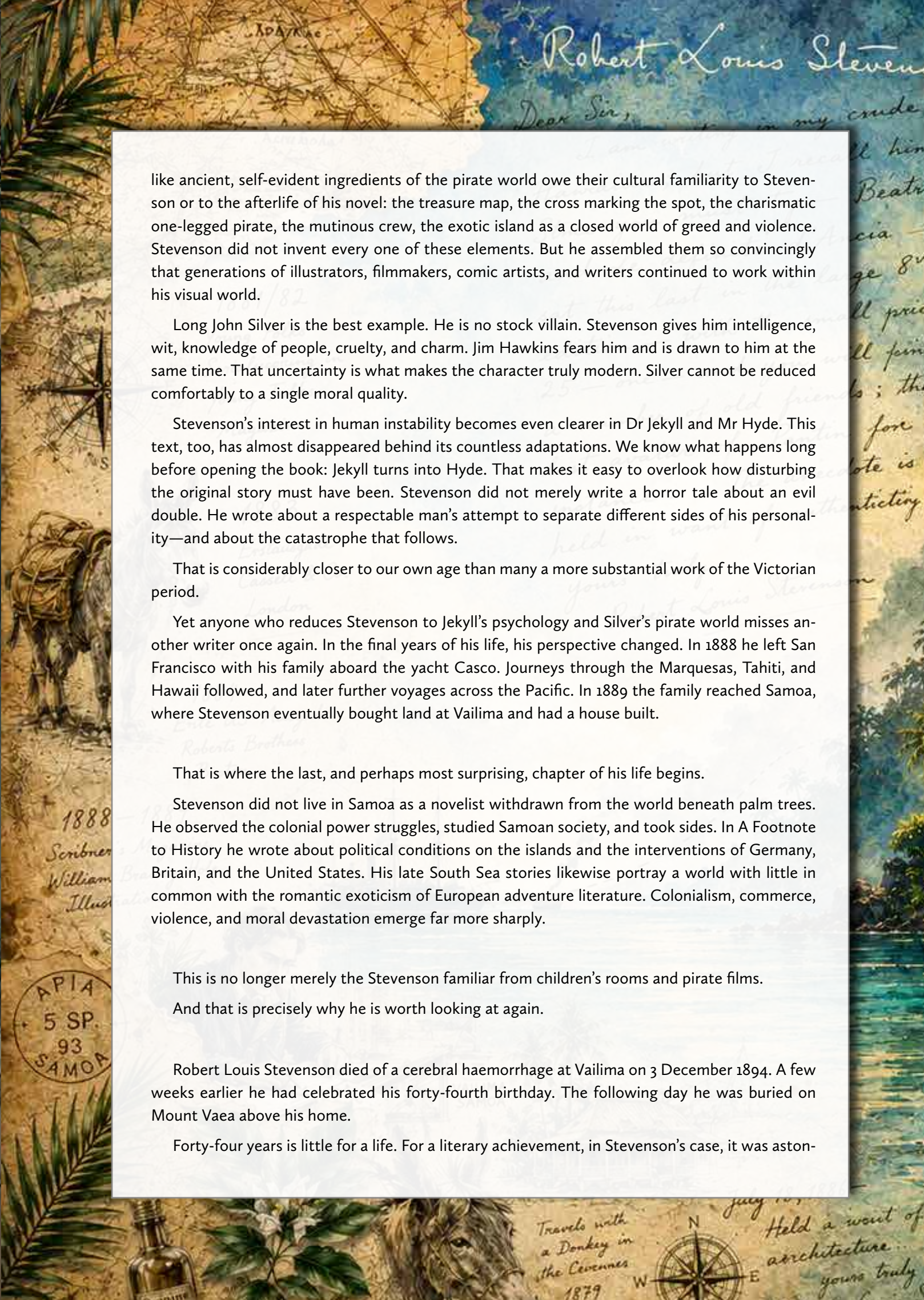
Stevenson's health had been fragile since childhood. In retrospect, the exact medical diagnosis is less clear-cut than older biographies sometimes suggested; what is certain is that severe respiratory illnesses, fevers, and recurrent bleeding shaped his life. Again and again, journeys and places to live were chosen in the hope of finding a climate somewhere that suited him better.

What is remarkable is what he wrote while all this was going on.

*Treasure Island* appeared in 1883. Three years later came *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and in the same year *Kidnapped*. There were also poems such as *A Child's Garden of Verses*, novels such as *The Master of Ballantrae*, short stories, essays, literary criticism, travel books, and, later, writings on Pacific societies and political conflicts. The Stevenson archive reveals an author who tried almost every available genre and published an astonishing amount in a short life.

Therein lies one of the problems of his posthumous reputation. Some of his inventions were so successful that they obscured everything else.

*Treasure Island* became the model book of the pirate adventure. Many things that now seem



like ancient, self-evident ingredients of the pirate world owe their cultural familiarity to Stevenson or to the afterlife of his novel: the treasure map, the cross marking the spot, the charismatic one-legged pirate, the mutinous crew, the exotic island as a closed world of greed and violence. Stevenson did not invent every one of these elements. But he assembled them so convincingly that generations of illustrators, filmmakers, comic artists, and writers continued to work within his visual world.

Long John Silver is the best example. He is no stock villain. Stevenson gives him intelligence, wit, knowledge of people, cruelty, and charm. Jim Hawkins fears him and is drawn to him at the same time. That uncertainty is what makes the character truly modern. Silver cannot be reduced comfortably to a single moral quality.

Stevenson's interest in human instability becomes even clearer in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This text, too, has almost disappeared behind its countless adaptations. We know what happens long before opening the book: Jekyll turns into Hyde. That makes it easy to overlook how disturbing the original story must have been. Stevenson did not merely write a horror tale about an evil double. He wrote about a respectable man's attempt to separate different sides of his personality—and about the catastrophe that follows.

That is considerably closer to our own age than many a more substantial work of the Victorian period.

Yet anyone who reduces Stevenson to Jekyll's psychology and Silver's pirate world misses another writer once again. In the final years of his life, his perspective changed. In 1888 he left San Francisco with his family aboard the yacht *Casco*. Journeys through the Marquesas, Tahiti, and Hawaii followed, and later further voyages across the Pacific. In 1889 the family reached Samoa, where Stevenson eventually bought land at Vailima and had a house built.

That is where the last, and perhaps most surprising, chapter of his life begins.

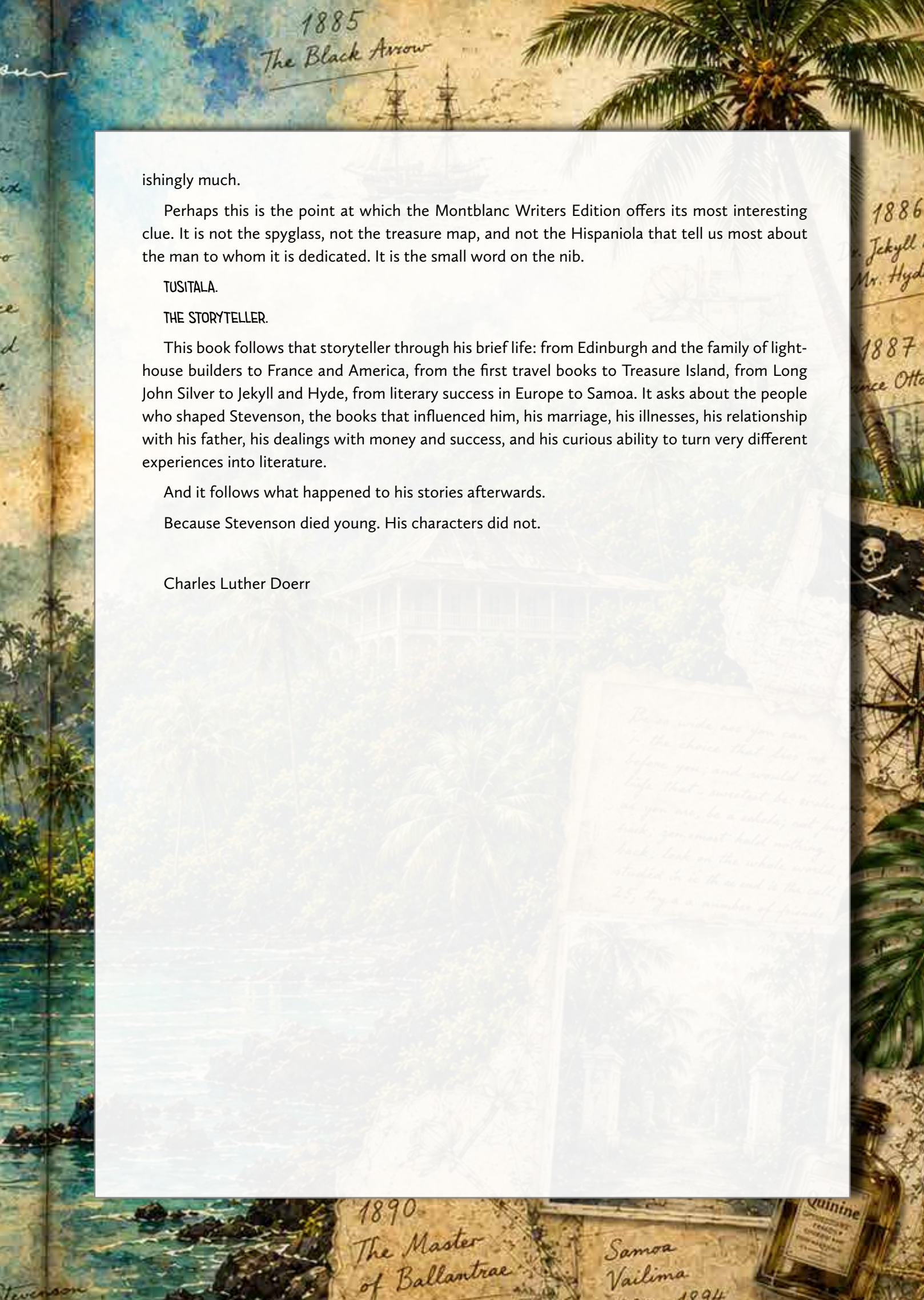
Stevenson did not live in Samoa as a novelist withdrawn from the world beneath palm trees. He observed the colonial power struggles, studied Samoan society, and took sides. In *A Footnote to History* he wrote about political conditions on the islands and the interventions of Germany, Britain, and the United States. His late South Sea stories likewise portray a world with little in common with the romantic exoticism of European adventure literature. Colonialism, commerce, violence, and moral devastation emerge far more sharply.

This is no longer merely the Stevenson familiar from children's rooms and pirate films.

And that is precisely why he is worth looking at again.

Robert Louis Stevenson died of a cerebral haemorrhage at Vailima on 3 December 1894. A few weeks earlier he had celebrated his forty-fourth birthday. The following day he was buried on Mount Vaea above his home.

Forty-four years is little for a life. For a literary achievement, in Stevenson's case, it was aston-



ishingly much.

Perhaps this is the point at which the Montblanc Writers Edition offers its most interesting clue. It is not the spyglass, not the treasure map, and not the Hispaniola that tell us most about the man to whom it is dedicated. It is the small word on the nib.

TUSITALA.

THE STORYTELLER.

This book follows that storyteller through his brief life: from Edinburgh and the family of lighthouse builders to France and America, from the first travel books to *Treasure Island*, from Long John Silver to *Jekyll and Hyde*, from literary success in Europe to Samoa. It asks about the people who shaped Stevenson, the books that influenced him, his marriage, his illnesses, his relationship with his father, his dealings with money and success, and his curious ability to turn very different experiences into literature.

And it follows what happened to his stories afterwards.

Because Stevenson died young. His characters did not.

Charles Luther Doerr

# Schatzinsel-Universum

## Ein Abenteueratlas

Eine Insel. Eine Schatzkarte. Eine zeitlose Geschichte.  
Seit über einem Jahrhundert inspiriert *Die Schatzinsel* Menschen  
auf der ganzen Welt – in Büchern, auf der Leinwand, auf der Bühne,  
in Comics und in der Popkultur. Dieser Atlas zeigt die Orte,  
Wege und vielen Leben eines großen Abenteuers.

### DAS STOCKADE

Hier verschanzten sich  
die Piraten. Ein Ort  
der Spannung, des  
Misstrauens – und  
des Aufstands.

### DIE HÖHLE

Düstere Gänge, versteckte  
Hinweise und ein  
gefährlicher Hinterhalt.  
In der Höhle zeigt sich,  
wem man wirklich  
vertrauen kann.

### DIE SCHATZINSEL

Ein ferner Ort voller Geheimnisse:  
dichte Dschungel, steile Klippen,  
versteckte Buchten – und der Traum  
vom großen Schatz.

### DIE REISE DER HISPANIOLA

Von Bristol aus sticht die  
*Hispaniola* in See, überquert  
den Atlantik und nimmt Kurs  
auf die geheimnisvolle Insel –  
wo Abenteuer und Gefahr  
warten.

### DIE GESCHICHTE

Junge Jim Hawkins findet  
eine Karte, heuert auf der  
*Hispaniola* an und begibt  
sich mit einer bunten  
Crew auf die Suche nach  
Flint's verdecktem Schatz.  
Mord, Verrat und Freundschaft  
bestimmen  
ihre Reise.

„Fünfzehn Mann auf des toten Mannes Kiste.“  
Ein Ruf, der niemals

## DIE NACHLEBEN – EIN ABENTEUER OHNE ENDE

### BENBOWS WIRTSHAUS

Der Ausgangspunkt  
des Abenteuers.  
Hier beginnt Jims  
ungewöhnliche Reise.

### LITERATUR

In unzähligen Ausgaben,  
Übersetzungen und  
Neuinterpretationen  
lebt Stevenson's Klavier  
weiter.



### FILM & TV

Von frühen Stummfilmen  
bis zu modernen  
Abenteuerrisiken – die  
Schatzinsel begeistert  
Generationen.



### THEATER

Auf großen Bühnen  
und in kleinen  
Theatern wird die  
Geschichte lebendig  
mit Mut, Musik und  
großen Gefühlen.



### COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

In starken Bildern und  
neuen Blickwinkeln  
entdecken Comic-Künstler  
die Welt der Piraten  
immer wieder neu.



### POP-KULTUR

Die Schatzinsel  
inspirierte Spiele,  
Hörspiele, Musik,  
Merchandise und  
unvergessliche  
Abenteuerträume.



### DER SCHATZORT

Am Ende der Karte  
liegt der Schatz –  
und die Entscheidung  
über Freund und  
Feind.



ste – Johoho und 'ne Buddel voll Rum!"  
s verklungen ist.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

I am writing you in my crude  
Hawaiian, but I recall him  
Since you must try — Beatrice  
and be definite d'Almeida  
sat this last in the large 8v  
edition — with the small price  
25 — one — and you will find  
a number of old friends; the  
last avatar of Pantofole for  
instance. The anecdote is  
held in want of authenticity

yours truly

Robert Louis Stevenson

1881/82

Young Folks  
Serialisation in  
Young Folks  
Magazine

1883

Erstaussage  
Cassell & Co.  
London

1884

Erste US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889

Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hole  
Illustrationen

APIA  
5 SP.  
93  
SAMOA

VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879

July 10, 1880

Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
The Black Arrow

1886

Mr. Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887

Prince Otto

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; make  
as you are, be a sailor; not just  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

The Master  
of Ballantrae

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

# Die Schatzkarte

zwischen

## Dichtung und Wahrheit

Robert Louis Stevenson schuf mit der *Schatzinsel* nicht nur eine packende Abenteuergeschichte, sondern auch eine Karte, die bis heute fasziniert. Doch wie viel davon ist echt – und wie viel entsprang seiner Vorstellungskraft?

### WAHRHEIT UND VORSTELLUNG

Stevenson ließ sich von Seekarten, Reiseberichten und seiner Zeit in der Südsee inspirieren. Doch die Insel, ihre Bucht und der Schatz – sie entspringen seiner Fantasie.

Er verband reale nautische Details mit romantischer Abenteuerlust – und schuf so eine Welt, die sich wahr anfühlt. Genau darin liegt das Geheimnis seiner Geschichte.

### ZWISCHEN REALER WELT UND

Stevenson kannte die Regeln der Seefahrt. Windrichtungen und Entfernungen stimmten. Doch dann setzt er seine eigene Welt darüber. Ein Schatz, der niemandem gehört, und eine

So entsteht Literatur, die beides ist: gla



## DIE KUNST DER ERFINDUNG

Eine gute Geschichte beginnt mit einer Idee – aber sie wird lebendig durch Details. Stevenson erfand nicht nur Ereignisse, sondern auch Zeichen, Orte und Geheimnisse, die seine Leser selbst entschlüsseln wollen.

Die Karte ist mehr als ein Plan – sie ist ein Versprechen. Ein Abenteuer auf Papier.

## ZEICHEN, SYMBOLE, GEHEIMNISSE

Der rote Strich, das Kreuz, die Landmarken – nichts davon ist zufällig. Jedes Symbol erzählt eine Geschichte und fordert den Leser heraus, zwischen den Zeilen zu lesen.

So wird aus einer Karte ein Rätsel – und aus dem Leser ein Entdecker.

## WARUM DIE KARTE SO WICHTIG IST

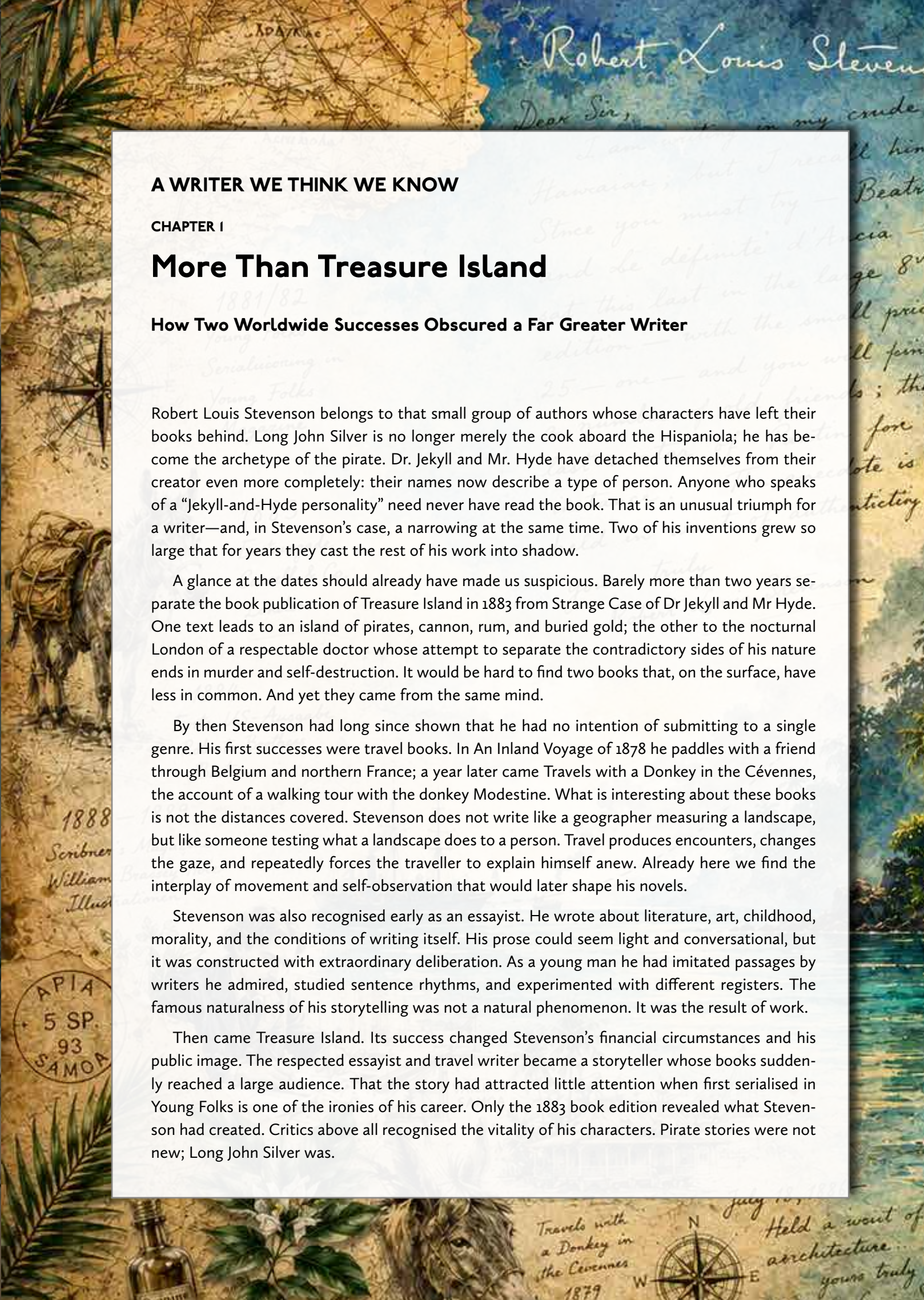
Sie ist der Schlüssel zur Handlung, der Motor der Spannung und das Herzstück des Abenteuers.

Ohne die Karte gäbe es keine Reise, keinen Schatz, keine Legende.

Sie steht für Hoffnung, Risiko und die Sehnsucht nach dem Unbekannten.

## UND FREIER PHANTASIE

genau: Strömungen, Inseltypen, oft mit der Realität überein. – mit einer Insel, die es nicht gibt, im Ende, das in Erinnerung bleibt. unwürdig und wunderbar.

The background is a collage of various elements. At the top, there's a map with a compass rose. Below the map, on the left, is a drawing of a donkey. On the right, there's a handwritten letter from Robert Louis Stevenson. At the bottom, there's a circular postmark from Apia, Samoa, dated 5 SP 93. To the right of the postmark is a drawing of a bottle and some leaves. At the bottom right, there's a compass rose and a handwritten note about a journey in the Cévennes in 1879.

## A WRITER WE THINK WE KNOW

### CHAPTER I

# More Than Treasure Island

## How Two Worldwide Successes Obscured a Far Greater Writer

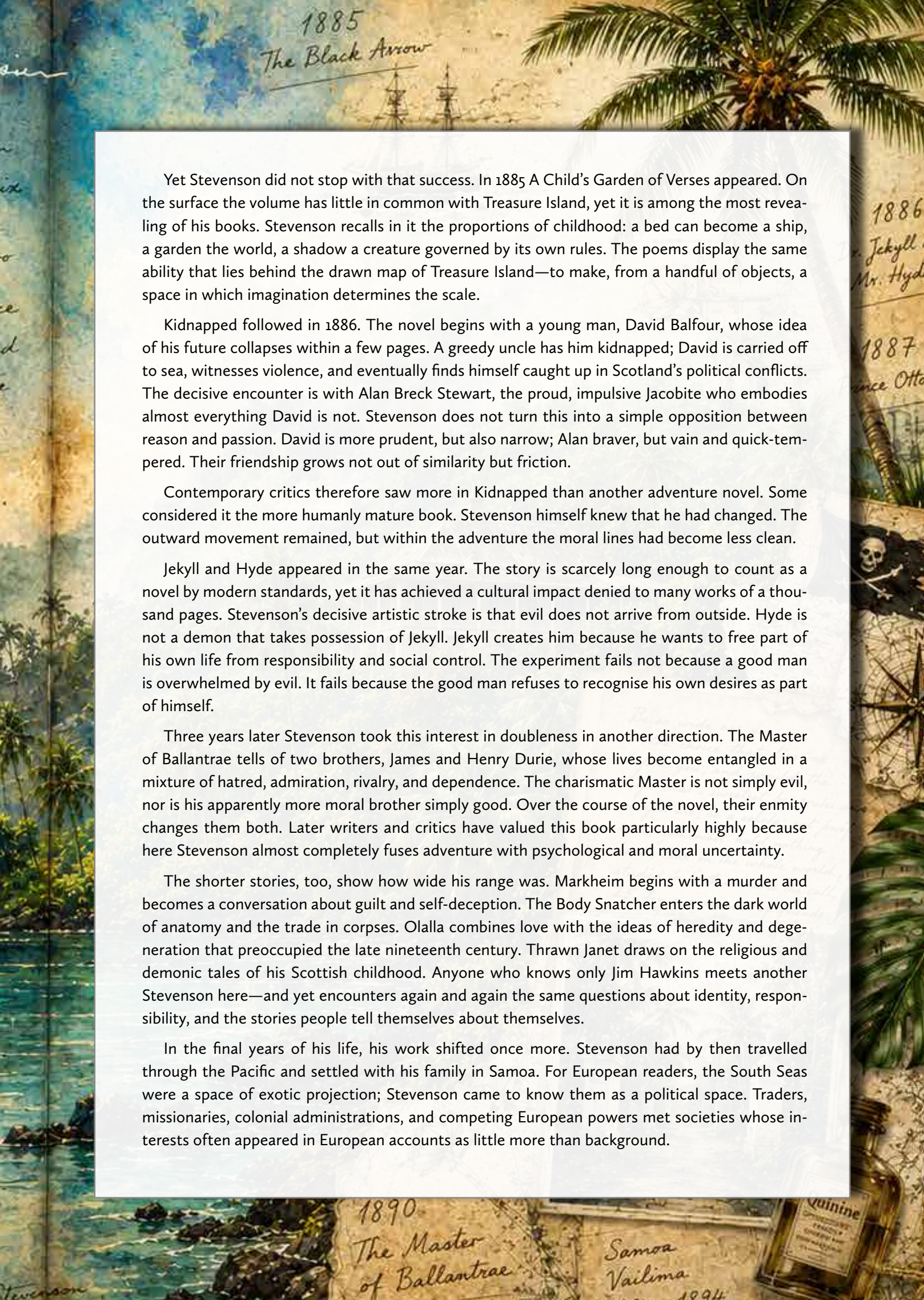
Robert Louis Stevenson belongs to that small group of authors whose characters have left their books behind. Long John Silver is no longer merely the cook aboard the *Hispaniola*; he has become the archetype of the pirate. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have detached themselves from their creator even more completely: their names now describe a type of person. Anyone who speaks of a “Jekyll-and-Hyde personality” need never have read the book. That is an unusual triumph for a writer—and, in Stevenson’s case, a narrowing at the same time. Two of his inventions grew so large that for years they cast the rest of his work into shadow.

A glance at the dates should already have made us suspicious. Barely more than two years separate the book publication of *Treasure Island* in 1883 from *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. One text leads to an island of pirates, cannon, rum, and buried gold; the other to the nocturnal London of a respectable doctor whose attempt to separate the contradictory sides of his nature ends in murder and self-destruction. It would be hard to find two books that, on the surface, have less in common. And yet they came from the same mind.

By then Stevenson had long since shown that he had no intention of submitting to a single genre. His first successes were travel books. In *An Inland Voyage* of 1878 he paddles with a friend through Belgium and northern France; a year later came *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, the account of a walking tour with the donkey Modestine. What is interesting about these books is not the distances covered. Stevenson does not write like a geographer measuring a landscape, but like someone testing what a landscape does to a person. Travel produces encounters, changes the gaze, and repeatedly forces the traveller to explain himself anew. Already here we find the interplay of movement and self-observation that would later shape his novels.

Stevenson was also recognised early as an essayist. He wrote about literature, art, childhood, morality, and the conditions of writing itself. His prose could seem light and conversational, but it was constructed with extraordinary deliberation. As a young man he had imitated passages by writers he admired, studied sentence rhythms, and experimented with different registers. The famous naturalness of his storytelling was not a natural phenomenon. It was the result of work.

Then came *Treasure Island*. Its success changed Stevenson’s financial circumstances and his public image. The respected essayist and travel writer became a storyteller whose books suddenly reached a large audience. That the story had attracted little attention when first serialised in *Young Folks* is one of the ironies of his career. Only the 1883 book edition revealed what Stevenson had created. Critics above all recognised the vitality of his characters. Pirate stories were not new; Long John Silver was.



Yet Stevenson did not stop with that success. In 1885 *A Child's Garden of Verses* appeared. On the surface the volume has little in common with *Treasure Island*, yet it is among the most revealing of his books. Stevenson recalls in it the proportions of childhood: a bed can become a ship, a garden the world, a shadow a creature governed by its own rules. The poems display the same ability that lies behind the drawn map of *Treasure Island*—to make, from a handful of objects, a space in which imagination determines the scale.

*Kidnapped* followed in 1886. The novel begins with a young man, David Balfour, whose idea of his future collapses within a few pages. A greedy uncle has him kidnapped; David is carried off to sea, witnesses violence, and eventually finds himself caught up in Scotland's political conflicts. The decisive encounter is with Alan Breck Stewart, the proud, impulsive Jacobite who embodies almost everything David is not. Stevenson does not turn this into a simple opposition between reason and passion. David is more prudent, but also narrow; Alan braver, but vain and quick-tempered. Their friendship grows not out of similarity but friction.

Contemporary critics therefore saw more in *Kidnapped* than another adventure novel. Some considered it the more humanly mature book. Stevenson himself knew that he had changed. The outward movement remained, but within the adventure the moral lines had become less clean.

*Jekyll and Hyde* appeared in the same year. The story is scarcely long enough to count as a novel by modern standards, yet it has achieved a cultural impact denied to many works of a thousand pages. Stevenson's decisive artistic stroke is that evil does not arrive from outside. Hyde is not a demon that takes possession of Jekyll. Jekyll creates him because he wants to free part of his own life from responsibility and social control. The experiment fails not because a good man is overwhelmed by evil. It fails because the good man refuses to recognise his own desires as part of himself.

Three years later Stevenson took this interest in doubleness in another direction. *The Master of Ballantrae* tells of two brothers, James and Henry Durie, whose lives become entangled in a mixture of hatred, admiration, rivalry, and dependence. The charismatic Master is not simply evil, nor is his apparently more moral brother simply good. Over the course of the novel, their enmity changes them both. Later writers and critics have valued this book particularly highly because here Stevenson almost completely fuses adventure with psychological and moral uncertainty.

The shorter stories, too, show how wide his range was. *Markheim* begins with a murder and becomes a conversation about guilt and self-deception. *The Body Snatcher* enters the dark world of anatomy and the trade in corpses. *Olalla* combines love with the ideas of heredity and degeneration that preoccupied the late nineteenth century. *Thrawn Janet* draws on the religious and demonic tales of his Scottish childhood. Anyone who knows only *Jim Hawkins* meets another Stevenson here—and yet encounters again and again the same questions about identity, responsibility, and the stories people tell themselves about themselves.

In the final years of his life, his work shifted once more. Stevenson had by then travelled through the Pacific and settled with his family in Samoa. For European readers, the South Seas were a space of exotic projection; Stevenson came to know them as a political space. Traders, missionaries, colonial administrations, and competing European powers met societies whose interests often appeared in European accounts as little more than background.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

This experience changes the tone of his late work. *The Beach of Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide* still use elements of the adventure story, but their European characters by no means appear automatically as bearers of civilisation. They are traders, fortune seekers, failures, and opportunists. Stevenson was not an anti-colonial writer in the modern sense and remained a man of his age; that is precisely why it is striking how clearly he could criticise concrete forms of European power politics. In *A Footnote to History* he even intervened directly in the political struggles over Samoa.

When Stevenson died on 3 December 1894 at the age of forty-four, he was working on *Weir of Hermiston*. The fragment is set once again in Scotland and shows a writer who had moved far from expectations of the successful adventure novelist. Many later readers saw in it the possible beginning of his most mature novel. That can only be speculation. What is certain is that Stevenson's work did not feel remotely complete in 1894.

For a long time, his posthumous reputation reduced all this to an astonishingly small selection: *Treasure Island*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, perhaps *Kidnapped*. These are great books. But they are not a summary of their author.

Stevenson was a travel writer and essayist, a poet of childhood and a political observer, a historical novelist and a psychological writer. He wrote about pirates and Calvinism, the South Seas and the Scottish Highlands, childhood, murder, friendship, illness, and colonial power. The variety is not incidental to his work. It is part of its nature.

That is precisely why it is worth asking what common principle lies behind these very different books.

1884  
Ente US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889  
Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hale  
Illustrationen

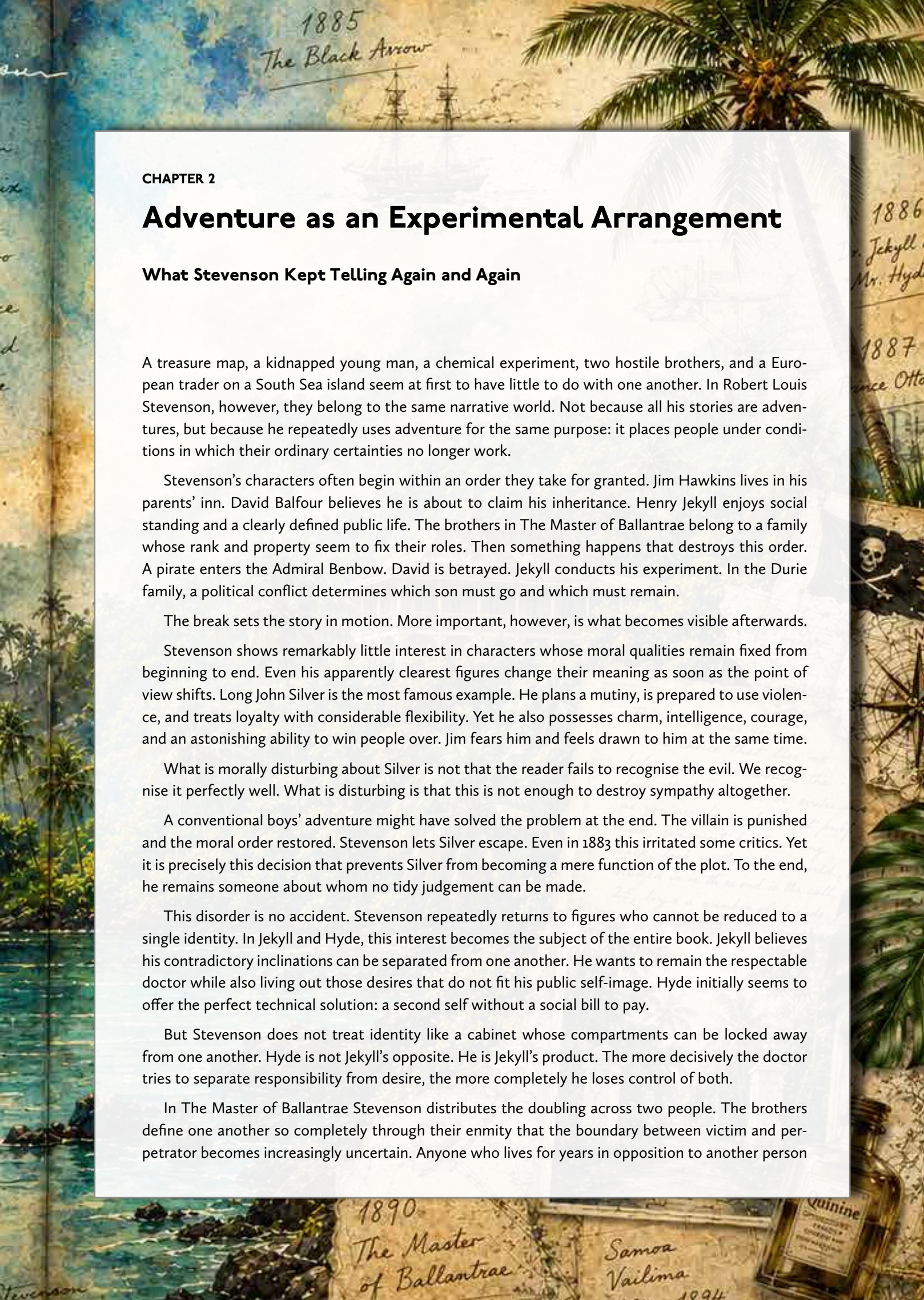


VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 10, 1879  
Held a wout of  
architecture  
yours truly



## CHAPTER 2

# Adventure as an Experimental Arrangement

## What Stevenson Kept Telling Again and Again

A treasure map, a kidnapped young man, a chemical experiment, two hostile brothers, and a European trader on a South Sea island seem at first to have little to do with one another. In Robert Louis Stevenson, however, they belong to the same narrative world. Not because all his stories are adventures, but because he repeatedly uses adventure for the same purpose: it places people under conditions in which their ordinary certainties no longer work.

Stevenson's characters often begin within an order they take for granted. Jim Hawkins lives in his parents' inn. David Balfour believes he is about to claim his inheritance. Henry Jekyll enjoys social standing and a clearly defined public life. The brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae* belong to a family whose rank and property seem to fix their roles. Then something happens that destroys this order. A pirate enters the *Admiral Benbow*. David is betrayed. Jekyll conducts his experiment. In the Durie family, a political conflict determines which son must go and which must remain.

The break sets the story in motion. More important, however, is what becomes visible afterwards.

Stevenson shows remarkably little interest in characters whose moral qualities remain fixed from beginning to end. Even his apparently clearest figures change their meaning as soon as the point of view shifts. Long John Silver is the most famous example. He plans a mutiny, is prepared to use violence, and treats loyalty with considerable flexibility. Yet he also possesses charm, intelligence, courage, and an astonishing ability to win people over. Jim fears him and feels drawn to him at the same time.

What is morally disturbing about Silver is not that the reader fails to recognise the evil. We recognise it perfectly well. What is disturbing is that this is not enough to destroy sympathy altogether.

A conventional boys' adventure might have solved the problem at the end. The villain is punished and the moral order restored. Stevenson lets Silver escape. Even in 1883 this irritated some critics. Yet it is precisely this decision that prevents Silver from becoming a mere function of the plot. To the end, he remains someone about whom no tidy judgement can be made.

This disorder is no accident. Stevenson repeatedly returns to figures who cannot be reduced to a single identity. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, this interest becomes the subject of the entire book. Jekyll believes his contradictory inclinations can be separated from one another. He wants to remain the respectable doctor while also living out those desires that do not fit his public self-image. Hyde initially seems to offer the perfect technical solution: a second self without a social bill to pay.

But Stevenson does not treat identity like a cabinet whose compartments can be locked away from one another. Hyde is not Jekyll's opposite. He is Jekyll's product. The more decisively the doctor tries to separate responsibility from desire, the more completely he loses control of both.

In *The Master of Ballantrae* Stevenson distributes the doubling across two people. The brothers define one another so completely through their enmity that the boundary between victim and perpetrator becomes increasingly uncertain. Anyone who lives for years in opposition to another person

begins to absorb something of that person's logic. Moral superiority offers no automatic protection against moral damage.

*Kidnapped* also works with such an opposite, though without the dark consequences of *The Master*. David Balfour and Alan Breck represent different political, religious, and social worlds. Stevenson does not force either man to surrender his identity. Instead, he forces them to get along. That contains an essential part of his storytelling: people must learn that the world is larger than their own judgement of it.

This fits Stevenson's extraordinary interest in roles, voices, and disguise. His characters tell stories, deceive, perform, and watch one another. Silver survives not through physical superiority but through language. He reads situations more quickly than others, adjusts his tone, and understands what the person facing him wants to hear. Jekyll controls his public image for years. Alan Breck stages himself with a delight that both fascinates and irritates David.

Stevenson knew that people play social roles. His literature does not ask what remains behind all masks as the final "true self". It is more suspicious than that. Perhaps the mask itself belongs to the person.

The spaces in his stories are therefore more than settings. *Treasure Island* is the most famous example. Stevenson drew the island before the novel fully existed. Bays, hills, and names generated action. The map was not a retrospective illustration of an already invented story; it helped bring that story into being. Anyone moving across an island must make decisions. Where can a ship anchor? From which hill can the bay be seen? Which path leads to the stockade? Geography becomes drama-turgy.

Scotland functions similarly in *Kidnapped*. There, landscape is history. Mountains, roads, and political boundaries determine whom one meets, whom one can trust, and which allegiance becomes dangerous. In *Jekyll and Hyde* the city takes over this function. Doors, back courts, respectable houses, and nocturnal streets form a topography of the separate existences Jekyll wants to maintain.

Stevenson's own life intensified this interest in movement. He belonged to a family of engineers who built lighthouses and surveyed coasts. A similar career had been intended for him. Instead he became a writer and spent a considerable part of his short life on the move: France, the United States, the Pacific, finally Samoa. Illness played a part, as did curiosity and personal decisions. No simple key to every work can be made from that biography. Still, it is striking how often Stevenson writes about people who lose their previous certainties while travelling.

His late South Sea writings sharpen this pattern once more. The European traveller, who in earlier adventure stories could take for granted that he stood at the centre of the world, now encounters societies whose reality resists his perspective. Stevenson discovers the political reverse side of the romantic idea of the distant place on which adventure literature itself had fed. An island is not empty simply because a European visitor does not know its history.

There is a development here, but not a complete break. *Treasure Island* had already shown Stevenson's lack of interest in a world of neatly distributed roles. The gentleman can be foolish, the doctor harbour criminal desires, the pirate be charming, and the young hero be prone to hasty judgement. In Samoa, that scepticism acquires a political dimension.

One might therefore describe adventure in Stevenson as a kind of pressure chamber. In ordinary life, people can preserve their self-images for a long time. Under danger, strangeness, greed, or fear,

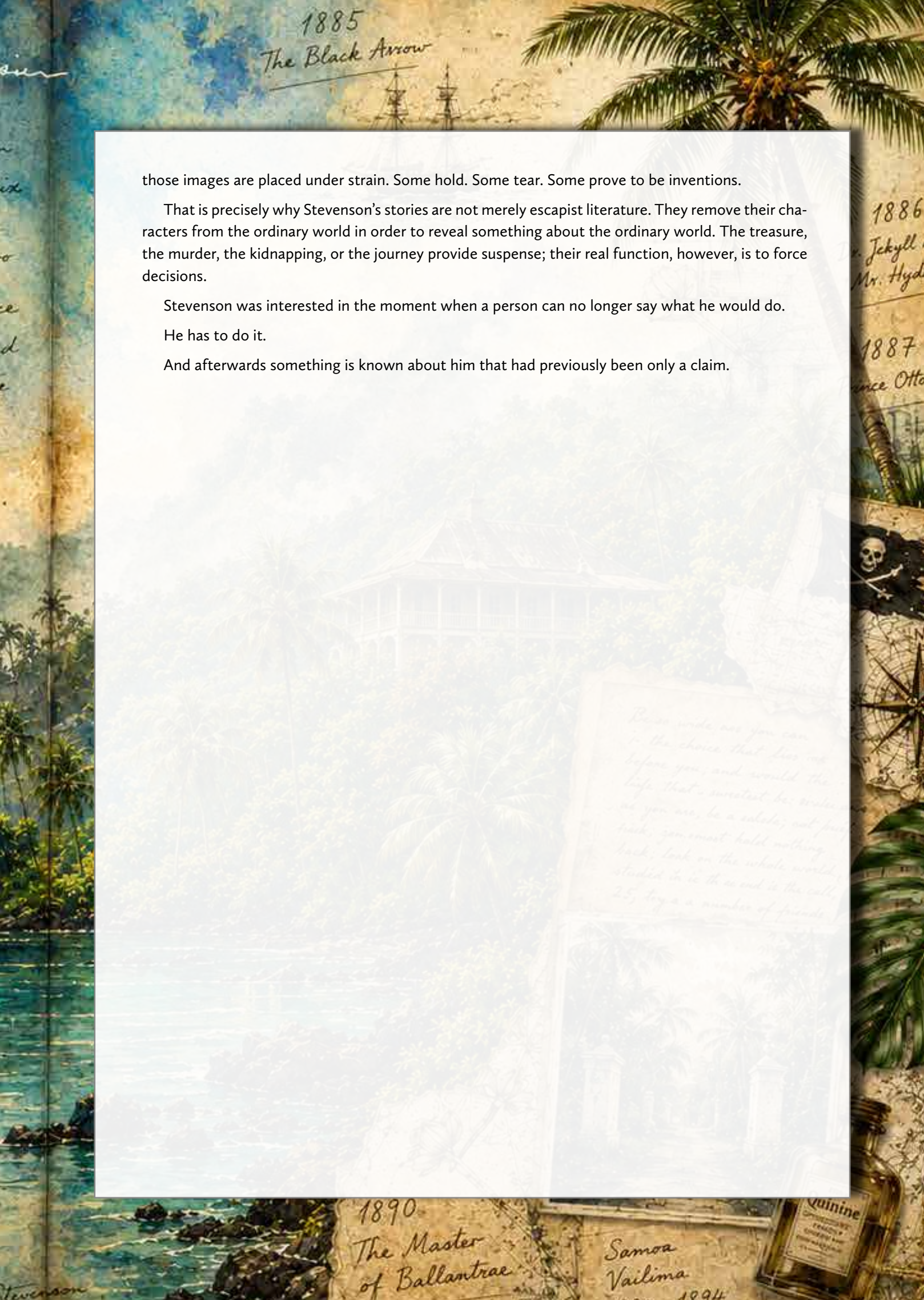
those images are placed under strain. Some hold. Some tear. Some prove to be inventions.

That is precisely why Stevenson's stories are not merely escapist literature. They remove their characters from the ordinary world in order to reveal something about the ordinary world. The treasure, the murder, the kidnapping, or the journey provide suspense; their real function, however, is to force decisions.

Stevenson was interested in the moment when a person can no longer say what he would do.

He has to do it.

And afterwards something is known about him that had previously been only a claim.



# Auf den Spuren der echten Schatzinsel

Karibische  
im Blick

## Norman Island

Nur wenige Seemeilen vor der britischen Jungferninsel gelegen, faszinierte Norman Island schon Generationen von Seeleuten. Hier soll Kapitän Kidd seine Schätze versteckt haben – und die Form der Insel erinnert verdächtig an eine Schatzkarte.

Robert Louis Stevenson ließ sich von Berichten echter Seefahrer, vergessenen Inseln und sagenumwobenen Küsten inspirieren.

Doch welche Orte könnten hinter den Schauplätzen von *Schatzinsel* stecken? Eine Spurensuche zwischen Geschichte, Geografie und Vorstellungskraft.

Jost Van Dyke

## Dead Chest Island

Auch bekannt als Peter Island. Ihr Name stammt – so sagt man – von einer alten Seemannsgeschichte über eine Truhe (engl. „dead chest“), die hier an Land gespült wurde. Ein gruseliger Name für einen Ort voller Geheimnisse!



## Literarische Vorstellungskraft

Stevenson mischte Fakten mit Fiktion: einsame Strände, tückische Riffe, verlassene Lager und rätselhafte Karten – all das speist sich aus wahren Geschichten und der grenzenlosen Kraft der Fantasie.



## Steckt ein echter Ort hinter dem Mythos?

Vielleicht keine einzelne Insel – vielleicht ein Mosaik aus vielen. Doch eines ist sicher: Die Karibik war voller Abenteuer, Gefahren und Geheimnisse. Genau der richtige Nährboden für die Geschichte von Piraten, Mut und verborgenem Reichtum.

nseln  
k

Norman Island

Dead Chest Island  
(Peter Island)

Hispaniola



## CHAPTER 3

# The Man Who Could Tell Stories Too Well

## How Stevenson Was Celebrated, Diminished, and Rediscovered

Robert Louis Stevenson was not discovered only after his death. Quite the opposite. The most striking fact of his literary career is how early major contemporaries recognised his talent. Even before *Treasure Island* introduced him to a large readership, he was regarded as an exceptional stylist and essayist. The success of the adventure novels added a second reputation: Stevenson could not only write—he could tell a story.

That sounds like unqualified praise. In literary criticism, it was not always meant as such.

When *Treasure Island* appeared in book form in 1883, the British press responded with conspicuous enthusiasm. The *Academy*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Graphic*, and other papers recognised that Stevenson had treated familiar material with unusual vitality. They praised the construction, pace, atmosphere, and above all the characters. Critics also noticed very quickly that this supposed boys' book held adult readers just as firmly.

Yet even this praise contained a certain condescension. Several reviews treated *Treasure Island*, in effect, as a brilliant exercise and coupled their admiration with the hope that Stevenson would now devote his abilities to a "serious" adult novel. The implied hierarchy was clear: an excellent adventure book was still only an adventure book.

Stevenson resisted this separation of narrative pleasure from literary value. He saw no reason why suspense, movement, and formal art should exclude one another. In this he found an important ally: Henry James.

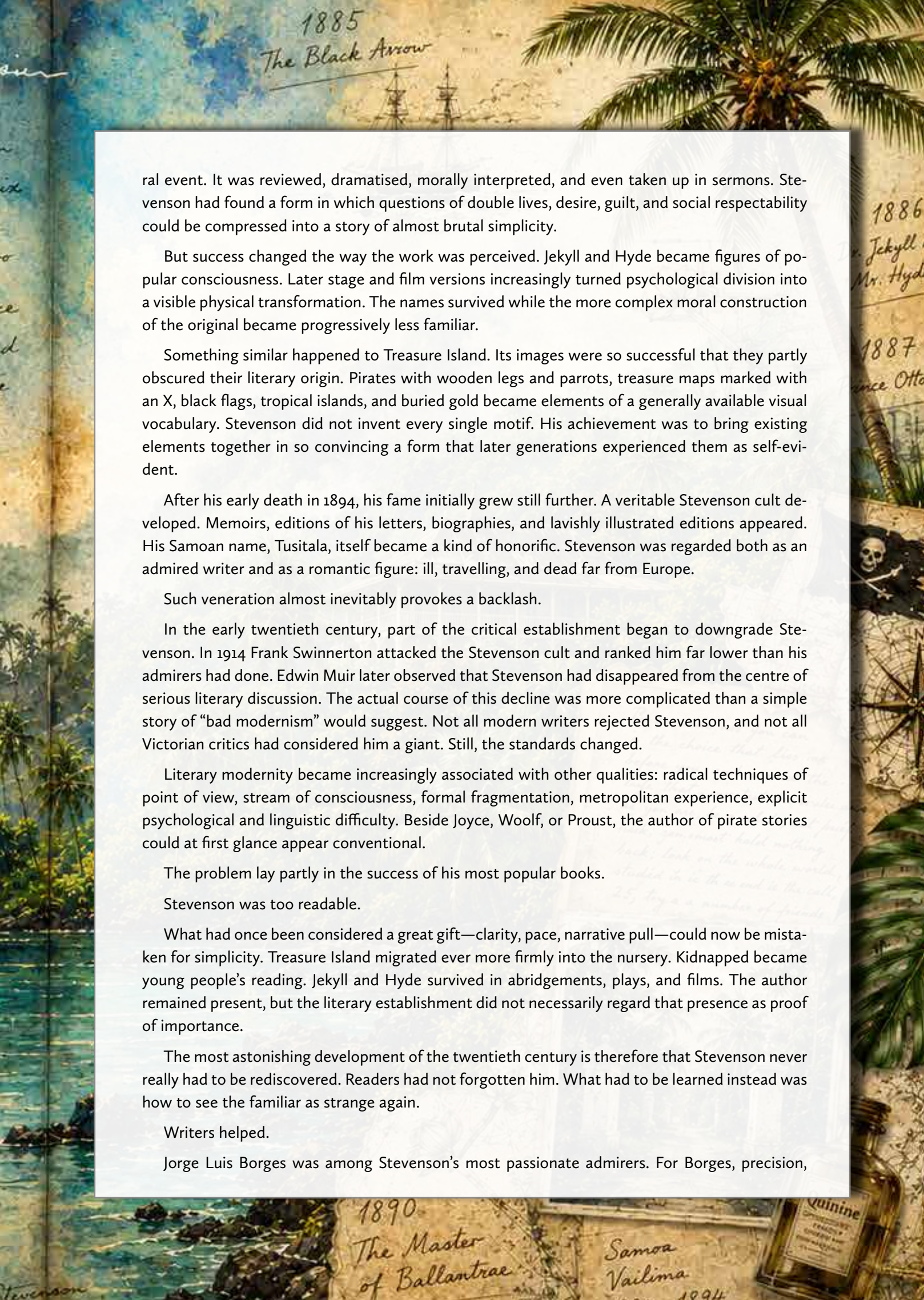
James was hardly one of those readers who judged literature by plot alone. His own novels stand for psychological nuance, point of view, and complex social observation. That is precisely what makes his defence of Stevenson remarkable. When Stevenson was accused of caring too much about style and artful phrasing, James replied in substance that Stevenson certainly paid close attention to his sentences—but that he was even more interested in life.

That touches the core of his success. Stevenson wrote deliberately without allowing the impression of literary labour to stand between the reader and the story. Construction disappears behind movement. Long John Silver does not feel like a demonstration of sophisticated characterisation; he feels like a person who has suddenly entered the room. *Jekyll and Hyde* possesses a highly controlled structure of information, yet on first reading it is experienced above all as a story.

That is exactly where the paradox of his posthumous reputation lies.

The better a narrative technique works, the less visible it becomes.

*Jekyll and Hyde* demonstrated this particularly clearly. The book immediately became a cultu-



ral event. It was reviewed, dramatised, morally interpreted, and even taken up in sermons. Stevenson had found a form in which questions of double lives, desire, guilt, and social respectability could be compressed into a story of almost brutal simplicity.

But success changed the way the work was perceived. Jekyll and Hyde became figures of popular consciousness. Later stage and film versions increasingly turned psychological division into a visible physical transformation. The names survived while the more complex moral construction of the original became progressively less familiar.

Something similar happened to *Treasure Island*. Its images were so successful that they partly obscured their literary origin. Pirates with wooden legs and parrots, treasure maps marked with an X, black flags, tropical islands, and buried gold became elements of a generally available visual vocabulary. Stevenson did not invent every single motif. His achievement was to bring existing elements together in so convincing a form that later generations experienced them as self-evident.

After his early death in 1894, his fame initially grew still further. A veritable Stevenson cult developed. Memoirs, editions of his letters, biographies, and lavishly illustrated editions appeared. His Samoan name, Tusitala, itself became a kind of honorific. Stevenson was regarded both as an admired writer and as a romantic figure: ill, travelling, and dead far from Europe.

Such veneration almost inevitably provokes a backlash.

In the early twentieth century, part of the critical establishment began to downgrade Stevenson. In 1914 Frank Swinnerton attacked the Stevenson cult and ranked him far lower than his admirers had done. Edwin Muir later observed that Stevenson had disappeared from the centre of serious literary discussion. The actual course of this decline was more complicated than a simple story of “bad modernism” would suggest. Not all modern writers rejected Stevenson, and not all Victorian critics had considered him a giant. Still, the standards changed.

Literary modernity became increasingly associated with other qualities: radical techniques of point of view, stream of consciousness, formal fragmentation, metropolitan experience, explicit psychological and linguistic difficulty. Beside Joyce, Woolf, or Proust, the author of pirate stories could at first glance appear conventional.

The problem lay partly in the success of his most popular books.

Stevenson was too readable.

What had once been considered a great gift—clarity, pace, narrative pull—could now be mistaken for simplicity. *Treasure Island* migrated ever more firmly into the nursery. Kidnapped became young people’s reading. Jekyll and Hyde survived in abridgements, plays, and films. The author remained present, but the literary establishment did not necessarily regard that presence as proof of importance.

The most astonishing development of the twentieth century is therefore that Stevenson never really had to be rediscovered. Readers had not forgotten him. What had to be learned instead was how to see the familiar as strange again.

Writers helped.

Jorge Luis Borges was among Stevenson’s most passionate admirers. For Borges, precision,

adventure, and narrative construction were not inferior qualities; they belonged at the centre of literature. Vladimir Nabokov, in turn, treated Jekyll and Hyde in his lectures on literature with the kind of analytical attention he reserved for texts whose form he considered seriously worth examining. Other twentieth-century writers likewise found in Stevenson what the previous downgrading had overlooked: elegance of construction, moral uncertainty, and the ability to turn philosophical questions into action without dissolving them into treatises.

At the same time, academic scholarship changed. The more fully accessible correspondence revealed a more complex author than the older legend of the lovable, sickly adventurer. His South Sea writings were reread in the context of colonialism and imperial politics. The Master of Ballantrae increasingly appeared as a psychologically and formally unusual novel. Jekyll and Hyde could be connected to questions of identity, sexuality, class, medicine, and urban modernity. Even Treasure Island gained complexity once closer attention was paid to narrative perspective, moral ambivalence, and the peculiar power of Long John Silver.

Henry James would probably not have been very surprised.

During Stevenson's lifetime he had already understood that apparent lightness did not mean a lack of seriousness. Stevenson took storytelling seriously without making storytelling heavy. He did not have to explain to the reader that a situation was morally complex. He could let Long John Silver walk into the room.

Perhaps that explains why Stevenson is repeatedly in danger of being underestimated. Literary criticism likes to see what a writer has worked at. With Stevenson, the art often lies in making that work disappear.

You keep reading.

Only later do you notice how carefully the information was distributed, how uncertain the moral positions have become, how strongly a landscape determines the action, or how skilfully a narrator creates sympathy and then withdraws it.

Stevenson's popular success was therefore not the opposite of his literary art. It was one of its results.

Toward the end of his life, Samoans gave him a name that in the European literary world can sound almost modest: Tusitala, storyteller. Yet perhaps this word captures more accurately than many learned categories what Stevenson wanted. He wanted to tell stories in such a way that people would follow them.

That is harder than it looks.

And Stevenson was one of the great masters of it in his age.

1885  
The Black Arrow

1886

Mr. Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887

Prince Otto

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be  
as you are, be a sailor; not  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

The Master  
of Ballantrae

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

# Die Erstausgabe von 1883



Im Januar 1883 veröffentlichte der Londoner Verlag  
Cassell & Company die erste Ausgabe von  
*Treasure Island* von Robert Louis Stevenson.  
Der Beginn einer Legende.

## EIN MEILENSTEIN

Dies ist die allererste Ausgabe des  
Romans, der die Abenteuerliteratur  
für immer veränderte. Stevenson  
schuf damit nicht nur unvergessliche  
Figuren, sondern auch eine Welt,  
die Generationen von Lesern bis  
heute in ihren Bann zieht.



## LIEBE ZUM DETAIL

Mit sechs ganzseitigen  
Illustrationen nach Zeichnungen  
von F. D. Bedford und  
einem klaren, lebendigen Satzbild  
wurde dieses Buch zu einem  
Schatz für die Augen und  
die Fantasie.

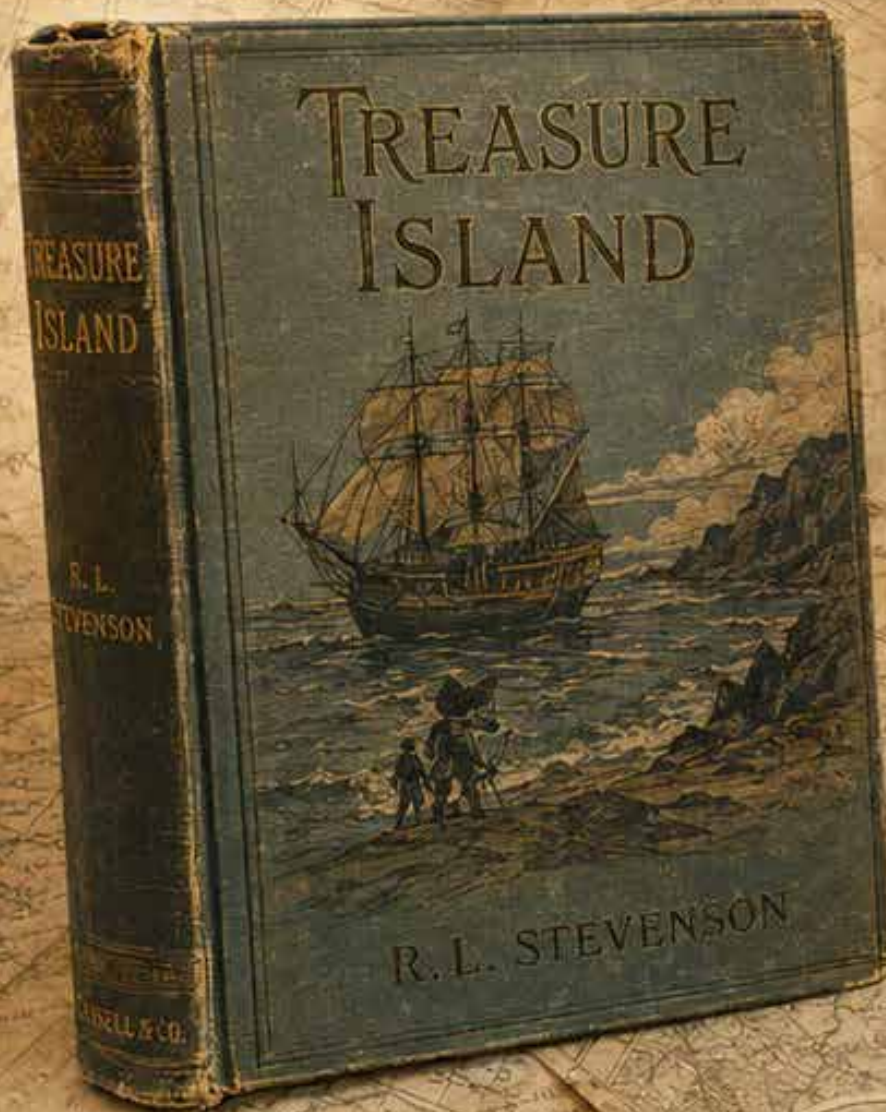
## TREASURE ISLAND

BY  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

ILLUSTRATED BY  
F. D. BEDFORD

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:  
LONDON, PARIS & MELBOURNE  
1883





#### VERLAG & JAHR

Cassell & Company, London  
Januar 1883

Die frühe Datierung „1883“ auf der Titelseite und dem Einband kennzeichnet diese Ausgabe.

#### EIN PRÄGENDER EINBAND

Der grüne Originalleinenband mit der schwarz-goldenen Prägung zeigt ein Segelschiff vor der Insel – ein Motiv, das sofort Fernweh und Abenteuer weckt.



#### SELTEN & BEGEHRT

Gut erhaltene Exemplare der Erstausgabe sind heute äußerst selten und zählen zu den kostbarsten Schätzen der Literatur.



#### WARUM DIESE AUSGABE WICHTIG IST

- 🏴‍☠️ Erster Druck des vollständigen Romans.
- 📖 Originalillustrationen, die den Klassiker prägten.
- 👑 Historisches Design, das die Atmosphäre des 19. Jahrhunderts einfängt.
- 😊 Ein Stück Literaturgeschichte – authentisch und unverfälscht.



#### ZEITZEUGNIS

Papier, Druck und Einband erzählen die Geschichte einer Zeit, in der Bücher noch von Handwerk, Sorgfalt und Leidenschaft geschaffen wurden.



„Fünfzehn Mann auf des toten Mannes Kiste – Yo-ho-ho, und eine Buddel voll Rum!“

So beginnt die Reise. Und mit dieser Ausgabe nimmt sie ihren Ursprung.



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
EDINBURGH · CA. 1870

# Ein junger Ingenieur für das Licht an der Küste

Der zwanzigjährige Sohn der berühmtesten Leuchtturmbauerfamilie Schottlands trug eine eigene technische Arbeit vor. Sie hieß *On a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses*, behandelte eine Verbesserung der Kennzeichnung von Leuchtfeuern und war keineswegs die höfliche Fingerübung eines jungen Mannes, dessen berühmter Familienname ihm eine Bühne verschafft hatte.

Stevenson hatte sich mit einem realen Problem beschäftigt: Je mehr Leuchttürme an den Küsten standen, desto wichtiger wurde es, dass Seeleute sie nachts voneinander unterscheiden konnten. Ein Licht musste gewissermaßen einen eigenen Rhythmus besitzen, eine Signatur aus Helligkeit und Dunkelheit.



*My father built lighthouses.  
My grandfather, and his  
father before him.  
The sea has always been  
our world.*

*R. L. Stevenson*



*On a New Form  
of Intermittent Light  
for Lighthouses*

By  
Robert Louis Stevenson

Read before the  
Institution of Civil Engineers  
May 1878





### *Intermittent Light*

- Distinctiveness
- Recognition
- Safety

*A light must have its own rhythm.*

*R. L. Stevenson*

### *A Signature in Light*

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>Fixed Light</i>             |  |
| <i>Flashing Light</i>          |  |
| <i>Group Flashing</i>          |  |
| <i>Occulting Light</i>         |  |
| <i>Intermittent (Improved)</i> |  |

*So may the mariner know  
where he is in the night.*

*R. L. Stevenson*



*The more lights  
we build, the more  
need to make  
each light known  
from the rest*

*R. L. Stevenson*

## PART I – A LIFE AGAINST TIME

### CHAPTER 4

## Edinburgh and the Lighthouse Builders

### The Family in Which Robert Louis Stevenson Was Supposed to Become an Engineer

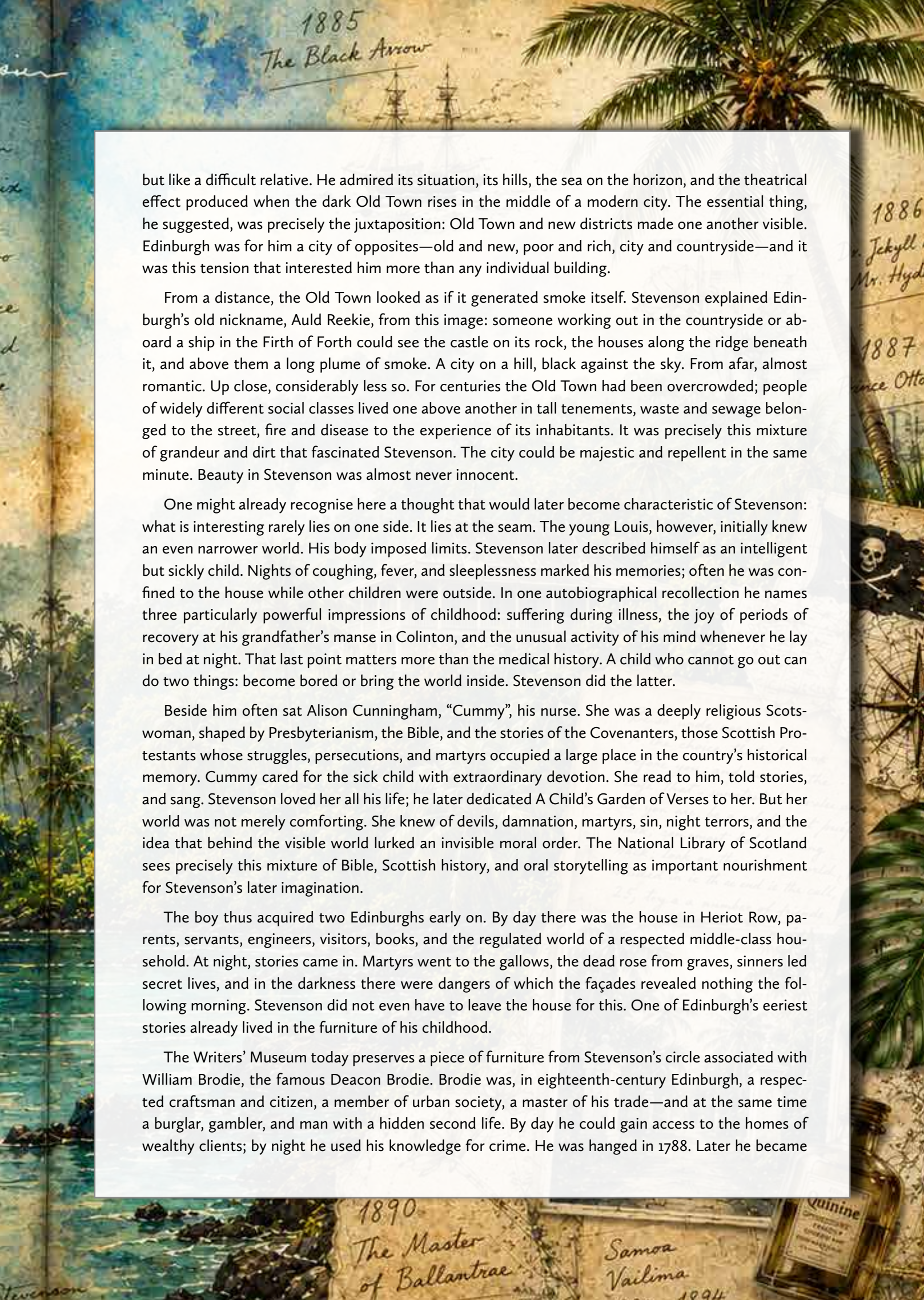
#### Edinburgh – The City with Two Faces

Before Robert Louis Stevenson split one man into two people, he grew up in a city that had been demonstrating the trick to him since childhood. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Edinburgh was not a city that gradually dissolved from one district into the next. It contained a rupture. On the high, narrow ridge of the Old Town, the ancient houses crowded below the castle, darkened by smoke, threaded with narrow closes and steep lanes, burdened by centuries of stories about plague, executions, murderers, Covenanters, thieves, and ghosts. To the north lay another city: broad streets, Georgian façades, geometric order, gardens, prosperity, and that demonstrative bourgeois rationality with which the nineteenth century liked to prove that it had overcome the chaos of the past. Between the two had once lain the stinking Nor' Loch; after it was drained, the New Town could expand. James Craig's plan turned spaciousness into a counter-programme to congestion. Where the old city had grown, the new one was designed. Where history had accumulated layer upon layer on the hill, order arose below on the drawing board. Edinburgh consisted of two cities that could look at one another.

The boy Robert Louis Stevenson lived on the orderly side. He was born at 8 Howard Place on 13 November 1850, the only child of Thomas Stevenson and Margaret Isabella Balfour. After a further house in Inverleith, the family moved in 1857, when Louis was six, to 17 Heriot Row. It was one of those respectable grey addresses of the New Town whose façade alone announced that behind these windows bills were paid, church was attended, and social rules observed. The house looked south over Queen Street Gardens; from the rear windows one could see, as his biographer and cousin Graham Balfour later recalled, beyond the city in the direction of Fife. Heriot Row remained the family's Edinburgh home for decades. Here the boy lay awake at night, here he was nursed, here he read, listened to stories, invented games, and began building that second existence writers usually possess long before they know that one day they may be paid for it.

The house stood on the right side of society, but Stevenson was interested early in the wrong one. Perhaps it is too convenient to explain a writer directly from a city. Cities do not write novels, and Edinburgh dictated neither *Treasure Island* nor *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to Stevenson. But it supplied him with something that would matter throughout his work: the experience that two opposing realities can be true at the same time. Order and crime, piety and sin, respectable façade and hidden desire did not have to be invented in Edinburgh. One could walk between them.

Stevenson would later describe this city with a mixture of love and malice perhaps possible only to someone who wants to leave a place and, for that very reason, can never quite escape it. In *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*, published in 1878, he looked at his native city not like an enthusiastic guide



but like a difficult relative. He admired its situation, its hills, the sea on the horizon, and the theatrical effect produced when the dark Old Town rises in the middle of a modern city. The essential thing, he suggested, was precisely the juxtaposition: Old Town and new districts made one another visible. Edinburgh was for him a city of opposites—old and new, poor and rich, city and countryside—and it was this tension that interested him more than any individual building.

From a distance, the Old Town looked as if it generated smoke itself. Stevenson explained Edinburgh's old nickname, Auld Reekie, from this image: someone working out in the countryside or aboard a ship in the Firth of Forth could see the castle on its rock, the houses along the ridge beneath it, and above them a long plume of smoke. A city on a hill, black against the sky. From afar, almost romantic. Up close, considerably less so. For centuries the Old Town had been overcrowded; people of widely different social classes lived one above another in tall tenements, waste and sewage belonged to the street, fire and disease to the experience of its inhabitants. It was precisely this mixture of grandeur and dirt that fascinated Stevenson. The city could be majestic and repellent in the same minute. Beauty in Stevenson was almost never innocent.

One might already recognise here a thought that would later become characteristic of Stevenson: what is interesting rarely lies on one side. It lies at the seam. The young Louis, however, initially knew an even narrower world. His body imposed limits. Stevenson later described himself as an intelligent but sickly child. Nights of coughing, fever, and sleeplessness marked his memories; often he was confined to the house while other children were outside. In one autobiographical recollection he names three particularly powerful impressions of childhood: suffering during illness, the joy of periods of recovery at his grandfather's manse in Colinton, and the unusual activity of his mind whenever he lay in bed at night. That last point matters more than the medical history. A child who cannot go out can do two things: become bored or bring the world inside. Stevenson did the latter.

Beside him often sat Alison Cunningham, "Cummy", his nurse. She was a deeply religious Scots-woman, shaped by Presbyterianism, the Bible, and the stories of the Covenanters, those Scottish Protestants whose struggles, persecutions, and martyrs occupied a large place in the country's historical memory. Cummy cared for the sick child with extraordinary devotion. She read to him, told stories, and sang. Stevenson loved her all his life; he later dedicated *A Child's Garden of Verses* to her. But her world was not merely comforting. She knew of devils, damnation, martyrs, sin, night terrors, and the idea that behind the visible world lurked an invisible moral order. The National Library of Scotland sees precisely this mixture of Bible, Scottish history, and oral storytelling as important nourishment for Stevenson's later imagination.

The boy thus acquired two Edinburghs early on. By day there was the house in Heriot Row, parents, servants, engineers, visitors, books, and the regulated world of a respected middle-class household. At night, stories came in. Martyrs went to the gallows, the dead rose from graves, sinners led secret lives, and in the darkness there were dangers of which the façades revealed nothing the following morning. Stevenson did not even have to leave the house for this. One of Edinburgh's eeriest stories already lived in the furniture of his childhood.

The Writers' Museum today preserves a piece of furniture from Stevenson's circle associated with William Brodie, the famous Deacon Brodie. Brodie was, in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, a respected craftsman and citizen, a member of urban society, a master of his trade—and at the same time a burglar, gambler, and man with a hidden second life. By day he could gain access to the homes of wealthy clients; by night he used his knowledge for crime. He was hanged in 1788. Later he became

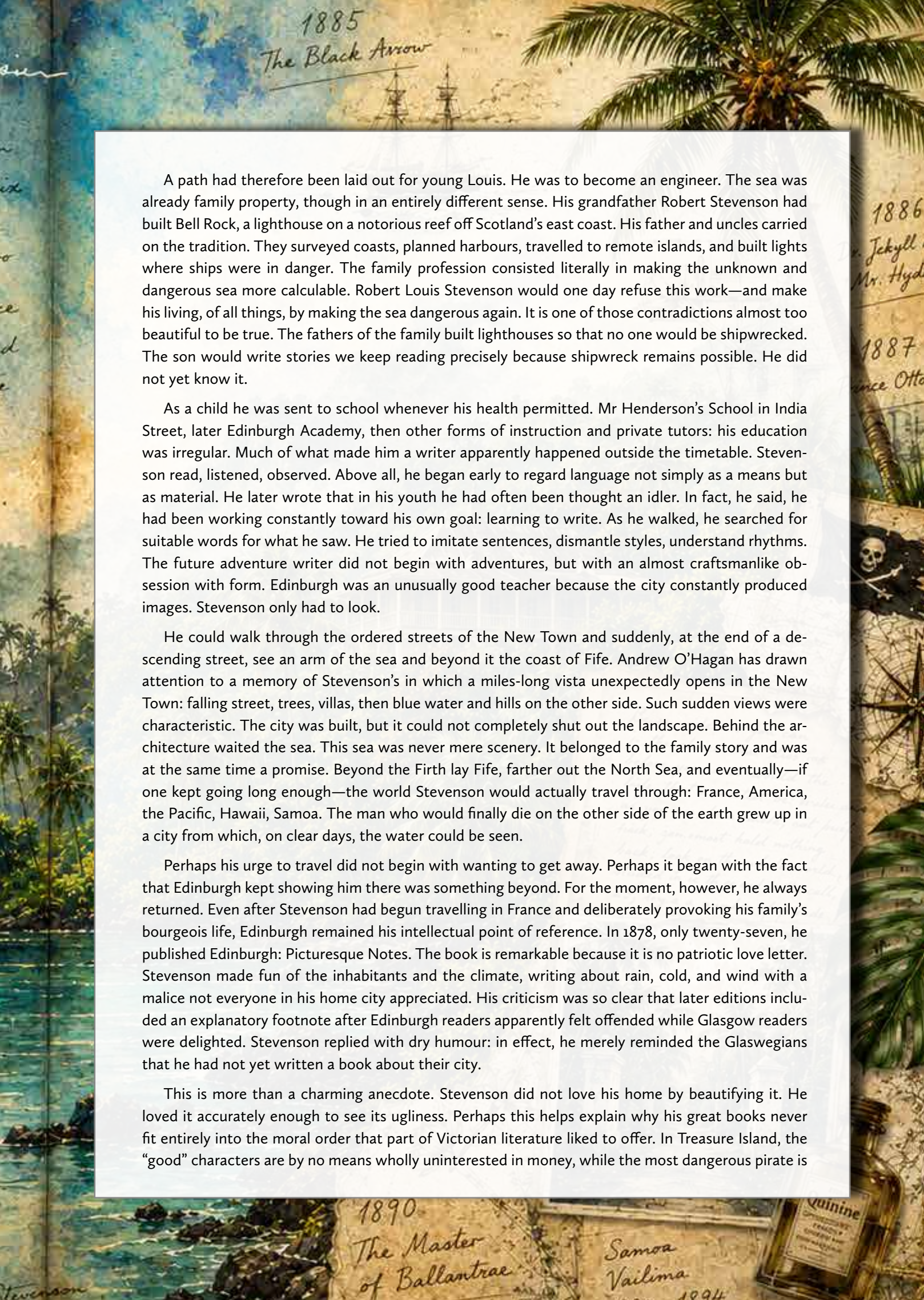
one of the great dark figures of Edinburgh folklore. Museum sources point out that a piece of furniture made by Brodie stood in the Stevenson household and that the story of this respectable man with his secret criminal life was likely familiar to Stevenson from youth. Whether Brodie directly “inspired” Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde cannot be proved and should not be turned into a picturesque certainty. What is certain is that Stevenson knew the story and later engaged with Brodie in his own literary work.

Imagine it: decades before Stevenson lets Dr Henry Jekyll open a door in his laboratory to Edward Hyde, he grows up in a bourgeois house containing an object linked to a man whose fame rests precisely on the fact that respectable façade and hidden life did not match. Perhaps writers do not need symbols. Perhaps the symbols find them.

Brodie’s story was so powerful in Edinburgh precisely because it seemed to confirm the city itself. The New Town proclaimed order, but the road to the Old Town was short. Churches stood beside sites of former executions. Respectability and crime were separated by no oceans, sometimes only by a door. In Greyfriars Kirkyard lay the dead from the Scottish religious conflicts of which Cummy told stories. In the lanes circulated tales of Major Thomas Weir, a respected religious man executed in the seventeenth century for grave crimes and later transformed by urban legend into a demonic figure. Stevenson later explicitly included Brodie and Weir in his dark reflections on Edinburgh. He did not need to invent a medieval castle on the Rhine in order to write Gothic. His native city possessed enough darkness.

But anyone who reads Stevenson only as a child of the dark Old Town misses half the picture. Light mattered just as much. From Heriot Row, the city opened northwards and westwards into another landscape. Queen Street Gardens lay directly opposite. Beyond them the ground dropped toward the Water of Leith; farther out were villages, fields, and hills. Stevenson spent much time at the manse of his grandfather Lewis Balfour in Colinton, then far more rural than it is today. There he remembered not the long nights of illness in Heriot Row but recovery, garden, water, and movement. Later came Swanston and the Pentland Hills. Edinburgh was therefore never only stone for him. The city had edges, and beyond those edges adventure began. This is another connection that would later matter. Stevenson was almost obsessively interested in transitions. House and street. City and country. Harbour and sea. Civilisation and island. Childhood and the adult world. Respectability and crime. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver. Even *Treasure Island* begins at such a boundary: the Admiral Benbow is a house on the coast. The safe world stands immediately beside the sea, and one day Billy Bones comes through the door.

Perhaps Stevenson had learned as a child that adventure does not begin somewhere far away. It begins where one world touches another. In Edinburgh, one only had to walk downhill. The New Town in which Stevenson grew up had essentially been a project of the Enlightenment. Its axes and squares embodied the idea that society could be organised rationally. In the eighteenth century Edinburgh had been one of Europe’s intellectual centres, home or workplace of David Hume, Adam Smith, Joseph Black, James Hutton, and other figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. In the nineteenth century this intellectual self-confidence was still palpable everywhere. Universities, learned societies, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and publishers belonged to the urban elite. Stevenson’s family fitted exactly into this world. His father Thomas was no romantic old sea dog but a highly qualified engineer. For generations the Stevenson family had built lighthouses, drawing on mathematics, geology, optics, mechanics, and a remarkable willingness to spend time in places where sensible people would preferably not choose to stay overnight.



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

A path had therefore been laid out for young Louis. He was to become an engineer. The sea was already family property, though in an entirely different sense. His grandfather Robert Stevenson had built Bell Rock, a lighthouse on a notorious reef off Scotland's east coast. His father and uncles carried on the tradition. They surveyed coasts, planned harbours, travelled to remote islands, and built lights where ships were in danger. The family profession consisted literally in making the unknown and dangerous sea more calculable. Robert Louis Stevenson would one day refuse this work—and make his living, of all things, by making the sea dangerous again. It is one of those contradictions almost too beautiful to be true. The fathers of the family built lighthouses so that no one would be shipwrecked. The son would write stories we keep reading precisely because shipwreck remains possible. He did not yet know it.

As a child he was sent to school whenever his health permitted. Mr Henderson's School in India Street, later Edinburgh Academy, then other forms of instruction and private tutors: his education was irregular. Much of what made him a writer apparently happened outside the timetable. Stevenson read, listened, observed. Above all, he began early to regard language not simply as a means but as material. He later wrote that in his youth he had often been thought an idler. In fact, he said, he had been working constantly toward his own goal: learning to write. As he walked, he searched for suitable words for what he saw. He tried to imitate sentences, dismantle styles, understand rhythms. The future adventure writer did not begin with adventures, but with an almost craftsmanlike obsession with form. Edinburgh was an unusually good teacher because the city constantly produced images. Stevenson only had to look.

He could walk through the ordered streets of the New Town and suddenly, at the end of a descending street, see an arm of the sea and beyond it the coast of Fife. Andrew O'Hagan has drawn attention to a memory of Stevenson's in which a miles-long vista unexpectedly opens in the New Town: falling street, trees, villas, then blue water and hills on the other side. Such sudden views were characteristic. The city was built, but it could not completely shut out the landscape. Behind the architecture waited the sea. This sea was never mere scenery. It belonged to the family story and was at the same time a promise. Beyond the Firth lay Fife, farther out the North Sea, and eventually—if one kept going long enough—the world Stevenson would actually travel through: France, America, the Pacific, Hawaii, Samoa. The man who would finally die on the other side of the earth grew up in a city from which, on clear days, the water could be seen.

Perhaps his urge to travel did not begin with wanting to get away. Perhaps it began with the fact that Edinburgh kept showing him there was something beyond. For the moment, however, he always returned. Even after Stevenson had begun travelling in France and deliberately provoking his family's bourgeois life, Edinburgh remained his intellectual point of reference. In 1878, only twenty-seven, he published *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*. The book is remarkable because it is no patriotic love letter. Stevenson made fun of the inhabitants and the climate, writing about rain, cold, and wind with a malice not everyone in his home city appreciated. His criticism was so clear that later editions included an explanatory footnote after Edinburgh readers apparently felt offended while Glasgow readers were delighted. Stevenson replied with dry humour: in effect, he merely reminded the Glaswegians that he had not yet written a book about their city.

This is more than a charming anecdote. Stevenson did not love his home by beautifying it. He loved it accurately enough to see its ugliness. Perhaps this helps explain why his great books never fit entirely into the moral order that part of Victorian literature liked to offer. In *Treasure Island*, the "good" characters are by no means wholly uninterested in money, while the most dangerous pirate is

1886  
*Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887  
*Prince Otto*

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
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1894

Quinine



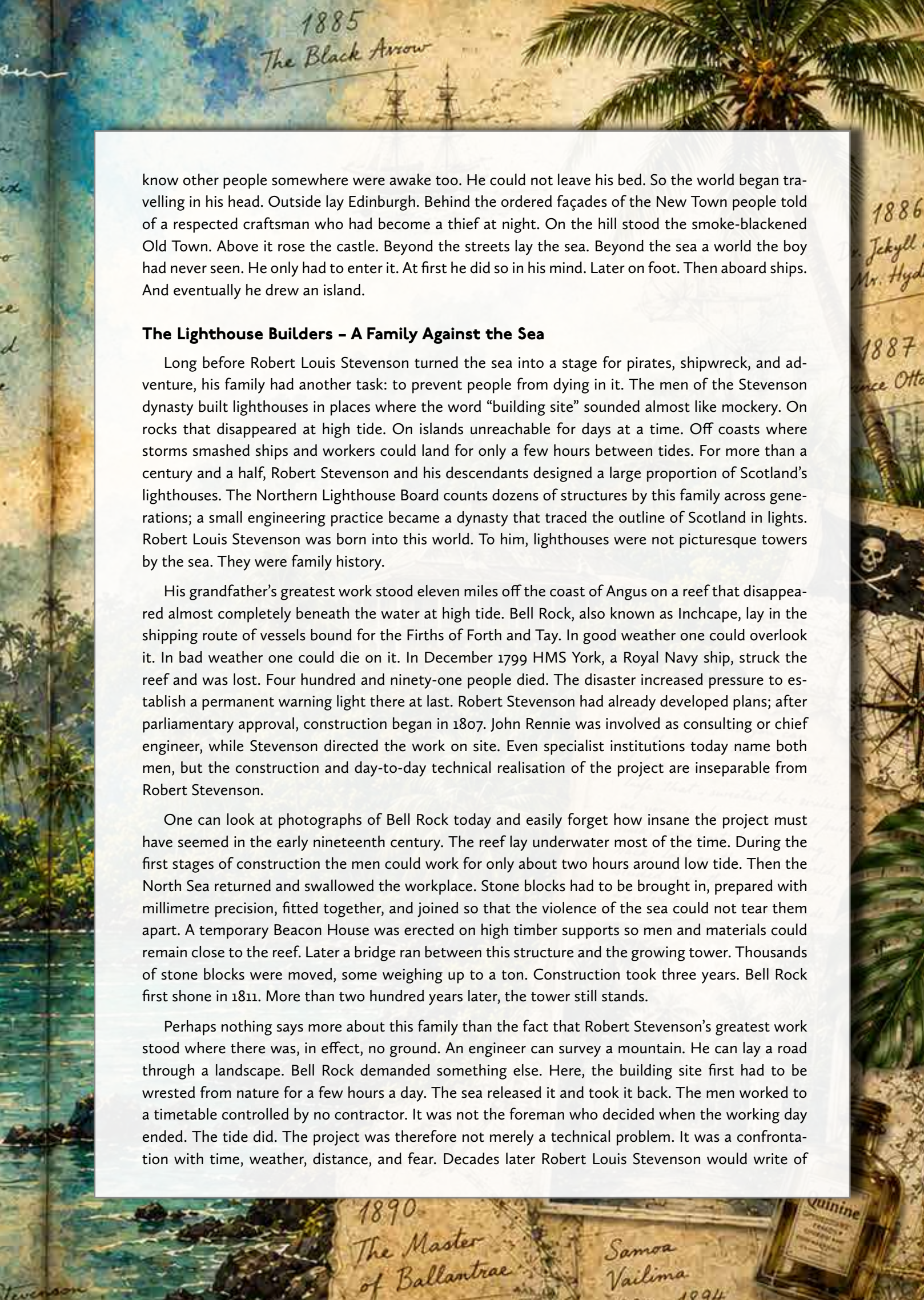
also the most charismatic figure. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, evil does not stand outside the bourgeois world. It lives within it. In *Kidnapped*, Scotland is shown as romantic and political, beautiful and violent at the same time. Stevenson distrusted pure images. Edinburgh had probably shown him early enough that every image has a reverse side. In this he also differs from a writer with whom Edinburgh is inevitably associated: Sir Walter Scott. Scott had turned Scotland into a vast historical landscape for an international audience. Stevenson revered him and at the same time rebelled against the world that had grown out of this romanticism. Where Scott loved grand historical tableaux, Stevenson is often interested in the precarious movement of individuals: a boy on a road, a man in a doorway, a ship with the wrong crew, a decision that suddenly changes everything. History is rarely background in Stevenson. It presses into the present.

In Edinburgh it was everywhere. One walked over places where people had been hanged. Houses carried stories. Cemeteries were archives. Names from the religious wars lived on in tales. Even the orderly New Town stood there only because an earlier city had become overcrowded and unhealthy. The new had not erased the old. It stood beside it. That is precisely why it is tempting to read *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as an Edinburgh book, even though the story is explicitly set in London. Stevenson moves the action south, but the idea of a respectable world behind whose doors a second life exists had been demonstrated to him, so to speak, at the scale of a city. Scholars and biographers have repeatedly pointed to this connection; the RLS Archive itself explicitly characterises Edinburgh: *Picturesque Notes* as a portrayal of a “doubled city”, a city composed of opposites. Even the house in Heriot Row acquires something Jekyll-like in retrospect. In front, the elegant street, ordered façade, Queen Street Gardens. Behind, servants’ areas, household work, another social world. This was neither secret nor scandal, but ordinary Victorian architecture. Yet that was exactly the lesson: a house could contain several worlds without its façade revealing any of them.

Stevenson would become a master of such façades. The Admiral Benbow initially looks like an inn. Then Billy Bones appears. Long John Silver initially looks like a friendly landlord. Then we hear him from inside the apple barrel. *Dr Jekyll* looks like a respected physician. Edinburgh looks like a city. Then you turn a corner. Perhaps this was Stevenson’s real school. Not Edinburgh Academy. Not the university that would follow. But the daily training in the possibility that behind a visible world another one may lie. When he finally left Edinburgh, he therefore took the city with him in a form stronger than memory. Its geography became a model for thought. The sea behind the streets, darkness behind the façade, countryside behind the city, criminal behind the citizen, adventurer behind the sick child. He would spend his life leaving and repeatedly writing about thresholds.

And he would carry Edinburgh with him even to the other side of the world. In Samoa, where vegetation, light, and heat could hardly have been farther from Heriot Row, Stevenson remained a Scottish writer. His language, stories, memories, and political instincts had been trained in a city that never quite knew whether it wanted to be Enlightenment or Gothic, reason or legend, stone or mist. Today the Writers’ Museum in Edinburgh holds Stevenson’s ring from Samoa. It bears the word *Tusitala*, the name by which he was known there: storyteller, teller of tales. His riding boots are also in the collection, beside books, portraits, and objects belonging to a man who eventually exchanged Edinburgh for the world. It makes a beautiful ending to a tour: the ring from the Pacific lies again in the city from which Stevenson set out. But at the beginning there was no *Tusitala*.

No famous writer. No world traveller. Only a thin boy in a grey house in Heriot Row, unable to sleep at night while lights still burned in a few windows on the far side of the dark Queen Street Gardens. His nurse sometimes carried him to the window and showed him those lights so that he would



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know other people somewhere were awake too. He could not leave his bed. So the world began travelling in his head. Outside lay Edinburgh. Behind the ordered façades of the New Town people told of a respected craftsman who had become a thief at night. On the hill stood the smoke-blackened Old Town. Above it rose the castle. Beyond the streets lay the sea. Beyond the sea a world the boy had never seen. He only had to enter it. At first he did so in his mind. Later on foot. Then aboard ships. And eventually he drew an island.

### **The Lighthouse Builders – A Family Against the Sea**

Long before Robert Louis Stevenson turned the sea into a stage for pirates, shipwreck, and adventure, his family had another task: to prevent people from dying in it. The men of the Stevenson dynasty built lighthouses in places where the word “building site” sounded almost like mockery. On rocks that disappeared at high tide. On islands unreachable for days at a time. Off coasts where storms smashed ships and workers could land for only a few hours between tides. For more than a century and a half, Robert Stevenson and his descendants designed a large proportion of Scotland’s lighthouses. The Northern Lighthouse Board counts dozens of structures by this family across generations; a small engineering practice became a dynasty that traced the outline of Scotland in lights. Robert Louis Stevenson was born into this world. To him, lighthouses were not picturesque towers by the sea. They were family history.

His grandfather’s greatest work stood eleven miles off the coast of Angus on a reef that disappeared almost completely beneath the water at high tide. Bell Rock, also known as Inchcape, lay in the shipping route of vessels bound for the Firths of Forth and Tay. In good weather one could overlook it. In bad weather one could die on it. In December 1799 HMS York, a Royal Navy ship, struck the reef and was lost. Four hundred and ninety-one people died. The disaster increased pressure to establish a permanent warning light there at last. Robert Stevenson had already developed plans; after parliamentary approval, construction began in 1807. John Rennie was involved as consulting or chief engineer, while Stevenson directed the work on site. Even specialist institutions today name both men, but the construction and day-to-day technical realisation of the project are inseparable from Robert Stevenson.

One can look at photographs of Bell Rock today and easily forget how insane the project must have seemed in the early nineteenth century. The reef lay underwater most of the time. During the first stages of construction the men could work for only about two hours around low tide. Then the North Sea returned and swallowed the workplace. Stone blocks had to be brought in, prepared with millimetre precision, fitted together, and joined so that the violence of the sea could not tear them apart. A temporary Beacon House was erected on high timber supports so men and materials could remain close to the reef. Later a bridge ran between this structure and the growing tower. Thousands of stone blocks were moved, some weighing up to a ton. Construction took three years. Bell Rock first shone in 1811. More than two hundred years later, the tower still stands.

Perhaps nothing says more about this family than the fact that Robert Stevenson’s greatest work stood where there was, in effect, no ground. An engineer can survey a mountain. He can lay a road through a landscape. Bell Rock demanded something else. Here, the building site first had to be wrested from nature for a few hours a day. The sea released it and took it back. The men worked to a timetable controlled by no contractor. It was not the foreman who decided when the working day ended. The tide did. The project was therefore not merely a technical problem. It was a confrontation with time, weather, distance, and fear. Decades later Robert Louis Stevenson would write of

1886  
*Mr. Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887  
*Prince Otto*

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*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
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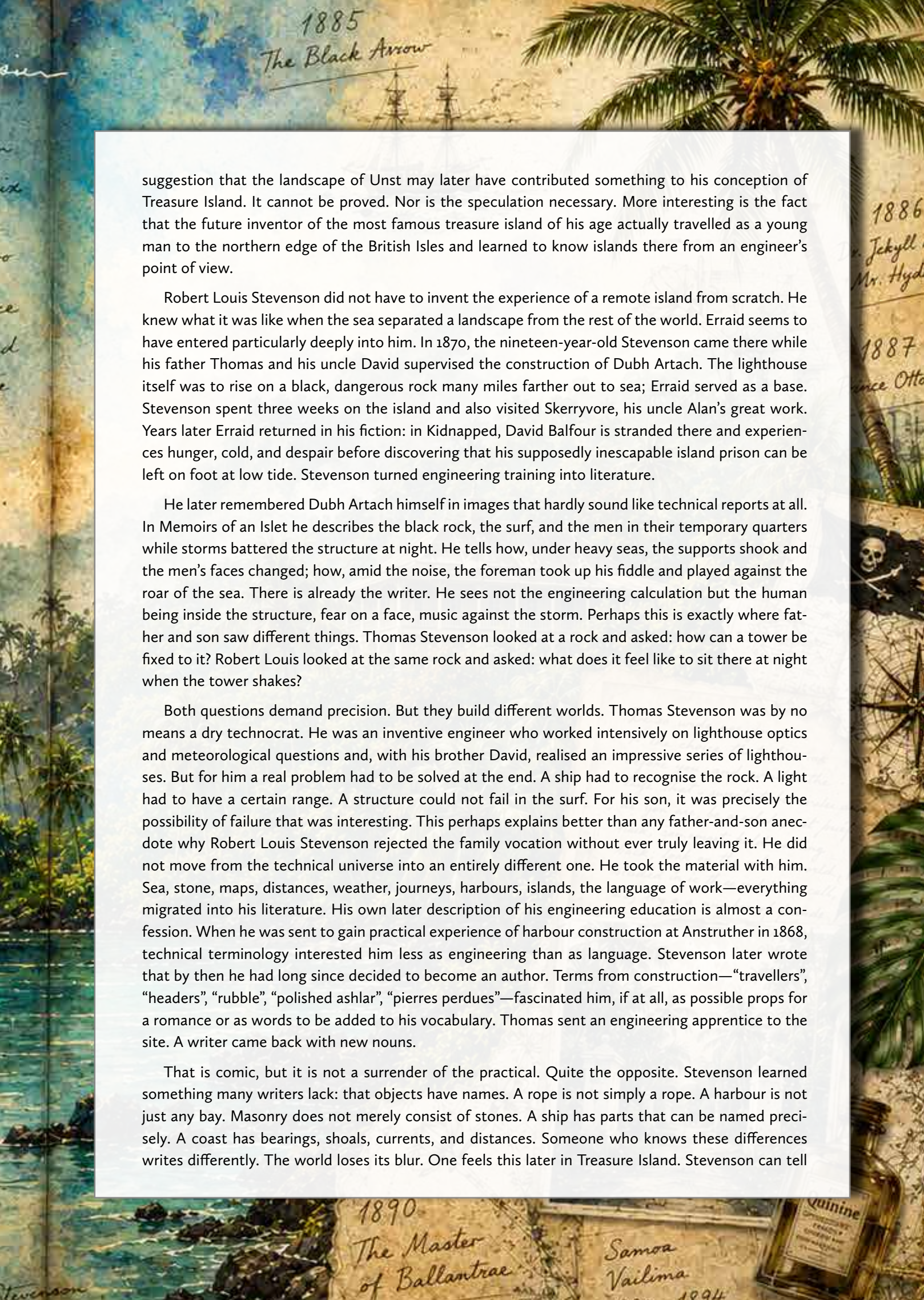
his grandfather that he was above all a man who designed works “in the face of nature” and altered nature itself. That captures the spirit of the family with remarkable precision. The Stevensons did not build where building was convenient. They went where impossibility itself defined the profession.

And Bell Rock, of all places, already had a pirate story attached to it. The Northern Lighthouse Board preserves an old legend according to which an abbot of Arbroath once fixed a bell to the reef. The waves were to move it and thus warn passing ships. A pirate supposedly stole the bell, destroying the humane warning. It is a legend, not a securely documented historical fact. But it is difficult to resist mentioning it in a book about Robert Louis Stevenson. The most famous structure built by his family stands on a rock around which, long before his birth, a story already circulated about pirates, danger, and a lost warning signal. Decades later the grandson would populate the literary world with a one-legged buccaneer. One should not turn this into a secret origin story of *Treasure Island*. But as a coincidence, it has almost the flavour of a Stevenson tale.

The man who carried Bell Rock through was Stevenson’s grandfather Robert. He died in July 1850, only a few months before his grandson was born that November. The boy therefore never knew him. Yet he grew up in his shadow. Family stories replaced personal memory. Bell Rock was less a building than a myth attached to his own surname: proof that a Stevenson could build things others considered impossible. Robert had turned the family practice into a technical institution; three of his sons—Alan, David, and Thomas—also became lighthouse engineers. Thomas was Robert Louis’s father. The next generation continued the work. Alan Stevenson built, among other things, Skerryvore, a tower on a dangerous reef off the Hebrides. Thomas and David Stevenson designed and supervised a long series of further lighthouses: Muckle Flugga, Butt of Lewis, St Abb’s Head, Dubh Artach, Turnberry, Chicken Rock, and many others. Later cousins extended the dynasty well into the twentieth century. For more than 150 years, Stevenson lighthouses filled maps of the Scottish coast. The name appeared not on novel jackets but on plans, reports, material lists, and technical drawings.

For Thomas Stevenson, then, it was fairly clear what his only son should become. Robert Louis was to be an engineer. One must understand this wish before romanticising the later rebellion. Thomas was not trying to force his son into some arbitrary unloved occupation. He wanted to hand him one of Britain’s most distinguished engineering traditions. The family name carried weight. The work was respected, technically demanding, socially useful, and full of real adventure. When Thomas told his son he should become an engineer, he was not offering him a life in an office. He was offering him Scotland’s coasts. Robert Louis Stevenson enrolled at the University of Edinburgh in 1867 to study engineering. In the summers that followed he began the practical training that disproves any notion that Stevenson knew the sea only from books. In 1868 he worked at, or observed, harbour works in Anstruther and Wick. In June 1869 he accompanied his father aboard the *Pharos*, the Northern Lighthouse Board’s ship, to Orkney and Shetland. In 1870 he spent three weeks on Erraid in connection with the construction of the Dubh Artach lighthouse.

He was there, then. Not in imagination, but on deck. He saw how the Scottish coast behaved from the sea. He learned what weather does to a journey, how a harbour appears from a distance, how harmless a rock can look in calm water, and how quickly a landing can become impossible. He travelled into those northern regions where the land already seems like a final act of resistance against the Atlantic. He saw engineers, craftsmen, sailors, and lighthouse keepers. He experienced the technical language, equipment, smells, rhythms of work, and dangers. On 18 June 1869 he visited Muckle Flugga with his father, high in the north of Shetland. The lighthouse had been built by Thomas and David Stevenson. The Northern Lighthouse Board still notes that Stevenson visited and even mentions a



suggestion that the landscape of Unst may later have contributed something to his conception of Treasure Island. It cannot be proved. Nor is the speculation necessary. More interesting is the fact that the future inventor of the most famous treasure island of his age actually travelled as a young man to the northern edge of the British Isles and learned to know islands there from an engineer's point of view.

Robert Louis Stevenson did not have to invent the experience of a remote island from scratch. He knew what it was like when the sea separated a landscape from the rest of the world. Erraid seems to have entered particularly deeply into him. In 1870, the nineteen-year-old Stevenson came there while his father Thomas and his uncle David supervised the construction of Dubh Artach. The lighthouse itself was to rise on a black, dangerous rock many miles farther out to sea; Erraid served as a base. Stevenson spent three weeks on the island and also visited Skerryvore, his uncle Alan's great work. Years later Erraid returned in his fiction: in *Kidnapped*, David Balfour is stranded there and experiences hunger, cold, and despair before discovering that his supposedly inescapable island prison can be left on foot at low tide. Stevenson turned engineering training into literature.

He later remembered Dubh Artach himself in images that hardly sound like technical reports at all. In *Memoirs of an Islet* he describes the black rock, the surf, and the men in their temporary quarters while storms battered the structure at night. He tells how, under heavy seas, the supports shook and the men's faces changed; how, amid the noise, the foreman took up his fiddle and played against the roar of the sea. There is already the writer. He sees not the engineering calculation but the human being inside the structure, fear on a face, music against the storm. Perhaps this is exactly where father and son saw different things. Thomas Stevenson looked at a rock and asked: how can a tower be fixed to it? Robert Louis looked at the same rock and asked: what does it feel like to sit there at night when the tower shakes?

Both questions demand precision. But they build different worlds. Thomas Stevenson was by no means a dry technocrat. He was an inventive engineer who worked intensively on lighthouse optics and meteorological questions and, with his brother David, realised an impressive series of lighthouses. But for him a real problem had to be solved at the end. A ship had to recognise the rock. A light had to have a certain range. A structure could not fail in the surf. For his son, it was precisely the possibility of failure that was interesting. This perhaps explains better than any father-and-son anecdote why Robert Louis Stevenson rejected the family vocation without ever truly leaving it. He did not move from the technical universe into an entirely different one. He took the material with him. Sea, stone, maps, distances, weather, journeys, harbours, islands, the language of work—everything migrated into his literature. His own later description of his engineering education is almost a confession. When he was sent to gain practical experience of harbour construction at Anstruther in 1868, technical terminology interested him less as engineering than as language. Stevenson later wrote that by then he had long since decided to become an author. Terms from construction—"travellers", "headers", "rubble", "polished ashlar", "pierres perdues"—fascinated him, if at all, as possible props for a romance or as words to be added to his vocabulary. Thomas sent an engineering apprentice to the site. A writer came back with new nouns.

That is comic, but it is not a surrender of the practical. Quite the opposite. Stevenson learned something many writers lack: that objects have names. A rope is not simply a rope. A harbour is not just any bay. Masonry does not merely consist of stones. A ship has parts that can be named precisely. A coast has bearings, shoals, currents, and distances. Someone who knows these differences writes differently. The world loses its blur. One feels this later in *Treasure Island*. Stevenson can tell

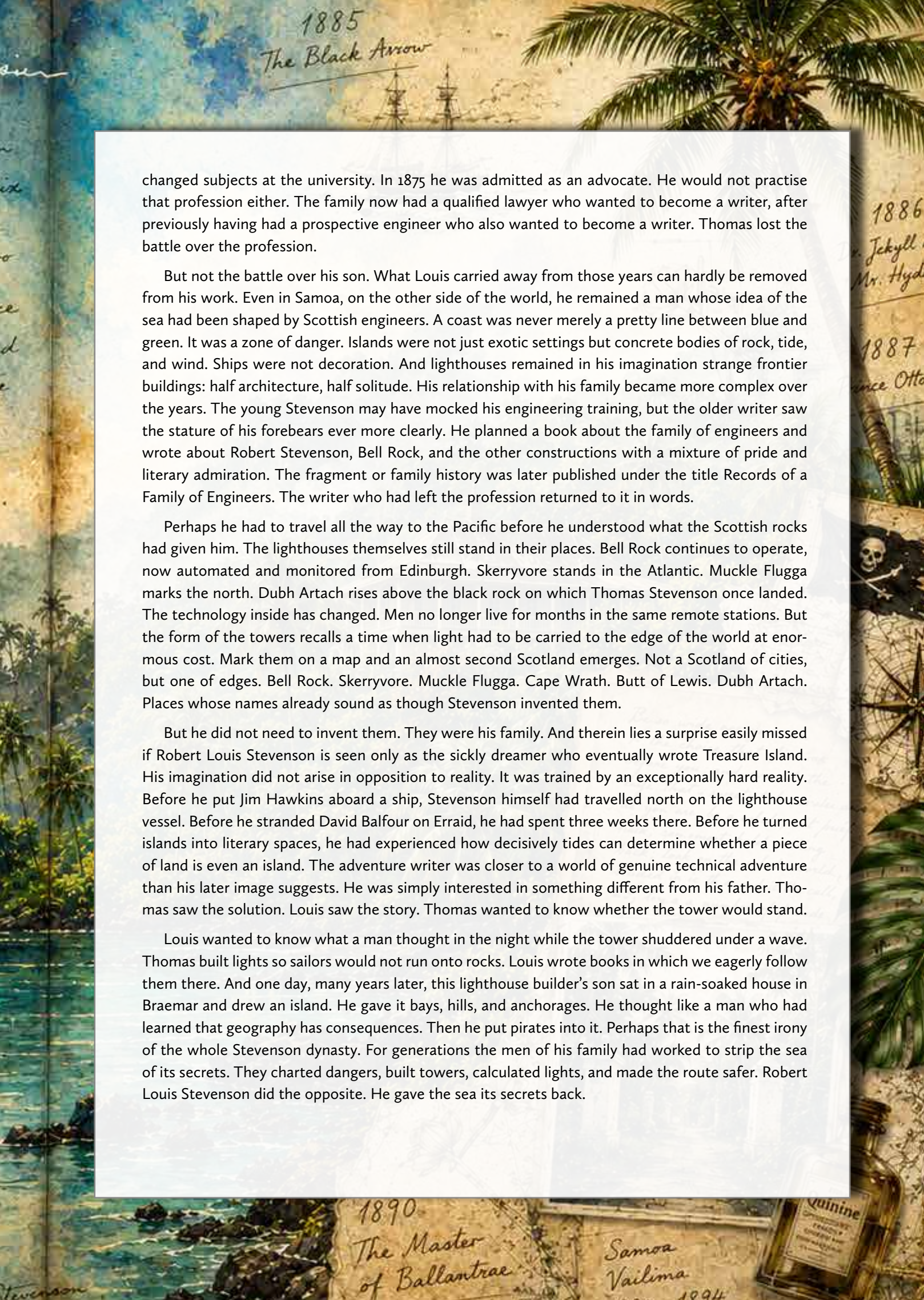
an island because he knows that geography generates action. The Hispaniola does not move across a decorative sea. Anchorage, current, distance from shore, and the ship's position have consequences. People must travel actual distances. A boat has a particular capacity. Someone who climbs a hill on an island can see things that someone in the woods cannot. The novel is adventure, but its suspense repeatedly depends on spatial logic.

That is engineering thought, even if no engineer built the Hispaniola. The connection becomes clearer still in the map from which *Treasure Island* grows. The son who rejected the family profession begins his most famous novel with exactly the tool that was taken for granted in the world of his fathers: he draws a landscape, fixes distances and positions, and lets the action emerge from them. His family had made maps so that ships would not be wrecked. Stevenson made a map so that people could get into the greatest possible trouble on it. There is a wonderful reversal in this. The engineers wanted to make danger calculable. The writer made calculability the precondition of danger. An adventure truly works only if the reader believes the world beneath it will hold. The island may be invented; its paths have to make sense. The ship may be invented; it must behave like a ship. Silver may be invented; his crutch must actually carry him across a deck. Precision is what first creates the freedom of imagination.

Perhaps that is exactly what Stevenson learned from his family. And perhaps his rebellion did not really consist in failing to become a Stevenson engineer. Perhaps it consisted in applying the same seriousness to different material. His grandfather fitted stones together so the tower would withstand a storm. Robert Louis fitted sentences together so an invented island would withstand a reader. There is another, less obvious connection. Lighthouse builders lived by warnings. Their entire work consisted in making danger visible. An invisible rock had to be given a voice through light. At night a lighthouse told a sailor: not here. You cannot see the rock, but it is there. Literature sometimes works in a similar way. Stevenson, too, loved things that remain invisible at first. The mutiny exists aboard the Hispaniola before Jim hears it from the apple barrel. Long John Silver is dangerous before Jim understands why. Dr Jekyll contains Hyde before the story explains how. The writer gives signals to hidden dangers.

With one decisive difference: a lighthouse is meant to lead us away from danger. Stevenson leads us into it. His father Thomas also appears in a different light as a result. In many short Stevenson biographies he is reduced mainly to the stern Victorian father disappointed because his son rejects engineering and later religious convictions. That belongs to the story, but it diminishes him. Thomas was part of a generation that genuinely shifted physical limits. In 1865 he landed on Dubh Artach to determine whether a light could be built on this black reef. During the same winter, numerous ships in the region were lost or driven ashore within a matter of days. The decision to build the lighthouse was not an aesthetic project; people died when the light was absent. Thomas therefore knew what the sea cost. When he tried to bring his son into the family profession, he also wanted to bring him into a world of responsibility. Engineering, for this family, was a moral activity. A badly calculated tower did not result in a bad review. It could cost lives.

Perhaps this explains part of the deep conflict between father and son. To Thomas, writing could easily appear an uncertain passion beside a profession that was so obviously useful. To Louis, by contrast, the thought of spending his life in a career for which he had been destined by family but was not inwardly made was unbearable. The break did not come suddenly. Stevenson made his journeys, visited worksites, and attended lectures, but his attention was constantly elsewhere. Eventually a compromise was found: if he would not become an engineer, he should at least study law. In 1871 he



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changed subjects at the university. In 1875 he was admitted as an advocate. He would not practise that profession either. The family now had a qualified lawyer who wanted to become a writer, after previously having had a prospective engineer who also wanted to become a writer. Thomas lost the battle over the profession.

But not the battle over his son. What Louis carried away from those years can hardly be removed from his work. Even in Samoa, on the other side of the world, he remained a man whose idea of the sea had been shaped by Scottish engineers. A coast was never merely a pretty line between blue and green. It was a zone of danger. Islands were not just exotic settings but concrete bodies of rock, tide, and wind. Ships were not decoration. And lighthouses remained in his imagination strange frontier buildings: half architecture, half solitude. His relationship with his family became more complex over the years. The young Stevenson may have mocked his engineering training, but the older writer saw the stature of his forebears ever more clearly. He planned a book about the family of engineers and wrote about Robert Stevenson, Bell Rock, and the other constructions with a mixture of pride and literary admiration. The fragment or family history was later published under the title *Records of a Family of Engineers*. The writer who had left the profession returned to it in words.

Perhaps he had to travel all the way to the Pacific before he understood what the Scottish rocks had given him. The lighthouses themselves still stand in their places. Bell Rock continues to operate, now automated and monitored from Edinburgh. Skerryvore stands in the Atlantic. Muckle Flugga marks the north. Dubh Artach rises above the black rock on which Thomas Stevenson once landed. The technology inside has changed. Men no longer live for months in the same remote stations. But the form of the towers recalls a time when light had to be carried to the edge of the world at enormous cost. Mark them on a map and an almost second Scotland emerges. Not a Scotland of cities, but one of edges. Bell Rock. Skerryvore. Muckle Flugga. Cape Wrath. Butt of Lewis. Dubh Artach. Places whose names already sound as though Stevenson invented them.

But he did not need to invent them. They were his family. And therein lies a surprise easily missed if Robert Louis Stevenson is seen only as the sickly dreamer who eventually wrote *Treasure Island*. His imagination did not arise in opposition to reality. It was trained by an exceptionally hard reality. Before he put Jim Hawkins aboard a ship, Stevenson himself had travelled north on the lighthouse vessel. Before he stranded David Balfour on Erraid, he had spent three weeks there. Before he turned islands into literary spaces, he had experienced how decisively tides can determine whether a piece of land is even an island. The adventure writer was closer to a world of genuine technical adventure than his later image suggests. He was simply interested in something different from his father. Thomas saw the solution. Louis saw the story. Thomas wanted to know whether the tower would stand.

Louis wanted to know what a man thought in the night while the tower shuddered under a wave. Thomas built lights so sailors would not run onto rocks. Louis wrote books in which we eagerly follow them there. And one day, many years later, this lighthouse builder's son sat in a rain-soaked house in Braemar and drew an island. He gave it bays, hills, and anchorages. He thought like a man who had learned that geography has consequences. Then he put pirates into it. Perhaps that is the finest irony of the whole Stevenson dynasty. For generations the men of his family had worked to strip the sea of its secrets. They charted dangers, built towers, calculated lights, and made the route safer. Robert Louis Stevenson did the opposite. He gave the sea its secrets back.

1886  
Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887  
Prince Otto

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES  
by Robert Louis Stevenson

# The Land of Counterpane



Robert L.  
at twelve years  
in Edinburgh

*Ein krankes Kind verwandelt seine Bettdecke  
in eine Welt aus Hügeln, Tälern, Straßen und Meeren.*

WHEN I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
to keep me company all day.

And sometimes for an hour or so  
I watched my leaden soldiers go  
With many a march and many a fight  
Across the hills and far away.



To travel hopefully  
is a better thing  
than to arrive.  
R. L. Stevenson



is Stevenson  
ears of age  
ugh



My hills were mountain ranges high,  
My rivers, valleys deep and wide;  
My roads were winding roads and long,  
My castles stood upon the crag;  
My ships went sailing by.



Imagination is the  
greatest gift of childhood—  
and the true chart  
of all our voyages.

R. L. Stevenson

## CHAPTER 5

# The Sick Child and Cummy

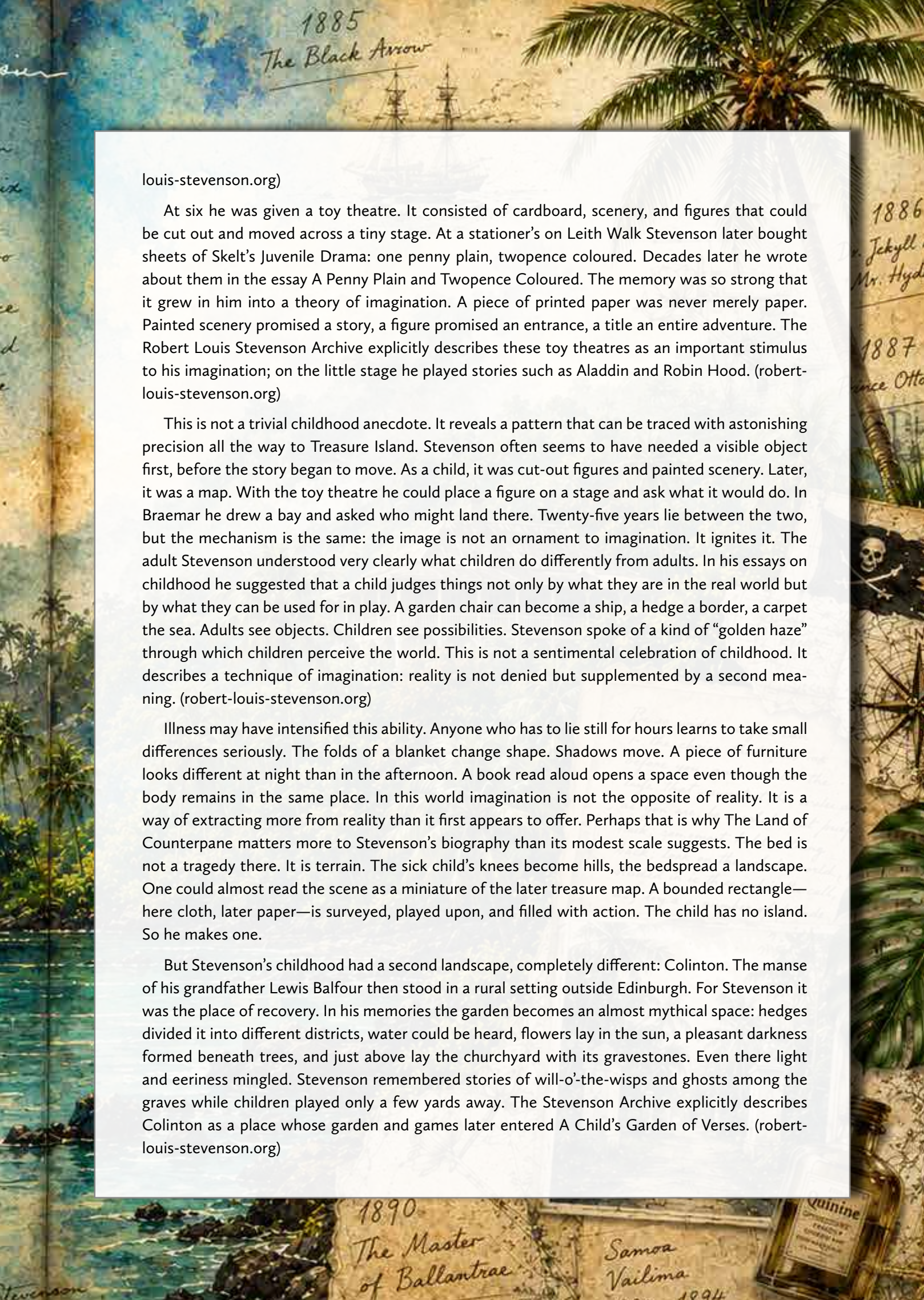
## How Stories Grew Larger Than the Room

### The Sick Child – Travelling in Bed

Before Robert Louis Stevenson travelled the world, it was sometimes no larger than a counterpane. In *A Child's Garden of Verses*, the poetry collection in which the adult Stevenson returned decades later to the landscape of his own childhood, there is a small poem about a sick child in bed. Lead soldiers stand on the bedspread. Hills rise between bent knees. The folds of the fabric become valleys and roads, toy ships sail across imaginary seas, and a place where a child has to lie becomes a country he rules. Stevenson called it "The Land of Counterpane". The image is so simple that it is easy to read past it. Yet it already contains an astonishing amount of the man who would later write *Treasure Island*: a confined space becomes a landscape, objects begin a story, and geography arises first in the mind. The child cannot leave the bed. So he enlarges the bed until a world fits inside it. ([robert-louis-stevenson.org](http://robert-louis-stevenson.org))

Stevenson himself later described his childhood with unusual clarity. Three memories, he said, had remained especially powerful: the suffering of illness, the happiness of periods of recovery at his grandfather's manse in Colinton, and the almost unnatural activity of his mind when he lay awake in bed at night. The National Library of Scotland places exactly these three experiences at the beginning of his biography. We should not too quickly attach the word "ill" to a later diagnosis. From early childhood Stevenson suffered recurrent serious illnesses, especially coughing, fever, and respiratory problems; medical labels changed, and later biographers disagreed about what precisely lay behind them. For the history of his writing, the name a modern doctor might choose matters less than the fact that illness in his childhood was not a single event. It was a rhythm: fall ill, remain indoors, recover, go outside, return again. ([nls.uk](http://nls.uk))

This rhythm did not turn him into a quiet, submissive patient. Quite the opposite. Precisely because his body so often decided what he could not do, his mind developed an almost aggressive mobility. At night, when other children slept, his real travelling time began. He listened to noises in the house, watched light move across walls, became frightened, and invented. The sickroom was refuge and prison at once, and this may well have been one of the earliest experiences from which Stevenson's later fiction drew its tension: an enclosed place is never truly enclosed. Someone may be standing behind a door. A sound acquires a cause. Darkness is not empty. It waits. His schooling, too, was shaped by this uncertainty. When Stevenson first attended Mr Henderson's Preparatory School in India Street in 1857, his health kept him there for only a few weeks. He later returned, attended Edinburgh Academy for about fifteen months from 1861, and repeatedly received private tuition as well. His education was less straightforward than that of a healthy boy from a comparable family. The timetable had competition: illness, travel, convalescence, reading, and that very private school in which Stevenson taught himself how things become stories. (



louis-stevenson.org)

At six he was given a toy theatre. It consisted of cardboard, scenery, and figures that could be cut out and moved across a tiny stage. At a stationer's on Leith Walk Stevenson later bought sheets of Skelt's Juvenile Drama: one penny plain, twopence coloured. Decades later he wrote about them in the essay *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured*. The memory was so strong that it grew in him into a theory of imagination. A piece of printed paper was never merely paper. Painted scenery promised a story, a figure promised an entrance, a title an entire adventure. The Robert Louis Stevenson Archive explicitly describes these toy theatres as an important stimulus to his imagination; on the little stage he played stories such as *Aladdin* and *Robin Hood*. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

This is not a trivial childhood anecdote. It reveals a pattern that can be traced with astonishing precision all the way to *Treasure Island*. Stevenson often seems to have needed a visible object first, before the story began to move. As a child, it was cut-out figures and painted scenery. Later, it was a map. With the toy theatre he could place a figure on a stage and ask what it would do. In *Braemar* he drew a bay and asked who might land there. Twenty-five years lie between the two, but the mechanism is the same: the image is not an ornament to imagination. It ignites it. The adult Stevenson understood very clearly what children do differently from adults. In his essays on childhood he suggested that a child judges things not only by what they are in the real world but by what they can be used for in play. A garden chair can become a ship, a hedge a border, a carpet the sea. Adults see objects. Children see possibilities. Stevenson spoke of a kind of "golden haze" through which children perceive the world. This is not a sentimental celebration of childhood. It describes a technique of imagination: reality is not denied but supplemented by a second meaning. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

Illness may have intensified this ability. Anyone who has to lie still for hours learns to take small differences seriously. The folds of a blanket change shape. Shadows move. A piece of furniture looks different at night than in the afternoon. A book read aloud opens a space even though the body remains in the same place. In this world imagination is not the opposite of reality. It is a way of extracting more from reality than it first appears to offer. Perhaps that is why *The Land of Counterpane* matters more to Stevenson's biography than its modest scale suggests. The bed is not a tragedy there. It is terrain. The sick child's knees become hills, the bedspread a landscape. One could almost read the scene as a miniature of the later treasure map. A bounded rectangle—here cloth, later paper—is surveyed, played upon, and filled with action. The child has no island. So he makes one.

But Stevenson's childhood had a second landscape, completely different: Colinton. The manse of his grandfather Lewis Balfour then stood in a rural setting outside Edinburgh. For Stevenson it was the place of recovery. In his memories the garden becomes an almost mythical space: hedges divided it into different districts, water could be heard, flowers lay in the sun, a pleasant darkness formed beneath trees, and just above lay the churchyard with its gravestones. Even there light and eeriness mingled. Stevenson remembered stories of will-o'-the-wisps and ghosts among the graves while children played only a few yards away. The Stevenson Archive explicitly describes Colinton as a place whose garden and games later entered *A Child's Garden of Verses*. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

For the sick child, returning to Colinton must have felt like a door opening. Heriot Row meant long nights, nursing, and restriction; Colinton, in his own memory, meant recovery, garden, cousins, movement. But even there Stevenson seems to have done something that would later shape his writing: he divided the landscape. In memory the garden consisted of “provinces”, separated by hedges and paths. Again, space appears not merely as background. It is organised, named, and thereby made tellable. The child who would later draw a treasure island thus spent his early years between two artificial geographies. In the sickroom he made a country out of a counterpane. In the garden he made provinces out of hedges. Perhaps that is how one learns to love maps. At the same time his parents did everything they could to ease their son’s health problems through changes of place and climate. And here begins a second great irony of this childhood: the very illness that repeatedly confined Stevenson to bed also made him a traveller early on.

By the age of twelve he had already seen part of Europe. In 1862 the family travelled via London, Dover, Brussels, Koblenz, and Frankfurt to Bad Homburg. Then, in January 1863, began a journey through Europe lasting almost five months. Stevenson travelled with his parents, his cousin Bessie, and his nurse Alison Cunningham. For a twelve-year-old from Victorian Edinburgh the itinerary reads as astonishingly cosmopolitan: London, Dover, Amiens, Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Toulon, Cannes, Nice, Menton; later Italy with Genoa, Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice, finally Innsbruck, Munich, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, the Rhine, Cologne, and the return via Belgium. Cummy kept a diary during the trip, which means that even individual hotels, walks, and excursions can still be reconstructed today. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

This significantly changes the picture of the “sickly child”. Stevenson was indeed often ill, but his childhood was by no means only a life between bedroom and doctor. Before he was even a teenager he had boarded trains, crossed canals and rivers, changed hotels, entered foreign churches, heard different languages, and seen the Mediterranean. In Nice he went to Villefranche, in Menton he walked with Cummy toward the Alps, the family travelled to Monaco, and several times he crossed the nearby Italian border. Cummy’s diary records how strange some things seemed to her, how different German sounded from French or Italian, how hotels, churches, landscapes, and people changed. For Stevenson, the journey must have been an early lesson in the fact that beyond every border another world begins—and yet can be reached by the same railway. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

One might say that his parents turned health into geography. If Edinburgh seemed too cold and damp, another climate was sought. Menton on the French-Italian Riviera later became a repeated place of convalescence. Stevenson returned there as early as the end of 1863. This pattern accompanied him throughout his life: doctors, family, and later Stevenson himself repeatedly sought places whose air, temperature, or dryness might help him. Southern France, Switzerland, the American West Coast, finally the Pacific—the man’s medical history and his travel biography can scarcely be separated. Illness held him still and set him in motion at the same time. There is a contradiction here stronger than the simple story of a weak body and a strong mind. Stevenson did not become a traveller despite his illness. Part of his early experience of travel came because of it. The body that imposed boundaries on him forced the family to cross boundaries. The twelve-year-old therefore learned an experience that would later become the basic rhythm of his life: a place can promise rescue and still be provisional. You arrive, hope for improvement, settle in, observe, read, write—and eventually travel on. The hotel room becomes a temporary home, the

1888

Scribner

William

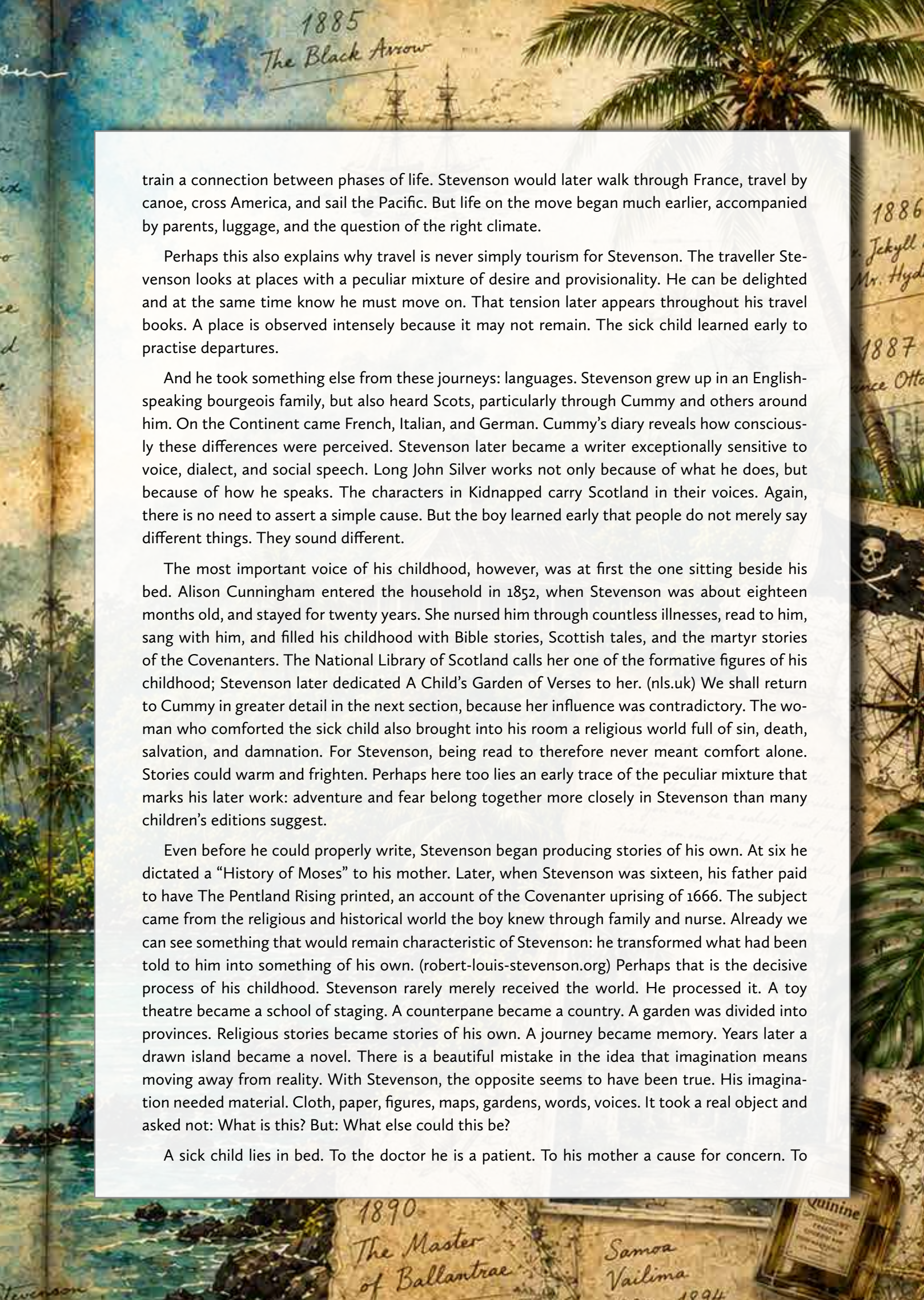
Illustr



Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 1879  
Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly



train a connection between phases of life. Stevenson would later walk through France, travel by canoe, cross America, and sail the Pacific. But life on the move began much earlier, accompanied by parents, luggage, and the question of the right climate.

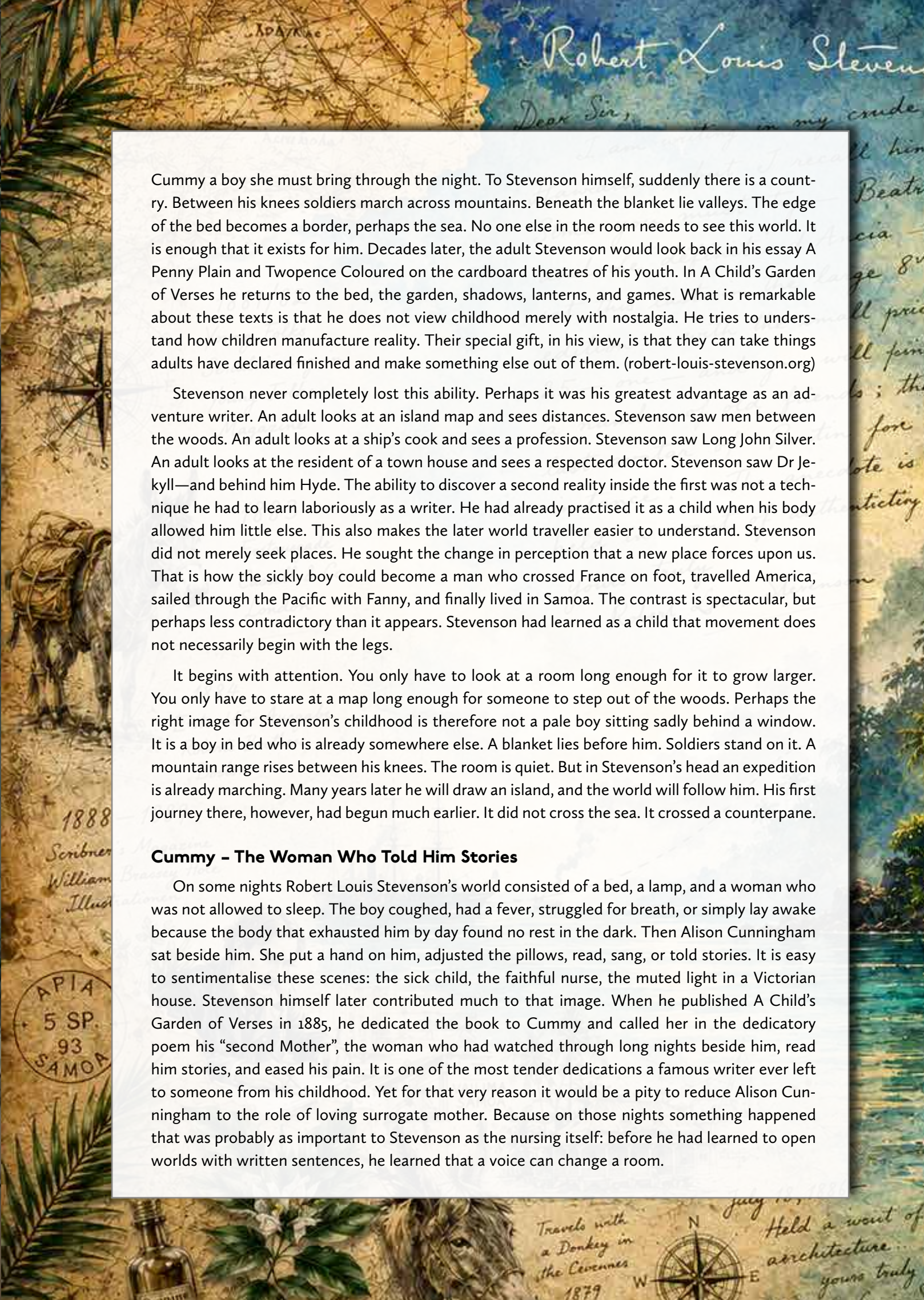
Perhaps this also explains why travel is never simply tourism for Stevenson. The traveller Stevenson looks at places with a peculiar mixture of desire and provisionality. He can be delighted and at the same time know he must move on. That tension later appears throughout his travel books. A place is observed intensely because it may not remain. The sick child learned early to practise departures.

And he took something else from these journeys: languages. Stevenson grew up in an English-speaking bourgeois family, but also heard Scots, particularly through Cummy and others around him. On the Continent came French, Italian, and German. Cummy's diary reveals how consciously these differences were perceived. Stevenson later became a writer exceptionally sensitive to voice, dialect, and social speech. Long John Silver works not only because of what he does, but because of how he speaks. The characters in *Kidnapped* carry Scotland in their voices. Again, there is no need to assert a simple cause. But the boy learned early that people do not merely say different things. They sound different.

The most important voice of his childhood, however, was at first the one sitting beside his bed. Alison Cunningham entered the household in 1852, when Stevenson was about eighteen months old, and stayed for twenty years. She nursed him through countless illnesses, read to him, sang with him, and filled his childhood with Bible stories, Scottish tales, and the martyr stories of the Covenanters. The National Library of Scotland calls her one of the formative figures of his childhood; Stevenson later dedicated *A Child's Garden of Verses* to her. (nls.uk) We shall return to Cummy in greater detail in the next section, because her influence was contradictory. The woman who comforted the sick child also brought into his room a religious world full of sin, death, salvation, and damnation. For Stevenson, being read to therefore never meant comfort alone. Stories could warm and frighten. Perhaps here too lies an early trace of the peculiar mixture that marks his later work: adventure and fear belong together more closely in Stevenson than many children's editions suggest.

Even before he could properly write, Stevenson began producing stories of his own. At six he dictated a "History of Moses" to his mother. Later, when Stevenson was sixteen, his father paid to have *The Pentland Rising* printed, an account of the Covenanter uprising of 1666. The subject came from the religious and historical world the boy knew through family and nurse. Already we can see something that would remain characteristic of Stevenson: he transformed what had been told to him into something of his own. (robert-louis-stevenson.org) Perhaps that is the decisive process of his childhood. Stevenson rarely merely received the world. He processed it. A toy theatre became a school of staging. A counterpane became a country. A garden was divided into provinces. Religious stories became stories of his own. A journey became memory. Years later a drawn island became a novel. There is a beautiful mistake in the idea that imagination means moving away from reality. With Stevenson, the opposite seems to have been true. His imagination needed material. Cloth, paper, figures, maps, gardens, words, voices. It took a real object and asked not: What is this? But: What else could this be?

A sick child lies in bed. To the doctor he is a patient. To his mother a cause for concern. To



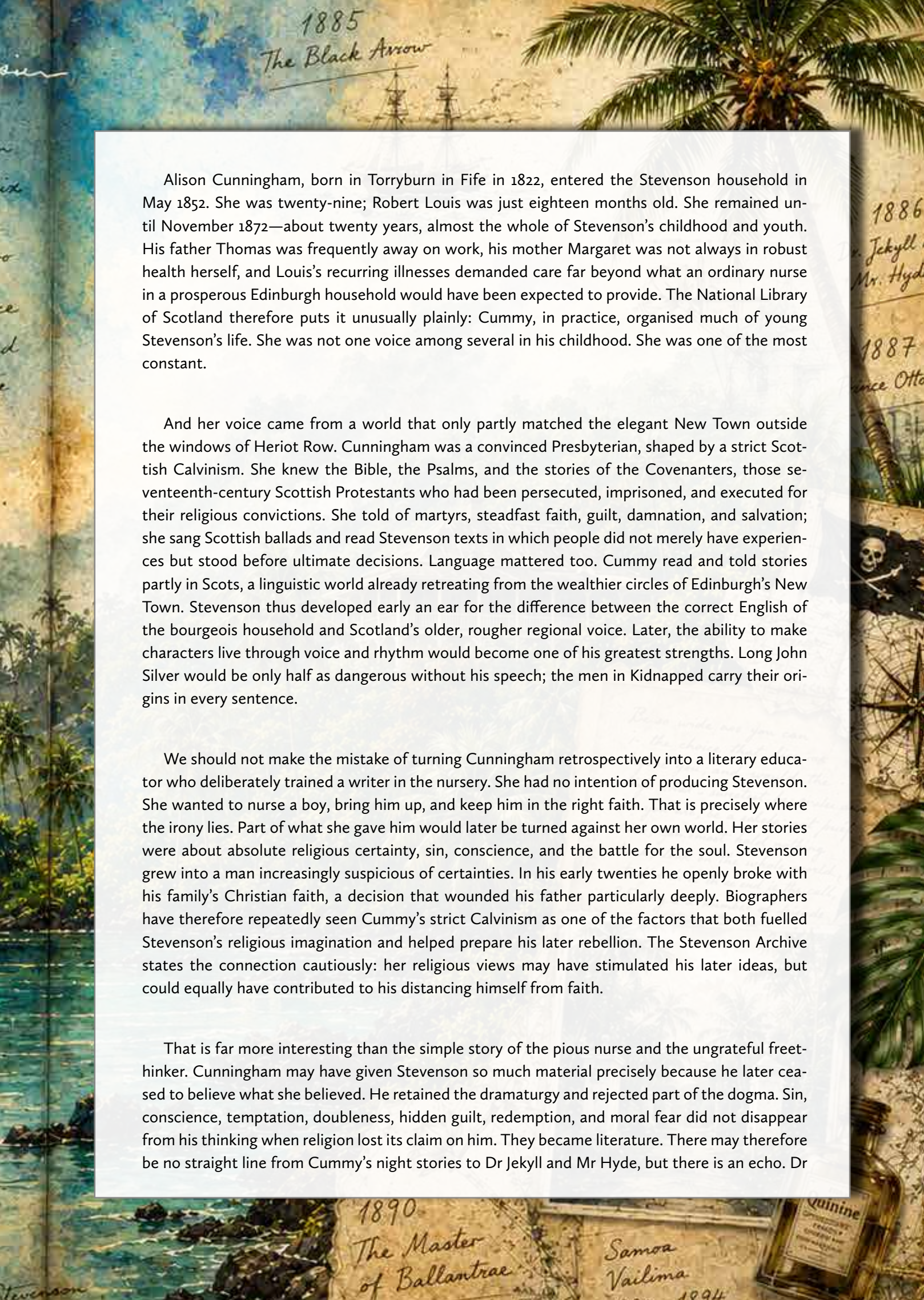
Cummy a boy she must bring through the night. To Stevenson himself, suddenly there is a country. Between his knees soldiers march across mountains. Beneath the blanket lie valleys. The edge of the bed becomes a border, perhaps the sea. No one else in the room needs to see this world. It is enough that it exists for him. Decades later, the adult Stevenson would look back in his essay *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured* on the cardboard theatres of his youth. In *A Child's Garden of Verses* he returns to the bed, the garden, shadows, lanterns, and games. What is remarkable about these texts is that he does not view childhood merely with nostalgia. He tries to understand how children manufacture reality. Their special gift, in his view, is that they can take things adults have declared finished and make something else out of them. (robert-louis-stevenson.org)

Stevenson never completely lost this ability. Perhaps it was his greatest advantage as an adventure writer. An adult looks at an island map and sees distances. Stevenson saw men between the woods. An adult looks at a ship's cook and sees a profession. Stevenson saw Long John Silver. An adult looks at the resident of a town house and sees a respected doctor. Stevenson saw Dr Jekyll—and behind him Hyde. The ability to discover a second reality inside the first was not a technique he had to learn laboriously as a writer. He had already practised it as a child when his body allowed him little else. This also makes the later world traveller easier to understand. Stevenson did not merely seek places. He sought the change in perception that a new place forces upon us. That is how the sickly boy could become a man who crossed France on foot, travelled America, sailed through the Pacific with Fanny, and finally lived in Samoa. The contrast is spectacular, but perhaps less contradictory than it appears. Stevenson had learned as a child that movement does not necessarily begin with the legs.

It begins with attention. You only have to look at a room long enough for it to grow larger. You only have to stare at a map long enough for someone to step out of the woods. Perhaps the right image for Stevenson's childhood is therefore not a pale boy sitting sadly behind a window. It is a boy in bed who is already somewhere else. A blanket lies before him. Soldiers stand on it. A mountain range rises between his knees. The room is quiet. But in Stevenson's head an expedition is already marching. Many years later he will draw an island, and the world will follow him. His first journey there, however, had begun much earlier. It did not cross the sea. It crossed a counterpane.

### **Cummy – The Woman Who Told Him Stories**

On some nights Robert Louis Stevenson's world consisted of a bed, a lamp, and a woman who was not allowed to sleep. The boy coughed, had a fever, struggled for breath, or simply lay awake because the body that exhausted him by day found no rest in the dark. Then Alison Cunningham sat beside him. She put a hand on him, adjusted the pillows, read, sang, or told stories. It is easy to sentimentalise these scenes: the sick child, the faithful nurse, the muted light in a Victorian house. Stevenson himself later contributed much to that image. When he published *A Child's Garden of Verses* in 1885, he dedicated the book to Cummy and called her in the dedicatory poem his "second Mother", the woman who had watched through long nights beside him, read him stories, and eased his pain. It is one of the most tender dedications a famous writer ever left to someone from his childhood. Yet for that very reason it would be a pity to reduce Alison Cunningham to the role of loving surrogate mother. Because on those nights something happened that was probably as important to Stevenson as the nursing itself: before he had learned to open worlds with written sentences, he learned that a voice can change a room.



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

Alison Cunningham, born in Torryburn in Fife in 1822, entered the Stevenson household in May 1852. She was twenty-nine; Robert Louis was just eighteen months old. She remained until November 1872—about twenty years, almost the whole of Stevenson's childhood and youth. His father Thomas was frequently away on work, his mother Margaret was not always in robust health herself, and Louis's recurring illnesses demanded care far beyond what an ordinary nurse in a prosperous Edinburgh household would have been expected to provide. The National Library of Scotland therefore puts it unusually plainly: Cummy, in practice, organised much of young Stevenson's life. She was not one voice among several in his childhood. She was one of the most constant.

And her voice came from a world that only partly matched the elegant New Town outside the windows of Heriot Row. Cunningham was a convinced Presbyterian, shaped by a strict Scottish Calvinism. She knew the Bible, the Psalms, and the stories of the Covenanters, those seventeenth-century Scottish Protestants who had been persecuted, imprisoned, and executed for their religious convictions. She told of martyrs, steadfast faith, guilt, damnation, and salvation; she sang Scottish ballads and read Stevenson texts in which people did not merely have experiences but stood before ultimate decisions. Language mattered too. Cummy read and told stories partly in Scots, a linguistic world already retreating from the wealthier circles of Edinburgh's New Town. Stevenson thus developed early an ear for the difference between the correct English of the bourgeois household and Scotland's older, rougher regional voice. Later, the ability to make characters live through voice and rhythm would become one of his greatest strengths. Long John Silver would be only half as dangerous without his speech; the men in *Kidnapped* carry their origins in every sentence.

We should not make the mistake of turning Cunningham retrospectively into a literary educator who deliberately trained a writer in the nursery. She had no intention of producing Stevenson. She wanted to nurse a boy, bring him up, and keep him in the right faith. That is precisely where the irony lies. Part of what she gave him would later be turned against her own world. Her stories were about absolute religious certainty, sin, conscience, and the battle for the soul. Stevenson grew into a man increasingly suspicious of certainties. In his early twenties he openly broke with his family's Christian faith, a decision that wounded his father particularly deeply. Biographers have therefore repeatedly seen Cummy's strict Calvinism as one of the factors that both fuelled Stevenson's religious imagination and helped prepare his later rebellion. The Stevenson Archive states the connection cautiously: her religious views may have stimulated his later ideas, but could equally have contributed to his distancing himself from faith.

That is far more interesting than the simple story of the pious nurse and the ungrateful freethinker. Cunningham may have given Stevenson so much material precisely because he later ceased to believe what she believed. He retained the dramaturgy and rejected part of the dogma. Sin, conscience, temptation, doubleness, hidden guilt, redemption, and moral fear did not disappear from his thinking when religion lost its claim on him. They became literature. There may therefore be no straight line from Cummy's night stories to Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, but there is an echo. Dr

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine

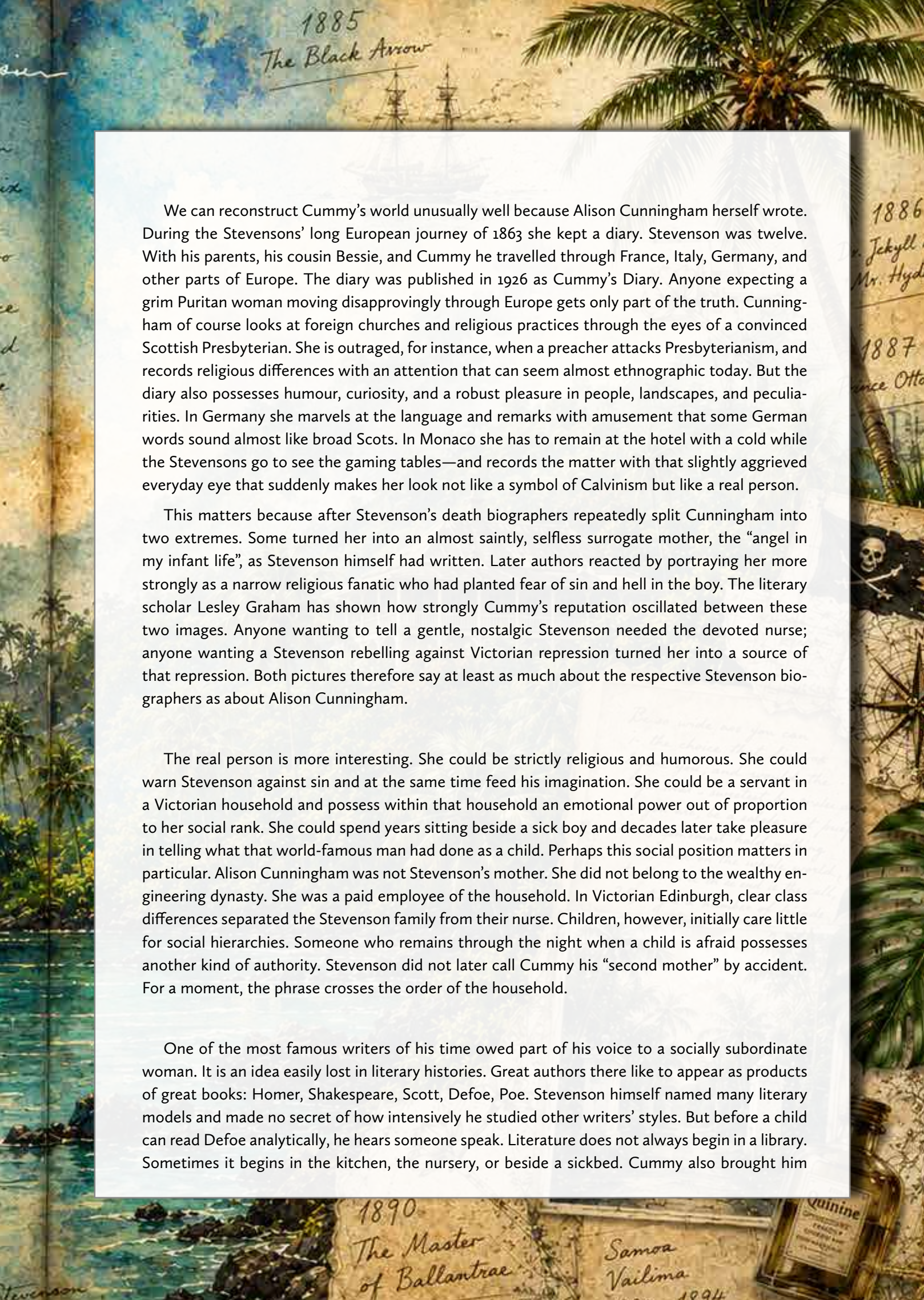
Jekyll, after all, is not a modern man indifferent to good and evil. He is obsessed with his hidden desire precisely because he feels the moral weight of his double nature. Hyde is no philosophical abstraction but something that almost calls for the old language of temptation, fall, and damnation. Stevenson modernised that world, but he had known its sound since childhood. He had heard it in the bedroom.

Even *Treasure Island* is less remote from this on closer inspection than its reputation as an adventure book suggests. Billy Bones lives in constant fear of a past that will find him. Blind Pew enters almost like a messenger of judgement. The black spot is nothing other than a sentence, a small piece of material that excludes a man from the community and tells him that his time is running out. Long John Silver, meanwhile, is so powerful because he constantly changes roles and seems to possess no inner moral authority that fixes him permanently. Cunningham would probably have had little liking for Silver's world. But the writer to whom she told stories of judgement and damnation knew very well the power of a verdict placed in someone's hand.

That Cummy's influence is not merely a later construction of biographers is shown by a small book in the holdings of the National Library of Scotland. A few months before Stevenson's fifth birthday, she gave him a volume about boys and wrote inside it: "R. Lewis Stevenson from Cummy". Beneath the inscription are childish pencil marks and coloured illustrations that may have been made by the young Stevenson himself. The object is unspectacular, but for that very reason moving. There is as yet no famous author, no *South Seas*, no *Treasure Island*. There is a woman giving a child a book and perhaps a child drawing in it. For a moment, later literary history fits completely between two covers.

Cunningham by no means read only pious texts to him. Her importance lay equally in the oral culture she brought into the house. Old Scottish stories, ballads, anecdotes, the tales of the Covenanters: these were materials that did not necessarily exist in the quiet form of a book. They lived in the way they were told. Emphasis, repetition, suspense, a change of voice—children learn very early whether a story works, long before they know why. Stevenson thus received a school in storytelling that neither curriculum nor university could offer. He learned that a story is physical. With the voice one can change speed, pause before something terrible happens, make a character visible with a different tone. Anyone who later reads the opening pages of *Treasure Island* aloud can hear how much Stevenson understood about this acoustic dimension of storytelling. Billy Bones does not merely enter the Admiral Benbow. Through his presence, his song, and his commands, he brings another rhythm into the house.

Perhaps this is one of the great underestimated sources of the adventure novel: it has to work when read aloud. Decades later Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* for Lloyd Osbourne and read the emerging chapters to his family. A chapter was written, then told. Its effect was tested immediately. Does someone laugh? Does the room fall silent? Does the boy want to know what happens next? This method of working is not so far from the nursery of Stevenson's own youth as it seems. He had first encountered stories as something that happens between two people: one tells, one listens. On that first page of his life, Cummy was the storyteller. Later the roles changed.



We can reconstruct Cummy's world unusually well because Alison Cunningham herself wrote. During the Stevensons' long European journey of 1863 she kept a diary. Stevenson was twelve. With his parents, his cousin Bessie, and Cummy he travelled through France, Italy, Germany, and other parts of Europe. The diary was published in 1926 as Cummy's Diary. Anyone expecting a grim Puritan woman moving disapprovingly through Europe gets only part of the truth. Cunningham of course looks at foreign churches and religious practices through the eyes of a convinced Scottish Presbyterian. She is outraged, for instance, when a preacher attacks Presbyterianism, and records religious differences with an attention that can seem almost ethnographic today. But the diary also possesses humour, curiosity, and a robust pleasure in people, landscapes, and peculiarities. In Germany she marvels at the language and remarks with amusement that some German words sound almost like broad Scots. In Monaco she has to remain at the hotel with a cold while the Stevensons go to see the gaming tables—and records the matter with that slightly aggrieved everyday eye that suddenly makes her look not like a symbol of Calvinism but like a real person.

This matters because after Stevenson's death biographers repeatedly split Cunningham into two extremes. Some turned her into an almost saintly, selfless surrogate mother, the "angel in my infant life", as Stevenson himself had written. Later authors reacted by portraying her more strongly as a narrow religious fanatic who had planted fear of sin and hell in the boy. The literary scholar Lesley Graham has shown how strongly Cummy's reputation oscillated between these two images. Anyone wanting to tell a gentle, nostalgic Stevenson needed the devoted nurse; anyone wanting a Stevenson rebelling against Victorian repression turned her into a source of that repression. Both pictures therefore say at least as much about the respective Stevenson biographers as about Alison Cunningham.

The real person is more interesting. She could be strictly religious and humorous. She could warn Stevenson against sin and at the same time feed his imagination. She could be a servant in a Victorian household and possess within that household an emotional power out of proportion to her social rank. She could spend years sitting beside a sick boy and decades later take pleasure in telling what that world-famous man had done as a child. Perhaps this social position matters in particular. Alison Cunningham was not Stevenson's mother. She did not belong to the wealthy engineering dynasty. She was a paid employee of the household. In Victorian Edinburgh, clear class differences separated the Stevenson family from their nurse. Children, however, initially care little for social hierarchies. Someone who remains through the night when a child is afraid possesses another kind of authority. Stevenson did not later call Cummy his "second mother" by accident. For a moment, the phrase crosses the order of the household.

One of the most famous writers of his time owed part of his voice to a socially subordinate woman. It is an idea easily lost in literary histories. Great authors there like to appear as products of great books: Homer, Shakespeare, Scott, Defoe, Poe. Stevenson himself named many literary models and made no secret of how intensively he studied other writers' styles. But before a child can read Defoe analytically, he hears someone speak. Literature does not always begin in a library. Sometimes it begins in the kitchen, the nursery, or beside a sickbed. Cummy also brought him

close to a Scotland that was not taken for granted in the elegant New Town. Scots in particular was by no means the language through which prosperous circles expected social advancement. Yet through Cunningham Stevenson gained access to another linguistic layer. Later he repeatedly worked with dialect, social voice, and Scottish identity. A completely linguistically smoothed-out Scotland would be inconceivable in *Kidnapped* or *Catriona*. Stevenson the writer heard differences because Louis the boy had heard differences.

And the Covenanters did not disappear either. In 1866, when Stevenson was sixteen, his first printed historical work appeared: *The Pentland Rising: A Page of History, 1666*. His father paid to have the small pamphlet printed. Its subject was the very Covenanter uprising whose stories Stevenson had heard since childhood. The National Library of Scotland explicitly makes the connection to Cunningham: her tales of these religious struggles had shaped his imagination and influenced the choice of his first historical subject. It is almost too perfect: before Stevenson wrote pirates, he wrote about people Cummy had told him about. The first trace of her voice therefore does not lead only indirectly into a later masterpiece. It already lands in one of the teenager's first printed texts. Decades later, when *A Child's Garden of Verses* was being prepared, Stevenson did not simply send Cunningham the book without comment. In letters he still teased her with memories from their shared past. At first she was not to see the dedication; he jokingly compared it with the jelly she apparently used to save for the end of a meal when he was a child. Even more than thirty years later there existed between them a private language of childhood phrases, small rituals, and memories. The relationship was not merely biographical gratitude. It had remained alive.

When Stevenson died in Samoa in 1894, Cummy lived for almost another twenty years. Then something curious happened. The nurse became famous herself. *A Child's Garden of Verses* found ever more readers in the early twentieth century. Stevenson had long since entered the literary canon. Visitors, admirers, and biographers suddenly wanted to meet the woman immortalised in his dedication. Cunningham happily told stories of "her boy", recalling illnesses, journeys, games, and peculiarities. The woman who had spent decades outside public life became the living link to a dead writer. The Stevenson Archive describes how much she actually enjoyed the attention. She died in 1913 at over ninety years of age. There is a strange reversal in this. When Stevenson was small, no one knew him, and Cunningham told him stories about famous people long dead. At the end of her life, strangers came to her so she could tell stories about Stevenson.

The storyteller had himself become a story. And Cummy once again possessed the voice. Perhaps for that reason the moving dedication in *A Child's Garden of Verses* is not the best place to understand her importance. It is too beautiful, too complete. It turns a complicated woman into gratitude. More interesting is the untidier picture: a strict Presbyterian woman from Fife telling a sick boy stories of martyrs and ghosts; a nurse putting Scots into his ear while the respectable New Town outside speaks English; a morally convinced Christian who, perhaps precisely through the intensity of this religious world, contributes to the conflict that later distances Stevenson from his family's faith; an employee who becomes more important within a child's life than the social order of the household would suggest; a woman who keeps a diary on European journeys, objects to foreign services, marvels at languages, and possesses enough humour to observe her

surroundings closely.

She did not make Stevenson a writer. No one makes another person a writer. But she gave him something harder to teach than grammar. She showed him that stories have voices. That a story can produce fear even though nothing has happened in the room. That people dead for two hundred years come alive again if someone tells of them properly. That a sentence sounds different when it comes from another part of Scotland. And that a child can get through a long, dark evening if someone sits beside the bed and makes the world larger. Many years later Stevenson would write *Treasure Island* every morning in Braemar and then read the new chapters aloud to his family. Lloyd Osbourne sits there and listens. A boy waits for the story to continue. The roles have reversed. Stevenson is now the voice in the room. But perhaps, at that moment, someone else still sits invisibly behind him: a woman from Fife who had watched beside his bed decades before. Cummy had not taught him how to write novels. She had shown him something more important. Why someone wants to keep listening.

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

1886

*Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde*

1887

*Prince Otto*

Be as wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you, and would the  
life that is sweetest be yours  
as you are, be a whole; not part;  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world  
studied in it as end in the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

*The Master  
of Ballantrae*

*Samoa  
Vailima*

1894

Quinine

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

I am writing you in my crude  
Hawaiian, but I recall him  
Since you must try — Beatrice  
and be definite d'Almeida  
sat this last in the large 8v  
edition — with the small price  
25 — one — and you will find  
a number of old friends; the  
last avatar of Pantofole for  
instance. The anecdote is  
held in want of authenticity

yours truly

Robert Louis Stevenson

1881/82

Young Folks  
Serialisation in  
Young Folks  
Magazine

1883

Erstaussage  
Cassell & Co.  
London

1884

Erste US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889

Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hole  
Illustrationen

APIA  
5 SP.  
93  
SAMOA

VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879

July 10, 1880

Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
The Black Arrow

1886  
Mr. Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887  
Prince Otto

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; make  
as you are, be a sailor; not just  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890  
The Master  
of Ballantrae

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894



## CHAPTER 6

# The Son Says No

## Stevenson Defies His Father and Reinvents Himself

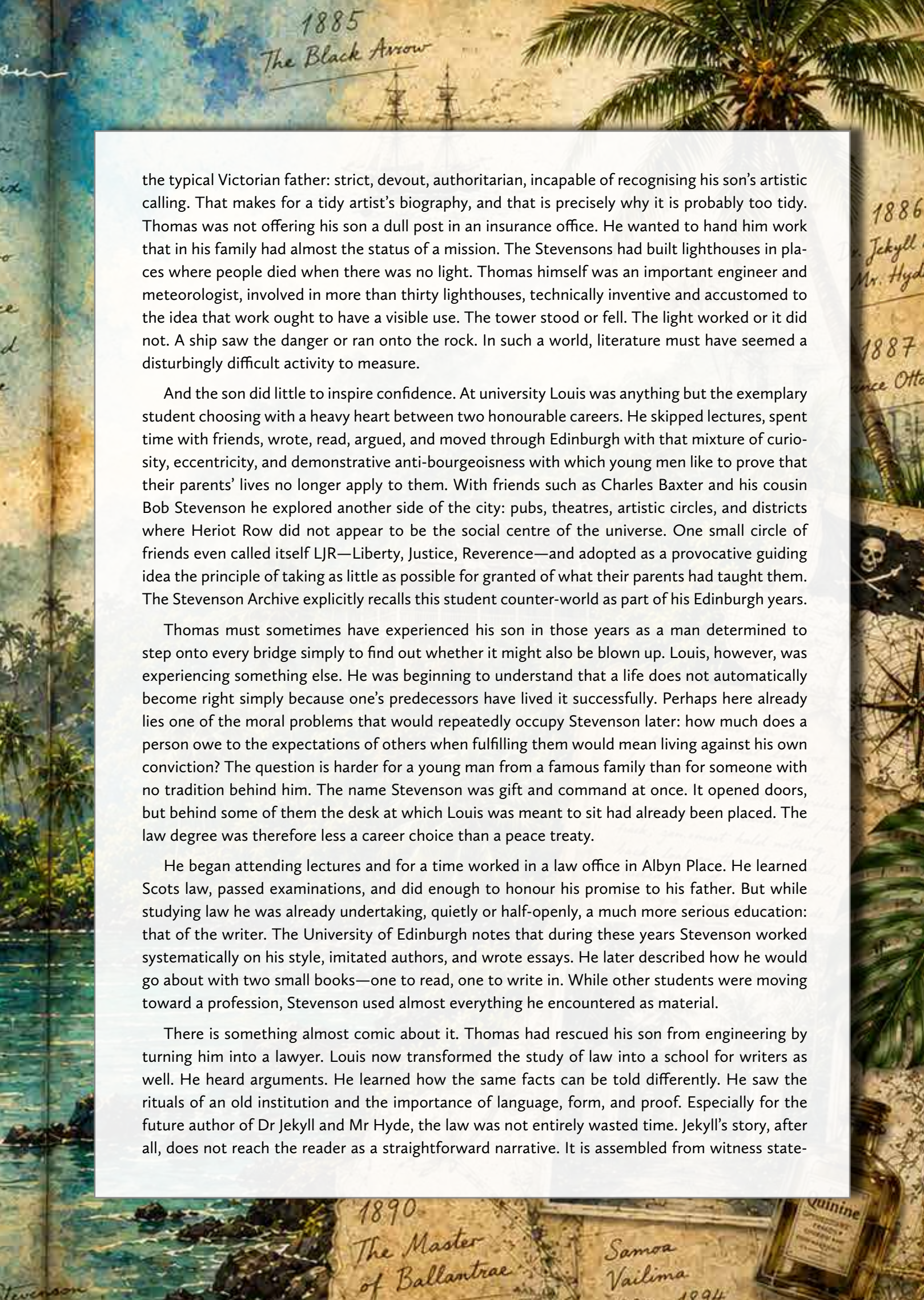
### The Son Says No – Engineer, Lawyer, or Writer?

On 27 March 1871 Robert Louis Stevenson stood before the Royal Scottish Society of Arts in Edinburgh and did something that must have given his father hope. The twenty-year-old son of Scotland's most famous family of lighthouse builders presented a technical paper of his own. It was called *On a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses*, dealt with an improvement in the identification of lighthouse signals, and was by no means the polite exercise of a young man whose famous family name had merely secured him a platform. Stevenson had addressed a real problem: the more lighthouses stood along the coasts, the more important it became for sailors to distinguish them from one another at night. A light needed, as it were, its own rhythm, a signature of brightness and darkness. Stevenson proposed an arrangement of rotating mirrors through which the light could abruptly disappear and reappear. In his paper he referred to solutions developed by his grandfather, discussed alternatives, and even mentioned a technical variant devised by his father. The Society listened, examined the proposal—and awarded Robert Louis Stevenson its silver medal. The prize was worth three sovereigns. A few copies of the paper were printed separately; today they are among the rarest of Stevenson's early publications.

It could have been the perfect beginning of an engineering career. Instead, it was almost its end. There is something in this life situation that would seem a little too neatly constructed in a novel. Stevenson did not fail at his father's profession. He had just proved that he could have pursued it. In retrospect, the silver medal removes a convenient explanation. The young man was not too inept for the family tradition and therefore fled into literature. He could understand technical problems, had spent years at university and on worksites, knew the family's engineering projects, and could hold his own before a professional society. Yet that same spring he decided that he did not want this life. The Royal Scottish Society of Arts had just confirmed that a Stevenson engineer lived within him. Robert Louis's answer, in effect, was: that is not enough for me.

Perhaps that was precisely the hardest kind of no. It is easy to explain the rejection of a profession in which one obviously fails. To reject a profession in which one is already receiving recognition demands another kind of certainty. Thomas Stevenson had to watch his only son leave the famous dynasty not because of a lack of talent but by choice. The University of Edinburgh describes the compromise soberly: Robert Louis had enrolled in engineering in 1867 at the age of seventeen, but showed ever less interest in carrying on the family tradition; in 1871 Thomas finally accepted the switch to law. Writing, which had long since become Louis's real work, was not yet considered a sufficient profession. The law was to be, in a sense, the safety net beneath the literary tightrope walker.

Thomas Stevenson deserves fairness in this conflict. From a distance it is easy to turn him into



the typical Victorian father: strict, devout, authoritarian, incapable of recognising his son's artistic calling. That makes for a tidy artist's biography, and that is precisely why it is probably too tidy. Thomas was not offering his son a dull post in an insurance office. He wanted to hand him work that in his family had almost the status of a mission. The Stevensons had built lighthouses in places where people died when there was no light. Thomas himself was an important engineer and meteorologist, involved in more than thirty lighthouses, technically inventive and accustomed to the idea that work ought to have a visible use. The tower stood or fell. The light worked or it did not. A ship saw the danger or ran onto the rock. In such a world, literature must have seemed a disturbingly difficult activity to measure.

And the son did little to inspire confidence. At university Louis was anything but the exemplary student choosing with a heavy heart between two honourable careers. He skipped lectures, spent time with friends, wrote, read, argued, and moved through Edinburgh with that mixture of curiosity, eccentricity, and demonstrative anti-bourgeoisness with which young men like to prove that their parents' lives no longer apply to them. With friends such as Charles Baxter and his cousin Bob Stevenson he explored another side of the city: pubs, theatres, artistic circles, and districts where Heriot Row did not appear to be the social centre of the universe. One small circle of friends even called itself LJR—Liberty, Justice, Reverence—and adopted as a provocative guiding idea the principle of taking as little as possible for granted of what their parents had taught them. The Stevenson Archive explicitly recalls this student counter-world as part of his Edinburgh years.

Thomas must sometimes have experienced his son in those years as a man determined to step onto every bridge simply to find out whether it might also be blown up. Louis, however, was experiencing something else. He was beginning to understand that a life does not automatically become right simply because one's predecessors have lived it successfully. Perhaps here already lies one of the moral problems that would repeatedly occupy Stevenson later: how much does a person owe to the expectations of others when fulfilling them would mean living against his own conviction? The question is harder for a young man from a famous family than for someone with no tradition behind him. The name Stevenson was gift and command at once. It opened doors, but behind some of them the desk at which Louis was meant to sit had already been placed. The law degree was therefore less a career choice than a peace treaty.

He began attending lectures and for a time worked in a law office in Albyn Place. He learned Scots law, passed examinations, and did enough to honour his promise to his father. But while studying law he was already undertaking, quietly or half-openly, a much more serious education: that of the writer. The University of Edinburgh notes that during these years Stevenson worked systematically on his style, imitated authors, and wrote essays. He later described how he would go about with two small books—one to read, one to write in. While other students were moving toward a profession, Stevenson used almost everything he encountered as material.

There is something almost comic about it. Thomas had rescued his son from engineering by turning him into a lawyer. Louis now transformed the study of law into a school for writers as well. He heard arguments. He learned how the same facts can be told differently. He saw the rituals of an old institution and the importance of language, form, and proof. Especially for the future author of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the law was not entirely wasted time. *Jekyll's* story, after all, does not reach the reader as a straightforward narrative. It is assembled from witness state-

# Long John Silver – Der Mann, der das Buch übernimmt

Er humpelt, er flucht, er lacht – und doch folgen ihm die Männer. Long John Silver ist kein Held, sondern ein Meister der Menschenseele. Mit Charme, List und furchteinflößender Intelligenz steuert er die Ereignisse wie kein anderer auf der Insel.



Seine Waffen:  
Verstand, Erfahrung,  
ein silberner Zungenschlag  
– und ein treues Tier.





### Der Strategie

Silver sieht mehr als andere. Er erkennt Schwächen, nutzt Gelegenheiten und plant stets mehrere Züge voraus.

### Der Schauspieler

Mal jovial, mal bedauernd, mal väterlich – Silver spielt jede Rolle mit Überzeugung und Timing.

### Der Anführer

Wenn es darauf ankommt, führt er entschlossen und macht klar, wer hier das Sagen hat.

### Der Manipulator

Er sieht, was andere wollen – und gibt ihnen genau das, was sie glauben zu brauchen.

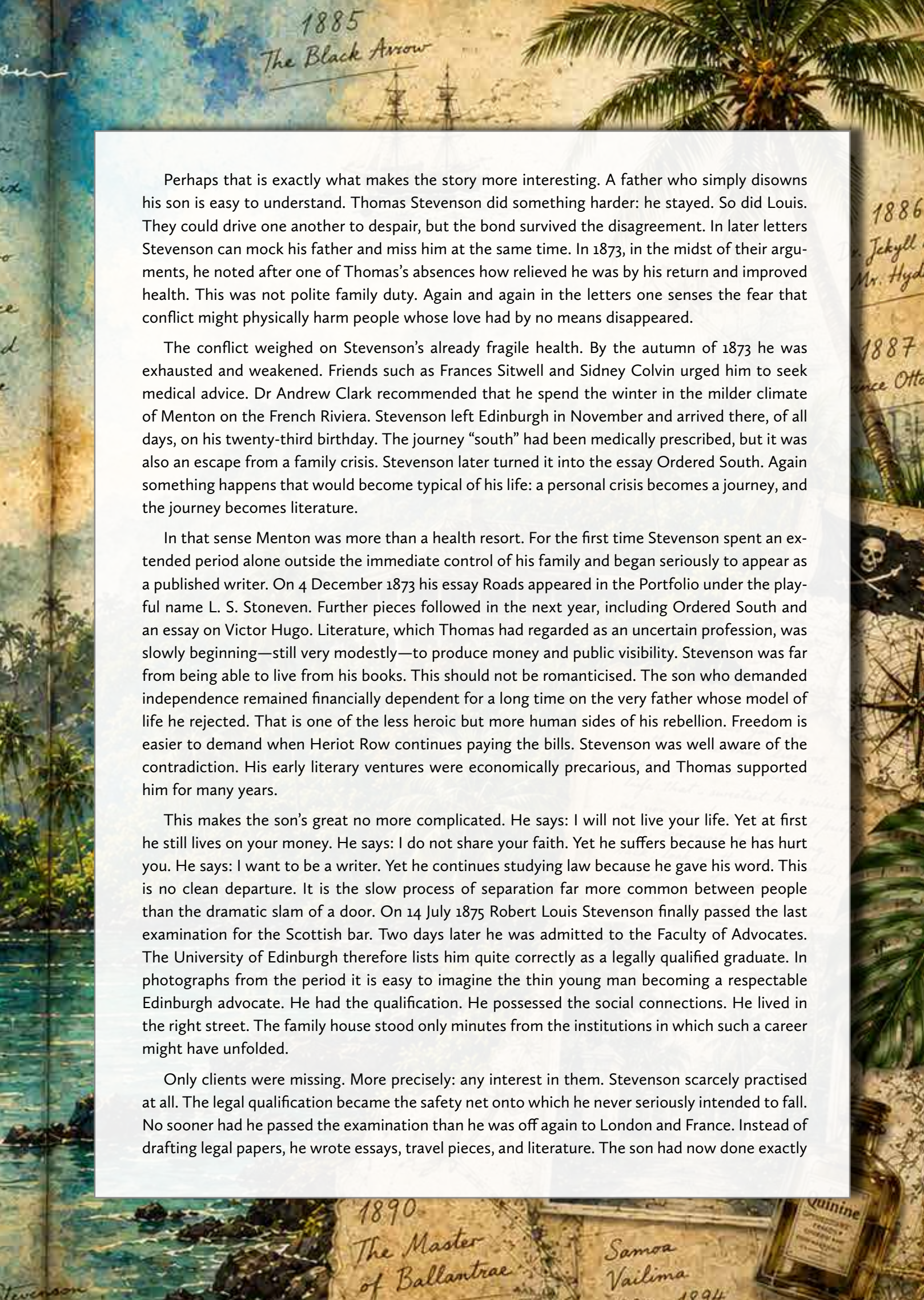


ments, documents, observations, and a final written confession. The truth must be reconstructed. It resembles a case file more than a fairy tale. Stevenson never practised law, but the legal idea that reality must be inferred from contradictory testimony was familiar to him. Yet harder still than the question of profession was another separation. In 1871 Louis had merely told his father that he would not continue his work. Two years later he had to tell him that he could no longer share his faith either.

On the evening of Friday, 31 January 1873, the conversation took place in Heriot Row that Stevenson described a few days later as a “thunderbolt”. Thomas questioned his son about his religious convictions. Louis answered openly. He had been deeply engaged with contemporary debates about science, evolution, philosophy, and religion; Darwin and Herbert Spencer were among the writers who had shaken the self-evident Christian order of his youth. The Stevenson Archive dates the open breach to that very day: the son told his father that he no longer shared his parents’ Christian faith in its existing form. Two days later he wrote to his friend Charles Baxter. Suddenly the later world-famous author disappears and what remains is a twenty-two-year-old man who has done something at home that cannot be undone. His parents, he writes, are ill with grief and silent. He himself torments himself with the question of whether he ought not to have lied instead. Then comes the sentence that brings the whole conflict into focus:

“Am I to live my whole life as one falsehood?” This is not the triumph of an enlightened son over an old-fashioned father. Stevenson does not rejoice. He suffers. That is precisely what makes the letter so powerful. For Thomas, loss of faith was not an interesting intellectual development in his son. It concerned his soul. If Thomas took religion seriously—and everything suggests that he did—he could not treat Louis’s declaration as a private difference of opinion. His son was not telling him that he preferred another political party or held a different view of literature. He was questioning the order in which Thomas connected hope, morality, family, and life after death. And Louis knew exactly what he was doing to him. That distinguishes the conflict from the usual story of rebellious youth. Stevenson did not simply want to provoke. By his own account he almost wished he could take back what had been said. But that would have returned him to precisely the form of life against which everything in him resisted: an existence performed for others.

He had already said no to his father’s profession. Now he said no to his father’s certainty. It was the more dangerous refusal. The house in Heriot Row must have been strangely quiet in those days. The same father who had discussed lighthouses, mathematics, and coasts with Louis now faced a son whose future was slipping from him in several respects. His mother Margaret also suffered from the conflict. Stevenson wrote that in being honest he had first thought of his father and forgotten what it would do to his mother. The letter to Baxter is full of that particular guilt which does not arise from believing one has done something wrong, but from knowing that something one considers necessary has hurt people one loves. This distinction matters because Thomas and Louis never simply lost one another despite all their conflicts. Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson later explicitly warned against constructing a false overall picture of the father-son relationship from the young Louis’s fierce letters. The religious disputes had appeared more dramatic in youth than the later relationship suggested; Thomas and his son remained closely connected. The Stevenson Archive stresses this closeness as well. They argued over profession, religion, and later Louis’s decision to love and eventually marry the married Fanny Osbourne. Yet Thomas later developed a warm relationship even with his daughter-in-law.



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Perhaps that is exactly what makes the story more interesting. A father who simply disowns his son is easy to understand. Thomas Stevenson did something harder: he stayed. So did Louis. They could drive one another to despair, but the bond survived the disagreement. In later letters Stevenson can mock his father and miss him at the same time. In 1873, in the midst of their arguments, he noted after one of Thomas's absences how relieved he was by his return and improved health. This was not polite family duty. Again and again in the letters one senses the fear that conflict might physically harm people whose love had by no means disappeared.

The conflict weighed on Stevenson's already fragile health. By the autumn of 1873 he was exhausted and weakened. Friends such as Frances Sitwell and Sidney Colvin urged him to seek medical advice. Dr Andrew Clark recommended that he spend the winter in the milder climate of Menton on the French Riviera. Stevenson left Edinburgh in November and arrived there, of all days, on his twenty-third birthday. The journey "south" had been medically prescribed, but it was also an escape from a family crisis. Stevenson later turned it into the essay *Ordered South*. Again something happens that would become typical of his life: a personal crisis becomes a journey, and the journey becomes literature.

In that sense Menton was more than a health resort. For the first time Stevenson spent an extended period alone outside the immediate control of his family and began seriously to appear as a published writer. On 4 December 1873 his essay *Roads* appeared in the *Portfolio* under the playful name L. S. Stoneven. Further pieces followed in the next year, including *Ordered South* and an essay on Victor Hugo. Literature, which Thomas had regarded as an uncertain profession, was slowly beginning—still very modestly—to produce money and public visibility. Stevenson was far from being able to live from his books. This should not be romanticised. The son who demanded independence remained financially dependent for a long time on the very father whose model of life he rejected. That is one of the less heroic but more human sides of his rebellion. Freedom is easier to demand when Heriot Row continues paying the bills. Stevenson was well aware of the contradiction. His early literary ventures were economically precarious, and Thomas supported him for many years.

This makes the son's great no more complicated. He says: I will not live your life. Yet at first he still lives on your money. He says: I do not share your faith. Yet he suffers because he has hurt you. He says: I want to be a writer. Yet he continues studying law because he gave his word. This is no clean departure. It is the slow process of separation far more common between people than the dramatic slam of a door. On 14 July 1875 Robert Louis Stevenson finally passed the last examination for the Scottish bar. Two days later he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates. The University of Edinburgh therefore lists him quite correctly as a legally qualified graduate. In photographs from the period it is easy to imagine the thin young man becoming a respectable Edinburgh advocate. He had the qualification. He possessed the social connections. He lived in the right street. The family house stood only minutes from the institutions in which such a career might have unfolded.

Only clients were missing. More precisely: any interest in them. Stevenson scarcely practised at all. The legal qualification became the safety net onto which he never seriously intended to fall. No sooner had he passed the examination than he was off again to London and France. Instead of drafting legal papers, he wrote essays, travel pieces, and literature. The son had now done exactly

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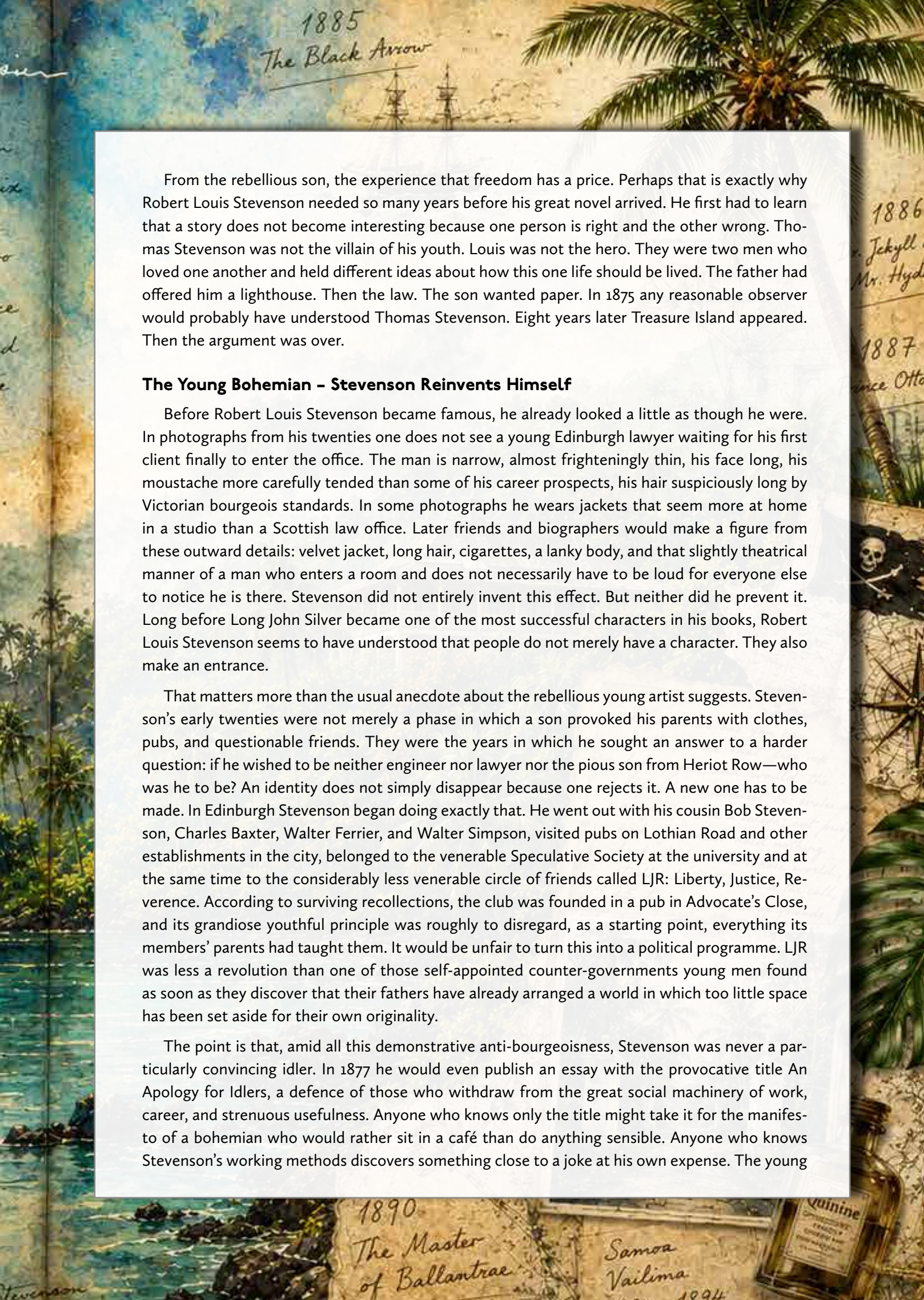


what his father required: he possessed a respectable profession. And did not use it. There is a particularly fine irony in the fact that Stevenson failed at neither of the careers he rejected. As a prospective engineer he won a silver medal. As a lawyer he passed his examinations and became an advocate. He had opened two doors. And walked through neither. There is perhaps no better demonstration of how serious his desire to write was. Literature was not the profession left over after other possibilities disappeared. It was the possibility for which he gave the others up.

That is an important distinction. Stevenson later wrote with remarkable sobriety about the writer's profession. He knew that the romantic idea of the inspired genius could be dangerous. Writing for him was craft, discipline, economic activity, and moral responsibility toward the reader. Perhaps his father's resistance had something to do with that. Anyone who has to explain to an engineer that literature is work had better believe it himself. Thomas Stevenson could point to a lighthouse and say: I built that. Louis had to wait longer before he could show anything comparable. In 1875 there was no *Treasure Island*. No *Kidnapped*. No *Jekyll and Hyde*. No international audience. There were essays, plans, notebooks, and a young man with a legal wig claiming that he was going to be a writer. From the point of view of a worried father, scepticism was not foolishness. And yet Louis possessed something Thomas could not measure: he had already been practising. Stevenson later described his literary training as almost obsessive imitation. When he liked a passage by a writer, he tried to create the same effect himself. He imitated Hazlitt, Lamb, Wordsworth, Defoe, Hawthorne, and others. He rewrote sentences, tried rhythms, studied transitions. Just as a future engineer had to learn why an arch bears weight, Stevenson wanted to know why a paragraph holds. His method was less romantic than his appearance. Behind the young man with long hair, velvet jacket, and demonstrative anti-bourgeoisness, a craftsman was at work.

Perhaps in this he was more like his father than either of them understood at the time. Thomas constructed light. Louis constructed effect. Thomas asked how a particular arrangement of mirrors altered a beam of light. Louis asked how a particular arrangement of words altered a reader's imagination. Both believed in precision. Only their materials differed. Even the small technical paper of 1871 acquires, in retrospect, a strangely literary resonance. Stevenson dealt there with the alternation of light and darkness. A lighthouse was to become unmistakable through the sudden disappearance and return of brightness. The intervals created identity. Twenty years later Stevenson's literature would be full of such alternations. *Jekyll and Hyde*. Respectability and crime. Civilisation and wilderness. Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver. Light and dark. It would of course be absurd to turn this into a direct technical cause of his novels. But as an image it fits astonishingly well with a man whose life in those years was ruled by two worlds. Heriot Row and the pub. Engineer and writer. Faith and doubt. Father and son.

Stevenson did not have to invent Dr Jekyll in order to learn that a person can contain more than one life. He was already living between several. The great decision of his early twenties therefore did not consist in destroying one of these sides. It consisted in discovering which of them would be allowed to determine his life. In the end literature won. But it did not win in a single uprising. It won a silver medal and gave up the profession anyway. It studied law and laid aside the gown. It told the father the truth about faith and at the same time wished it had not hurt him. It travelled south because conflict had exhausted the body and turned even that flight into an essay. It took something from every abandoned life. From the engineer, precision. From the lawyer, distrust of simple truths. From Calvinism, the weight of moral decisions.



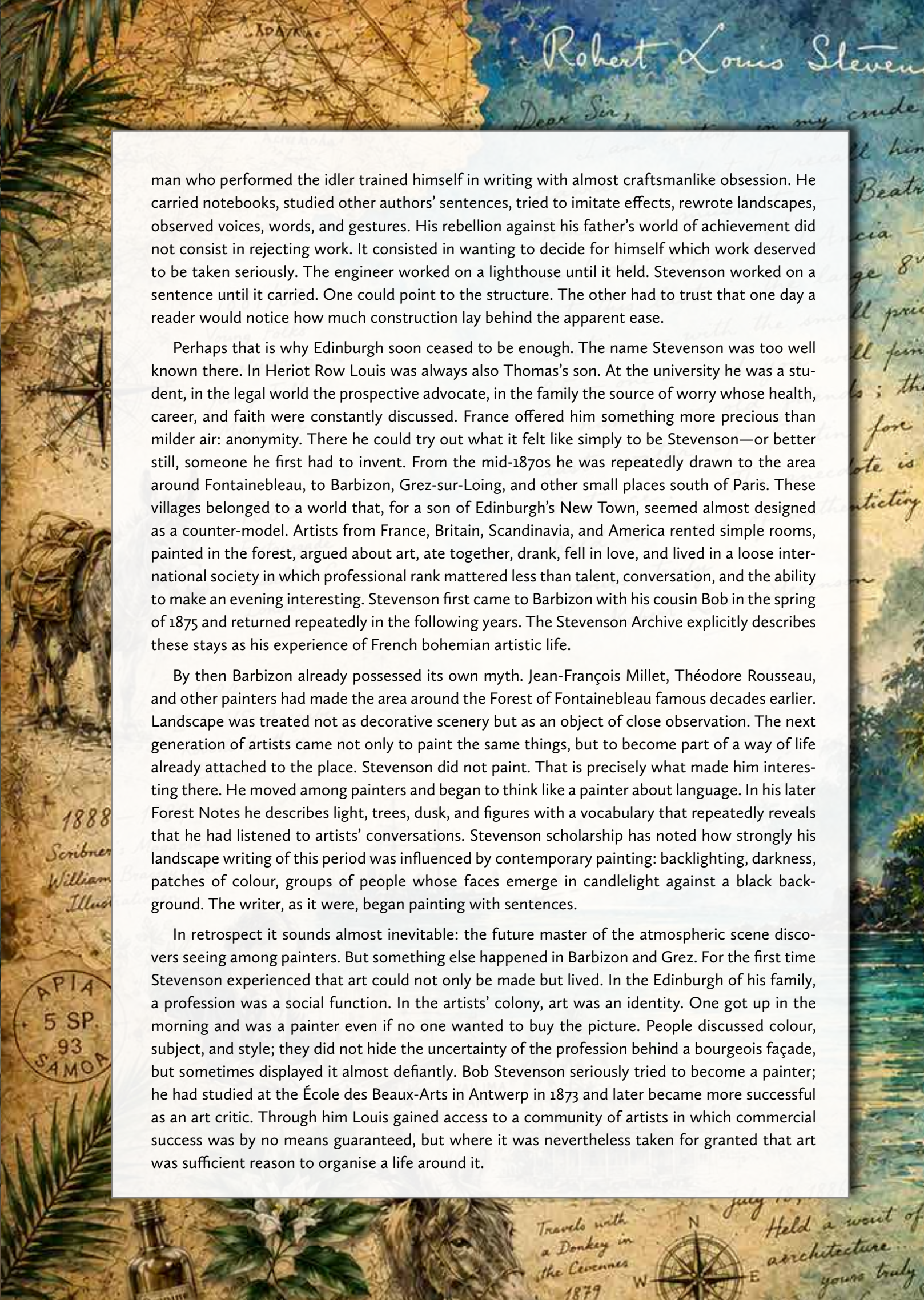
From the rebellious son, the experience that freedom has a price. Perhaps that is exactly why Robert Louis Stevenson needed so many years before his great novel arrived. He first had to learn that a story does not become interesting because one person is right and the other wrong. Thomas Stevenson was not the villain of his youth. Louis was not the hero. They were two men who loved one another and held different ideas about how this one life should be lived. The father had offered him a lighthouse. Then the law. The son wanted paper. In 1875 any reasonable observer would probably have understood Thomas Stevenson. Eight years later *Treasure Island* appeared. Then the argument was over.

### **The Young Bohemian – Stevenson Reinvents Himself**

Before Robert Louis Stevenson became famous, he already looked a little as though he were. In photographs from his twenties one does not see a young Edinburgh lawyer waiting for his first client finally to enter the office. The man is narrow, almost frighteningly thin, his face long, his moustache more carefully tended than some of his career prospects, his hair suspiciously long by Victorian bourgeois standards. In some photographs he wears jackets that seem more at home in a studio than a Scottish law office. Later friends and biographers would make a figure from these outward details: velvet jacket, long hair, cigarettes, a lanky body, and that slightly theatrical manner of a man who enters a room and does not necessarily have to be loud for everyone else to notice he is there. Stevenson did not entirely invent this effect. But neither did he prevent it. Long before Long John Silver became one of the most successful characters in his books, Robert Louis Stevenson seems to have understood that people do not merely have a character. They also make an entrance.

That matters more than the usual anecdote about the rebellious young artist suggests. Stevenson's early twenties were not merely a phase in which a son provoked his parents with clothes, pubs, and questionable friends. They were the years in which he sought an answer to a harder question: if he wished to be neither engineer nor lawyer nor the pious son from Heriot Row—who was he to be? An identity does not simply disappear because one rejects it. A new one has to be made. In Edinburgh Stevenson began doing exactly that. He went out with his cousin Bob Stevenson, Charles Baxter, Walter Ferrier, and Walter Simpson, visited pubs on Lothian Road and other establishments in the city, belonged to the venerable Speculative Society at the university and at the same time to the considerably less venerable circle of friends called LJR: Liberty, Justice, Reverence. According to surviving recollections, the club was founded in a pub in Advocate's Close, and its grandiose youthful principle was roughly to disregard, as a starting point, everything its members' parents had taught them. It would be unfair to turn this into a political programme. LJR was less a revolution than one of those self-appointed counter-governments young men found as soon as they discover that their fathers have already arranged a world in which too little space has been set aside for their own originality.

The point is that, amid all this demonstrative anti-bourgeoisness, Stevenson was never a particularly convincing idler. In 1877 he would even publish an essay with the provocative title *An Apology for Idlers*, a defence of those who withdraw from the great social machinery of work, career, and strenuous usefulness. Anyone who knows only the title might take it for the manifesto of a bohemian who would rather sit in a café than do anything sensible. Anyone who knows Stevenson's working methods discovers something close to a joke at his own expense. The young

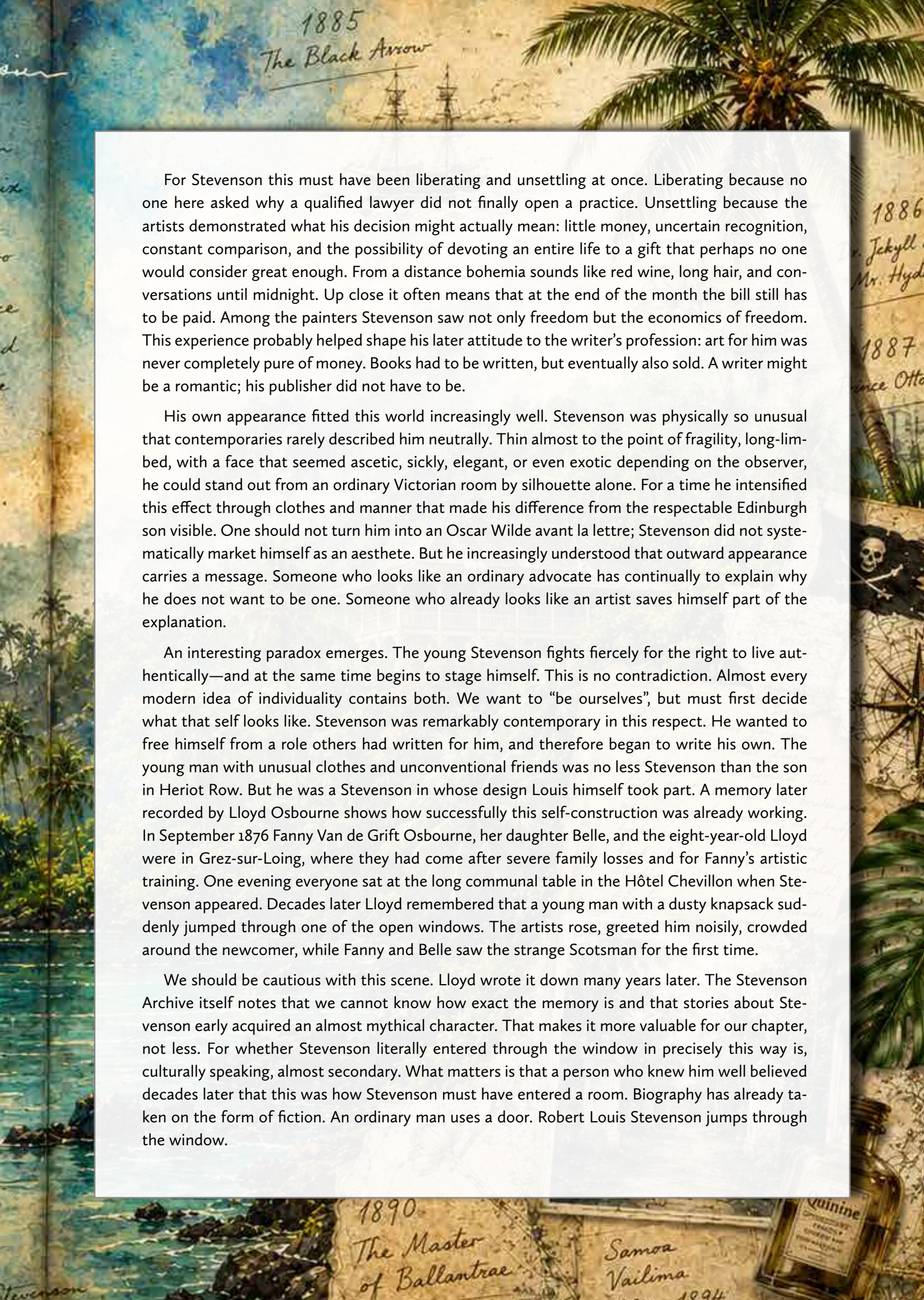


man who performed the idler trained himself in writing with almost craftsmanlike obsession. He carried notebooks, studied other authors' sentences, tried to imitate effects, rewrote landscapes, observed voices, words, and gestures. His rebellion against his father's world of achievement did not consist in rejecting work. It consisted in wanting to decide for himself which work deserved to be taken seriously. The engineer worked on a lighthouse until it held. Stevenson worked on a sentence until it carried. One could point to the structure. The other had to trust that one day a reader would notice how much construction lay behind the apparent ease.

Perhaps that is why Edinburgh soon ceased to be enough. The name Stevenson was too well known there. In Heriot Row Louis was always also Thomas's son. At the university he was a student, in the legal world the prospective advocate, in the family the source of worry whose health, career, and faith were constantly discussed. France offered him something more precious than milder air: anonymity. There he could try out what it felt like simply to be Stevenson—or better still, someone he first had to invent. From the mid-1870s he was repeatedly drawn to the area around Fontainebleau, to Barbizon, Grez-sur-Loing, and other small places south of Paris. These villages belonged to a world that, for a son of Edinburgh's New Town, seemed almost designed as a counter-model. Artists from France, Britain, Scandinavia, and America rented simple rooms, painted in the forest, argued about art, ate together, drank, fell in love, and lived in a loose international society in which professional rank mattered less than talent, conversation, and the ability to make an evening interesting. Stevenson first came to Barbizon with his cousin Bob in the spring of 1875 and returned repeatedly in the following years. The Stevenson Archive explicitly describes these stays as his experience of French bohemian artistic life.

By then Barbizon already possessed its own myth. Jean-François Millet, Théodore Rousseau, and other painters had made the area around the Forest of Fontainebleau famous decades earlier. Landscape was treated not as decorative scenery but as an object of close observation. The next generation of artists came not only to paint the same things, but to become part of a way of life already attached to the place. Stevenson did not paint. That is precisely what made him interesting there. He moved among painters and began to think like a painter about language. In his later Forest Notes he describes light, trees, dusk, and figures with a vocabulary that repeatedly reveals that he had listened to artists' conversations. Stevenson scholarship has noted how strongly his landscape writing of this period was influenced by contemporary painting: backlighting, darkness, patches of colour, groups of people whose faces emerge in candlelight against a black background. The writer, as it were, began painting with sentences.

In retrospect it sounds almost inevitable: the future master of the atmospheric scene discovers seeing among painters. But something else happened in Barbizon and Grez. For the first time Stevenson experienced that art could not only be made but lived. In the Edinburgh of his family, a profession was a social function. In the artists' colony, art was an identity. One got up in the morning and was a painter even if no one wanted to buy the picture. People discussed colour, subject, and style; they did not hide the uncertainty of the profession behind a bourgeois façade, but sometimes displayed it almost defiantly. Bob Stevenson seriously tried to become a painter; he had studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp in 1873 and later became more successful as an art critic. Through him Louis gained access to a community of artists in which commercial success was by no means guaranteed, but where it was nevertheless taken for granted that art was sufficient reason to organise a life around it.



For Stevenson this must have been liberating and unsettling at once. Liberating because no one here asked why a qualified lawyer did not finally open a practice. Unsettling because the artists demonstrated what his decision might actually mean: little money, uncertain recognition, constant comparison, and the possibility of devoting an entire life to a gift that perhaps no one would consider great enough. From a distance bohemia sounds like red wine, long hair, and conversations until midnight. Up close it often means that at the end of the month the bill still has to be paid. Among the painters Stevenson saw not only freedom but the economics of freedom. This experience probably helped shape his later attitude to the writer's profession: art for him was never completely pure of money. Books had to be written, but eventually also sold. A writer might be a romantic; his publisher did not have to be.

His own appearance fitted this world increasingly well. Stevenson was physically so unusual that contemporaries rarely described him neutrally. Thin almost to the point of fragility, long-limbed, with a face that seemed ascetic, sickly, elegant, or even exotic depending on the observer, he could stand out from an ordinary Victorian room by silhouette alone. For a time he intensified this effect through clothes and manner that made his difference from the respectable Edinburgh son visible. One should not turn him into an Oscar Wilde avant la lettre; Stevenson did not systematically market himself as an aesthete. But he increasingly understood that outward appearance carries a message. Someone who looks like an ordinary advocate has continually to explain why he does not want to be one. Someone who already looks like an artist saves himself part of the explanation.

An interesting paradox emerges. The young Stevenson fights fiercely for the right to live authentically—and at the same time begins to stage himself. This is no contradiction. Almost every modern idea of individuality contains both. We want to “be ourselves”, but must first decide what that self looks like. Stevenson was remarkably contemporary in this respect. He wanted to free himself from a role others had written for him, and therefore began to write his own. The young man with unusual clothes and unconventional friends was no less Stevenson than the son in Heriot Row. But he was a Stevenson in whose design Louis himself took part. A memory later recorded by Lloyd Osbourne shows how successfully this self-construction was already working. In September 1876 Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, her daughter Belle, and the eight-year-old Lloyd were in Grez-sur-Loing, where they had come after severe family losses and for Fanny's artistic training. One evening everyone sat at the long communal table in the Hôtel Cheillon when Stevenson appeared. Decades later Lloyd remembered that a young man with a dusty knapsack suddenly jumped through one of the open windows. The artists rose, greeted him noisily, crowded around the newcomer, while Fanny and Belle saw the strange Scotsman for the first time.

We should be cautious with this scene. Lloyd wrote it down many years later. The Stevenson Archive itself notes that we cannot know how exact the memory is and that stories about Stevenson early acquired an almost mythical character. That makes it more valuable for our chapter, not less. For whether Stevenson literally entered through the window in precisely this way is, culturally speaking, almost secondary. What matters is that a person who knew him well believed decades later that this was how Stevenson must have entered a room. Biography has already taken on the form of fiction. An ordinary man uses a door. Robert Louis Stevenson jumps through the window.



Perhaps that is the moment when the young bohemian becomes a character. One can imagine him: dusty from travel, thin, knapsack on his back, among a group of painters who clearly know and like him. He is not yet the author of *Treasure Island*. No reader is waiting for his next book. The great novels lie years in the future. And yet in this small hotel he already possesses something that would later belong to his public persona: presence. People remember his arrival. Stories gather around him. The man who would later create extraordinarily successful characters apparently possessed the ability himself to become a character in other people's memories.

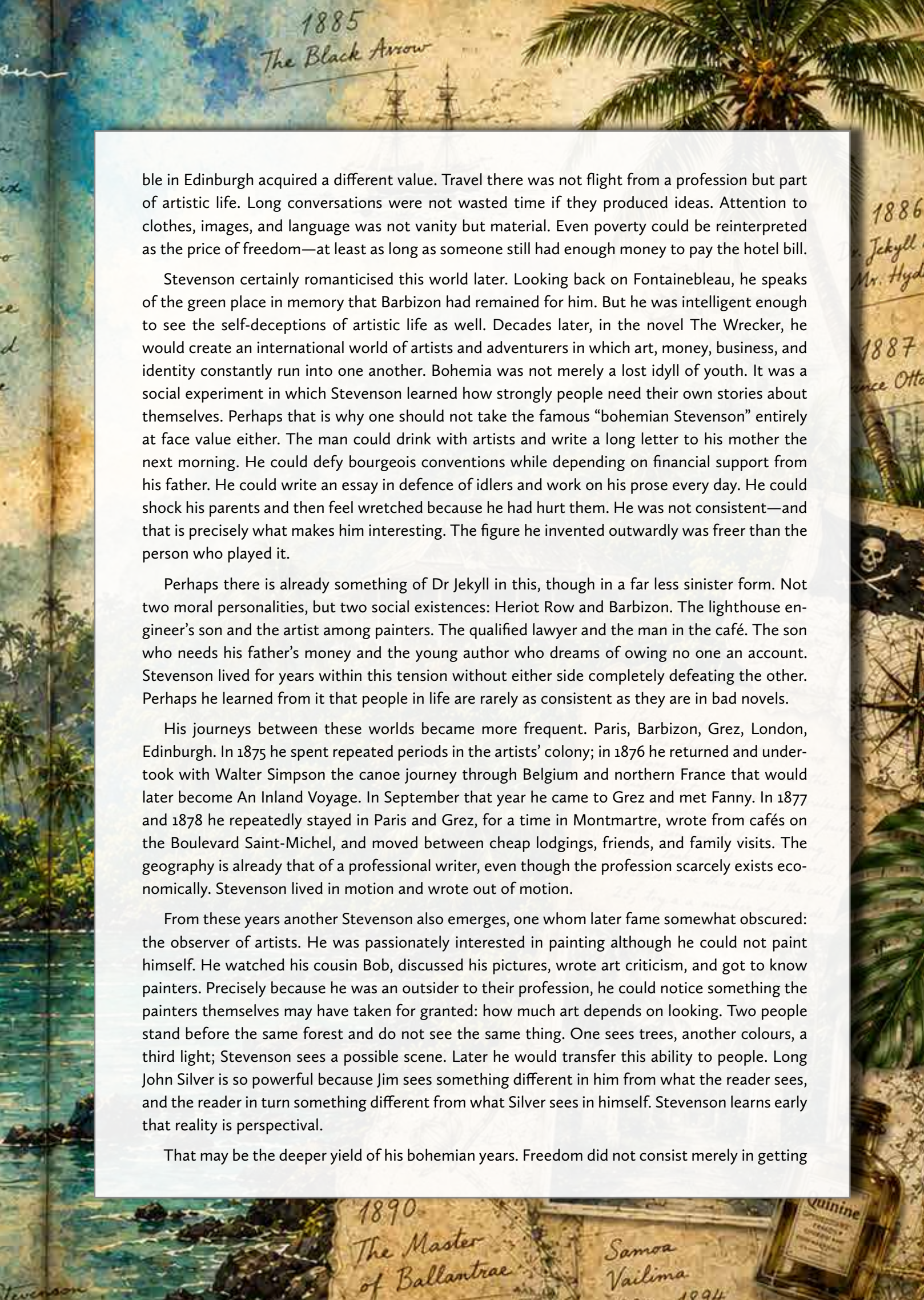
Perhaps this also explains why Stevenson understood so well that great fictional characters are not created by complete psychological description. Long John Silver needs no detailed curriculum vitae. He needs a missing leg, a crutch, a voice, a parrot, and that difficult-to-explain energy that makes the reader immediately want to know what the man will do next. Billy Bones needs a scar, a sea chest, rum, and the look of someone waiting for something. Stevenson learned early that identity can be built from a few strong signs. Long hair, thin body, velvet jacket, knapsack, cigarette, an unexpected way of entering a room: the character "Robert Louis Stevenson" also arose from such details.

And yet it would be unfair to reduce him to the surface. Behind the pose worked a man who took his art almost painfully seriously. French artistic life was therefore not merely liberation from the parental home for Stevenson, but a second university. In Edinburgh he had studied engineering and law. At Fontainebleau he studied perception. He watched painters search for a "motif", not in the sense of a plot but of a pictorial subject, a constellation of light, form, and landscape. He himself began collecting landscapes as motifs. In *Forest Notes* and later *Fontainebleau*, roads, woods, dusk, table gatherings, and weather appear not as background to thought but as sensory events. The young writer learned something crucial for adventure literature: a place must not merely be described. It must possess an atmosphere before anything happens.

This is the school from which the Admiral Benbow can later emerge. Before Blind Pew stands at the door, the inn must have become real enough for his arrival to constitute a disturbance. Before the *Hispaniola* mutinies, the ship must exist as a space. Before Jim Hawkins steps onto the island, its smell, heat, vegetation, and silence must reach the reader. Among painters Stevenson learned that atmosphere is not decoration. Atmosphere is action before action begins.

At the same time, these artistic circles opened another social Europe to him. The people Stevenson met there were international, mobile, and less trapped in Edinburgh's rigid social circles. Americans sat beside Scots, English, and French. Women such as Fanny and her daughter Belle came to Europe to study art—a step that alone would have seemed unusual from the perspective of many Victorian families. Fanny herself was ten years older than Stevenson, married, a mother, American, and possessed of a life experience with little in common with the young women of Edinburgh society whom Stevenson might theoretically have met. That these two people encountered one another precisely in Grez belongs, not by accident, in the chapter on his self-invention. Stevenson first had to enter another social world before he met the woman who would radically change the rest of his life.

This is not yet the chapter about Fanny; her story deserves a space of its own. For the moment, only the shift matters. The son who had rebelled at home against the future planned for him had found in France a counter-world in which precisely those qualities that might appear unreasona-



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ble in Edinburgh acquired a different value. Travel there was not flight from a profession but part of artistic life. Long conversations were not wasted time if they produced ideas. Attention to clothes, images, and language was not vanity but material. Even poverty could be reinterpreted as the price of freedom—at least as long as someone still had enough money to pay the hotel bill.

Stevenson certainly romanticised this world later. Looking back on Fontainebleau, he speaks of the green place in memory that Barbizon had remained for him. But he was intelligent enough to see the self-deceptions of artistic life as well. Decades later, in the novel *The Wrecker*, he would create an international world of artists and adventurers in which art, money, business, and identity constantly run into one another. Bohemia was not merely a lost idyll of youth. It was a social experiment in which Stevenson learned how strongly people need their own stories about themselves. Perhaps that is why one should not take the famous “bohemian Stevenson” entirely at face value either. The man could drink with artists and write a long letter to his mother the next morning. He could defy bourgeois conventions while depending on financial support from his father. He could write an essay in defence of idlers and work on his prose every day. He could shock his parents and then feel wretched because he had hurt them. He was not consistent—and that is precisely what makes him interesting. The figure he invented outwardly was freer than the person who played it.

Perhaps there is already something of Dr Jekyll in this, though in a far less sinister form. Not two moral personalities, but two social existences: Heriot Row and Barbizon. The lighthouse engineer’s son and the artist among painters. The qualified lawyer and the man in the café. The son who needs his father’s money and the young author who dreams of owing no one an account. Stevenson lived for years within this tension without either side completely defeating the other. Perhaps he learned from it that people in life are rarely as consistent as they are in bad novels.

His journeys between these worlds became more frequent. Paris, Barbizon, Grez, London, Edinburgh. In 1875 he spent repeated periods in the artists’ colony; in 1876 he returned and undertook with Walter Simpson the canoe journey through Belgium and northern France that would later become *An Inland Voyage*. In September that year he came to Grez and met Fanny. In 1877 and 1878 he repeatedly stayed in Paris and Grez, for a time in Montmartre, wrote from cafés on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, and moved between cheap lodgings, friends, and family visits. The geography is already that of a professional writer, even though the profession scarcely exists economically. Stevenson lived in motion and wrote out of motion.

From these years another Stevenson also emerges, one whom later fame somewhat obscured: the observer of artists. He was passionately interested in painting although he could not paint himself. He watched his cousin Bob, discussed his pictures, wrote art criticism, and got to know painters. Precisely because he was an outsider to their profession, he could notice something the painters themselves may have taken for granted: how much art depends on looking. Two people stand before the same forest and do not see the same thing. One sees trees, another colours, a third light; Stevenson sees a possible scene. Later he would transfer this ability to people. Long John Silver is so powerful because Jim sees something different in him from what the reader sees, and the reader in turn something different from what Silver sees in himself. Stevenson learns early that reality is perspectival.

That may be the deeper yield of his bohemian years. Freedom did not consist merely in getting

1886  
Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887  
since Otto

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine

Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

up late, wearing strange clothes, or contradicting one's parents. It consisted in allowing more than one view of the same world. In Heriot Row an artist could appear to be a person without a secure profession. In Barbizon the same man could be regarded as someone who had dedicated his life to art. In Edinburgh Stevenson was the son risking his future. Among painters he could be the writer before the public had confirmed it. Identity depends on who is looking. And that is why the famous window scene at Grez is so apt, even if it may have been embellished in memory. A Stevenson who comes through a door merely enters a room. A Stevenson who jumps through a window enters a story. Perhaps that was his real invention of these years: not a style of dress, not a pose, but the conviction that a life ought to be tellable. He did not merely want to become a writer. He began to look at his life with the same attention he would later give a landscape, a character, or a map. Journeys acquired form. Friends became characters. Inns became settings. A walk could become an essay, a canoe trip a book, an illness a reason for travel, an argument a moral problem. The boundary between experience and writing grew porous.

That is dangerous. A person who constantly treats life as material can eventually forget that other people in it are not supporting characters. Stevenson would repeatedly feel this boundary later, especially in relation to Fanny, friends, and family. But for the writer it was productive. He discovered that adventure does not begin only on a treasure island. It begins with the ability to see an ordinary movement in such a way that it could become a story.

When he emerges from these years at the end of the 1870s, Stevenson still has no great commercial success. An *Inland Voyage* appears in 1878, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* in 1879. He is a promising essayist and travel writer, not a world-famous novelist. His father still pays a considerable part of the life whose independence the son likes to emphasise. His health remains uncertain, and so does his future. Fanny will return to California and plunge Stevenson into a crisis that drives him onto a journey which nearly costs him his life. From a distance this period looks like a prelude. To Stevenson himself it was not. It was his life, with no guarantee of later success.

That is precisely why his self-staging is more than youthful vanity. It was a kind of advance on his own future. Stevenson behaved like a writer before the world had confirmed that he was one. He partly dressed like one, lived among artists, travelled, wrote, published small pieces, collected experiences, and risked the security of two respectable professions. He led a life whose economic foundation was thin because he believed in an identity for which there was still very little evidence. Perhaps that is the true boldness of these years. Not jumping through the window. Not the long hair. Not the pubs. But waking in the morning when there was still no *Treasure Island*, no *Jekyll and Hyde*, no *Kidnapped*, no famous name on a book cover—and nevertheless saying: I am a writer. The world needed a few more years to believe him. Stevenson had begun earlier.

1888

Scribner  
William  
Illustr



WAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cévennes  
1879



July 10, 1879  
Held a wout of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
The Black Arrow

1886

Mr. Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887

Prince Otto

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; make  
as you are, be a sailor; not just  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

The Master  
of Ballantrae

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

# William Brassey Hole – Die Schatzinsel in Scribner's Magazine

Hole verstand es,  
Spannung, Charakter  
und Atmosphäre in  
jedem Strich einzufangen.  
Seine Bilder machten  
die Welt von Piraten,  
Seefahrern und verborgenen  
Schatzen lebendig.

Als Robert Louis Stevenson 1881 seinen Abenteuerroman  
*Die Schatzinsel* veröffentlichte, ahnte noch niemand,  
welche Wirkung die Geschichte entfalten würde –  
und wie sehr die Illustrationen von William Brassey Hole  
das Bild der Piratenwelt prägen sollten.

In jeder Ausgabe:



Packende Kapitel  
von Robert Louis Stevenson



Fesselnde Illustrationen  
von W. Brassey Hole



Spannung, die Leser Monat  
für Monat zurückkehren ließ

**WILLIAM BRASSEY HOLE**  
1846–1917

Englischer Illustrator und Marinekünstler.  
Seine Arbeiten erschienen in führenden  
Zeitschriften seiner Zeit und machten  
ihn zu einem der bekanntesten  
Illustratoren des späten 19. Jahrhunderts.

**SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE**

Gegründet 1870 in New York,  
war Scribner's eine der einflussreichsten  
Zeitschriften der USA.

Hier erreichte *Die Schatzinsel* ein  
riesiges Publikum und begründete  
Stevenson weltweiten Ruhm.



SCRIBNER'S

MAKER

TREASURE

BY ROBERT LOUIS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY



CHAPTER XX

The Garrison of Pines

289

# Die illustrierte Fortsetzung eines großen Abenteuers

Von Januar 1882 bis Juli 1882 erschien *Die Schatzinsel* in zwölf monatlichen Folgen in *Scribner's Magazine*. Die ausdrucksstarken Bilder von William Brassey Hole begleiteten Stevensons Geschichte und ließen die Welt von Long John Silver und Jim Hawkins vor den Augen der Leser entstehen.



Long John Silver erscheint



Die Landung auf der Insel



Kampf auf hoher See

## Wirkung, die bleibt

Holes Illustrationen wurden vielfach nachgedruckt, gesammelt und bewundert. Sie prägten das Bild der *Schatzinsel* für Generationen – und machten die Geschichte zu einem Klassiker der Weltliteratur.



## CHAPTER 7

# Adventure as a Way of Life

## France, Modestine and Life on the Road

### France on Foot and by Water – Adventure as Method

Robert Louis Stevenson was twenty-four years old when he was arrested as a German spy in a small French town. The most suspicious item in his luggage was a book of fifteenth-century poetry. It was late summer 1875. Stevenson and his friend Walter Grindlay Simpson were walking through the Loing valley south of Paris, through the country around Fontainebleau, Barbizon and Grez, where by now Stevenson knew artists, inns and paths better than many a street in Edinburgh. Simpson was the less conspicuous of the two. He was the son of the famous physician Sir James Young Simpson, who had introduced chloroform into obstetrics; like Stevenson, he had studied law, and he possessed that social assurance which in the nineteenth century spared a man many unnecessary explanations. Stevenson, by contrast, already looked like someone a provincial French policeman might find interesting if sufficiently bored: thin, unusually dressed, carrying a knapsack and papers, with a habit of stopping to write things down. The Franco-Prussian War had ended only a few years earlier. Stories of Prussian spies, uhlans and secret scouts were still alive in the countryside. A poorly dressed stranger carrying maps, notes and a volume of old French verse did not necessarily have to be a writer. He might also represent a threat to the Republic.

Stevenson was taken to Châtillon-sur-Loire and questioned. The official tried to discover who this peculiar man might be, a man whose explanations apparently did not quite match his appearance. At one point the commissioner finally declared, with the confidence authorities can develop when facts become inconvenient, that Stevenson was German and had come to sing at the fair. Stevenson offered to sing, presumably in the hope of dispelling at least that suspicion. The commissioner did not find the idea amusing. Stevenson tried literature instead. In his knapsack he carried the works of the late-medieval poet Charles d'Orléans; he opened the book and attempted to prove that nobody could make a success at a fair with verses like these. The official read them and thought: why not? Stevenson eventually found himself in a cell until Simpson arrived, whose good suit, money and impeccable passport transformed the situation completely. The suspicious vagabond suddenly became the eccentric friend of a respectable gentleman. Stevenson was released. Later he told the story with great delight, turning humiliation into comedy.

This small episode already contains almost the whole method of travel that Stevenson would develop over the next few years into his first major literary form. He did not go out to tick off sights. He put himself into situations whose outcome could not be entirely controlled, and then observed what they did to him. He did not want to get comfortably from Paris to Lyon; there were railways for that. He wanted to know what happens when one travels slowly enough to be seen, misjudged, soaked, hungry, bored, welcomed kindly or arrested. The destination mattered less than the friction along the way. A year after the episode at Châtillon he would test this principle even more consistently. This time he and Simpson would not walk. They would take two small canoes and set out from Antwerp

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

into a European network of waterways that was neither developed for tourism nor fully predictable to either man. Stevenson called his boat *Arethusa*, Simpson his *Cigarette*. On 25 August 1876 the two canoes were launched in the Antwerp docks. Children ran after them, dockworkers helped carry them, a steamer came dangerously close, men shouted warnings from the quay – and Stevenson later admitted quite openly that until that moment he had never handled a sailing canoe. He compared the sensation of catching the wind in the little sail for the first time in the middle of the Scheldt, of all things, with two other leaps into the unknown: publishing a first book or getting married.

It was an astonishingly modern way to begin an adventure. You buy equipment you have not yet quite learned to master, give it an attractive name and set off. The two canoes were small enough to be carried when locks or obstacles interrupted the route, and large enough to take clothing, a little food and that minimum of gear which tempts a traveller to believe himself independent. The very



first meal showed how relative that independence was. Stevenson and Simpson tried to cook eggs on the bank with a small spirit stove. The grass caught fire several times, fingers were burned, one egg ended up scarcely warm, the other turned into a culinary defeat involving newspaper, printer's ink and fragments of shell. Stevenson did not later write the episode off as bad luck. He made it the opening scene. Already here one sees his talent for finding the traveller's dignity most interesting precisely where it is lost. In Stevenson, adventure rarely grows out of sovereign mastery. It often begins when something fails to work.

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

*Samoa Vailima*  
1894



Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

The journey first led through Belgium. From Antwerp they travelled by the Scheldt and the Willebroek Canal towards Boom and on to the outskirts of Brussels. The weather offered little assistance. The Stevenson Archive reconstructs a journey of roughly two hundred miles on which it rained almost every day. On 28 August the two men abandoned part of their beautiful idea of an uninterrupted water route: between Brussels and Charleroi lay fifty-five locks. They would have had to lift the canoes out of the water, carry them and relaunch them again and again. So they took the train to Maubeuge and resumed the journey in France. That too is characteristic. Stevenson did not turn adventure into a religion. If a romantic idea drowns in fifty-five locks, even a bohemian may use the railway.

From Maubeuge the route followed canalised rivers and eventually the Oise, through small towns, industrial districts, meadows and villages whose inhabitants regarded the two peculiar boat travellers with a mixture of curiosity, helpfulness and suspicion. They slept in inns and met barge families, soldiers, innkeepers, fishermen, workers, children, showmen and people who would never have been given a role in a conventional travel account. That was precisely Stevenson's discovery. He did not have to travel to Rome to find something worth reporting. A conversation beside a canal could be enough. A bad innkeeper could be more interesting than a monument. A barge on which a family lived among flowerpots, chimney smoke and children could say more about Europe than a carefully prepared lecture on national character. The travel book thus began to move away from the classical description of famous places. Stevenson was no longer primarily asking: What is there to see here? His real question was: What happens to a person who passes through here?

And that is exactly what makes *An Inland Voyage* so important for our Stevenson book. Anyone who knows only the later *Treasure Island* might imagine that in 1881 Stevenson suddenly discovered how to create narrative momentum out of travel, danger, landscape and strange encounters. In fact he had trained this method on his own body years earlier. The traveller and the adventure hero share one decisive quality: neither quite knows what lies around the next bend. Stevenson therefore did not yet need Jim Hawkins. He could begin by using himself. The rivers of northern France were no treasure island, but they already offered the same elemental dramaturgy: one sets out with limited knowledge, meets strangers, reads a landscape, loses security, has to improvise and understands something in the evening that did not exist in the morning. The great technical innovation of his early writing was to place the author himself inside the experiment.

Sometimes the experiment became more dangerous than Stevenson had intended. On the swollen Oise the *Arethusa* got into trouble. The boat capsized, or was torn from him, and Stevenson clung to a tree while Simpson paddled downstream to catch the drifting canoe. Stevenson eventually crawled along the trunk to the bank and walked shivering with cold through the meadows until he found his friend again. He had dry clothes in a waterproof bag and could change, but something had altered. Later he wrote that for the first time he had felt how quickly a peaceful landscape could reveal another face. The river still looked beautiful. That was precisely what made it uncanny. Nature did not need to look evil in order to kill a man. Its friendly face was only a surface.

Here the journey suddenly touches something that will return much later in *Treasure Island*. Stevenson's landscapes are rarely neutral backdrops. They can be beautiful and dangerous at the same time. *Treasure Island* is at first exotic, green, full of promise; soon afterwards it is hot, feverish, confusing and full of men who want to kill one another. On the Oise too the danger does not arrive in a romantically staged thunderstorm. A green valley, a flowing river, bells in the distance – and suddenly a man is hanging from a tree and wondering whether the water will drag him away. Stevenson learns here a lesson every good adventure writer needs: danger is more powerful when the world does not

1888

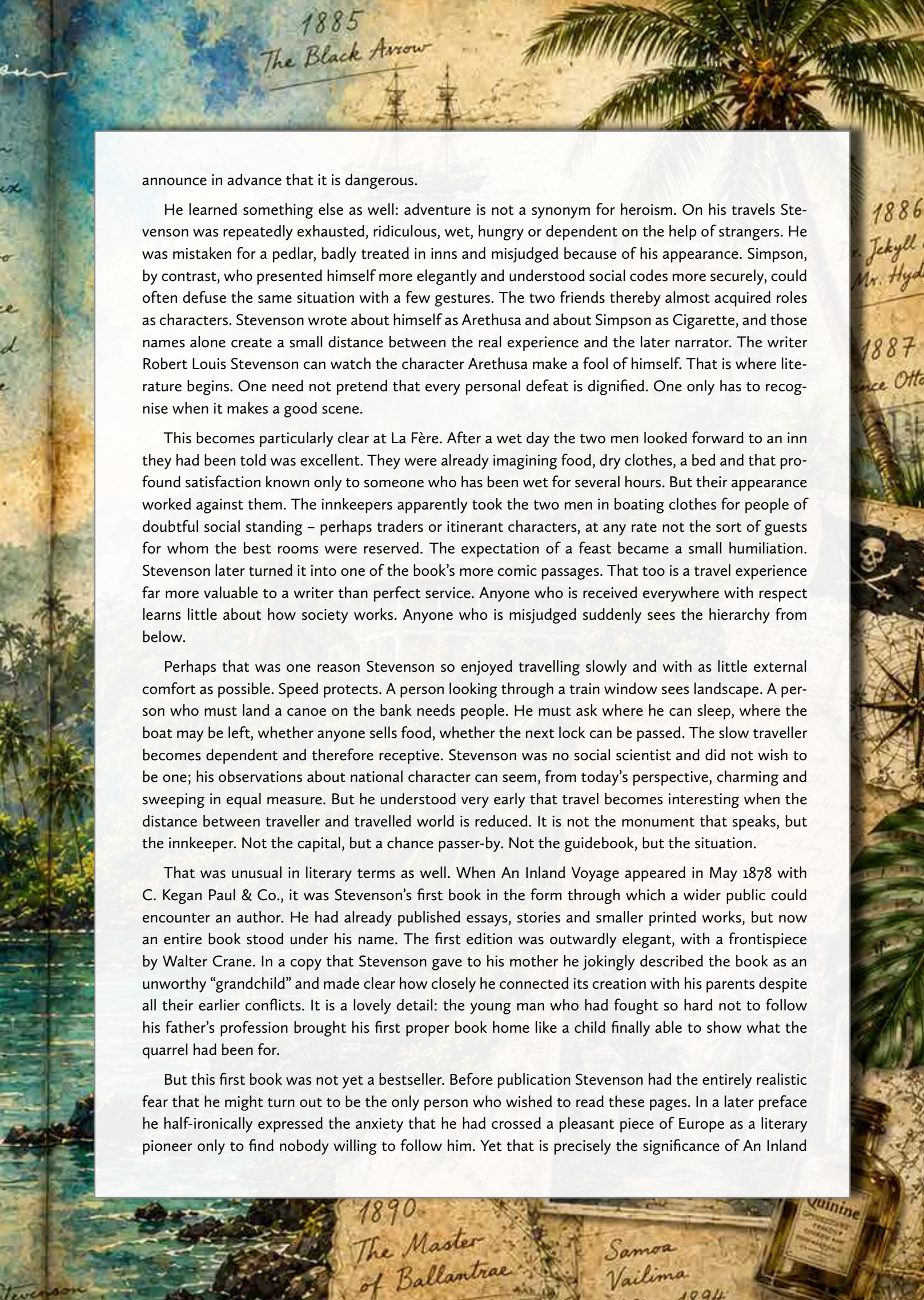
Scribner  
William  
Illustr



Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 1879  
Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly



announce in advance that it is dangerous.

He learned something else as well: adventure is not a synonym for heroism. On his travels Stevenson was repeatedly exhausted, ridiculous, wet, hungry or dependent on the help of strangers. He was mistaken for a pedlar, badly treated in inns and misjudged because of his appearance. Simpson, by contrast, who presented himself more elegantly and understood social codes more securely, could often defuse the same situation with a few gestures. The two friends thereby almost acquired roles as characters. Stevenson wrote about himself as Arethusa and about Simpson as Cigarette, and those names alone create a small distance between the real experience and the later narrator. The writer Robert Louis Stevenson can watch the character Arethusa make a fool of himself. That is where literature begins. One need not pretend that every personal defeat is dignified. One only has to recognise when it makes a good scene.

This becomes particularly clear at La Fère. After a wet day the two men looked forward to an inn they had been told was excellent. They were already imagining food, dry clothes, a bed and that profound satisfaction known only to someone who has been wet for several hours. But their appearance worked against them. The innkeepers apparently took the two men in boating clothes for people of doubtful social standing – perhaps traders or itinerant characters, at any rate not the sort of guests for whom the best rooms were reserved. The expectation of a feast became a small humiliation. Stevenson later turned it into one of the book's more comic passages. That too is a travel experience far more valuable to a writer than perfect service. Anyone who is received everywhere with respect learns little about how society works. Anyone who is misjudged suddenly sees the hierarchy from below.

Perhaps that was one reason Stevenson so enjoyed travelling slowly and with as little external comfort as possible. Speed protects. A person looking through a train window sees landscape. A person who must land a canoe on the bank needs people. He must ask where he can sleep, where the boat may be left, whether anyone sells food, whether the next lock can be passed. The slow traveller becomes dependent and therefore receptive. Stevenson was no social scientist and did not wish to be one; his observations about national character can seem, from today's perspective, charming and sweeping in equal measure. But he understood very early that travel becomes interesting when the distance between traveller and travelled world is reduced. It is not the monument that speaks, but the innkeeper. Not the capital, but a chance passer-by. Not the guidebook, but the situation.

That was unusual in literary terms as well. When *An Inland Voyage* appeared in May 1878 with C. Kegan Paul & Co., it was Stevenson's first book in the form through which a wider public could encounter an author. He had already published essays, stories and smaller printed works, but now an entire book stood under his name. The first edition was outwardly elegant, with a frontispiece by Walter Crane. In a copy that Stevenson gave to his mother he jokingly described the book as an unworthy "grandchild" and made clear how closely he connected its creation with his parents despite all their earlier conflicts. It is a lovely detail: the young man who had fought so hard not to follow his father's profession brought his first proper book home like a child finally able to show what the quarrel had been for.

But this first book was not yet a bestseller. Before publication Stevenson had the entirely realistic fear that he might turn out to be the only person who wished to read these pages. In a later preface he half-ironically expressed the anxiety that he had crossed a pleasant piece of Europe as a literary pioneer only to find nobody willing to follow him. Yet that is precisely the significance of *An Inland*

Voyage in retrospect: it shows a writer already finding a form of his own before the world knows his name. The travel book is neither mere diary nor guidebook. Stevenson turns himself into a narrator, Simpson into a character and accidents into dramaturgy. He cuts, orders, heightens, omits what is unimportant and retrospectively gives experience the form that real life, while being lived, naturally does not possess. The journey took place in 1876. The book appeared in 1878. Between the two lies literature.

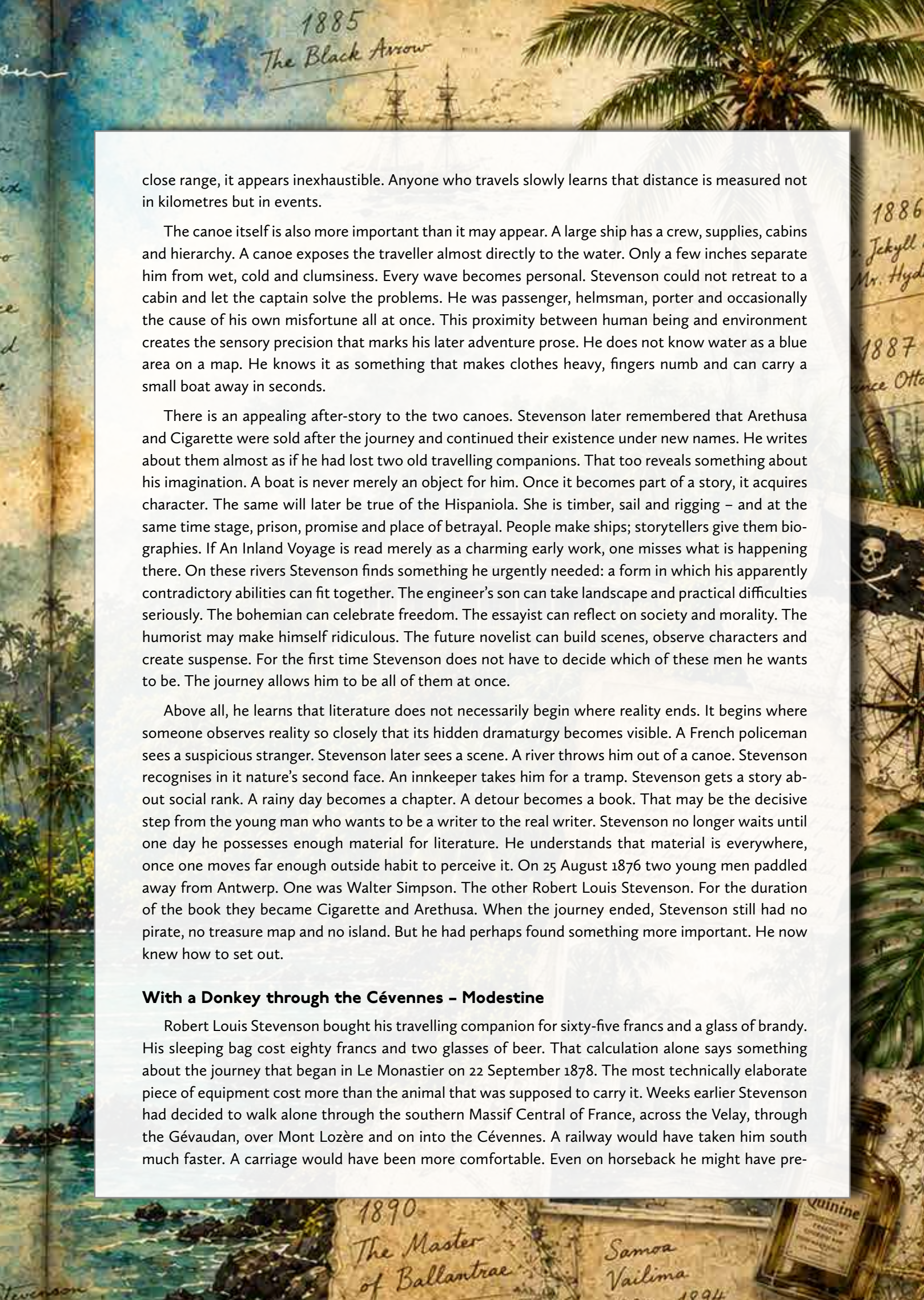
Stevenson had even understood that the greatest adventures often lie precisely where a traveller does not seek them. At one point in *An Inland Voyage* he formulates the thought that "the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek". At first this sounds contradictory from the mouth of a man who voluntarily climbed into a small canoe and paddled two hundred miles through rain. In truth it describes his entire method. Stevenson creates the conditions in which something can happen, but he must not determine the result. He chooses the slow route, the small boat, open contact with strangers. Then he waits for the world to answer. Adventure can be prepared for, but it cannot be ordered.

This attitude will later be decisive for *Treasure Island*. Jim Hawkins does not go to the island because he has chosen adventure as a lifestyle. He falls into it. Billy Bones appears at the inn. The map comes into Jim's hands. The *Hispaniola* is fitted out. Long John Silver appears. One decision draws the next after it. Adventure always contains a mixture of intention and chance. That was exactly what Stevenson had experienced while travelling. He had planned a route and been arrested as a spy. He had chosen a canoe and nearly drowned in a river. He had expected a good inn and was treated like a tramp. He had been travelling through Europe to experience freedom and, after the canoe journey ended, met at Grez the woman who would change his life more profoundly than any landscape on the route.

For when Stevenson and Simpson reached Pontoise around 13 or 14 September 1876, *An Inland Voyage* came to an end. Stevenson travelled on to Paris and then to Grez-sur-Loing. There he met Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne. Older accounts differ about the precise date of their first meeting; the chronology now preferred by the Stevenson Archive places it after the canoe journey, in September 1876. Fanny was American, married, ten years older than Stevenson, a mother, and at that time in France with her children. The man who had just written about the most beautiful adventures being those one does not seek found, at the end of a deliberately unreasonable journey, an adventure he most certainly had not planned.

One might dismiss this as too neat a biographical punchline had Stevenson not repeatedly experienced transitions of just this kind. He set out to see something and returned with a different life. Travel was not a pause between important things for him. Travel was the place where important things happened. That distinguished him from many affluent Victorian travellers, for whom Europe meant education, health or social completion. Stevenson was seeking something messier. He wanted to discover how he reacted when the usual safeguards disappeared.

In the process he began developing a literary technique that would later become almost invisible because it works so naturally. The adventure writer must make a world seem large even when the geographical space is small. Stevenson's canoe journey did not cross an ocean. It passed through canals, rivers and towns in a densely populated Europe. Yet a lock, an inn or a bend in the river can become the whole world for several pages. Exactly the same thing will later happen on *Treasure Island*. The island is not large. But because Stevenson tells every movement, distance and encounter at



close range, it appears inexhaustible. Anyone who travels slowly learns that distance is measured not in kilometres but in events.

The canoe itself is also more important than it may appear. A large ship has a crew, supplies, cabins and hierarchy. A canoe exposes the traveller almost directly to the water. Only a few inches separate him from wet, cold and clumsiness. Every wave becomes personal. Stevenson could not retreat to a cabin and let the captain solve the problems. He was passenger, helmsman, porter and occasionally the cause of his own misfortune all at once. This proximity between human being and environment creates the sensory precision that marks his later adventure prose. He does not know water as a blue area on a map. He knows it as something that makes clothes heavy, fingers numb and can carry a small boat away in seconds.

There is an appealing after-story to the two canoes. Stevenson later remembered that Arethusa and Cigarette were sold after the journey and continued their existence under new names. He writes about them almost as if he had lost two old travelling companions. That too reveals something about his imagination. A boat is never merely an object for him. Once it becomes part of a story, it acquires character. The same will later be true of the Hispaniola. She is timber, sail and rigging – and at the same time stage, prison, promise and place of betrayal. People make ships; storytellers give them biographies. If *An Inland Voyage* is read merely as a charming early work, one misses what is happening there. On these rivers Stevenson finds something he urgently needed: a form in which his apparently contradictory abilities can fit together. The engineer's son can take landscape and practical difficulties seriously. The bohemian can celebrate freedom. The essayist can reflect on society and morality. The humorist may make himself ridiculous. The future novelist can build scenes, observe characters and create suspense. For the first time Stevenson does not have to decide which of these men he wants to be. The journey allows him to be all of them at once.

Above all, he learns that literature does not necessarily begin where reality ends. It begins where someone observes reality so closely that its hidden dramaturgy becomes visible. A French policeman sees a suspicious stranger. Stevenson later sees a scene. A river throws him out of a canoe. Stevenson recognises in it nature's second face. An innkeeper takes him for a tramp. Stevenson gets a story about social rank. A rainy day becomes a chapter. A detour becomes a book. That may be the decisive step from the young man who wants to be a writer to the real writer. Stevenson no longer waits until one day he possesses enough material for literature. He understands that material is everywhere, once one moves far enough outside habit to perceive it. On 25 August 1876 two young men paddled away from Antwerp. One was Walter Simpson. The other Robert Louis Stevenson. For the duration of the book they became Cigarette and Arethusa. When the journey ended, Stevenson still had no pirate, no treasure map and no island. But he had perhaps found something more important. He now knew how to set out.

### **With a Donkey through the Cévennes – Modestine**

Robert Louis Stevenson bought his travelling companion for sixty-five francs and a glass of brandy. His sleeping bag cost eighty francs and two glasses of beer. That calculation alone says something about the journey that began in Le Monastier on 22 September 1878. The most technically elaborate piece of equipment cost more than the animal that was supposed to carry it. Weeks earlier Stevenson had decided to walk alone through the southern Massif Central of France, across the Velay, through the Gévaudan, over Mont Lozère and on into the Cévennes. A railway would have taken him south much faster. A carriage would have been more comfortable. Even on horseback he might have pre-

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
EDINBURGH · 1878



R. L. Stevenson

# An Inland Voyage

## Sein erstes richtiges Buch

Als „An Inland Voyage“ im Mai 1878 bei C. Kegan Paul & Co. erschien, war es Stevensons erstes Buch in jener Form, in der ein breiteres Publikum einen Autor kennenlernen konnte. Er hatte bereits Essays, Erzählungen und kleinere Drucke veröffentlicht, aber nun stand ein ganzes Buch unter seinem Namen. Die erste Ausgabe war äußerlich elegant, mit einem Frontispiz von Walter Crane.

In einem Exemplar, das Stevenson seiner Mutter schenkte, bezeichnete er das Buch scherzhaft als ein unwürdiges „Enkelkind“ und machte deutlich, wie eng er dessen Entstehung trotz aller früheren Konflikte mit seinen Eltern verband.

Es ist ein schönes Detail: Der junge Mann, der so hart darum gekämpft hatte, nicht den Beruf seines Vaters ausüben zu müssen, brachte sein erstes richtiges Buch nach Hause wie ein Kind, das endlich zeigen konnte, wofür sich der Streit gelohnt hatte.

C. KEGAN PAUL & Co.  
LONDON

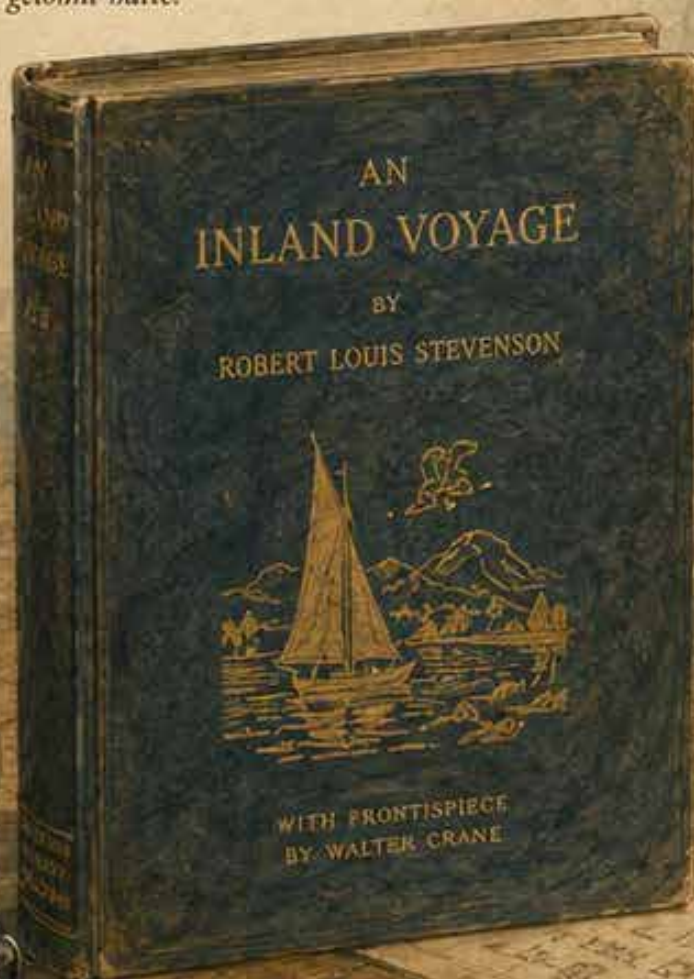
May 1878



TRAVELS WITH  
A DONKEY

TREASURE ISLAND

THE PENTLAND RISING



WITH FRONTISPIECE  
BY WALTER CRANE



*To travel hopefully  
is a better thing  
than to arrive.*

*R. L. Stevenson*



*May 1878*

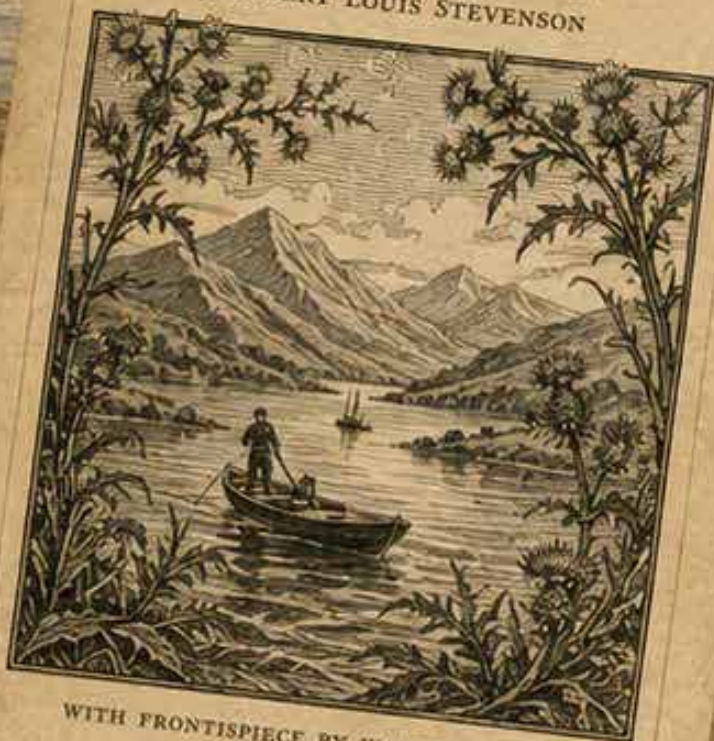
*My dear Mother,*

*I dedicate this book  
to you, though it is but  
an unworthy grandchild.*

*Yet take it in love  
from your affectionate  
son,*

*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

**AN INLAND VOYAGE.**  
By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



WITH FRONTISPIECE BY WALTER CRANE  
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., LONDON  
1878

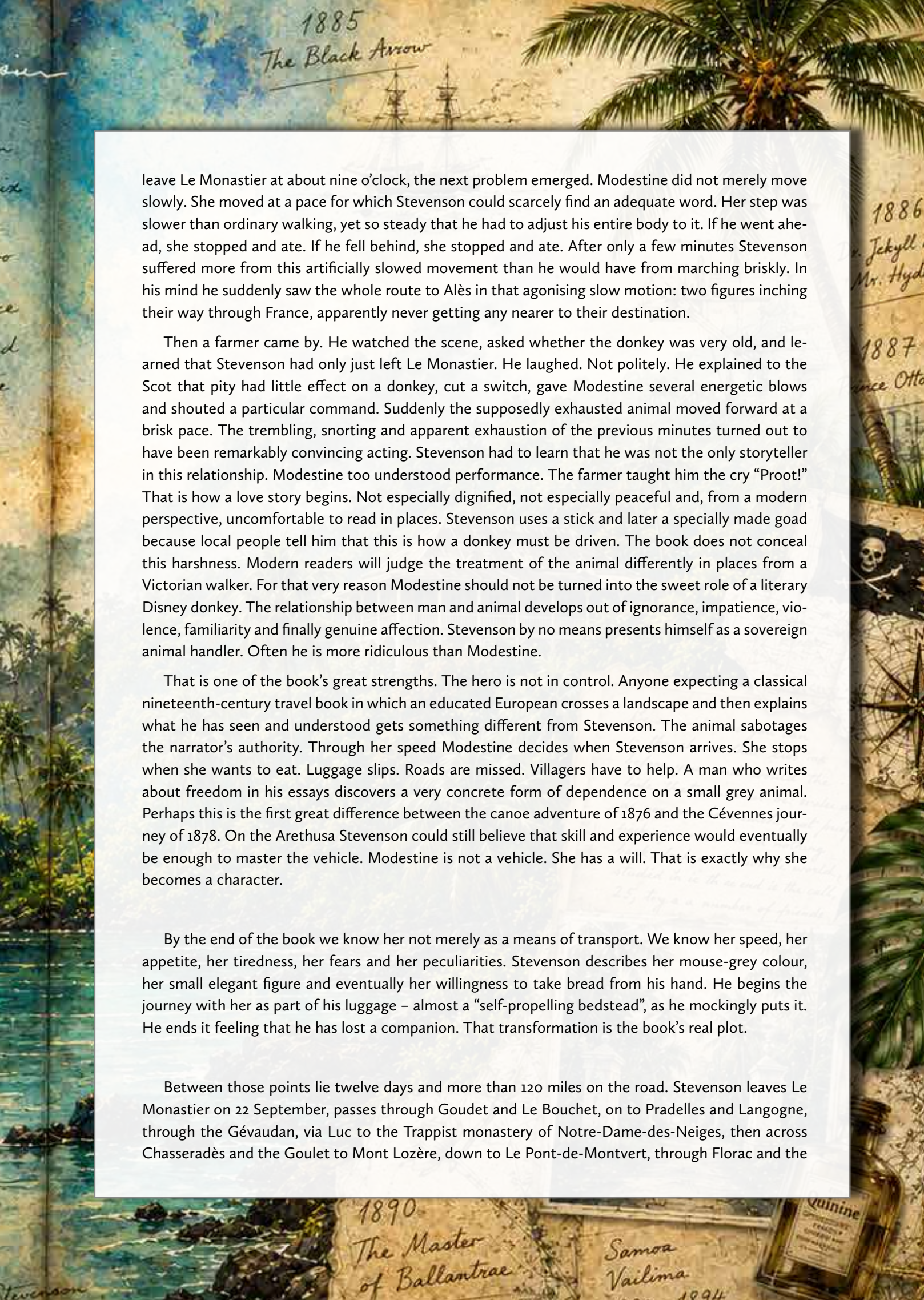
served that dignity which can occasionally be useful to a travelling writer. Instead Stevenson chose a she-donkey scarcely larger than a big dog, mouse-grey, with a kindly eye and a lower jaw that already suggested at the moment of purchase that she held her own views on essential questions of their future collaboration. Her owner, an old man from Le Monastier whom everyone called Father Adam, finally demanded sixty-five francs. The glass of brandy apparently formed part of the contract. Stevenson immediately christened the animal Modestine.

Nobody in the market square could have guessed that this small transaction would produce one of the most famous travel books of the nineteenth century. They might even have been surprised. To the inhabitants of Le Monastier, Stevenson's plan was strange enough already. He had voluntarily stayed for a month in the mountain town, announced that he intended afterwards to walk through the Cévennes, and was consequently treated with that mixture of helpfulness and mistrust people often show to strangers who evidently possess enough money to do something completely unreasonable. Stevenson himself reports that his expedition was regarded roughly as though he were planning a journey to the moon: ridiculous, yet bold enough to be interesting. The locals discussed his luggage, warned him about cold, robbers, wolves and nocturnal dangers, and took enormous pleasure in helping with the preparations. Before he had walked the first mile, the journey had become a public event.

The most modern object on the expedition, however, may not have been Modestine. It was that green, shapeless sack that had cost more than she had. Stevenson wanted to be independent of inns. A tent seemed too cumbersome, conspicuous and heavy for a solitary walker. So in Le Puy he had a kind of portable bed made to his own design: green waterproof cart-sheet material on the outside, blue sheepskin within, almost six feet square, with flaps that could serve as pillows at night and fastenings by day. The whole thing was to function simultaneously as bed, piece of luggage and protection from the weather. Stevenson could roll himself inside it up to his neck; for his head he had planned a fur cap with flaps, and in rain he intended to improvise an additional little shelter from his coat, stones and a bent branch. He simply called the contraption his "sleeping-sack".

It would be too much to call Stevenson the inventor of the sleeping bag. Long before him people had slept outdoors in blankets, furs and portable sleeping systems. Yet the description feels astonishingly modern. A solitary traveller considers how to reduce his luggage, become independent of accommodation, combine sleeping and transport, and bivouac as unobtrusively as possible. Today such questions fill entire outdoor fairs, YouTube channels and catalogues. Stevenson was discussing them in 1878 with a tailor or craftsman in provincial France. Anyone who now compares ultralight tents, chooses sleeping bags by temperature rating and plans daily stages on a hiking app will recognise a curiously familiar mentality in Stevenson's deliberations. Except that his "ultralight" system was a green sheepskin-lined sack so heavy and bulky that he then had to buy an animal to carry it.

Nineteenth-century outdoor optimisation therefore suffered from the same problem as today's: as soon as one owns the perfect equipment, one needs new equipment to transport it. That was how Modestine entered the story. On the very morning of departure the plan began to fall apart. The specially made pack-saddle would not stay on her back. Stevenson quarrelled so fiercely with its maker that a crowd gathered in the street; in his account the pieces of the failed saddle almost began flying between the two men. When the load had finally been secured somehow and Stevenson was able to



leave Le Monastier at about nine o'clock, the next problem emerged. Modestine did not merely move slowly. She moved at a pace for which Stevenson could scarcely find an adequate word. Her step was slower than ordinary walking, yet so steady that he had to adjust his entire body to it. If he went ahead, she stopped and ate. If he fell behind, she stopped and ate. After only a few minutes Stevenson suffered more from this artificially slowed movement than he would have from marching briskly. In his mind he suddenly saw the whole route to Alès in that agonising slow motion: two figures inching their way through France, apparently never getting any nearer to their destination.

Then a farmer came by. He watched the scene, asked whether the donkey was very old, and learned that Stevenson had only just left Le Monastier. He laughed. Not politely. He explained to the Scot that pity had little effect on a donkey, cut a switch, gave Modestine several energetic blows and shouted a particular command. Suddenly the supposedly exhausted animal moved forward at a brisk pace. The trembling, snorting and apparent exhaustion of the previous minutes turned out to have been remarkably convincing acting. Stevenson had to learn that he was not the only storyteller in this relationship. Modestine too understood performance. The farmer taught him the cry "Proot!" That is how a love story begins. Not especially dignified, not especially peaceful and, from a modern perspective, uncomfortable to read in places. Stevenson uses a stick and later a specially made goad because local people tell him that this is how a donkey must be driven. The book does not conceal this harshness. Modern readers will judge the treatment of the animal differently in places from a Victorian walker. For that very reason Modestine should not be turned into the sweet role of a literary Disney donkey. The relationship between man and animal develops out of ignorance, impatience, violence, familiarity and finally genuine affection. Stevenson by no means presents himself as a sovereign animal handler. Often he is more ridiculous than Modestine.

That is one of the book's great strengths. The hero is not in control. Anyone expecting a classical nineteenth-century travel book in which an educated European crosses a landscape and then explains what he has seen and understood gets something different from Stevenson. The animal sabotages the narrator's authority. Through her speed Modestine decides when Stevenson arrives. She stops when she wants to eat. Luggage slips. Roads are missed. Villagers have to help. A man who writes about freedom in his essays discovers a very concrete form of dependence on a small grey animal. Perhaps this is the first great difference between the canoe adventure of 1876 and the Cévennes journey of 1878. On the Arethusa Stevenson could still believe that skill and experience would eventually be enough to master the vehicle. Modestine is not a vehicle. She has a will. That is exactly why she becomes a character.

By the end of the book we know her not merely as a means of transport. We know her speed, her appetite, her tiredness, her fears and her peculiarities. Stevenson describes her mouse-grey colour, her small elegant figure and eventually her willingness to take bread from his hand. He begins the journey with her as part of his luggage – almost a "self-propelling bedstead", as he mockingly puts it. He ends it feeling that he has lost a companion. That transformation is the book's real plot.

Between those points lie twelve days and more than 120 miles on the road. Stevenson leaves Le Monastier on 22 September, passes through Goudet and Le Bouchet, on to Pradelles and Langogne, through the Gévaudan, via Luc to the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, then across Chasseradès and the Goulet to Mont Lozère, down to Le Pont-de-Montvert, through Florac and the





ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1887

# An Inland Voyage

Stevenson im Kanu  
auf Reisen durch Frankreich



R. L. Stevenson

*Im Mai 1878 brach Robert Louis Stevenson zu einer besonderen Reise auf: allein im Kanu, nur mit dem Nötigsten und einem wachen Herzen für die Welt.*

*Von Genf bis Saint-Nazaire folgte er den Flüssen und Kanälen Frankreichs – der Rhône, der Saône, der Seine und der Loire – auf mehr als 800 Kilometern stiller Entdeckung.*

*Er suchte nicht das Ziel, sondern den Weg. Nicht den Komfort, sondern die Erfahrung. So entstand An Inland Voyage – ein Buch über Landschaften, Begegnungen und die leise Freude des Unterwegsseins.*

*Eine Reise, die äußerlich durch Frankreich führt und Innerlich zu sich selbst.*



A detailed illustration of a man with a mustache, wearing a brown jacket, sitting in a wooden boat on a river. He is looking towards a village in the distance, which features a prominent church tower. The river is surrounded by lush greenery, including a large weeping willow on the left and tall reeds with yellow flowers on the right. In the foreground, there are two open books. The book on the left has a drawing of a plant and some text. The book on the right is a travelogue titled 'AN INLAND VOYAGE' by Robert Louis Stevenson, featuring a map of France and the dates 'Mai - September 1878'.

*Das Reisen erweitert  
nicht nur den Geist,  
sondern die Seele.*

*R. L. Stevenson*

*The great question  
is not where,  
but in what  
direction.*

*R. L. Stevenson*

AN INLAND VOYAGE.  
By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



Mai - September 1878





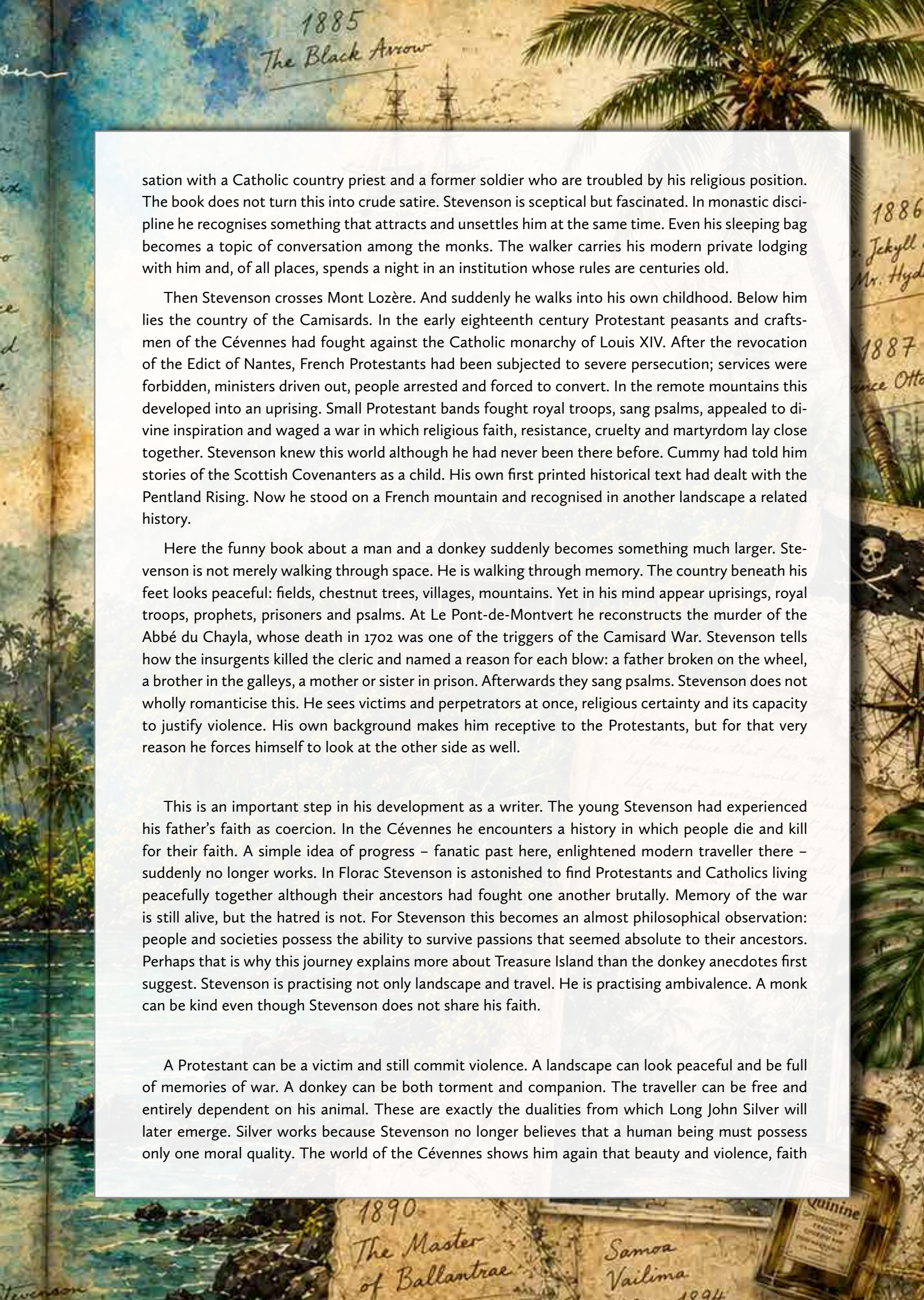
Mimente valley, and finally by Saint-Germain-de-Calberte to Saint-Jean-du-Gard. On 4 October he sells Modestine because she needs rest after the last hard march and Stevenson wants to continue to Alès. The Stevenson Archive reconstructs the route in detail; Stevenson himself summed up at the end that he and Modestine had been uninterrupted companions for twelve days and had covered more than 120 miles.

Today that eccentric walk has become a trail. In 1993 the route was waymarked as the GR 70. The present-day Chemin de Stevenson crosses the French Massif Central and the Cévennes; walkers can follow it alone or in groups, on foot, with a donkey, by bicycle or on horseback. The modern main route is longer than Stevenson's actual journey and differs from it in places, but it follows his path and bears his name. What the inhabitants of Le Monastier in 1878 regarded almost as a journey to the moon is now an organised long-distance walking route with accommodation, waymarks and travel information. That too is a small reversal in cultural history. Stevenson was an odd man then because he travelled on foot although he did not have to. Today people travel to France expressly to imitate precisely this supposed irrationality. In the nineteenth century progress had a fairly clear direction. Railways became faster, roads better, distances shorter. Travel was supposed to save time. Stevenson did the opposite. He made slowness the point. Not because he rejected railways, but because they took something away from him: the spaces in between. A train connects two places. A walker has to cross everything that lies between them.

That is exactly where the modernity of this journey lies. Many forms of travel today rest on a similar voluntary return to discomfort. People own cars and walk anyway. They could sleep in hotels and carry tents. They could wheel a suitcase and buy a rucksack. They could reach a destination in a few hours and deliberately take twelve days. The paradox of modern outdoor adventure is that people possess technical comfort and then buy back selected forms of discomfort because they suspect that speed has removed something from life. Stevenson was already doing this in 1878. He did not simply want to get somewhere. He wanted to be on the road. His sleeping bag in particular becomes a symbol of this. Stevenson explains that he does not want to be forced to reach accommodation before dark every evening. A person who can sleep wherever he happens to be possesses a different kind of freedom. The destination loses power over the day. Perhaps that is the most important invention in his equipment: not comfort, but time. The sleeping bag allows him not to organise a journey around the opening hours of inns.

When he finally sleeps beneath pine trees on Mont Lozère, this principle becomes one of the book's most beautiful scenes. He sleeps alone outdoors, wakes in the night, sees stars between the trees, hears the sounds of the landscape and experiences a moment in which the world no longer appears merely as a route between two places to stay. In the morning he is so moved by the night that he leaves coins on the grass or in the earth, as though he owed payment for his lodging to an invisible host. The Stevenson Archive explicitly notes this small gesture. This is not outdoor sport. It is almost religion. And it reveals another Stevenson, one easily overlooked after his conflicts with his father's faith. He has left the Calvinism of his family, but the need for experiences in which the world for a moment seems larger than the human being remains. He simply no longer finds those moments necessarily in a church. He finds them in a forest, at night, alone in a sheepskin sack.

Perhaps for Stevenson the step from faith to landscape was smaller than he himself imagined. Yet on this very journey religion meets him again. First at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, a Trappist monastery. Stevenson, who had long since left his Presbyterian upbringing behind, enters a Catholic world of silence, rule and monastic order. The monks receive him kindly. Among the guests he falls into conver-



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

sation with a Catholic country priest and a former soldier who are troubled by his religious position. The book does not turn this into crude satire. Stevenson is sceptical but fascinated. In monastic discipline he recognises something that attracts and unsettles him at the same time. Even his sleeping bag becomes a topic of conversation among the monks. The walker carries his modern private lodging with him and, of all places, spends a night in an institution whose rules are centuries old.

Then Stevenson crosses Mont Lozère. And suddenly he walks into his own childhood. Below him lies the country of the Camisards. In the early eighteenth century Protestant peasants and craftsmen of the Cévennes had fought against the Catholic monarchy of Louis XIV. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, French Protestants had been subjected to severe persecution; services were forbidden, ministers driven out, people arrested and forced to convert. In the remote mountains this developed into an uprising. Small Protestant bands fought royal troops, sang psalms, appealed to divine inspiration and waged a war in which religious faith, resistance, cruelty and martyrdom lay close together. Stevenson knew this world although he had never been there before. Cummy had told him stories of the Scottish Covenanters as a child. His own first printed historical text had dealt with the Pentland Rising. Now he stood on a French mountain and recognised in another landscape a related history.

Here the funny book about a man and a donkey suddenly becomes something much larger. Stevenson is not merely walking through space. He is walking through memory. The country beneath his feet looks peaceful: fields, chestnut trees, villages, mountains. Yet in his mind appear uprisings, royal troops, prophets, prisoners and psalms. At Le Pont-de-Montvert he reconstructs the murder of the Abbé du Chayla, whose death in 1702 was one of the triggers of the Camisard War. Stevenson tells how the insurgents killed the cleric and named a reason for each blow: a father broken on the wheel, a brother in the galleys, a mother or sister in prison. Afterwards they sang psalms. Stevenson does not wholly romanticise this. He sees victims and perpetrators at once, religious certainty and its capacity to justify violence. His own background makes him receptive to the Protestants, but for that very reason he forces himself to look at the other side as well.

This is an important step in his development as a writer. The young Stevenson had experienced his father's faith as coercion. In the Cévennes he encounters a history in which people die and kill for their faith. A simple idea of progress – fanatic past here, enlightened modern traveller there – suddenly no longer works. In Florac Stevenson is astonished to find Protestants and Catholics living peacefully together although their ancestors had fought one another brutally. Memory of the war is still alive, but the hatred is not. For Stevenson this becomes an almost philosophical observation: people and societies possess the ability to survive passions that seemed absolute to their ancestors. Perhaps that is why this journey explains more about *Treasure Island* than the donkey anecdotes first suggest. Stevenson is practising not only landscape and travel. He is practising ambivalence. A monk can be kind even though Stevenson does not share his faith.

A Protestant can be a victim and still commit violence. A landscape can look peaceful and be full of memories of war. A donkey can be both torment and companion. The traveller can be free and entirely dependent on his animal. These are exactly the dualities from which Long John Silver will later emerge. Silver works because Stevenson no longer believes that a human being must possess only one moral quality. The world of the Cévennes shows him again that beauty and violence, faith

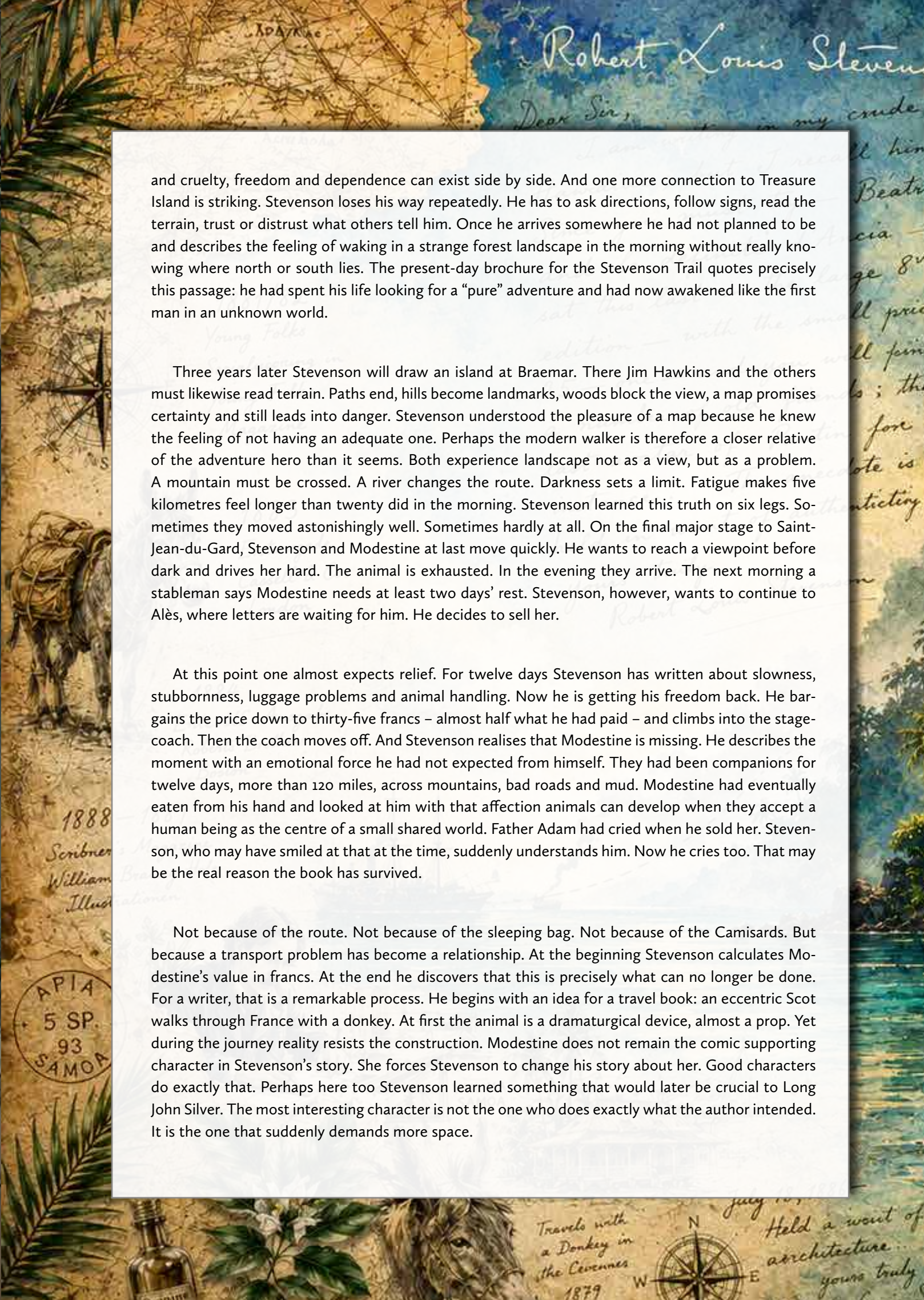
1886  
*Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887  
*Prince Otto*

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine

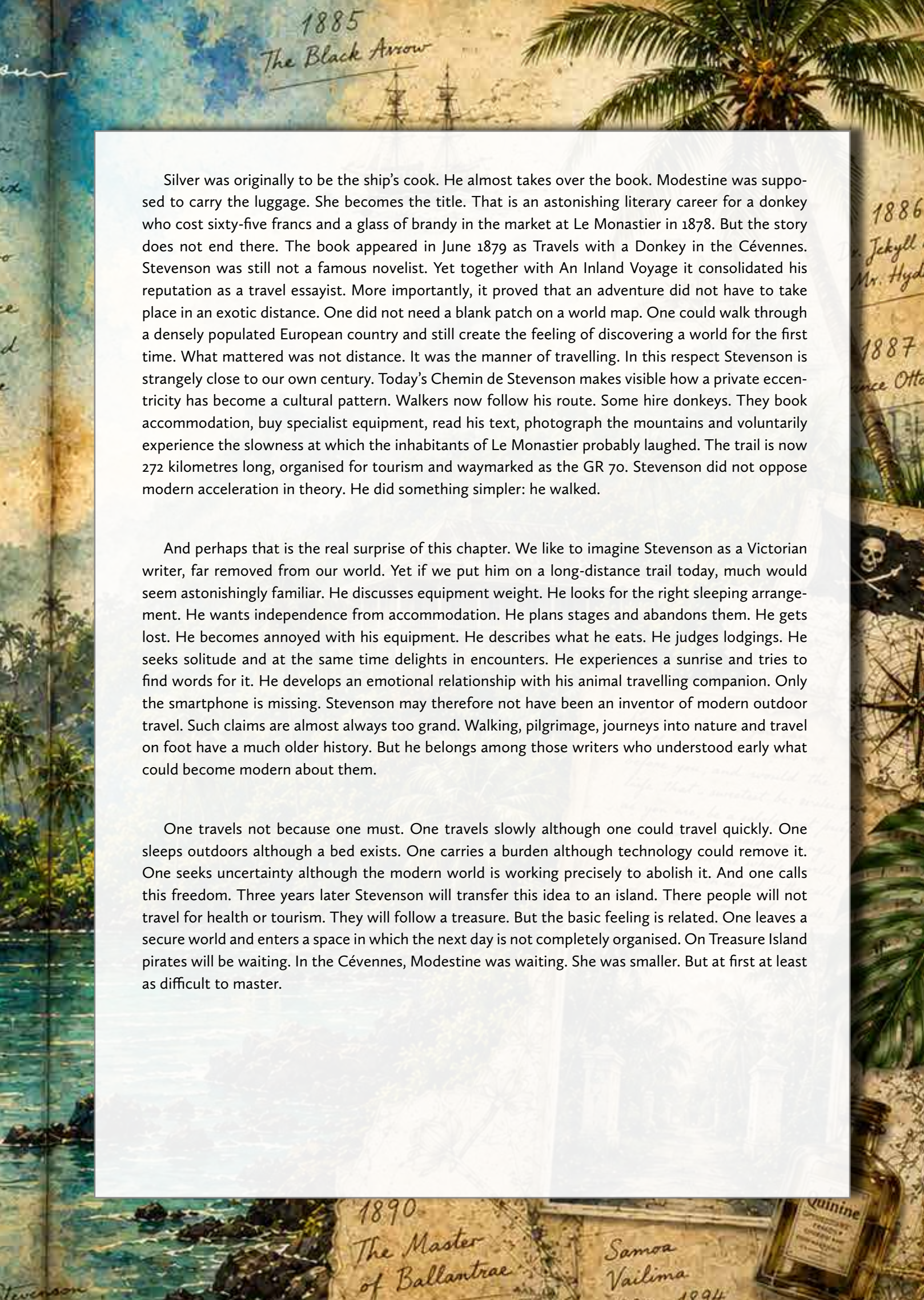


and cruelty, freedom and dependence can exist side by side. And one more connection to Treasure Island is striking. Stevenson loses his way repeatedly. He has to ask directions, follow signs, read the terrain, trust or distrust what others tell him. Once he arrives somewhere he had not planned to be and describes the feeling of waking in a strange forest landscape in the morning without really knowing where north or south lies. The present-day brochure for the Stevenson Trail quotes precisely this passage: he had spent his life looking for a “pure” adventure and had now awakened like the first man in an unknown world.

Three years later Stevenson will draw an island at Braemar. There Jim Hawkins and the others must likewise read terrain. Paths end, hills become landmarks, woods block the view, a map promises certainty and still leads into danger. Stevenson understood the pleasure of a map because he knew the feeling of not having an adequate one. Perhaps the modern walker is therefore a closer relative of the adventure hero than it seems. Both experience landscape not as a view, but as a problem. A mountain must be crossed. A river changes the route. Darkness sets a limit. Fatigue makes five kilometres feel longer than twenty did in the morning. Stevenson learned this truth on six legs. Sometimes they moved astonishingly well. Sometimes hardly at all. On the final major stage to Saint-Jean-du-Gard, Stevenson and Modestine at last move quickly. He wants to reach a viewpoint before dark and drives her hard. The animal is exhausted. In the evening they arrive. The next morning a stableman says Modestine needs at least two days’ rest. Stevenson, however, wants to continue to Alès, where letters are waiting for him. He decides to sell her.

At this point one almost expects relief. For twelve days Stevenson has written about slowness, stubbornness, luggage problems and animal handling. Now he is getting his freedom back. He bargains the price down to thirty-five francs – almost half what he had paid – and climbs into the stage-coach. Then the coach moves off. And Stevenson realises that Modestine is missing. He describes the moment with an emotional force he had not expected from himself. They had been companions for twelve days, more than 120 miles, across mountains, bad roads and mud. Modestine had eventually eaten from his hand and looked at him with that affection animals can develop when they accept a human being as the centre of a small shared world. Father Adam had cried when he sold her. Stevenson, who may have smiled at that at the time, suddenly understands him. Now he cries too. That may be the real reason the book has survived.

Not because of the route. Not because of the sleeping bag. Not because of the Camisards. But because a transport problem has become a relationship. At the beginning Stevenson calculates Modestine’s value in francs. At the end he discovers that this is precisely what can no longer be done. For a writer, that is a remarkable process. He begins with an idea for a travel book: an eccentric Scot walks through France with a donkey. At first the animal is a dramaturgical device, almost a prop. Yet during the journey reality resists the construction. Modestine does not remain the comic supporting character in Stevenson’s story. She forces Stevenson to change his story about her. Good characters do exactly that. Perhaps here too Stevenson learned something that would later be crucial to Long John Silver. The most interesting character is not the one who does exactly what the author intended. It is the one that suddenly demands more space.



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

Silver was originally to be the ship's cook. He almost takes over the book. Modestine was supposed to carry the luggage. She becomes the title. That is an astonishing literary career for a donkey who cost sixty-five francs and a glass of brandy in the market at Le Monastier in 1878. But the story does not end there. The book appeared in June 1879 as *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*. Stevenson was still not a famous novelist. Yet together with *An Inland Voyage* it consolidated his reputation as a travel essayist. More importantly, it proved that an adventure did not have to take place in an exotic distance. One did not need a blank patch on a world map. One could walk through a densely populated European country and still create the feeling of discovering a world for the first time. What mattered was not distance. It was the manner of travelling. In this respect Stevenson is strangely close to our own century. Today's *Chemin de Stevenson* makes visible how a private eccentricity has become a cultural pattern. Walkers now follow his route. Some hire donkeys. They book accommodation, buy specialist equipment, read his text, photograph the mountains and voluntarily experience the slowness at which the inhabitants of Le Monastier probably laughed. The trail is now 272 kilometres long, organised for tourism and waymarked as the GR 70. Stevenson did not oppose modern acceleration in theory. He did something simpler: he walked.

And perhaps that is the real surprise of this chapter. We like to imagine Stevenson as a Victorian writer, far removed from our world. Yet if we put him on a long-distance trail today, much would seem astonishingly familiar. He discusses equipment weight. He looks for the right sleeping arrangement. He wants independence from accommodation. He plans stages and abandons them. He gets lost. He becomes annoyed with his equipment. He describes what he eats. He judges lodgings. He seeks solitude and at the same time delights in encounters. He experiences a sunrise and tries to find words for it. He develops an emotional relationship with his animal travelling companion. Only the smartphone is missing. Stevenson may therefore not have been an inventor of modern outdoor travel. Such claims are almost always too grand. Walking, pilgrimage, journeys into nature and travel on foot have a much older history. But he belongs among those writers who understood early what could become modern about them.

One travels not because one must. One travels slowly although one could travel quickly. One sleeps outdoors although a bed exists. One carries a burden although technology could remove it. One seeks uncertainty although the modern world is working precisely to abolish it. And one calls this freedom. Three years later Stevenson will transfer this idea to an island. There people will not travel for health or tourism. They will follow a treasure. But the basic feeling is related. One leaves a secure world and enters a space in which the next day is not completely organised. On *Treasure Island* pirates will be waiting. In the Cévennes, Modestine was waiting. She was smaller. But at first at least as difficult to master.

1886  
*Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887  
*ance Otto*

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

I am writing you in my crude  
Hawaiian, but I recall him  
Since you must try — Beatrice  
and be definite d'Almeida  
sat this last in the large 8v  
edition — with the small price  
25 — one — and you will find  
a number of old friends; the  
last avatar of Pantofole for  
instance. The anecdote is  
held in want of authenticity

yours truly

Robert Louis Stevenson

1881/82

Young Folks  
Serialisation in  
Young Folks  
Magazine

1883

Erstaussage  
Cassell & Co.  
London

1884

Erste US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889

Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hole  
Illustrationen

APIA  
5 SP.  
93  
SAMOA

VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879

July 10, 1880

Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

1886

*Mr. Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887

*Prince Otto*

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; wake  
as you are, be a sailor; not  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

*The Master*  
*of Ballantrae*

*Samoa*  
*Vailima*

1894

Quinine

R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.



TUSITALA

Die Reise des Geschichtenerzählers

4

STATION 4 / KAPITEL 4

# DIE LIEBE

## Fanny und Amerika

1879 verlässt Stevenson Schottland,  
um mit Fanny in ein neues Leben  
aufzubrechen.

Über den Atlantik, nach San Francisco  
und weiter nach Kalifornien –  
eine Reise voller Hoffnung,  
Zuncigung und Neuanfänge.

STATION ENTDECKEN →



MEIN KOFFER

7



FANNY

## DIE LIEBE

WAND: FANNY, REISE, SILVERADO

### EIN NEUES KAPITEL

1880 lagert Robert Louis Stevenson Fanny Osbourne. Auch Freundschaft wird Liebe. Gemeinsam verlassen sie Europa und suchen das Leben, das ihnen Gesundheit und Freiheit verspricht.

Ihre Reise führt sie über den Ozean – in ein neues Leben, weit entfernt von allem, was bekannt war.

FANNY OSBOURNE  
1862-1914

„Ich liebe sie sehr, doch zu sehr.“  
- Robert Louis Stevenson

SILVERADO  
Fanny Osbourne & Robert Louis Stevenson

EINE ZEMME IN SILVERADO  
Die stahlene Zeme in der Höhe  
verleiht der Burg und Kalifornien

SCROLL

Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.



— R. L. S.

„Die Welt war we-  
auch von Blau“



AMERIKA



KALIFORNIEN



BRIEFE

EN & ENTDECK

# 4 ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

INFOTAFEL FANNY OSBOURNE UND AMERIKA

Die Begegnung mit Fanny Osbourne veränderte Stevensons Leben für immer. Ihre Liebe gab ihm Mut, ihre Stärke begleitete ihn auf seinen Reisen – und führte ihn schließlich nach Amerika, um neue Chancen, Gesundheit und Abenteuer auf ihn zu warten.



1866

Begegnung mit Fanny Osbourne in Bournemouth



1870

Verlobung – ihre Gesundheit verschlechterte sich und David die Familie



1871

Heute am 15. Mai in Carr, Frankreich



1874

Kalifornien nach Amerika auf der „Albatross“



1879

Erkrankung in San Francisco, Kalifornien



1880–1881

Leben in Kalifornien – schwerer, aber neuer Freizeitspaß

BRIEFE VOLLER ZUNEIGUNG



„Ein reges Briefwechsel steht nicht da, sondern das Leben selbst. Seine Worte tragen Zärtlichkeit, Wärme und neue Qualitäten.“

„Deine Liebe ist mir Sonne und Regen.“

– R. L. Stevenson an Fanny Osbourne

KALIFORNIEN: HOFFNUNG UND HEILUNG



„Die meiste Chance eines Heilung für seine Gesundheit ist in der frischen, kalifornischen Luft und in der Energie und lebhaften Freude.“

„Hier ist das Leben anders – es ist wie ein Versprechen.“

– R. L. Stevenson

EBE UND PARTNERSCHAFT



„Fanny ist mir mehr als eine Frau – sie ist mein Leben, mein Glück und meine Zukunft.“

„Sie hat mir mehr gegeben, als ich selbst es hätte tun.“

– R. L. Stevenson

SILVERADO: ABENTEUER UND INSPIRATION



„Auf dem Silbersteinen, Calaveras, entdeckte ich die Schönheit der Natur und die Freude, die sie auf mich ausstrahlte.“

„Die Natur ist ein Buch, das man lesen kann.“

– R. L. Stevenson

„Die Bedeutung dieses Kapitels.“



„Fanny ist mein Heim, wohin immer ich gehe.“

– Robert Louis Stevenson

Once printed,  
Fanny's love was no longer  
a thing that  
belongs to  
its author alone.  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.

– R. L. S.

*R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.*

ELLENWOODS  
DIGITAL MUSEUMS

# TUSITALA

Die Reise des Geschichtenerzählers

Robert Louis Stevenson  
und die Erfindung des Abenteuers

Er war Schriftsteller, Reisender, Beobachter.  
Er erfand Piraten und Doppelgänger.  
Er suchte die Welt – und fand Geschichten,  
die bis heute weiterleben.

DIE REISE BEGINNEN →

## 1. EDINBURGH – DIE WURZELN



## 2. DER KRANKE JUNGE – GESCHICHTE



*I have no need  
for wonder life,  
for imaginative  
when I am such  
in the world.  
— R. L. Stevenson.*

Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.  
— R. L. S.



R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.

RLS

THE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
VIRTUAL MUSEUM

STATION 1

# Edinburgh

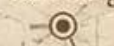
## Die Familie der Leuchtturmbauer

Hier, in der rauen Schönheit Schottlands,  
begann die Reise eines Jungen, der Geschichten  
liebte – und dessen Familie seit Generationen  
Licht in die Welt trug.

Thomas Stevenson, Ingenieur und Erbauer von  
Leuchttürmen, prägte nicht nur Küsten und Meere,  
sondern auch die Vorstellungskraft seines Sohnes  
Robert Louis.

*I travel not  
to go anywhere,  
but to go.  
I travel for  
travel's sake.*

Edinburgh



RLS

THE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
VIRTUAL MUSEUM

STATION 1

## Der kranke Junge

*Wie Krankheit, Lesen und Fantasie  
den Schriftsteller formten.*

In Edinburgh kam Robert Louis Stevenson  
am 13. November 1850 zur Welt.  
Ein zartes Kind, oft krank, aber von  
Geschichten, Büchern und Tagträumen  
getragen. Zwischen Fieberkrämpfen und  
Regenstunden begann eine Reise,  
die weit über die Grenzen seiner Heimat  
hinausführte.



*Bücher waren meine  
besten und geliebtesten  
Freunde.*  
R.L. Stevenson

Edinburgh



Thomas Stevenson  
Ingenieur – Leuchtturmbauer

12.11.1850

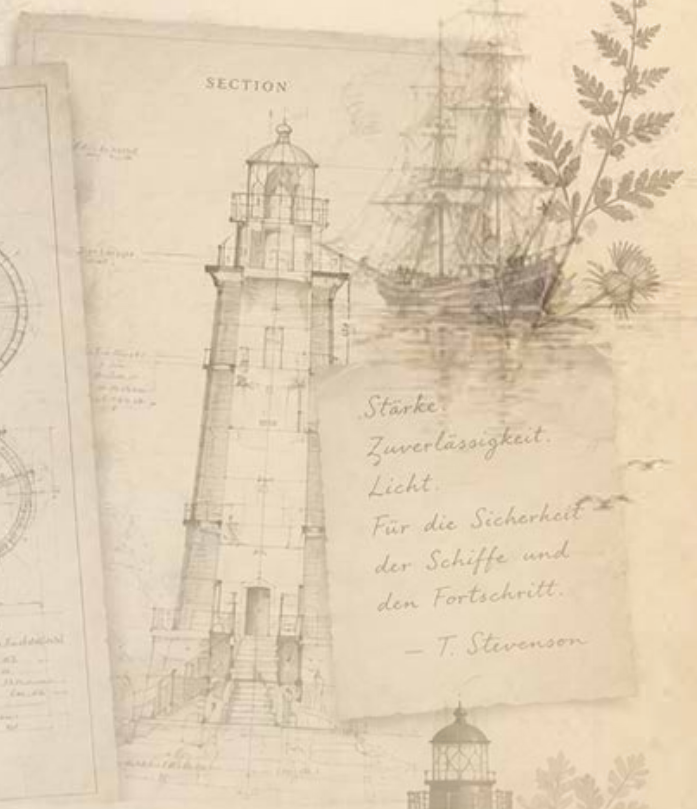
EIN KRANKES KIND – FINE YEARS IN NERB – FINE PHANTASIE OHNE GRENZEN  
R.L. Stevenson

Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.

— R. L. S.

„Mein Vater baute Leuchttürme,  
ich baue vielleicht Geschichten.“

R. L. Sternoon



Stärke.  
Zuverlässigkeit.  
Licht.  
Für die Sicherheit  
der Schiffe und  
den Fortschritt.  
— T. Stevenson



Jede Küste  
erzählt eine  
Geschichte.  
Jede Flamme  
ein Versprechen.  




Leuchtturm an der schottischen Küste  
— gebaut von T. Stevenson.



Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone;  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.  
— R. L. S.



R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.

# Stevenson – Ein Leben für Geschichten



## Kindheit in Schottland

Am 13. November 1850 wurde Stevenson in Edinburgh geboren. Die rauen Hügel, Burgruinen und Geschichten seines Landes prägten seine Fantasie früh.

„Unter dem  
Vordach des  
Himmels ist  
Platz für alle.“  
– R. L. Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) war Dichter, Abenteurer und ein feiner Beobachter der Welt. Seine Geschichten begeistern seit Generationen – voller Mut, Fantasie und Mitgefühl für die Menschen am Rand.

## Kränkel in Schottland

Am 13. November 1850 wurde Stevenson in Edinburgh geboren. Die rauen Hügel, Burgruinen und Geschichten seines Landes prägten seine Fantasie früh.

## Ein leidenschaftlicher Leser

Bücher waren seine besten Freunde. Von Shakespeare bis Jules Verne, von der Bibel bis zu den Märchen aus Tausendundeiner Nacht – Stevenson las alles, was er in die Hände bekam.

## Begegnungen & Einflüsse



**William Shakespeare**  
Seine Dramen lehrten Stevenson die Kraft der menschlichen Seele.



**Charles Dickens**  
Von ihm bewunderte er die Wärme für Außenseiter und das Erzählen.



**Jules Verne**  
Seine Romane weckten die Reiselust und den Sinn für das Abenteuer.

## Der Durchbruch – Geschichten, die bleiben

Mit „Die Schatzinsel“ (1883) und „Der seltsame Fall des Dr. Jekyll und Mr. Hyde“ (1886) wurde Stevenson weltberühmt. Er schrieb über das Gute und das Dunkle in Menschen – spannend bis zur letzten Seite.



Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.

## Unterwegs in Europa

Er reiste viel – zu Fuß, mit dem Fahrrad und immer mit Notizbuch. In Frankreich fand er Inspiration, Freunde und oft auch Erholung.

Grez-sur-Loing,  
Frankreich

„Die Welt ist  
so voll von einer  
Menge Dinge,  
ich bin sicher,  
wir sollten alle  
glücklich sein.“  
– R. L. Stevenson

## Schottland – Heimat und Inspiration

Die Landschaft seiner Kindheit  
kehrt immer wieder in seinen  
Geschichten zurück: stürmische  
Küsten, Nebel, alte Steine –  
und der Stolz der Menschen.

## Abenteuer in Amerika

In den USA lernte Stevenson  
viele Menschen kennen und  
sah die Gegensätze des  
Landes. Er liebte die Weite,  
die Städte – und die Freiheit  
des Reisens.

## Ein neues Zuhause: Samoa

1889 fand Stevenson auf der  
Südseeinsel Samoa ein Zuhause.  
Hier schrieb er, baute, pflanzte –  
und wurde von den Menschen  
sehr geschätzt.

Samoa

## Sein Vermächtnis

Stevenson starb am 3. Dezember 1894.  
Doch seine Geschichten leben weiter –  
über Mut, Freundschaft, Gerechtigkeit  
und die Sehnsucht nach der Ferne.

## Werke, die bleiben

Die Schatzinsel (1883)  
Der seltsame Fall des Dr. Jekyll  
und Mr. Hyde (1886)  
Kidnapped (Einführt, 1886)  
A Child's Garden of Verses (1885)  
Reise mit einem Esel durch die  
Cevennen (1879)

DER SELTSAME FALL  
DES DR. JEKYLL  
UND MR. HYDE

Once printed,  
it is no longer  
yours to  
keep alone;  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.  
– R. L. S.

## STATION 7

# Der Emigrant

## Die Reise nach Amerika

30. August 1879. Nach einer langen  
Überfahrt erreicht Robert Louis Stevenson  
New York. Ein neuer Kontinent,  
ein ungewisses Leben, viele Geschichten.



Ankunft in New York  
17. August 1879



Abfahrt von Greenock  
13. Juli 1879

STATION 7

## Ankunft in New York

3. September 1879 – Nach vier Wochen  
auf See errächt Robert Louis Stevenson  
amerikanischen Boden.

Der Hafen von New York liegt am Damm des  
Morgens. Ein neues Leben beginnt – voller  
Möglichkeiten, Erwartungen und Geschichten,  
die erst noch geschrieben werden.



Ankunft in New York  
3. September 1879



Reise mit der Casco  
Abfahrt Glasgow  
14. August 1879



1 Edinburgh

2 Die Stadt

3 Die Seelands

4 Das Doppelhörn

5 Monterey und Fern

6 Der Emigrant

7 Ankunft in New York

8 Across



DENKEN SIE DIE KARTE  
UND ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN



Ein neuer Kontinent liegt vor mir, und mit ihm  
die Aussicht auf Arbeit, Abenteuer und ein freieres Leben.

MEHR ÜBER STEVENSON

# New York 1879

Ankunft in einer Stadt  
voller Möglichkeiten.

Nach Wochen auf der Straße  
Robert Louis Stevenson New York.  
Hier hat sich eine Stadt im Aufbau  
bald, glanzvoll, unerschrocken  
Hier beginnt ein neues Kapitel.

AN DER ANKER-LINIE  
Hier steht / eine günstige  
Ankunft in einer  
Stadt, und es ist  
schon / und bald  
die Zukunft.

U.S. AGAMA  
New York  
17. August 1879



1. Anker



2. Der Anker

3. Der Anker

4. Der Anker

5. Der Anker

6. Der Anker

7. Der Anker

8. Der Anker

9. Der Anker

10. Der Anker

11. Der Anker

12. Der Anker

13. Der Anker

14. Der Anker

15. Der Anker



"Die Freiheit selbst  
schon hier in New York  
zu finden, die in  
aufgefordert wird."  
R. L. Stevenson  
17. August 1879



WALS WYNTON

R. L. Stevenson  
17. August 1879

AK LINE  
TICKET  
INSON  
1879

AK LINE  
TICKET  
INSON  
1879



ANCHOR LINE

PASSENGER TICKET.

STEAMSHIP: S.S. DEVONSHIRE

FROM: GREENOCK

TO: NEW YORK

DATE: 13 JULY 1879

PASSENGER:  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

No. 73142

The horizon opens.  
America lies before us—  
Strange, immense, inviting,  
and a little terrible.

R.L.S.

The Amateur  
Emigrant

BY  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1879



## CHAPTER 8

# A Scot in New York

## How America Changed Stevenson's View of the World and of Writing

One night on the Atlantic, a man lies in the water-channel of the deck. It is damp, fog drifts across the ship, and somewhere beyond the bow the foghorn sends its regular warnings into the darkness. The man is older, racked by cramps, barely able to speak. Robert Louis Stevenson and two other passengers discover him almost by accident. Stevenson looks for help, cannot find the ship's doctor, goes on, and eventually asks an officer. Does the sick man belong to the crew? the officer wants to know. Stevenson thinks he is a stoker. That speeds matters up. In the galley too they ask about the man's status. Then the light of a lantern falls on his face and a cook recognises the mistake: not a stoker, not a sailor, merely a passenger. He turns round and takes the lantern with him. Stevenson's companion Jones calls after him that the man outside is still a human being. The answer from the darkness is a joke. Of course he is a man; nobody had claimed he was a woman.

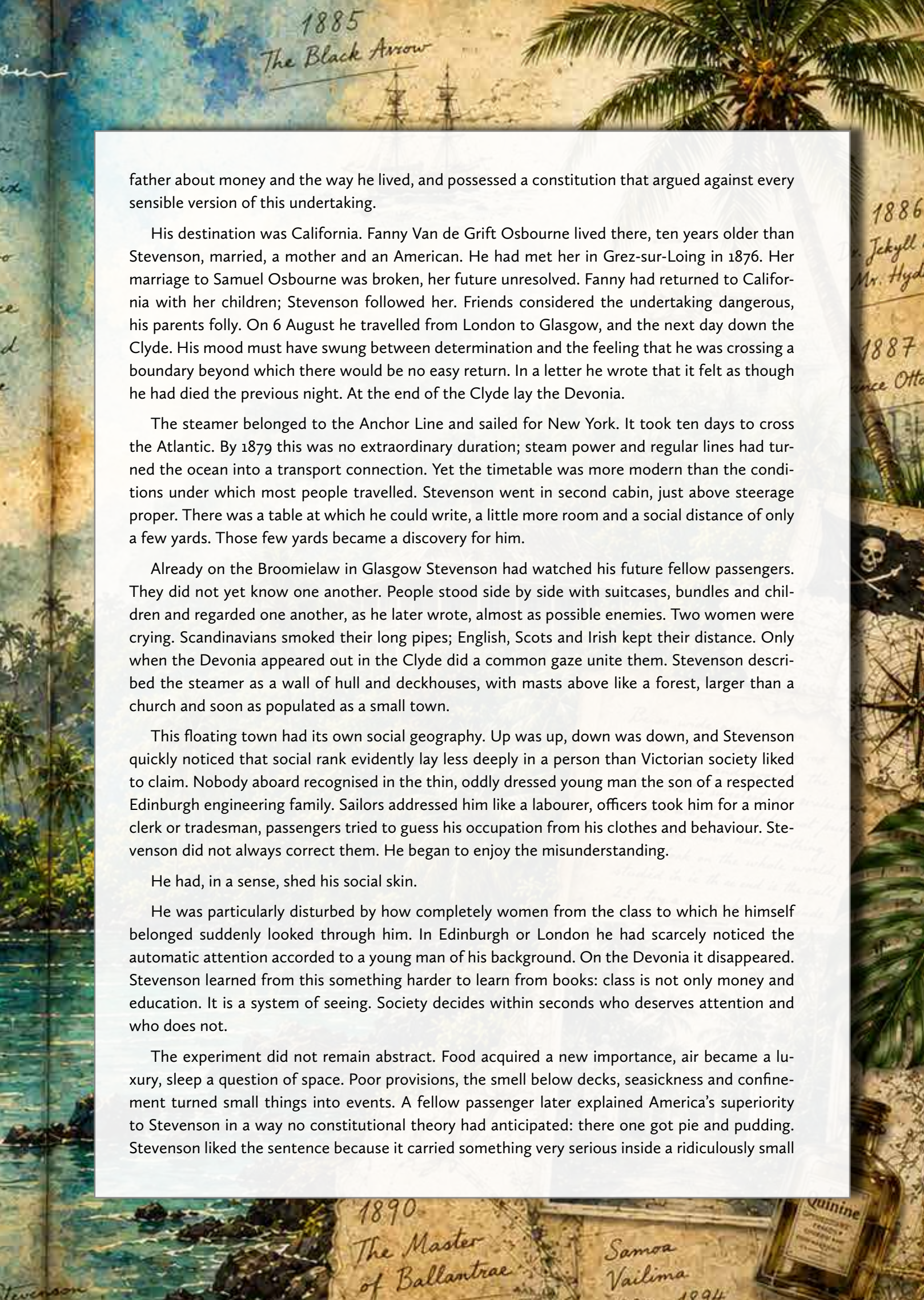
One does not have to turn Robert Louis Stevenson into a social reformer to understand why this small scene matters. On a steamer carrying several hundred people from Europe to America, something becomes visible for a moment that the elegant language of progress prefers to conceal: human beings are assigned different values, and that value can be read with remarkable precision from where they sleep, what ticket they hold and whether anyone is responsible for them. Stevenson will not forget it. He travelled to America in August 1879 because a woman he loved lived there. What returns will be a writer who has seen something other than what he expected to see.

For Stevenson already knew America before he set foot in it. That may have been the real problem.

For years the young Scot had imagined the continent as Europe's opposite. America meant space, movement, possibility; a society whose forms had not yet hardened, whose cities seemed to rise overnight, whose forests vanished as railways, farms and settlements pushed westward. In Europe much appeared fixed by origin, property, education and social expectations. America, by contrast, existed in Stevenson's imagination as a place where biographies had not yet been written to the end. Later he called it his "promised land". What fascinated him was precisely its unfinished quality: the sense that life there was less regulated by convention and still conducted with the open harshness that old Europe seemed long ago to have lost.

It was an idea that said a great deal about Stevenson and, at first, very little about America.

When he boarded the *Devonia* at Greenock on 7 August 1879, he was twenty-eight years old. He was no longer unknown, but he was by no means famous. An *Inland Voyage* had appeared, as had *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*; some literary people in London and Edinburgh knew who Robert Louis Stevenson was. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* still lay in a future nobody could foresee. He did not earn enough to live independently, quarrelled with his



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

father about money and the way he lived, and possessed a constitution that argued against every sensible version of this undertaking.

His destination was California. Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne lived there, ten years older than Stevenson, married, a mother and an American. He had met her in Grez-sur-Loing in 1876. Her marriage to Samuel Osbourne was broken, her future unresolved. Fanny had returned to California with her children; Stevenson followed her. Friends considered the undertaking dangerous, his parents folly. On 6 August he travelled from London to Glasgow, and the next day down the Clyde. His mood must have swung between determination and the feeling that he was crossing a boundary beyond which there would be no easy return. In a letter he wrote that it felt as though he had died the previous night. At the end of the Clyde lay the Devonian.

The steamer belonged to the Anchor Line and sailed for New York. It took ten days to cross the Atlantic. By 1879 this was no extraordinary duration; steam power and regular lines had turned the ocean into a transport connection. Yet the timetable was more modern than the conditions under which most people travelled. Stevenson went in second cabin, just above steerage proper. There was a table at which he could write, a little more room and a social distance of only a few yards. Those few yards became a discovery for him.

Already on the Broomielaw in Glasgow Stevenson had watched his future fellow passengers. They did not yet know one another. People stood side by side with suitcases, bundles and children and regarded one another, as he later wrote, almost as possible enemies. Two women were crying. Scandinavians smoked their long pipes; English, Scots and Irish kept their distance. Only when the Devonian appeared out in the Clyde did a common gaze unite them. Stevenson described the steamer as a wall of hull and deckhouses, with masts above like a forest, larger than a church and soon as populated as a small town.

This floating town had its own social geography. Up was up, down was down, and Stevenson quickly noticed that social rank evidently lay less deeply in a person than Victorian society liked to claim. Nobody aboard recognised in the thin, oddly dressed young man the son of a respected Edinburgh engineering family. Sailors addressed him like a labourer, officers took him for a minor clerk or tradesman, passengers tried to guess his occupation from his clothes and behaviour. Stevenson did not always correct them. He began to enjoy the misunderstanding.

He had, in a sense, shed his social skin.

He was particularly disturbed by how completely women from the class to which he himself belonged suddenly looked through him. In Edinburgh or London he had scarcely noticed the automatic attention accorded to a young man of his background. On the Devonian it disappeared. Stevenson learned from this something harder to learn from books: class is not only money and education. It is a system of seeing. Society decides within seconds who deserves attention and who does not.

The experiment did not remain abstract. Food acquired a new importance, air became a luxury, sleep a question of space. Poor provisions, the smell below decks, seasickness and confinement turned small things into events. A fellow passenger later explained America's superiority to Stevenson in a way no constitutional theory had anticipated: there one got pie and pudding. Stevenson liked the sentence because it carried something very serious inside a ridiculously small

1886  
Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887  
ince Otto

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

observation. For a worker, prosperity eventually ceases to be decided by what a country says about freedom and is measured instead by what can still be put on the table after bread and rent.

Stevenson listened to such people. That distinguished him from many travellers of his class, who liked the emigrant as a picturesque figure and were otherwise glad if he slept on another deck.

One of his most important companions became Jones, a Welshman and trained blacksmith who had already lived in America. Jones had lost money, lost his wife and yet by no means lost his appetite for reinventing himself. He carried with him a remedy called "Golden Oil" which, in his opinion, cured an astonishing number of human complaints, and Stevenson was curious enough to try it himself. More important, however, was their shared interest in the other passengers. Stevenson and Jones walked the decks, listened, watched people, remembered phrases, peculiarities and life stories, then compared their discoveries. Stevenson later remembered them as two anglers spreading out their catch at the end of the day.

Two years before a drawn island at Braemar gives rise to Jim Hawkins, Billy Bones, Ben Gunn and Long John Silver, Stevenson learns aboard an emigrant ship to read people as narrative material.

One should not build from this a primitive origin story for *Treasure Island*. Long John Silver cannot secretly be found on the *Devonia's* passenger list. Something else is more interesting. Stevenson is moving here among people whose biographies have become uncertain. They have left their homeland and not yet reached the new one. Some are fleeing poverty, some failed lives, others hope for work. On such a ship everyone has a past, but nobody can say with certainty what future will fit it. Biography becomes mobile. People retell themselves.

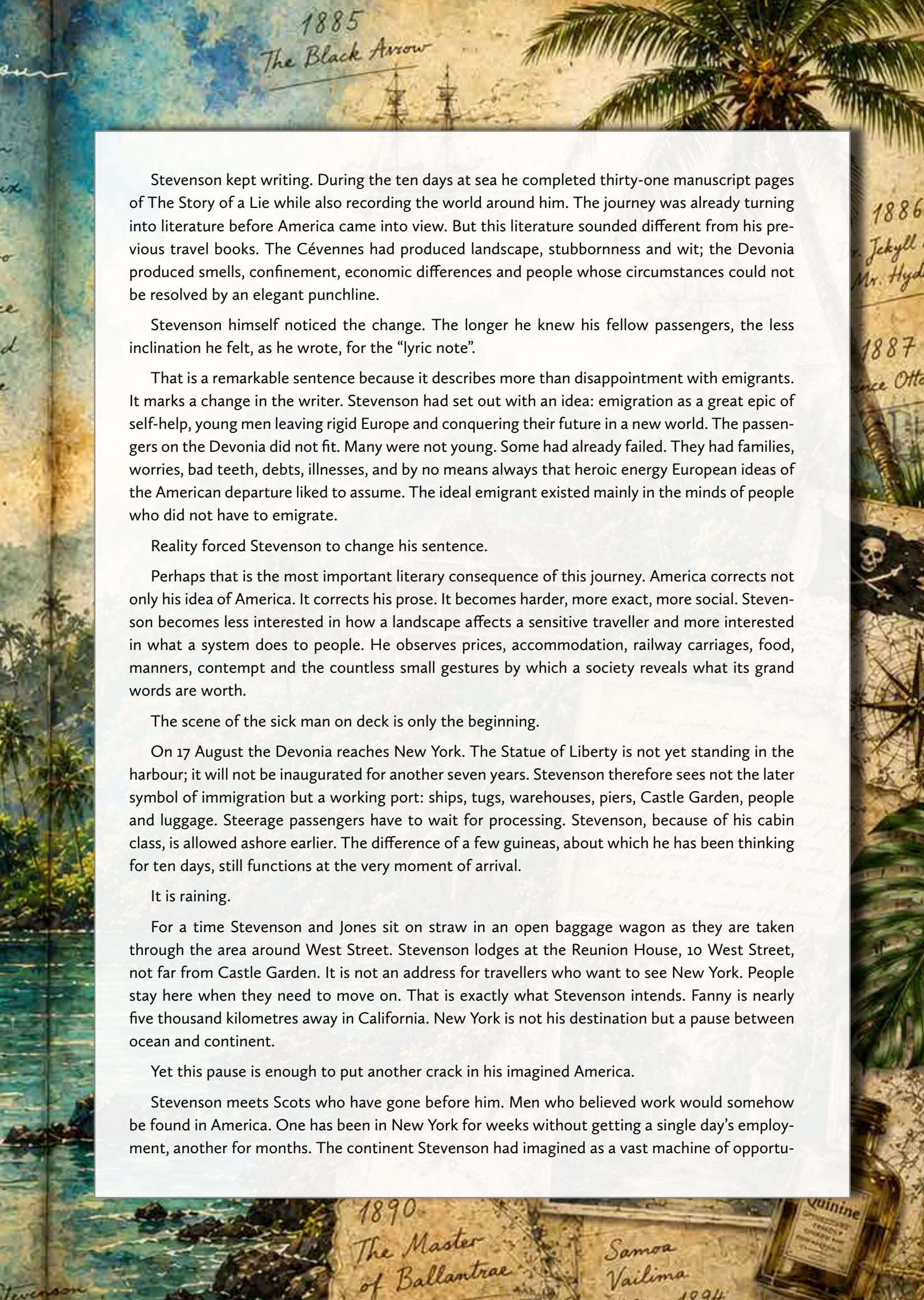
One passenger is especially good at this art. The man is still young, neatly dressed, seems educated and has the gift of turning almost any event into a story. He tells of India, of work with the P&O, of the Royal Engineers and of adventures that add up to a life almost too large to be true. Stevenson listens, fascinated. To him the stranger is an almost Homeric storyteller. Only later does he ask Jones who the man actually is.

A stowaway.

The man has no ticket, but he has stories. For a few hours that is enough. An improvised society on the Atlantic accepts his authority not because of rank, property or official position, but because he tells better stories than the others. Stevenson, still struggling to establish his own place as a writer, must have enjoyed that. Later his most famous characters will work in much the same way. Silver is powerful long before he draws a weapon. He understands people, speaks differently to each of them and tells each exactly the version of himself that is useful at that moment.

On the *Devonia*, meanwhile, Stevenson's own writing is regarded as a rather peculiar pastime. He works every day. Officers begin to joke about it, asking whether he is "still" writing. Eventually the purser offers him a sensible alternative: if Stevenson insists on writing, he could copy the passenger list. At least he would be paid for that.

It belongs among the better ironies of literary history that in 1879 a ship's officer tried to explain to Robert Louis Stevenson how to make money from writing.



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

Stevenson kept writing. During the ten days at sea he completed thirty-one manuscript pages of *The Story of a Lie* while also recording the world around him. The journey was already turning into literature before America came into view. But this literature sounded different from his previous travel books. The Cévennes had produced landscape, stubbornness and wit; the Devonian produced smells, confinement, economic differences and people whose circumstances could not be resolved by an elegant punchline.

Stevenson himself noticed the change. The longer he knew his fellow passengers, the less inclination he felt, as he wrote, for the "lyric note".

That is a remarkable sentence because it describes more than disappointment with emigrants. It marks a change in the writer. Stevenson had set out with an idea: emigration as a great epic of self-help, young men leaving rigid Europe and conquering their future in a new world. The passengers on the Devonian did not fit. Many were not young. Some had already failed. They had families, worries, bad teeth, debts, illnesses, and by no means always that heroic energy European ideas of the American departure liked to assume. The ideal emigrant existed mainly in the minds of people who did not have to emigrate.

Reality forced Stevenson to change his sentence.

Perhaps that is the most important literary consequence of this journey. America corrects not only his idea of America. It corrects his prose. It becomes harder, more exact, more social. Stevenson becomes less interested in how a landscape affects a sensitive traveller and more interested in what a system does to people. He observes prices, accommodation, railway carriages, food, manners, contempt and the countless small gestures by which a society reveals what its grand words are worth.

The scene of the sick man on deck is only the beginning.

On 17 August the Devonian reaches New York. The Statue of Liberty is not yet standing in the harbour; it will not be inaugurated for another seven years. Stevenson therefore sees not the later symbol of immigration but a working port: ships, tugs, warehouses, piers, Castle Garden, people and luggage. Steerage passengers have to wait for processing. Stevenson, because of his cabin class, is allowed ashore earlier. The difference of a few guineas, about which he has been thinking for ten days, still functions at the very moment of arrival.

It is raining.

For a time Stevenson and Jones sit on straw in an open baggage wagon as they are taken through the area around West Street. Stevenson lodges at the Reunion House, 10 West Street, not far from Castle Garden. It is not an address for travellers who want to see New York. People stay here when they need to move on. That is exactly what Stevenson intends. Fanny is nearly five thousand kilometres away in California. New York is not his destination but a pause between ocean and continent.

Yet this pause is enough to put another crack in his imagined America.

Stevenson meets Scots who have gone before him. Men who believed work would somehow be found in America. One has been in New York for weeks without getting a single day's employment, another for months. The continent Stevenson had imagined as a vast machine of opportu-

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima

1894



nity evidently also produces people for whom there is no use. The discovery strikes him precisely because the men come from where he comes from. America is not automatically a new beginning. One can cross an ocean and discover on the far side that the old problem has travelled with you.

Stevenson does not therefore reject America. That would have been too simple and probably contrary to his temperament. What irritates him about the city fascinates him at the same time. People seem coarse and helpful, businesslike and generous, suspicious and open. He encounters men whose tone initially insults him and who a few minutes later are ready to run errands for him. The country begins to become more complicated than its myth.

Perhaps this is the moment when Stevenson truly enters America.

Not when he steps off the *Devonia*, but when he stops demanding that the continent conform to his idea of it.

In a New York bookshop a small scene occurs that almost perfectly describes the traveller's position. Stevenson finds one of his own books. The bookseller tells him the author's name. Stevenson asks again as though he has never heard it. Yes, the bookseller assures him, Stevenson. Nothing more happens.

A book by Robert Louis Stevenson is for sale in New York.

Robert Louis Stevenson is standing in front of it.

Nobody recognises him.

It is hard to imagine a more beautiful moment for this man. Socially, aboard the *Devonia*, he has already learned how easily one can become invisible. Now he experiences the same thing in literature. His name has arrived; his fame has not.

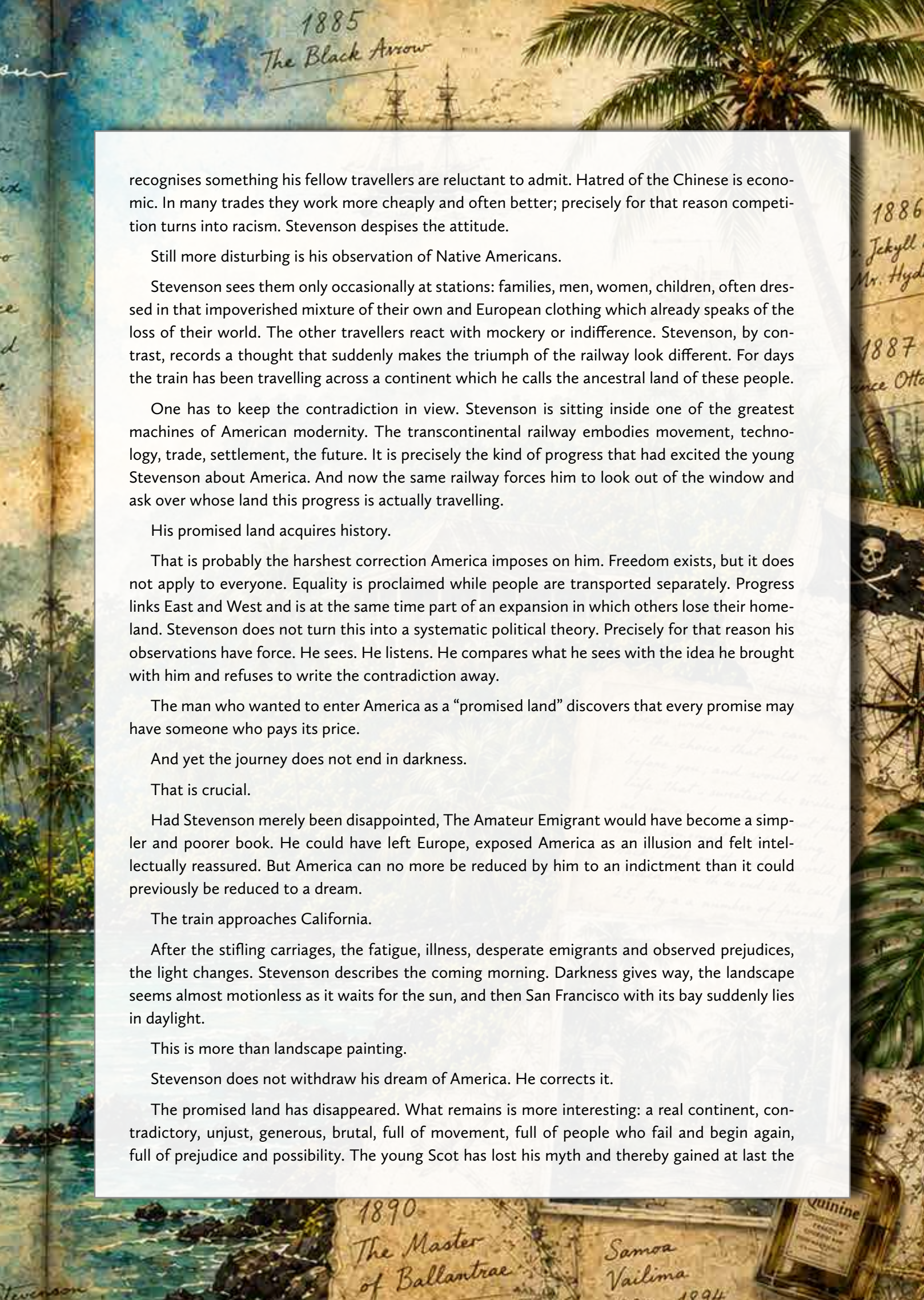
By the evening of 18 August his first encounter with New York is already over. Stevenson crosses the Hudson to New Jersey and boards an emigrant train. Twelve days of railway travel lie ahead. The transcontinental line had been completed only ten years earlier and belonged to the great technological self-images of the United States: space conquered, coasts linked, people and goods moving at a speed that would have been unimaginable only a few decades before.

Stevenson experiences this miracle in a railway carriage with scarcely any air.

He is soon utterly exhausted, feverish, dirty and ill. People sleep on hard seats, luggage blocks the space, food has to be bought at stations or from a travelling vendor. A newsboy sells not only newspapers and sweets, but soap, towels, coffee, sugar and tinned food – a mobile infrastructure for people to whom the railway company supplies little beyond transport. When the boy notices how ill Stevenson is, he brings him fruit and newspapers and sits beside him. In the middle of a system designed to move passengers west as efficiently as possible, it is one individual who organises care.

Yet the farther west the train travels, the more fundamental Stevenson's observations become.

America had fascinated him precisely because he expected to find a freer society there. Now he sees how unevenly that freedom is distributed. A separate carriage is reserved for Chinese travellers. Stevenson hears the casual certainty with which other passengers speak about them: as competitors, foreigners and people against whom apparently any prejudice is permitted. He

The background is a collage. At the top, a document snippet shows the date '1885' and the title 'The Black Arrow' with an illustration of a ship. To the right, there's a painting of a tropical beach with palm trees. On the right edge, another document snippet shows the date '1886' and names 'Jekyll' and 'Mr. Hyde'. Below that, '1887' and 'Prince Otto' are visible. At the bottom, a document shows '1890' and 'The Master of Ballantrae'. To the right of this is a document with 'Samoa Vailima' and '1894'. In the bottom right corner, there is a bottle of Quinine.

recognises something his fellow travellers are reluctant to admit. Hatred of the Chinese is economic. In many trades they work more cheaply and often better; precisely for that reason competition turns into racism. Stevenson despises the attitude.

Still more disturbing is his observation of Native Americans.

Stevenson sees them only occasionally at stations: families, men, women, children, often dressed in that impoverished mixture of their own and European clothing which already speaks of the loss of their world. The other travellers react with mockery or indifference. Stevenson, by contrast, records a thought that suddenly makes the triumph of the railway look different. For days the train has been travelling across a continent which he calls the ancestral land of these people.

One has to keep the contradiction in view. Stevenson is sitting inside one of the greatest machines of American modernity. The transcontinental railway embodies movement, technology, trade, settlement, the future. It is precisely the kind of progress that had excited the young Stevenson about America. And now the same railway forces him to look out of the window and ask over whose land this progress is actually travelling.

His promised land acquires history.

That is probably the harshest correction America imposes on him. Freedom exists, but it does not apply to everyone. Equality is proclaimed while people are transported separately. Progress links East and West and is at the same time part of an expansion in which others lose their homeland. Stevenson does not turn this into a systematic political theory. Precisely for that reason his observations have force. He sees. He listens. He compares what he sees with the idea he brought with him and refuses to write the contradiction away.

The man who wanted to enter America as a “promised land” discovers that every promise may have someone who pays its price.

And yet the journey does not end in darkness.

That is crucial.

Had Stevenson merely been disappointed, *The Amateur Emigrant* would have become a simpler and poorer book. He could have left Europe, exposed America as an illusion and felt intellectually reassured. But America can no more be reduced by him to an indictment than it could previously be reduced to a dream.

The train approaches California.

After the stifling carriages, the fatigue, illness, desperate emigrants and observed prejudices, the light changes. Stevenson describes the coming morning. Darkness gives way, the landscape seems almost motionless as it waits for the sun, and then San Francisco with its bay suddenly lies in daylight.

This is more than landscape painting.

Stevenson does not withdraw his dream of America. He corrects it.

The promised land has disappeared. What remains is more interesting: a real continent, contradictory, unjust, generous, brutal, full of movement, full of people who fail and begin again, full of prejudice and possibility. The young Scot has lost his myth and thereby gained at last the

subject about which he can write.

On 30 August he reaches Monterey. Twenty-three days have passed since Greenock. Behind him lie the Clyde, ten days of Atlantic, one day in New York and twelve days of railway travel. Ahead lies Fanny.

But before this love story is decided, another begins.

Stevenson sits down and writes.

He calls the book *The Amateur Emigrant*.

The title already contains the necessary self-criticism. Stevenson knows that he is not a real emigrant. He can go back. He has family, friends, education, connections. If the money runs out, there is a father in Edinburgh with whom he can quarrel and who will ultimately help anyway. The people with whom he has travelled often possess no such luxury. Stevenson does not claim their experience as his own. He approaches it temporarily – and for that very reason writes more precisely about the differences.

What emerges differs markedly from his previous travel writing. Landscape remains, but it has lost its monopoly. Alongside it come prices, smells, unemployment, ethnic hostility, cabin classes and the question of who brings a lantern to a sick man. Stevenson becomes interested in the ordinary lives of people and begins to describe social structures from everyday situations. These very experiences sharpen his prose style.

Perhaps that was exactly the problem.

At home, it seems, a different Stevenson was expected.

His earlier travel books had shown an individual, cultivated traveller whose adventures the reader could enjoy from a safe distance. *The Amateur Emigrant* came from another world. There were no pretty landscapes standing between reader and subject. Stevenson had sat among people about whom his own society preferred to speak in the abstract, and now reported what he had seen. The manuscript was prepared for publication in 1880 – and withdrawn. The second part of the journey appeared separately in 1883 as *Across the Plains*; it was later included in the volume of that name in 1892. The first part of *The Amateur Emigrant* was not published until 1895, after Stevenson's death. A journey that belonged together geographically was torn apart in literature.

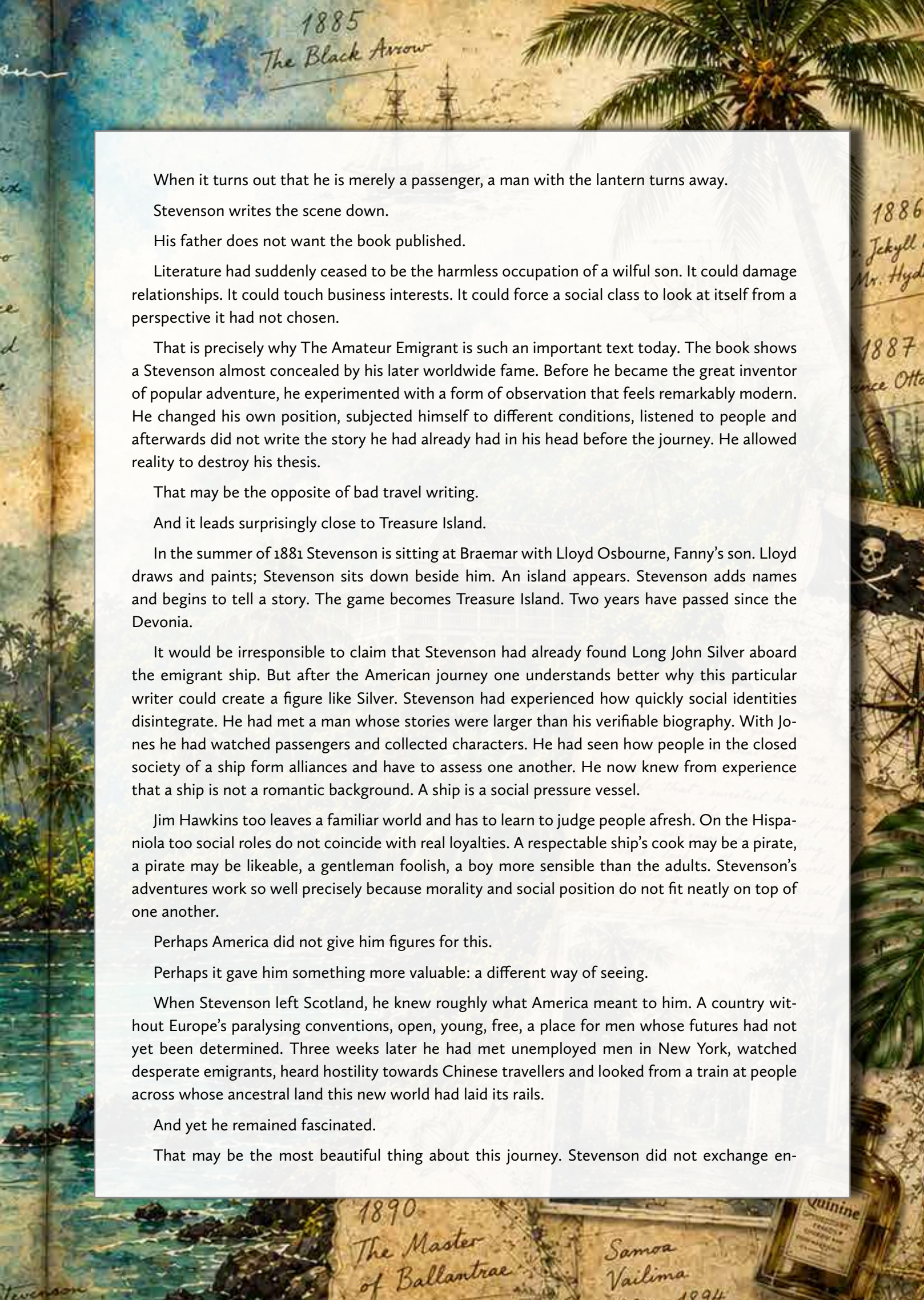
The history of this non-publication leads back to Edinburgh and to Thomas Stevenson.

His father thought little of the new manuscript. His son was suddenly writing about people and conditions which, in Thomas's view, perhaps belonged neither to the social standing of the family nor to the kind of literature Louis ought to be writing. But behind the aesthetic and family conflict there may have been something more concrete. Thomas Stevenson was close to the Hendersons, the men behind the Anchor Line. Louis had gathered his observations on one of their ships. In later discussions of publication there was concern that the text could reflect on the shipping company and therefore on people with whom Thomas Stevenson was connected.

This gives the scene from that foggy night on the Atlantic a second shadow in retrospect.

A sick man lies on deck.

The crew asks whether he is one of them.



When it turns out that he is merely a passenger, a man with the lantern turns away.

Stevenson writes the scene down.

His father does not want the book published.

Literature had suddenly ceased to be the harmless occupation of a wilful son. It could damage relationships. It could touch business interests. It could force a social class to look at itself from a perspective it had not chosen.

That is precisely why *The Amateur Emigrant* is such an important text today. The book shows a Stevenson almost concealed by his later worldwide fame. Before he became the great inventor of popular adventure, he experimented with a form of observation that feels remarkably modern. He changed his own position, subjected himself to different conditions, listened to people and afterwards did not write the story he had already had in his head before the journey. He allowed reality to destroy his thesis.

That may be the opposite of bad travel writing.

And it leads surprisingly close to *Treasure Island*.

In the summer of 1881 Stevenson is sitting at Braemar with Lloyd Osbourne, Fanny's son. Lloyd draws and paints; Stevenson sits down beside him. An island appears. Stevenson adds names and begins to tell a story. The game becomes *Treasure Island*. Two years have passed since the *Devonia*.

It would be irresponsible to claim that Stevenson had already found Long John Silver aboard the emigrant ship. But after the American journey one understands better why this particular writer could create a figure like Silver. Stevenson had experienced how quickly social identities disintegrate. He had met a man whose stories were larger than his verifiable biography. With Jones he had watched passengers and collected characters. He had seen how people in the closed society of a ship form alliances and have to assess one another. He now knew from experience that a ship is not a romantic background. A ship is a social pressure vessel.

Jim Hawkins too leaves a familiar world and has to learn to judge people afresh. On the *Hispaniola* too social roles do not coincide with real loyalties. A respectable ship's cook may be a pirate, a pirate may be likeable, a gentleman foolish, a boy more sensible than the adults. Stevenson's adventures work so well precisely because morality and social position do not fit neatly on top of one another.

Perhaps America did not give him figures for this.

Perhaps it gave him something more valuable: a different way of seeing.

When Stevenson left Scotland, he knew roughly what America meant to him. A country without Europe's paralysing conventions, open, young, free, a place for men whose futures had not yet been determined. Three weeks later he had met unemployed men in New York, watched desperate emigrants, heard hostility towards Chinese travellers and looked from a train at people across whose ancestral land this new world had laid its rails.

And yet he remained fascinated.

That may be the most beautiful thing about this journey. Stevenson did not exchange en-

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

thusiasm for cynicism. He merely gave up the convenience of a simple opinion. After California, America was still a promise. But now he knew that every promise had to be tested against the people who lived inside it.

His prose had already passed that test.

His father was less enthusiastic.

One hundred pounds were eventually used to prevent publication of the first part. The book initially disappeared from public view. Its author later returned to Europe, married Fanny, acquired Lloyd as a stepson and two years later sat down over a boy's drawing.

An island appeared.

Four years after the journey, Treasure Island was in the bookshops.

Robert Louis Stevenson's real adventure – emigrants, poverty, class barriers, racism, a sick man in the rain and the failure of a promised land – had been held back.

The invented adventure could no longer be stopped.

Erstaufgabe  
Cassell & Co.  
London

1884  
Erste US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889  
Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hole  
Illustrationen

APIA  
5 SP.  
93  
SAMOA

VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 10, 1880  
Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly



CHAPTER 9

## Fanny and America

### Love, Poverty, Monterey and Silverado

#### Fanny - The Woman for Whom He Crossed an Ocean

The reason for this unreason was Frances Matilda Van de Grift Osbourne. Fanny was not one of those pale muses in artists' biographies who seem to begin existing only at the moment a famous man meets them. When Stevenson encountered her at Grez in 1876, she had already lived a full, complicated and in part hard life. Born in Indianapolis in 1840, she married Samuel Osbourne at seventeen. The couple lived for periods in the American West, including the mining regions of Nevada and California; the marriage was burdened by long separations and Sam's infidelity. Fanny had three children: Isobel, usually called Belle, Lloyd and the little Hervey. Hervey died in 1876 after a long illness. Fanny had already left her husband in 1875 and gone to Europe with the children, where she and Belle intended to study art. When Stevenson met her in Grez, then, it was not an experienced man of the world encountering a vulnerable girl, but a twenty-five-year-old Scottish writer meeting a thirty-six-year-old American woman who had experienced marriage, motherhood, the American West, separation, art studies and the death of a child.

Perhaps part of her attraction lay there. Stevenson was fascinated throughout his life by people who could not easily be fitted into a single category. Fanny was exactly such a person. She could be practical and impulsive, caring and brusque, artistic and entirely unromantic. Stevenson's later friends reacted to her in very different ways; some admired her energy, others found her difficult or dominating. The image of the mere "writer's wife" fits her about as well as the idea that Long

R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.



*I travel not  
to go anywhere,  
but to go.  
I travel for  
travel's sake.*

STATION 6

# Monterey und Fanny

*Für die Liebe nach Kalifornien.*

1879 reiste Robert Louis Stevenson nach Kalifornien,  
um Fanny Osbourne zu besuchen.  
Aus Freundschaft wurde Liebe.  
Er lebte in Monterey – und heiratete sie  
am 19. Mai 1880 in San Francisco.



Monterey  
Stevenson lebte 1879/80  
im French Hotel (heute Stevenson House).



San Francisco  
19. Mai 1880 – Heirat mit  
Fanny Osbourne.



Napa / Silverado  
Aufenthalte im Napa Valley,  
u. a. in Silverado.



French Hotel, Monterey, ca. 1880  
heute Stevenson House



Fanny Osbourne  
1840–1914



1 Edinburgh → 2 Die Straße → 3 Die Schräginsel → 4 Das Doppellängerlin

ZIEHEN SIE DIE KARTE  
ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN

*I have no need  
for wonder life,  
for imaginative  
when I am such  
in the world.*

— R. L. Stevenson

Stevensons Weg nach Amerika w  
In Monterey fand er ein Zuhause, in San



STATION 4

# Across the Plains

Mit der Eisenbahn durch Amerika, 1879.

Von New York nach Chicago, von Chicago nach Omaha – weiter westwärts, immer tiefer hinein in ein Kontinent von Licht und Weite. Stevenson beobachtet, notiert, staunt – und hält die Reise in Worten und Skizzen fest.

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD  
PASSENGER TICKET  
CHICAGO TO OMAHA  
via Northern Route.  
No. 1337 R.L. Stevenson

The endless wilderness  
as I seem to be travelling  
through the dreams of  
some giant.  
R.L.S.  
St. Louis, Sept. 1879

UNITED STATES



What is this country  
but a grand experiment  
in freedom and space?  
R.L. Stevenson

1 Ellensburg → 2 The Snake → 3 Die Schlamassel → 4 Across the Plains → 5 San Francisco → 6 Samoa → 7 Vailima

MEHR ÜBER STEVENSON →

IGTE STAATEN  
N AMERIKA

PA / SILVERADO



Monterey Bay, ca. 1880

## MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

State of California  
County of San Francisco  
This certifies that

Robert Louis Stevenson  
Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne  
were joined in Marriage  
May 19th, 1880  
San Francisco.

THE OLD  
PACIFIC  
CAPITAL  
MONTEREY  
CALIFORNIA  
By  
R. L. STEVENSON



Monterey, ca. 1880



Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone,  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.

- R. L. S.

ar ein Weg der Liebe.  
Francisco heiratete er Fanny.

MEHR ÜBER STEVENSON →



John Silver is merely a ship's cook. Even her family later described her life as an almost breathless succession of extraordinary situations. In her, Stevenson met someone who already knew the mixture of toughness and adventure he had until then mainly been seeking.

The relationship developed over the following years. Exactly how and when closeness became love cannot in every detail be reconstructed with the certainty later romantic biographies like to produce. What is certain is that in 1877 Stevenson spent time with Fanny in Paris; in 1878 she returned with her children to California and to Samuel Osbourne. The separation was hard for Stevenson. Soon afterwards he made his walk with Modestine through the Cévennes. One could make from this the attractive legend of a desperate lover fleeing into the mountains with a donkey. The chronology allows the mood, but it should not become the sole explanation of the book. More interesting is the pattern Stevenson had already begun to develop: when his life entered crisis, he set himself in motion. Movement was rarely mere escape for him. It transformed disorder into experience and experience, eventually, into text.

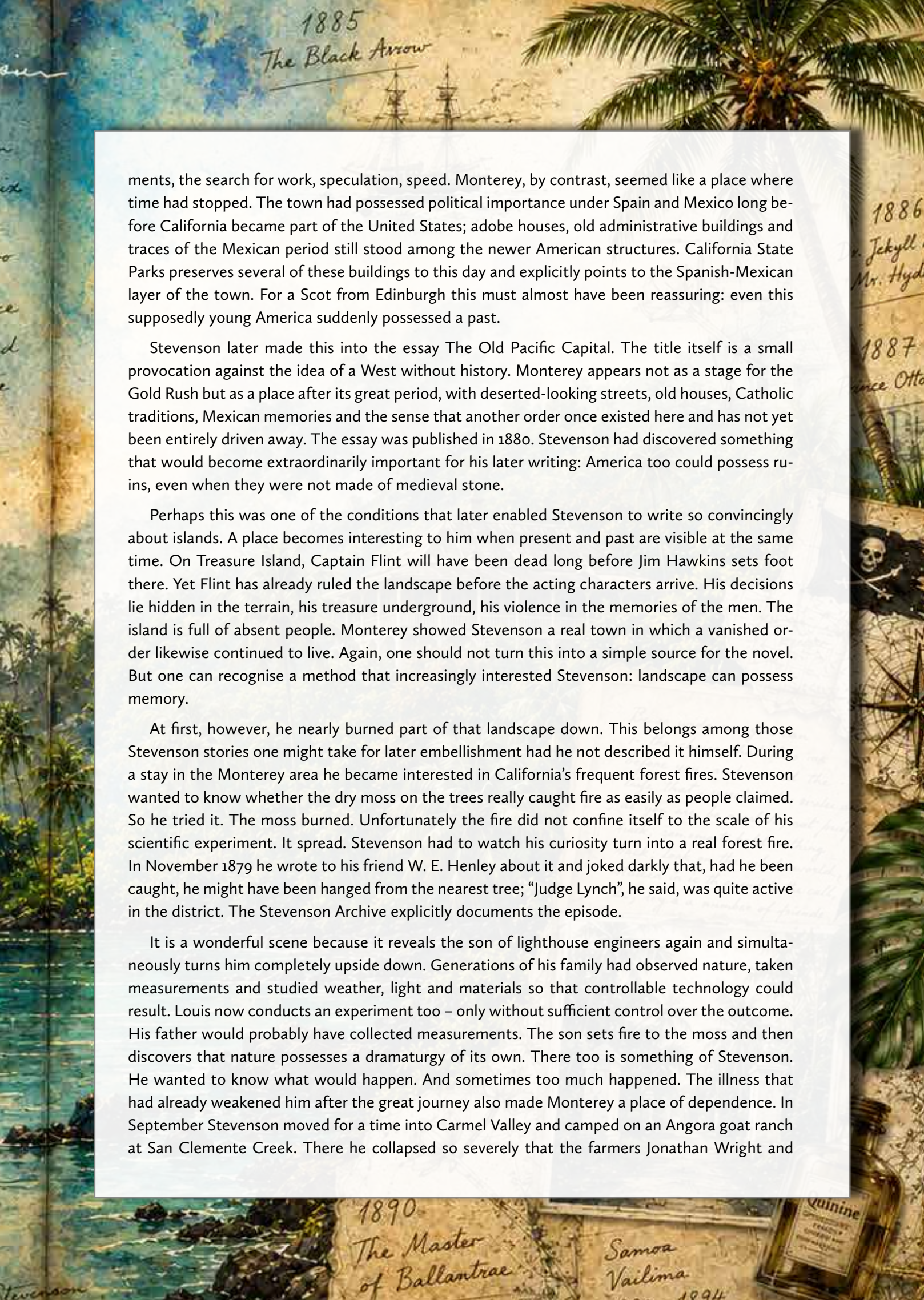
By the summer of 1879, however, the distance from Fanny had become unbearable. Stevenson learned of her difficult situation and poor health. He wanted to go to California. In London at the end of July he consulted friends. They advised against it. The journey was physically dangerous, the situation with a still-married woman complicated, his finances poor. Stevenson went to Glasgow anyway and boarded the *Devonia* on 7 August. And here begins the real surprise of this story. For the very journey so often told in popular biographies as a romantic proof of love led Stevenson deeper into the social reality of the nineteenth century than almost anything he had previously written.

### Monterey and Silverado – America Becomes Literature

When Robert Louis Stevenson reached Monterey on 30 August 1879, he had done almost everything a sensible doctor would probably have forbidden. He had left Europe ill, crossed the Atlantic in a cheap cabin, then travelled across the United States on an emigrant train, eating badly, sleeping badly and continuing to write all the while. He had been thin when he left Greenock; he arrived in California so emaciated that later descriptions almost invite the word skeleton. The Pacific lay before him. Somewhere in this foreign world lived Fanny Osbourne, the reason he had made the journey at all. But before the American journey could become a marriage, Stevenson first had to become healthy enough to possess any future. Monterey therefore did not become a romantic endpoint. It became a waiting room at the edge of the ocean.

The house in which he lived for much of the autumn still stands. It was then called the French Hotel, a two-storey adobe boarding house on what is now Houston Street; today it is preserved as Stevenson House. California State Parks describes the young resident of those months in three sober words: poor, in poor health and unknown. The last word matters. We enter these rooms backwards. We know that one of the most famous authors of his generation lived here. The people who met Stevenson at the French Hotel in 1879 knew none of that. To them he was an oddly thin Scot with little money, who wrote, coughed, waited for letters and courted a complicated married woman. In this very house he also began to turn Monterey into literature.

Monterey was a discovery for Stevenson because it disturbed his image of America. On the transcontinental railway he had experienced a country pressing westward: tracks, new settle-



ments, the search for work, speculation, speed. Monterey, by contrast, seemed like a place where time had stopped. The town had possessed political importance under Spain and Mexico long before California became part of the United States; adobe houses, old administrative buildings and traces of the Mexican period still stood among the newer American structures. California State Parks preserves several of these buildings to this day and explicitly points to the Spanish-Mexican layer of the town. For a Scot from Edinburgh this must almost have been reassuring: even this supposedly young America suddenly possessed a past.

Stevenson later made this into the essay *The Old Pacific Capital*. The title itself is a small provocation against the idea of a West without history. Monterey appears not as a stage for the Gold Rush but as a place after its great period, with deserted-looking streets, old houses, Catholic traditions, Mexican memories and the sense that another order once existed here and has not yet been entirely driven away. The essay was published in 1880. Stevenson had discovered something that would become extraordinarily important for his later writing: America too could possess ruins, even when they were not made of medieval stone.

Perhaps this was one of the conditions that later enabled Stevenson to write so convincingly about islands. A place becomes interesting to him when present and past are visible at the same time. On Treasure Island, Captain Flint will have been dead long before Jim Hawkins sets foot there. Yet Flint has already ruled the landscape before the acting characters arrive. His decisions lie hidden in the terrain, his treasure underground, his violence in the memories of the men. The island is full of absent people. Monterey showed Stevenson a real town in which a vanished order likewise continued to live. Again, one should not turn this into a simple source for the novel. But one can recognise a method that increasingly interested Stevenson: landscape can possess memory.

At first, however, he nearly burned part of that landscape down. This belongs among those Stevenson stories one might take for later embellishment had he not described it himself. During a stay in the Monterey area he became interested in California's frequent forest fires. Stevenson wanted to know whether the dry moss on the trees really caught fire as easily as people claimed. So he tried it. The moss burned. Unfortunately the fire did not confine itself to the scale of his scientific experiment. It spread. Stevenson had to watch his curiosity turn into a real forest fire. In November 1879 he wrote to his friend W. E. Henley about it and joked darkly that, had he been caught, he might have been hanged from the nearest tree; "Judge Lynch", he said, was quite active in the district. The Stevenson Archive explicitly documents the episode.

It is a wonderful scene because it reveals the son of lighthouse engineers again and simultaneously turns him completely upside down. Generations of his family had observed nature, taken measurements and studied weather, light and materials so that controllable technology could result. Louis now conducts an experiment too – only without sufficient control over the outcome. His father would probably have collected measurements. The son sets fire to the moss and then discovers that nature possesses a dramaturgy of its own. There too is something of Stevenson. He wanted to know what would happen. And sometimes too much happened. The illness that had already weakened him after the great journey also made Monterey a place of dependence. In September Stevenson moved for a time into Carmel Valley and camped on an Angora goat ranch at San Clemente Creek. There he collapsed so severely that the farmers Jonathan Wright and

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

Ansom Smith took him in and cared for him. The writer who only weeks earlier had crossed the United States from east to west had suddenly returned to where his childhood had begun: in bed, dependent on people who stayed when he himself could go no further.

It is tempting to tell Stevenson's biography as a constant overcoming of illness. The brave man defies a weak body and travels the world anyway. But that does not do justice to his experience. Stevenson did not overcome his body. He negotiated with it continually. Sometimes the journey won, sometimes the cough, sometimes a doctor, sometimes a new landscape. His life did not consist of victory over illness but of an astonishing ability to begin again and again between movement and collapse. Perhaps that also explains his special relationship to adventure. For a healthy person danger is often something waiting outside. Stevenson carried the possibility of collapse with him all the time.

And yet he wrote. He wrote about Monterey, about California and about the America he encountered. On 11 November 1879 his piece *San Carlos Day* appeared in the *Monterey Californian*. Even in a period when his life seemed wholly determined by Fanny and his health, Stevenson observed his surroundings with professional persistence. Perhaps this is the point at which the bohemian finally becomes the writer. Earlier he had had to travel in order to find material. In California he merely has to arrive. Everything becomes material: a procession, an old adobe building, a conversation, a landscape, a forest fire, a hotel room. Fanny meanwhile did not remain the reward at the end of a journey. Her situation first had to be resolved. Her marriage to Samuel Osbourne finally ended in divorce, and on 19 May 1880 she and Stevenson married in San Francisco. At this point a conventional love story ought really to end. The man crosses an ocean, finds the woman, they marry.

With Stevenson, a silver mine begins at this point. Three days after the wedding Robert Louis and Fanny set out for the Napa Valley. They travelled via Vallejo to Calistoga, then a small spa and mining town at the northern end of the valley. Their dog Chuchu was with them; Lloyd joined them a little later. At first they stayed in a cottage by the Hot Springs Hotel. Then they moved farther uphill towards Mount St Helena, first to the Toll House and finally to the abandoned buildings of the Silverado Mine. There they spent a considerable part of their honeymoon in an old miners' lodging. What today belongs to one of the world's most famous wine landscapes was for Stevenson still a region in which the remains of California's mining boom were visible.

It is difficult to invent a more suitable honeymoon for this man. Other couples went to a hotel. The Stevensons moved into a failed silver mine. The choice was partly economic. Money still mattered. Stevenson was a long way from being a wealthy author, and the abandoned mine building offered cheap, if primitive, accommodation. But the situation was also literarily irresistible. The family lived among the remains of an American dream that had exhausted itself. Where men had searched for silver only a few years earlier, abandoned huts now stood. The wealth that had created the place had either been found, overestimated or vanished. What remained was infrastructure without a purpose. Here, of all places, Stevenson spent his honeymoon. The very man who months earlier had realised on the railway that there was "no El Dorado anywhere". And only about a year later he would begin *Treasure Island*. Again one should not make the mistake of claiming a direct causal line: Stevenson lives in an abandoned mine, therefore he invents Flint's treasure. Literature rarely works like that. But the connection is too beautiful and too deep to

1888

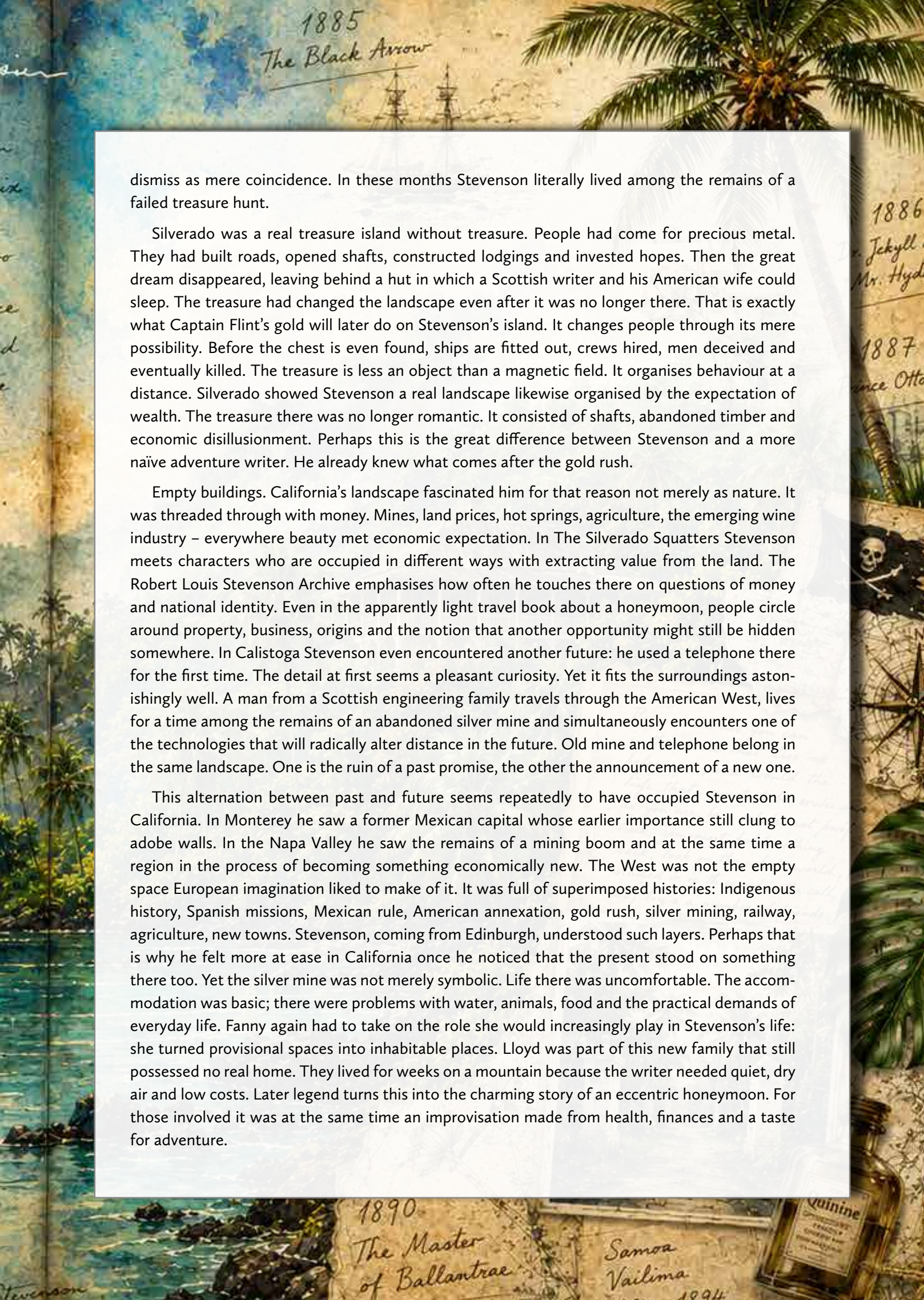
Scribner  
William  
Illustr



Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 1879  
Held a wout of  
architecture  
yours truly

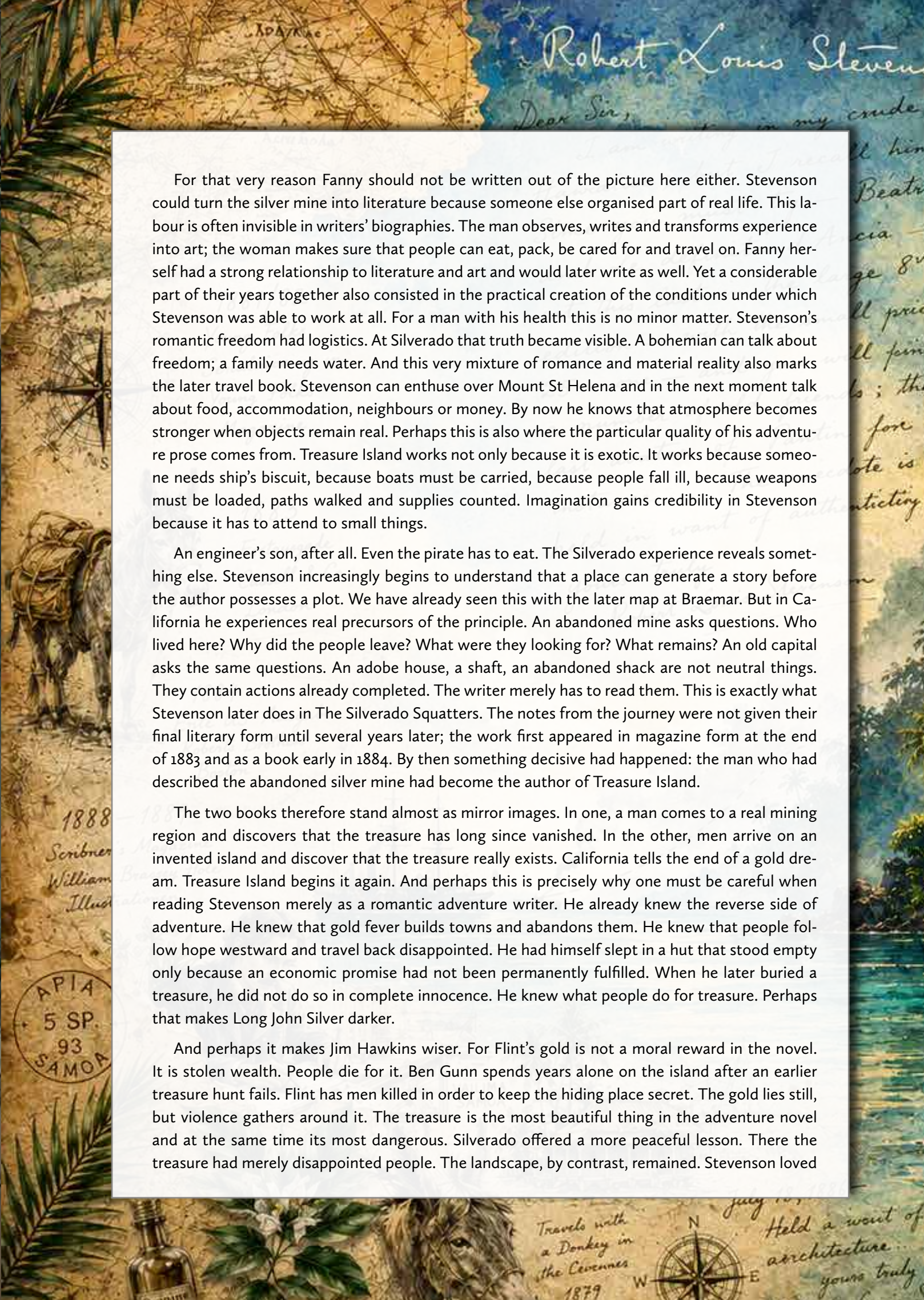


dismiss as mere coincidence. In these months Stevenson literally lived among the remains of a failed treasure hunt.

Silverado was a real treasure island without treasure. People had come for precious metal. They had built roads, opened shafts, constructed lodgings and invested hopes. Then the great dream disappeared, leaving behind a hut in which a Scottish writer and his American wife could sleep. The treasure had changed the landscape even after it was no longer there. That is exactly what Captain Flint's gold will later do on Stevenson's island. It changes people through its mere possibility. Before the chest is even found, ships are fitted out, crews hired, men deceived and eventually killed. The treasure is less an object than a magnetic field. It organises behaviour at a distance. Silverado showed Stevenson a real landscape likewise organised by the expectation of wealth. The treasure there was no longer romantic. It consisted of shafts, abandoned timber and economic disillusionment. Perhaps this is the great difference between Stevenson and a more naïve adventure writer. He already knew what comes after the gold rush.

Empty buildings. California's landscape fascinated him for that reason not merely as nature. It was threaded through with money. Mines, land prices, hot springs, agriculture, the emerging wine industry – everywhere beauty met economic expectation. In *The Silverado Squatters* Stevenson meets characters who are occupied in different ways with extracting value from the land. The Robert Louis Stevenson Archive emphasises how often he touches there on questions of money and national identity. Even in the apparently light travel book about a honeymoon, people circle around property, business, origins and the notion that another opportunity might still be hidden somewhere. In Calistoga Stevenson even encountered another future: he used a telephone there for the first time. The detail at first seems a pleasant curiosity. Yet it fits the surroundings astonishingly well. A man from a Scottish engineering family travels through the American West, lives for a time among the remains of an abandoned silver mine and simultaneously encounters one of the technologies that will radically alter distance in the future. Old mine and telephone belong in the same landscape. One is the ruin of a past promise, the other the announcement of a new one.

This alternation between past and future seems repeatedly to have occupied Stevenson in California. In Monterey he saw a former Mexican capital whose earlier importance still clung to adobe walls. In the Napa Valley he saw the remains of a mining boom and at the same time a region in the process of becoming something economically new. The West was not the empty space European imagination liked to make of it. It was full of superimposed histories: Indigenous history, Spanish missions, Mexican rule, American annexation, gold rush, silver mining, railway, agriculture, new towns. Stevenson, coming from Edinburgh, understood such layers. Perhaps that is why he felt more at ease in California once he noticed that the present stood on something there too. Yet the silver mine was not merely symbolic. Life there was uncomfortable. The accommodation was basic; there were problems with water, animals, food and the practical demands of everyday life. Fanny again had to take on the role she would increasingly play in Stevenson's life: she turned provisional spaces into inhabitable places. Lloyd was part of this new family that still possessed no real home. They lived for weeks on a mountain because the writer needed quiet, dry air and low costs. Later legend turns this into the charming story of an eccentric honeymoon. For those involved it was at the same time an improvisation made from health, finances and a taste for adventure.

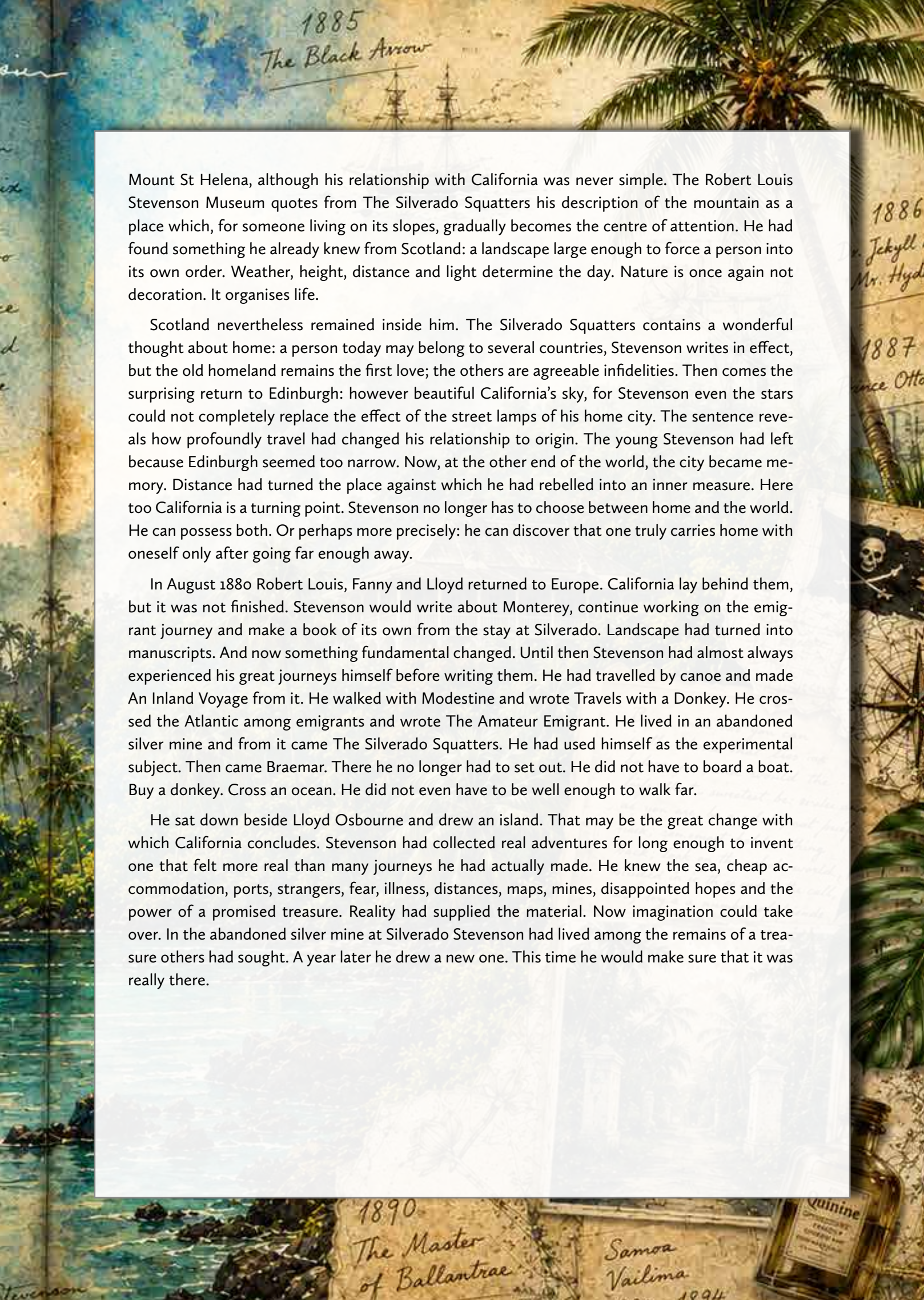


For that very reason Fanny should not be written out of the picture here either. Stevenson could turn the silver mine into literature because someone else organised part of real life. This labour is often invisible in writers' biographies. The man observes, writes and transforms experience into art; the woman makes sure that people can eat, pack, be cared for and travel on. Fanny herself had a strong relationship to literature and art and would later write as well. Yet a considerable part of their years together also consisted in the practical creation of the conditions under which Stevenson was able to work at all. For a man with his health this is no minor matter. Stevenson's romantic freedom had logistics. At Silverado that truth became visible. A bohemian can talk about freedom; a family needs water. And this very mixture of romance and material reality also marks the later travel book. Stevenson can enthuse over Mount St Helena and in the next moment talk about food, accommodation, neighbours or money. By now he knows that atmosphere becomes stronger when objects remain real. Perhaps this is also where the particular quality of his adventure prose comes from. Treasure Island works not only because it is exotic. It works because someone needs ship's biscuit, because boats must be carried, because people fall ill, because weapons must be loaded, paths walked and supplies counted. Imagination gains credibility in Stevenson because it has to attend to small things.

An engineer's son, after all. Even the pirate has to eat. The Silverado experience reveals something else. Stevenson increasingly begins to understand that a place can generate a story before the author possesses a plot. We have already seen this with the later map at Braemar. But in California he experiences real precursors of the principle. An abandoned mine asks questions. Who lived here? Why did the people leave? What were they looking for? What remains? An old capital asks the same questions. An adobe house, a shaft, an abandoned shack are not neutral things. They contain actions already completed. The writer merely has to read them. This is exactly what Stevenson later does in *The Silverado Squatters*. The notes from the journey were not given their final literary form until several years later; the work first appeared in magazine form at the end of 1883 and as a book early in 1884. By then something decisive had happened: the man who had described the abandoned silver mine had become the author of *Treasure Island*.

The two books therefore stand almost as mirror images. In one, a man comes to a real mining region and discovers that the treasure has long since vanished. In the other, men arrive on an invented island and discover that the treasure really exists. California tells the end of a gold dream. *Treasure Island* begins it again. And perhaps this is precisely why one must be careful when reading Stevenson merely as a romantic adventure writer. He already knew the reverse side of adventure. He knew that gold fever builds towns and abandons them. He knew that people follow hope westward and travel back disappointed. He had himself slept in a hut that stood empty only because an economic promise had not been permanently fulfilled. When he later buried a treasure, he did not do so in complete innocence. He knew what people do for treasure. Perhaps that makes Long John Silver darker.

And perhaps it makes Jim Hawkins wiser. For Flint's gold is not a moral reward in the novel. It is stolen wealth. People die for it. Ben Gunn spends years alone on the island after an earlier treasure hunt fails. Flint has men killed in order to keep the hiding place secret. The gold lies still, but violence gathers around it. The treasure is the most beautiful thing in the adventure novel and at the same time its most dangerous. Silverado offered a more peaceful lesson. There the treasure had merely disappointed people. The landscape, by contrast, remained. Stevenson loved



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

Mount St Helena, although his relationship with California was never simple. The Robert Louis Stevenson Museum quotes from *The Silverado Squatters* his description of the mountain as a place which, for someone living on its slopes, gradually becomes the centre of attention. He had found something he already knew from Scotland: a landscape large enough to force a person into its own order. Weather, height, distance and light determine the day. Nature is once again not decoration. It organises life.

Scotland nevertheless remained inside him. *The Silverado Squatters* contains a wonderful thought about home: a person today may belong to several countries, Stevenson writes in effect, but the old homeland remains the first love; the others are agreeable infidelities. Then comes the surprising return to Edinburgh: however beautiful California's sky, for Stevenson even the stars could not completely replace the effect of the street lamps of his home city. The sentence reveals how profoundly travel had changed his relationship to origin. The young Stevenson had left because Edinburgh seemed too narrow. Now, at the other end of the world, the city became memory. Distance had turned the place against which he had rebelled into an inner measure. Here too California is a turning point. Stevenson no longer has to choose between home and the world. He can possess both. Or perhaps more precisely: he can discover that one truly carries home with oneself only after going far enough away.

In August 1880 Robert Louis, Fanny and Lloyd returned to Europe. California lay behind them, but it was not finished. Stevenson would write about Monterey, continue working on the emigrant journey and make a book of its own from the stay at Silverado. Landscape had turned into manuscripts. And now something fundamental changed. Until then Stevenson had almost always experienced his great journeys himself before writing them. He had travelled by canoe and made *An Inland Voyage* from it. He walked with Modestine and wrote *Travels with a Donkey*. He crossed the Atlantic among emigrants and wrote *The Amateur Emigrant*. He lived in an abandoned silver mine and from it came *The Silverado Squatters*. He had used himself as the experimental subject. Then came Braemar. There he no longer had to set out. He did not have to board a boat. Buy a donkey. Cross an ocean. He did not even have to be well enough to walk far.

He sat down beside Lloyd Osbourne and drew an island. That may be the great change with which California concludes. Stevenson had collected real adventures for long enough to invent one that felt more real than many journeys he had actually made. He knew the sea, cheap accommodation, ports, strangers, fear, illness, distances, maps, mines, disappointed hopes and the power of a promised treasure. Reality had supplied the material. Now imagination could take over. In the abandoned silver mine at Silverado Stevenson had lived among the remains of a treasure others had sought. A year later he drew a new one. This time he would make sure that it was really there.

# Tusitala wird politisch

Vailima, Samoa – der Schriftsteller  
als Anwalt des Landes

1892 ließ sich Stevenson in Vailima auf Upolu nieder. Hier fand er nicht nur ein Zuhause, sondern auch eine Aufgabe: Er setzte sich für die Rechte der Samoaner ein – in Briefen, Artikeln und Gesprächen. Zwischen den Interessen Großbritanniens, Deutschlands und der Verrington Staaten wurde Samoa zum Spielball der Mächte. Stevenson erhob seine Stimme – für Gerechtigkeit, Würde und Selbstbestimmung.

R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1887

„Ich habe Samoa lieb gewonnen – seine Menschen,  
seine Klarheit, seine Unabhängigkeit.  
Ich werde, was ich kann, für sie tun.“

R. L. Stevenson

APIA HARBOR, 1890  
Britische, deutsche und amerikanische  
Schiffe liegen im Einfluss von Samoa

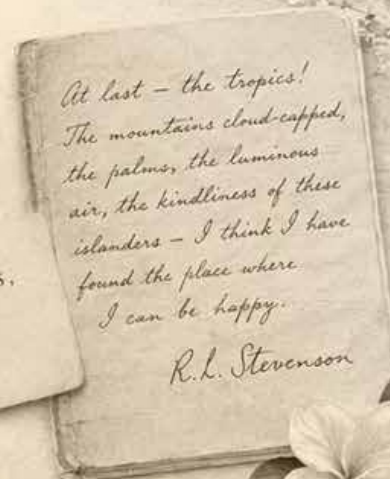


„Wir haben Gerechtigkeit, aber keine Achtung.“  
– Aus einem Brief an einen Freund, 1893

## Vailima – Tusitala

Ankunft in Apia, Samoa – 7. Dezember 1889

Nach Jahren der Wanderschaft erreichte Stevenson den Ort, den er seine Heimat nennen sollte. In Apia fand er Freundschaft, Familie und den Frieden, der ihm neue Kraft zum Schreiben schenkte.



SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN



A lovelier island  
could not be imagined.  
R. L. Stevenson

1 Edinburgh → 2 Die Straße → 3 Die Schatzinsel → 4 Das Doppelgängerlabor



ZIEHEN SIE DIE KARTE  
ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN

„Hier bin ich zu Hause. Hier will ich bleiben.“

R. L. Stevenson

Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.  
— R. L. S.

STATION 7

# Vailima – Tusitala

Wo er lebte: Vailima, oberhalb von Apia  
1890 bis 1894

Hier fand Stevenson ein Zuhause, Freundschaft  
und Inspiration. Zwischen Garten, Meer und  
Bergen schreift er, empfängt Gäste und leitet  
das Leben, das er sich erträumt hatte.  
Vailima wurde sein Ort der Ruhe – und  
sein Vermächtnis.

TUSITALA

Der Gästebuchhalter:  
Ein Name von Freunden:  
ein Name, den er mit  
Toni teilt.

Tusitala

1. Bildbogen

ZEHNEN SIE DIE KARTEN  
ENTWICKELN SIE SIE KARTEN

2. Die Straße

3. Die Schiffe

4. Die Dampfschiffe

5. Amerika

6. Der Pazifik

7. Vailima – Tusitala

8. Vailima

Vailima ist wirklich wunderschön – und das Leben hier genau das rechte für mich.  
R. L. Stevenson

Kauf des Apia  
Januar 1894

Einzug in Vailima  
September 1890

Hier lebte Stevenson  
bis zu seinem Tod 1894

THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEATH  
The story of the island of Apia  
and the life of the man who  
lived there.

STATION 7

Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone,  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.  
— R. L. S.

5. Amerika

6. Der Pazifik

7. Vailima – Tusitala

MEHR ÜBER STEVENSON

ben."

R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.

*I travel not  
to go anywhere,  
but to go.  
I travel for  
travel's sake.*

STATION 7

# Tusitala schreibt

## Was in Samoa entstand

In Vailima fand Stevenson  
Gesundheit, Freundschaft und  
Inspiration. Hier schrieb er  
Geschichten, Essays und Bücher,  
die bis heute die Welt lesen.



1 Edinburgh → 2 Die Straße → 3 Die Schatzinsel → 4 Das Doppelgängerlabor



ZIEHEN SIE DIE KARTE  
ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN

„Ich wünsche, die Welt zu verstehen, und die Meere zu verstehen.“

R. L. Stevenson

*I have no need  
for wonder life,  
for imagination  
when I am such  
in the world.*

— R. L. Stevenson

Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.

— R. L. S.



„Hier ist das Leben  
freundlich – und die Arbeit  
meinem Herzen gemäß.“  
R. L. Stevenson

Savai'i

Upolu

VAILIMA

Vailima – Blick auf den  
Mount Vaea

**WICHTIGE WERKE IN SAMOA**

|                                                      |                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>A Footnote<br/>to History</i><br>1892             | <i>Catriona</i><br>1893                          |
| <i>The Ebb-Tide</i><br>1894                          | <i>Island Nights'<br/>Entertainments</i><br>1893 |
| <i>Weir of Hermiston</i><br>(unvollendet)<br>ab 1895 |                                                  |

**POLITIK &  
ÖFFENTLICHES LEBEN**

Stevenson setzte sich für  
Gerechtigkeit, Bildung und  
Verständigung ein – als  
Schriftsteller, Anwalt und  
Vertrauter der Menschen  
Samoas.

*Samoan  
Custom  
and Lore*

5 Amerika → 6 Der Pazifik → 7 Tusitala schreibt → 8 Vailima – Das Erbe

MENSCHEN ZU LIEBEN, DIE SIE BEWOHNEN.“

MEHR ÜBER STEVENSON →

Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone,  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.

— R. L. S.



## CHAPTER 10

# Tusitala

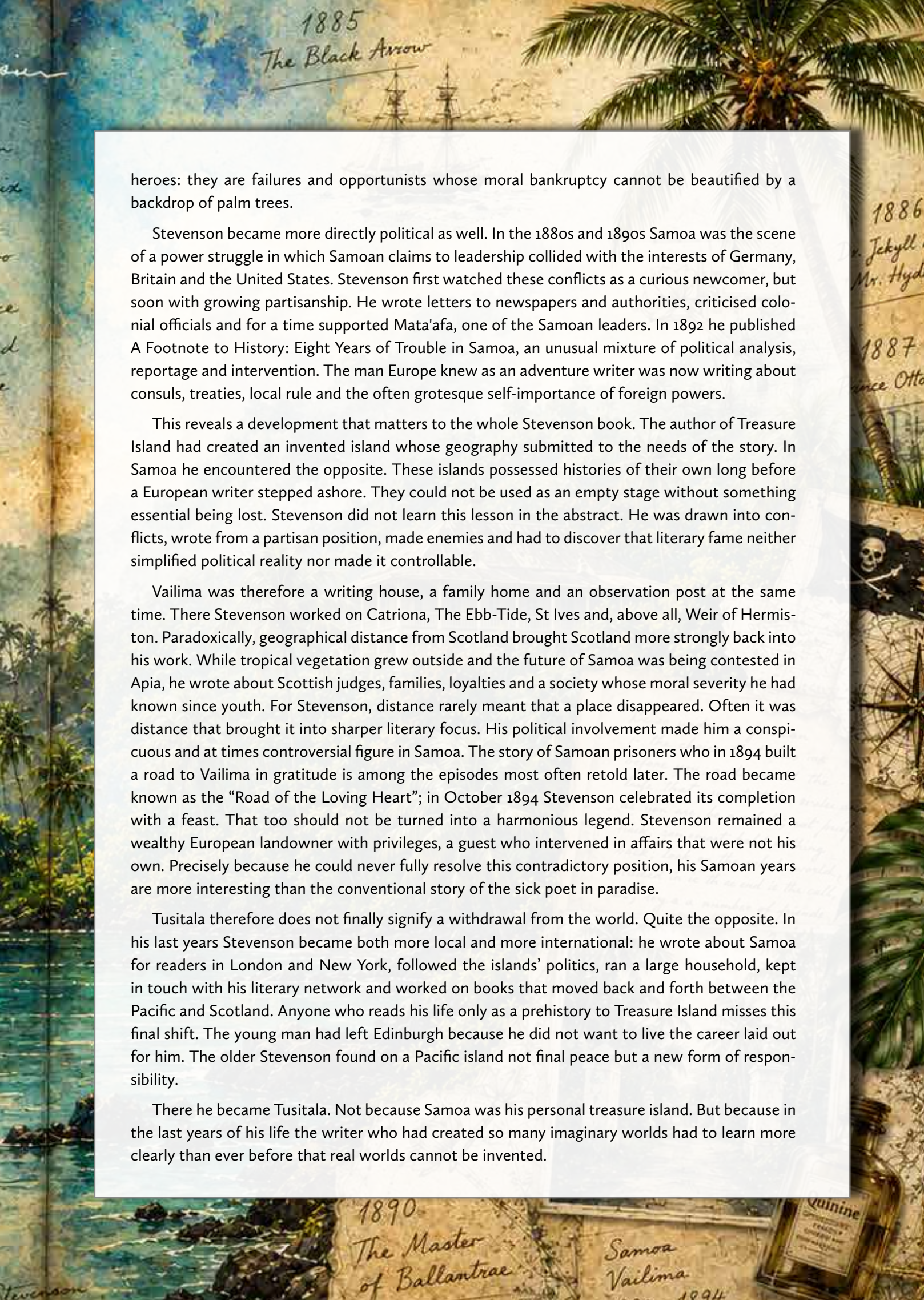
## Samoa, Vailima and the Writer as Political Observer

When Robert Louis Stevenson stepped ashore at Apia on 7 December 1889, he already had more sea behind him than most writers of his generation. Since leaving San Francisco in June 1888, the family had travelled aboard the *Casco* and later the *Equator* through the Marquesas, the Paumotu Islands, Tahiti, Hawaii and the Gilbert Islands. What had begun as a health-driven flight from the North Atlantic climate changed along the way. Stevenson was no longer merely collecting exotic impressions for a European readership. He began to understand that the South Seas, so often presented in European literature as an alternative world to civilisation, had long been part of a political and economic system: missionaries, traders, consuls and warships were as present as the societies whose islands they claimed to organise.

Samoa therefore became more than the final stop on a long journey. Only a few weeks after his first arrival Stevenson bought land above Apia; work on Vailima began in 1890, and in 1891 the family moved into the enlarged house. The decision had practical reasons. The climate suited him comparatively well, he liked the islands, and a regular postal connection made it possible to remain in contact with publishers, agents and friends. Yet anyone who retrospectively turns this decision into a romantic escape to a tropical paradise underestimates how complicated and European Stevenson's new life soon became. Vailima was a large household with family, guests, staff, building costs, manuscripts, supply problems and bills. The famous writer still had to write, not least because the house and the people in it cost money.

It was precisely here that the Samoan name by which Stevenson became known acquired its real meaning. Tusitala is usually translated as "storyteller" or "teller of tales". The word fits so perfectly that one is tempted to treat it as the final punchline of a biography. For Stevenson it was more than that. In Samoa he was not merely the author of two English bestsellers whose characters most people already knew. He told stories, read aloud, listened to stories, conducted conversations and lived in a society in which oral tradition, genealogy and political speech held a different place from that in the Victorian literary world. Tusitala did not reduce him to a particular genre. The name described what he did.

These years also changed the material of his writing. For European authors the South Seas had long been a screen for projection: warmth, sexual freedom, supposed primordial innocence, the promise of a life beyond industrial modernity. Stevenson was by no means free of the assumptions of his age, and it would be wrong to reinvent him retrospectively as a modern postcolonial writer. Yet prolonged residence made simple exoticism increasingly difficult for him. In "The Beach of Falesá", the European trader does not automatically appear as the representative of a higher order. Trade, racism, sexual dependency, deception and local power relations form the real fabric of the story. In *The Ebb-Tide*, Europeans in the Pacific are even less likely to be civilising



heroes: they are failures and opportunists whose moral bankruptcy cannot be beautified by a backdrop of palm trees.

Stevenson became more directly political as well. In the 1880s and 1890s Samoa was the scene of a power struggle in which Samoan claims to leadership collided with the interests of Germany, Britain and the United States. Stevenson first watched these conflicts as a curious newcomer, but soon with growing partisanship. He wrote letters to newspapers and authorities, criticised colonial officials and for a time supported Mata'afa, one of the Samoan leaders. In 1892 he published *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*, an unusual mixture of political analysis, reportage and intervention. The man Europe knew as an adventure writer was now writing about consuls, treaties, local rule and the often grotesque self-importance of foreign powers.

This reveals a development that matters to the whole Stevenson book. The author of *Treasure Island* had created an invented island whose geography submitted to the needs of the story. In Samoa he encountered the opposite. These islands possessed histories of their own long before a European writer stepped ashore. They could not be used as an empty stage without something essential being lost. Stevenson did not learn this lesson in the abstract. He was drawn into conflicts, wrote from a partisan position, made enemies and had to discover that literary fame neither simplified political reality nor made it controllable.

Vailima was therefore a writing house, a family home and an observation post at the same time. There Stevenson worked on *Catriona*, *The Ebb-Tide*, *St Ives* and, above all, *Weir of Hermiston*. Paradoxically, geographical distance from Scotland brought Scotland more strongly back into his work. While tropical vegetation grew outside and the future of Samoa was being contested in Apia, he wrote about Scottish judges, families, loyalties and a society whose moral severity he had known since youth. For Stevenson, distance rarely meant that a place disappeared. Often it was distance that brought it into sharper literary focus. His political involvement made him a conspicuous and at times controversial figure in Samoa. The story of Samoan prisoners who in 1894 built a road to Vailima in gratitude is among the episodes most often retold later. The road became known as the "Road of the Loving Heart"; in October 1894 Stevenson celebrated its completion with a feast. That too should not be turned into a harmonious legend. Stevenson remained a wealthy European landowner with privileges, a guest who intervened in affairs that were not his own. Precisely because he could never fully resolve this contradictory position, his Samoan years are more interesting than the conventional story of the sick poet in paradise.

Tusitala therefore does not finally signify a withdrawal from the world. Quite the opposite. In his last years Stevenson became both more local and more international: he wrote about Samoa for readers in London and New York, followed the islands' politics, ran a large household, kept in touch with his literary network and worked on books that moved back and forth between the Pacific and Scotland. Anyone who reads his life only as a prehistory to *Treasure Island* misses this final shift. The young man had left Edinburgh because he did not want to live the career laid out for him. The older Stevenson found on a Pacific island not final peace but a new form of responsibility.

There he became Tusitala. Not because Samoa was his personal treasure island. But because in the last years of his life the writer who had created so many imaginary worlds had to learn more clearly than ever before that real worlds cannot be invented.



STATION 3

# Wie eine Landkarte die *Schatzinsel* schrie

*Von der Skizze zum Mythos*

Eine vergilbte Karte. Ein paar hastige Notizen.  
Und die Vorstellung von Abenteuer.  
So beginnt 1881 eine Geschichte,  
die Generationen prägen wird.  
Begleiten Sie Robert Louis Stevenson  
auf der Reise von den Südseestränden  
zur Schatzinsel.



*Treasure lies  
beyond the  
olden trees.*

Oct. 1881  
Apia, Upolu  
Samoa



Strong tide  
& wind  
from N.W.

Tall trees  
a good mark



The island was a map  
of the imagination,  
drawn in ink and  
washed in adventure.

R. L. S.

## CHAPTER II

# The Man Who Travelled with Death

## Illness, Breathlessness and Robert Louis Stevenson's Final Years

Robert Louis Stevenson spent a considerable part of his life in motion: by canoe through France, on foot with the donkey Modestine through the Cévennes, across the Atlantic and across America, later to Davos, Bournemouth, the Adirondacks and finally the Pacific. It is easy to see how the image arose of the restless adventurer among writers. Yet a significant part of these journeys began not with wanderlust but with medical advice. For decades Stevenson's geography was also a medical history.

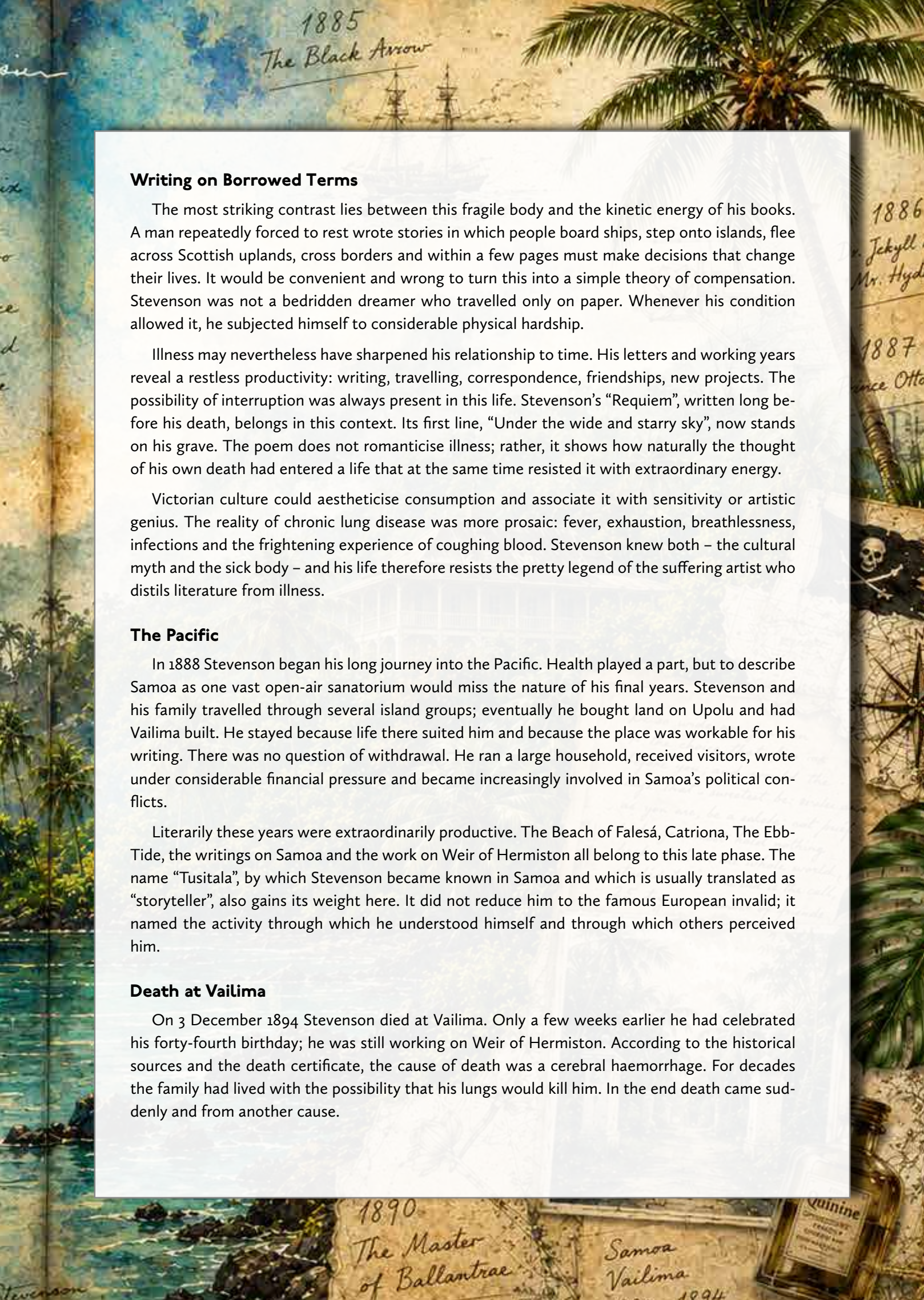
From childhood he suffered from recurrent severe respiratory infections, fever, tormenting coughs and later haemoptysis, bleeding from the respiratory tract. School, university and work were repeatedly interrupted as a result. Climate was no minor matter for him: damp or dry, cold or warm, sea level or mountains could determine whether a stay could continue. In the nineteenth century this pattern of symptoms naturally raised the suspicion of "consumption". Yet our modern tendency simply to write "tuberculosis" makes the matter more definite than it was historically.

### In Search of Air

When Stevenson arrived at Saranac Lake in New York State in 1887, he met Edward Livingston Trudeau, one of the pioneers of American tuberculosis research and of the open-air treatment then in use. Stevenson lived at Baker Cottage from October 1887 until April 1888. Trudeau examined and treated him; he later stated that during those months he had found neither active haemoptysis and fever nor tubercle bacilli in his famous patient. This does not prove that Stevenson could never have had tuberculosis. Trudeau himself believed that an earlier tuberculosis was probable. What is certain is only that the diagnosis could not be confirmed as an active disease at Saranac.

This very uncertainty matters to the biography. The "consumptive Stevenson" became almost a ready-made figure during his lifetime and even more so after his death: thin, feverish, constantly travelling in search of a better climate. Modern medical retrospectives have therefore proposed other explanations, including chronic bronchiectasis, sarcoidosis or a hereditary vascular disorder. None of these retrospective diagnoses can be proved. A modern clinical reassessment can re-weight the surviving symptoms; it cannot examine a nineteenth-century patient after the event.

For Stevenson himself, this diagnostic question was less abstract. He lived with a real, sometimes life-threatening illness and with the experience that plans could at any moment be overturned by fever, bleeding or a doctor's instruction. This does not explain his literature, but it belongs among the conditions under which that literature was written.



## Writing on Borrowed Terms

The most striking contrast lies between this fragile body and the kinetic energy of his books. A man repeatedly forced to rest wrote stories in which people board ships, step onto islands, flee across Scottish uplands, cross borders and within a few pages must make decisions that change their lives. It would be convenient and wrong to turn this into a simple theory of compensation. Stevenson was not a bedridden dreamer who travelled only on paper. Whenever his condition allowed it, he subjected himself to considerable physical hardship.

Illness may nevertheless have sharpened his relationship to time. His letters and working years reveal a restless productivity: writing, travelling, correspondence, friendships, new projects. The possibility of interruption was always present in this life. Stevenson's "Requiem", written long before his death, belongs in this context. Its first line, "Under the wide and starry sky", now stands on his grave. The poem does not romanticise illness; rather, it shows how naturally the thought of his own death had entered a life that at the same time resisted it with extraordinary energy.

Victorian culture could aestheticise consumption and associate it with sensitivity or artistic genius. The reality of chronic lung disease was more prosaic: fever, exhaustion, breathlessness, infections and the frightening experience of coughing blood. Stevenson knew both – the cultural myth and the sick body – and his life therefore resists the pretty legend of the suffering artist who distils literature from illness.

## The Pacific

In 1888 Stevenson began his long journey into the Pacific. Health played a part, but to describe Samoa as one vast open-air sanatorium would miss the nature of his final years. Stevenson and his family travelled through several island groups; eventually he bought land on Upolu and had Vailima built. He stayed because life there suited him and because the place was workable for his writing. There was no question of withdrawal. He ran a large household, received visitors, wrote under considerable financial pressure and became increasingly involved in Samoa's political conflicts.

Literarily these years were extraordinarily productive. The Beach of Falesá, Catriona, The Ebb-Tide, the writings on Samoa and the work on Weir of Hermiston all belong to this late phase. The name "Tusitala", by which Stevenson became known in Samoa and which is usually translated as "storyteller", also gains its weight here. It did not reduce him to the famous European invalid; it named the activity through which he understood himself and through which others perceived him.

## Death at Vailima

On 3 December 1894 Stevenson died at Vailima. Only a few weeks earlier he had celebrated his forty-fourth birthday; he was still working on Weir of Hermiston. According to the historical sources and the death certificate, the cause of death was a cerebral haemorrhage. For decades the family had lived with the possibility that his lungs would kill him. In the end death came suddenly and from another cause.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

The number forty-four changes the way we look at the work. Treasure Island, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Kidnapped, The Master of Ballantrae, travel books, poems, essays, South Sea stories and an immense correspondence were produced within a professional life of scarcely two decades. Nor was this work complete. Weir of Hermiston remained unfinished; other projects had begun. Stevenson's death did not close a carefully rounded career; it interrupted a phase of intense work.

### The Road up the Mountain

The following day Stevenson was buried on Mount Vaea above Vailima. A path had to be cleared for the ascent; Samoans and members of the household carried the coffin up the mountain. The verses of the "Requiem" stand on the grave. Seen from a distance, the scene appears almost too perfect: the sick writer, his own grave poem, the mountain above the Pacific. Precisely for that reason caution is needed. Stevenson's life was less orderly than his final resting place.

Today we cannot say with absolute certainty which illness tormented him for decades. We know that his symptoms were severe, that a diagnosis of tuberculosis seemed plausible in his own time, that Trudeau could not demonstrate active tuberculosis at Saranac and that modern authors have considered other diagnoses. Above all, we know that illness determined routes, places of residence and rhythms of work without mechanically explaining the content of his books.

It produced neither Long John Silver nor Mr Hyde. It merely made the finitude under which Stevenson worked unusually concrete. Perhaps part of the energy of his prose lies there: in his books stories rarely wait for life to begin at some later point. Ships put out, doors open, people leave houses and make decisions. Stevenson had forty-four years. He did not treat time as an unlimited resource.

VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 10, 1880  
Held a want of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

1886

*Mr. Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887

*Prince Otto*

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; wake  
as you are, be a sailor; not fear  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

*The Master*  
*of Ballantrae*

*Samoa*  
*Vailima*

1894

Quinine

# Mount Vaea

## Heim vom Meer

Stevensons letzte Tage in Vailima waren geprägt von Freundschaft, Schreiben und stillem Abschied. Fannys Brief vom 4. Dezember 1894 erzählt Anne Jenkin von den Stunden des Loslassens – in der Liebe, die bleibt.

*Tusitala =  
Erzähler der  
Geschichten*  
1894

### WICHTIGE WERKE IN SAMOA

*A Footnote  
to History*  
1892

*Catriona*  
1893

*The Ebb-Tide*  
1894

*Island Nights'  
Entertainments*  
1893

*Weir of Hermiston*  
(unvollendet)  
ab 1893

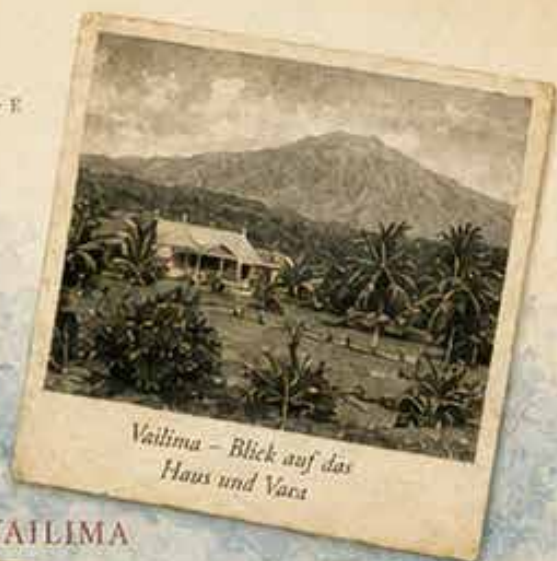
### POLITIK & ÖFFENTLICHES LEBEN

Stevenson setzte sich für Gerechtigkeit, Bildung und Verständigung ein – als Schriftsteller, Anwalt und Vertrauter der Menschen Samoas.



„Hier ist das Leben  
freundlich – und die Arbeit  
meinem Herzen gemäß.“

R. L. Stevenson



Vailima – Blick auf das  
Haus und Vaea

VAILIMA

Vailima.

Samoa.  
Dec 4<sup>th</sup>

Dearest Friend,

I can only write a  
word to let you know how my heart  
turned towards you in these black  
days, on when Sam went on the last  
pleys, on when Sam wanted to be loved  
above, and above with his dear men, and  
when when at last as always, have  
fratched him, my own and his own and  
from him, your beauty, guardian: for  
for one the People miss him greatly.  
He wished to lie in Mount Vaea among  
many pretty women men, not far from the  
belong cast a discord up the chest of  
all his women men.

Fanny's Brief an Anne Jenkin,  
Vailima, Samoa - 4. Dezember 1894

— 88 —

see my heart, I want to die in  
the 17 feel quiet as I stand."  
This has been one long romance,  
and he hoped to have a romantic end;  
and he wished to leave a romantic end;  
his beautiful hands, each took a  
little; his life had been one long romance.  
and he hoped to have a romantic end;  
that as his dreamland that  
before, and to go old he would  
in the end had all his work, and  
I try to be thankful though all  
of the will as empty and empty.  
Children, but I have  
the heartiest that I have  
thy love, J. B. L. Stevenson

# DIE LETZTEN STUNDEN

- 3. Dezember 1894 • ca. 18 Uhr Zusammenbruch
- 20.10 Uhr • Tod in Vailima
- 4. Dezember 1894 • Beisetzung auf Mount Vaea

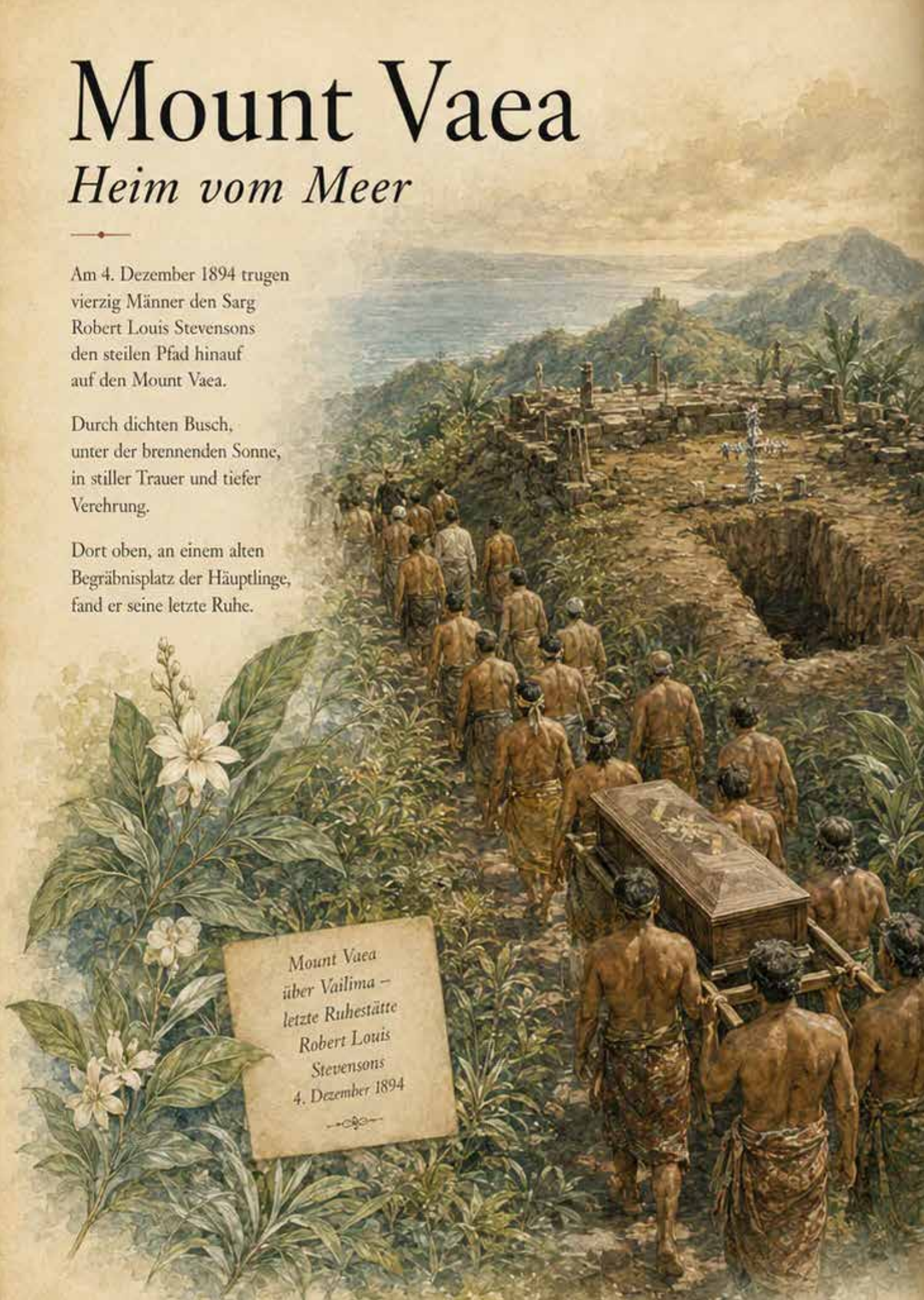
# Mount Vaea

## *Heim vom Meer*

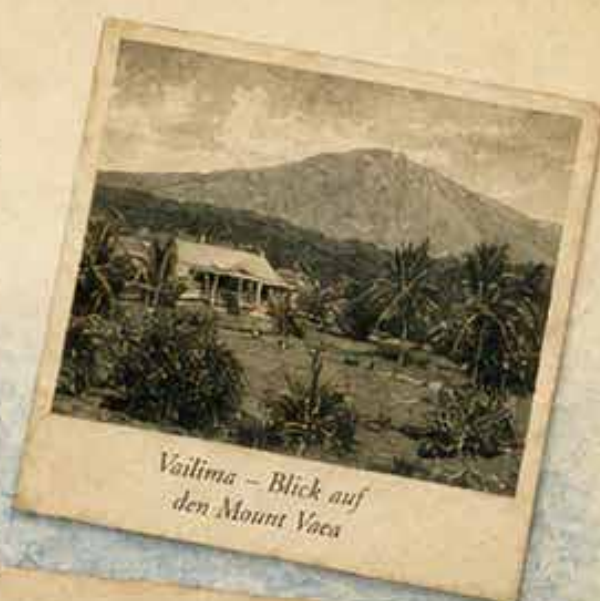
Am 4. Dezember 1894 trugen  
vierzig Männer den Sarg  
Robert Louis Stevensons  
den steilen Pfad hinauf  
auf den Mount Vaea.

Durch dichten Busch,  
unter der brennenden Sonne,  
in stiller Trauer und tiefer  
Verehrung.

Dort oben, an einem alten  
Begräbnisplatz der Häuptlinge,  
fand er seine letzte Ruhe.



Mount Vaea  
über Vailima –  
letzte Ruhestätte  
Robert Louis  
Stevensons  
4. Dezember 1894



Vailima - Blick auf  
den Mount Vaea

Vailima  
Samoa  
Dec 4<sup>th</sup>

Dearest Friend,

I can only write a  
word to let you know how my heart  
turns towards you in those black  
days, on when Sam went on the last  
plunge, on when Sam marched to the bond  
pain, and above with his plan was laid.  
from when at last as always, have  
brought him, my own and his own and  
from how you beauty. Grandfather for  
for one the People saw him quietly.  
He wished to lie in above here among  
many pretty from men, not for from the  
Samoan cast a dissonant up the chest of  
all his men now.

Even my children, but I have  
not seen. No one knows what  
from. Light in a terrible light up

Fanny B. L. Stevenson

Vierzig Männer, so berichtet  
Fanny, arbeiteten stundenlang  
durch den Busch. Dort oben,  
an einem alten Begräbnisplatz  
der Häuptlinge, wurde  
Stevensons Grab ausgehoben.

Am Kopfende stand zunächst  
kein Denkmal.

Nur ein improvisiertes Kreuz  
aus glänzendem Lametta.

#### DIE LETZTEN STUNDEN

- 3. Dezember 1894 · ca. 18 Uhr Zusammenbruch
- 20.10 Uhr · Tod in Vailima
- 4. Dezember 1894 · Beisetzung auf Mount Vaea

Fannys Brief an Anne Jenkin,  
Vailima, 4. Dezember 1894

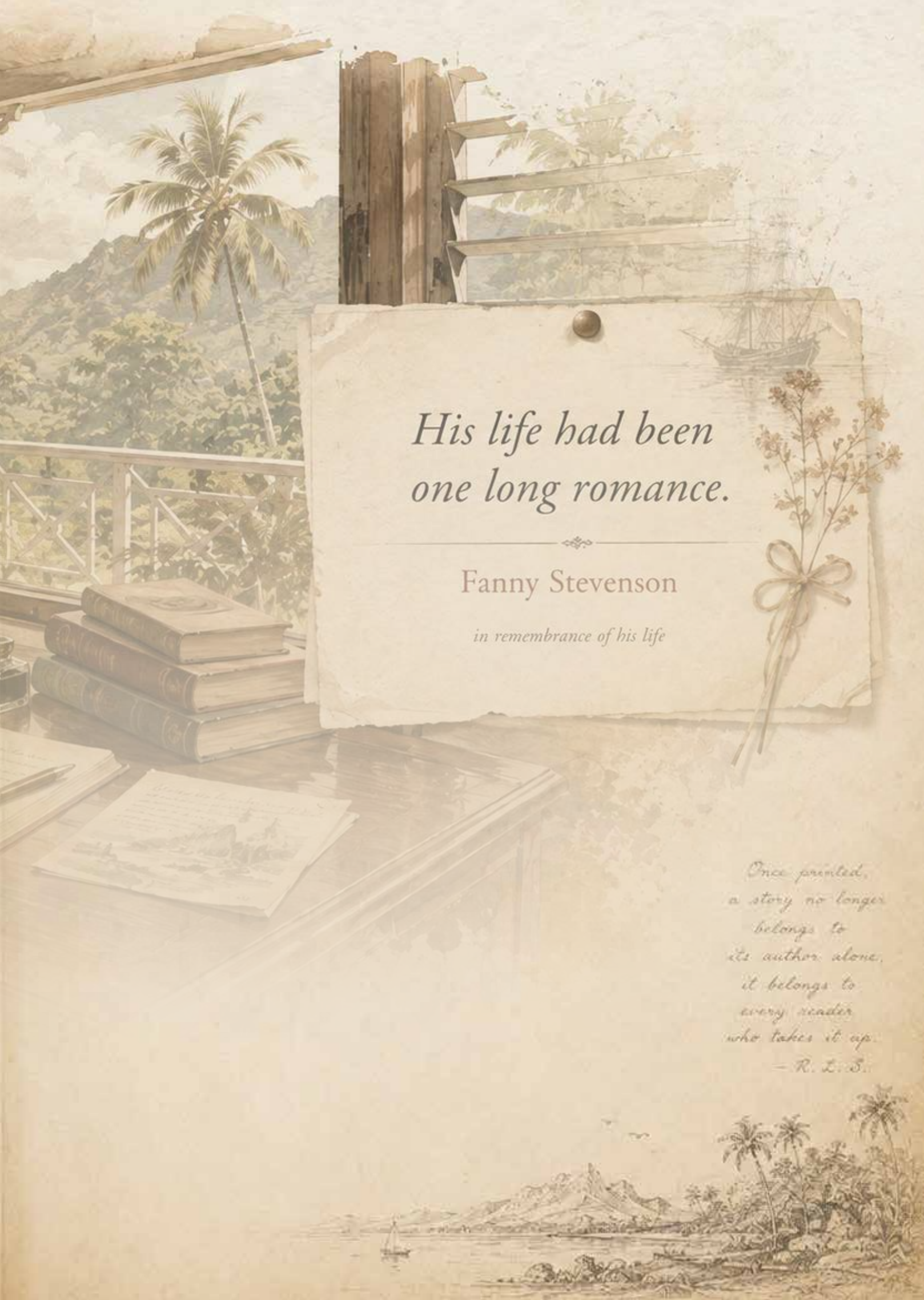


*I travel, not  
to go anywhere,  
but  
I travel for  
travel's sake.*

*I have no need  
for wonder life,  
for imaginative  
when I am such  
in the world.*

*— R. L. Stevenson.*





*His life had been  
one long romance.*

Fanny Stevenson

*in remembrance of his life*

*Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone,  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.*

*- R. L. S.*

STATION 6

# Der Pazifik

*Marquesas, Paumotus, Tahiti –  
Begegnungen, Inselwelten, Geschichten.*

Zwischen 1888 und 1889 verbrachte Stevenson viele Monate auf Inseln des Pazifiks. Er ging an Land, beobachtete Landschaften und Menschen, sammelte Eindrücke, führte Notizbücher und schrieb Briefe. Aus diesen Erfahrungen entstanden später *In the South Seas* und viele Inselgeschichten. Diese erste Südseereise wurde für ihn zu einer neuen literarischen Welt.



1 Edinburgh



2 Die Straße



3 Die Schatzinsel



ZIEHEN SIE DIE KARTE  
ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN

*„Die Südsee hat eine eig*

*for imaginative  
when I am such  
in the world.  
— R. L. Stevenson.*



→ 4 Das Doppelgängerlabor → 5 Amerika → 6 Der Pazifik → 7 Vailima

ene Sprache der Schönheit, die den Schriftsteller verwandelt.“

*R.L. Stevenson*

MEHR ÜBER ST



## PART II – THE WRITER

### CHAPTER 12

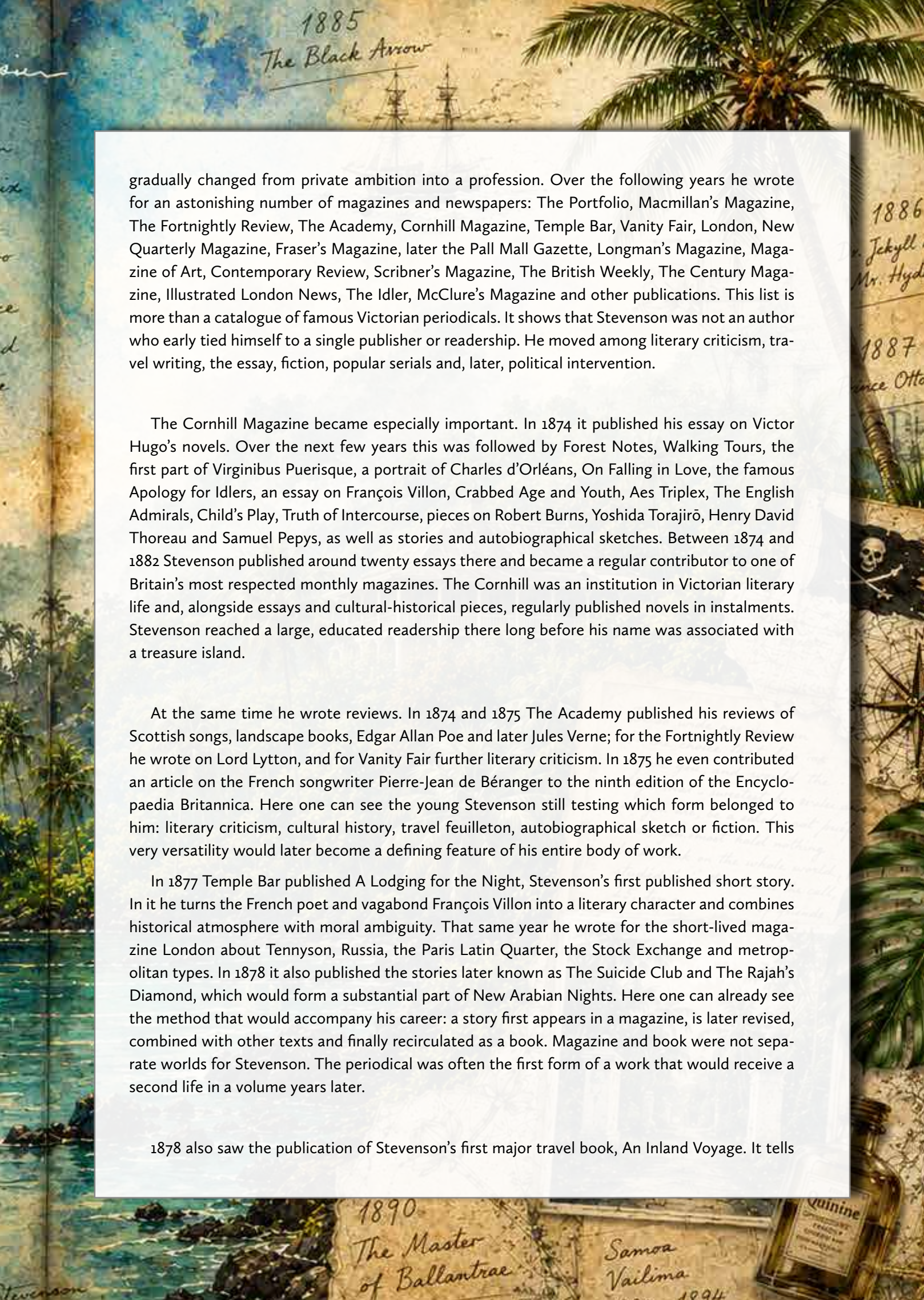
# A Life in Books and Magazines

**Robert Louis Stevenson's complete body of work – and how a young essayist became one of the most famous storytellers of the nineteenth century**

Anyone who knows Robert Louis Stevenson only through *Treasure Island* might easily imagine that his work begins in 1883 with a mysterious map and a one-legged pirate. In fact Stevenson had been publishing regularly since the early 1870s and by 1883 already had a considerable career behind him as an essayist, critic and travel writer. He had written about literature and painting, reviewed books, produced travel accounts, published philosophical essays, supplied stories to magazines, written about his home city of Edinburgh and gained his first experience of that particular form of publishing which shaped the literary nineteenth century at least as strongly as the book: the magazine. For Stevenson, periodicals were not a sideline to his career. For many years they were his real workshop. There he learned to hold a reader within a few sentences, develop an idea in a confined space, make a character visible in a few strokes and construct a story so that one wanted to wait for the next instalment. Anyone wishing to understand why *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* or even *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* move at such speed therefore needs to look not only at Stevenson's books. One must also open the magazines in which this writer developed a substantial part of his craft.

His first printed work, however, was not journalism. In 1866, when Stevenson was fifteen, his father paid to have a small historical pamphlet printed: *The Pentland Rising: A Page of History, 1666*. Its subject was the Scottish Covenanter uprising of 1666, and already here one encounters something that will recur throughout Stevenson's work: Scottish history was not abstract school knowledge to him but a reservoir of conflict, landscape, questions of faith and political memory. Far more important for his actual career, however, was 1871. The *Edinburgh University Magazine* published pieces such as *An Old Scotch Gardener*, *Edinburgh Students in 1824*, *The Modern Student Considered Generally*, *The Philosophy of Umbrellas*, *Debating Societies* and *The Philosophy of Nomenclature*. Stevenson was still a student, his family still expected a respectable profession from him, but in literary terms he was already becoming something else. Many of these early pieces feel like exercises, yet they reveal one decisive trait: Stevenson liked observing what seemed incidental. An umbrella, a student habit, an old gardener could be enough to make him think about character, society or memory.

In 1873 the essay *Roads* appeared in *The Portfolio*. For Stevenson's career this unassuming piece is significant because it is regarded as his first paid publication. From this point writing



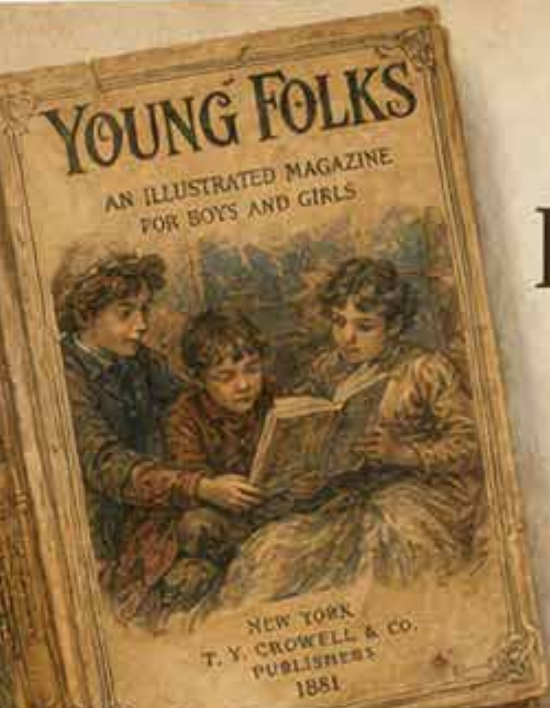
gradually changed from private ambition into a profession. Over the following years he wrote for an astonishing number of magazines and newspapers: *The Portfolio*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Academy*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Temple Bar*, *Vanity Fair*, *London*, *New Quarterly Magazine*, *Fraser's Magazine*, later the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Longman's Magazine*, *Magazine of Art*, *Contemporary Review*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *The British Weekly*, *The Century Magazine*, *Illustrated London News*, *The Idler*, *McClure's Magazine* and other publications. This list is more than a catalogue of famous Victorian periodicals. It shows that Stevenson was not an author who early tied himself to a single publisher or readership. He moved among literary criticism, travel writing, the essay, fiction, popular serials and, later, political intervention.

The *Cornhill Magazine* became especially important. In 1874 it published his essay on Victor Hugo's novels. Over the next few years this was followed by *Forest Notes*, *Walking Tours*, the first part of *Virginibus Puerisque*, a portrait of Charles d'Orléans, *On Falling in Love*, the famous *Apology for Idlers*, an essay on François Villon, *Crabbed Age and Youth*, *Aes Triplex*, *The English Admirals*, *Child's Play*, *Truth of Intercourse*, pieces on Robert Burns, Yoshida Torajirō, Henry David Thoreau and Samuel Pepys, as well as stories and autobiographical sketches. Between 1874 and 1882 Stevenson published around twenty essays there and became a regular contributor to one of Britain's most respected monthly magazines. The *Cornhill* was an institution in Victorian literary life and, alongside essays and cultural-historical pieces, regularly published novels in instalments. Stevenson reached a large, educated readership there long before his name was associated with a treasure island.

At the same time he wrote reviews. In 1874 and 1875 *The Academy* published his reviews of Scottish songs, landscape books, Edgar Allan Poe and later Jules Verne; for the *Fortnightly Review* he wrote on Lord Lytton, and for *Vanity Fair* further literary criticism. In 1875 he even contributed an article on the French songwriter Pierre-Jean de Béranger to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Here one can see the young Stevenson still testing which form belonged to him: literary criticism, cultural history, travel feuilleton, autobiographical sketch or fiction. This very versatility would later become a defining feature of his entire body of work.

In 1877 *Temple Bar* published *A Lodging for the Night*, Stevenson's first published short story. In it he turns the French poet and vagabond François Villon into a literary character and combines historical atmosphere with moral ambiguity. That same year he wrote for the short-lived magazine *London* about Tennyson, Russia, the Paris Latin Quarter, the Stock Exchange and metropolitan types. In 1878 it also published the stories later known as *The Suicide Club* and *The Rajah's Diamond*, which would form a substantial part of *New Arabian Nights*. Here one can already see the method that would accompany his career: a story first appears in a magazine, is later revised, combined with other texts and finally recirculated as a book. Magazine and book were not separate worlds for Stevenson. The periodical was often the first form of a work that would receive a second life in a volume years later.

1878 also saw the publication of Stevenson's first major travel book, *An Inland Voyage*. It tells



# Young Folks – Die erste Schatzinsel



Bevor die Welt die *Schatzinsel* kannte, begegneten junge Leserinnen und Leser in Amerika Stevenson's *Seeräubern* zuerst in den Seiten des Magazins *Young Folks*.

Kapitel für Kapitel, Monat für Monat – ein Abenteuer, auf das man sich freute und das man kaum erwarten konnte, weiterzulesen.

## 1881–1882: Eine Geschichte in monatlichen Folgen

Zwischen Mai 1881 und Januar 1882 erschien *Treasure Island* (Originaltitel: *Treasure Island; or, The Mutiny of the Hispaniola*) erstmals in *Young Folks*. Die Leser verfolgten Jims Reise von Kapitel zu Kapitel – ein frühes Beispiel dafür, wie Serientagebücher Spannung über viele Wochen hinweg aufbauen.



## Über den Autor

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) schrieb die Geschichte für seinen Sohn Lloyd Osbourne und dessen Freunde. Aus einem Geschenk für einen Jungen wurde eine der beliebtesten Abenteuerromane der Welt.



## Inspiration in Davos, 1880

In den Schweizer Bergen entstand die Idee zu einer Geschichte über Mut, Freundschaft und das große Abenteuer auf See.



## Kapitel für Kapitel – ein Abenteuer entsteht

Die Geschichte erschien in achtzehn monatlichen Folgen. Jeder Abschnitt brachte neue Spannung, neue Orte – und ließ die Leserinnen und Leser Teil der Reise werden.



## So erschien die Geschichte

*Young Folks* war eines der beliebtesten Jugendmagazine Amerikas – reich illustriert, spannend und perfekt für abenteuerlustige Leser.



## YOUNG FOLKS

May, 1881

TREASURE ISLAND;  
or, The Mutiny of the Hispaniola  
BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

### CHAPTER I.

The Old Sea-dog at the  
Admiral Benbow.



## Die Originaltitel

Veröffentlicht wurde das Roman unter dem Titel *Treasure Island, or, The Mutiny of the Hispaniola*. Erst die Buchausgabe von 1900 brachte das heute bekannte *Karibid Treasure Island*.



## Fortsetzung erwünscht!

Am Ende jeder Folge versprach die Vertriebskraft auf das nächste Heft neue Gefahren, spannende Begegnungen und das Versprechen, dass das Abenteuer weitergeht.

Im nächsten Heft:  
*Die Männer der Hispaniola  
setzen die Meuterei fort ...*



## Frühe Reaktionen

Die jungen Leser waren begeistert. Lehrer und Kritiker lobten die lebendigen Figuren und die Kraft der Erzählung. Viele warteten ungeduldig auf jedes neue Heft – und wunderten die Folgen ausgiebig, dass kein Kapitel fehlte.

„Eine Geschichte, die Jungen und Mädchen gleichermaßen in Atem hält.“  
– *A Contemporary Review*, 1882



7  
November 1881

8  
Dezember 1881

9  
Januar 1882

... bis  
18  
Januar 1882



Aus einer Zeitschrift  
für junge Leser  
wurde ein Klassiker  
für alle Zeiten.



R. L. Stevenson  
Edinburgh 1881.

ELLENWOODS  
DIGITAL MUSEUMS

# TUSITALA

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
UND DIE ERFINDUNG DES ABENTEUERS

Folgen Sie dem Geschichtenerzähler  
auf seiner Reise durch ein außergewöhnliches Leben.  
Zehn Stationen. Eine Geschichte.

R. L. Stevenson

1

EDINBURGH  
DAS HAUS DER  
LEUCHTTÜRME

Die Kindheit in  
Edinburgh und die  
Familie der Ingenieure.  
Leuchttürme als frühe  
Faszination.



2

DER KRANKE JUNGE  
GESCHICHTEN ALS  
GEGENWELT

Krankheit, Einsamkeit  
und Bücher.  
Wie Fantasie zum  
Zufluchtsort wurde.



3

DIE STRASSE  
DER REISENDE  
STEVENSON

Frankreich, Cévennen,  
Esel, Flüsse, Notizbücher.  
Der junge Autor  
entdeckt die Welt.



4

DIE LIEBE  
FANNY UND  
AMERIKA

Fanny Osbourne,  
Amerika, schwierige  
Wege und eine  
ungewisse Zukunft.



VITRINEN – ORIGINALOBJEKTE UND HANDSCHRIFTEN

„Ich reise nicht,  
um anzukommen,  
sondern um zu leben.“

R. L. Stevenson



PLAKATE UND V



for wonder life,  
for imagination  
when I am such  
in the world.

— R. L. Stevenson

*Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.*



*Follow  
the storyteller.*

5

**Die Karte**  
Die Geburt der Schatzinsel

Edgar Allan Poe, erste Ideen, erste Zeichnung eines Roman.

6

**Die Schatzinsel**  
Die Erfindung des Piraten

Jim Hawkins, Long John Silver und der Schatz. Wie Stevenson den Piraten für immer prägte.

7

**Das Doppelgänger-Labor**  
Jekyll & Hyde

London, Wissenschaft, Moral und das Böse in jedem Menschen.

8

**Der Schriftsteller als Maschine**

Manuskripte, Korrekturen, Magazine, Disziplin. Die Werkstatt des Erzählers.

9

**Der Pazifik**  
Die Welt wird grösser

Marquesas, Hawaii, Tahiti. Begegnungen, Beobachtungen und kritische Blicke.

10

**Vailima**  
Tusitala und das Weiterleben

Samoa, das Haus, letzte Werke und das Erbe in Film, Kunst und Popkultur.

## VERFILMUNGEN



## INFOTAFELN UND INTERAKTIVE STATIONEN

**LONG JOHN SILVER –  
EINE FIGUR FÜR DIE EWIGKEIT**

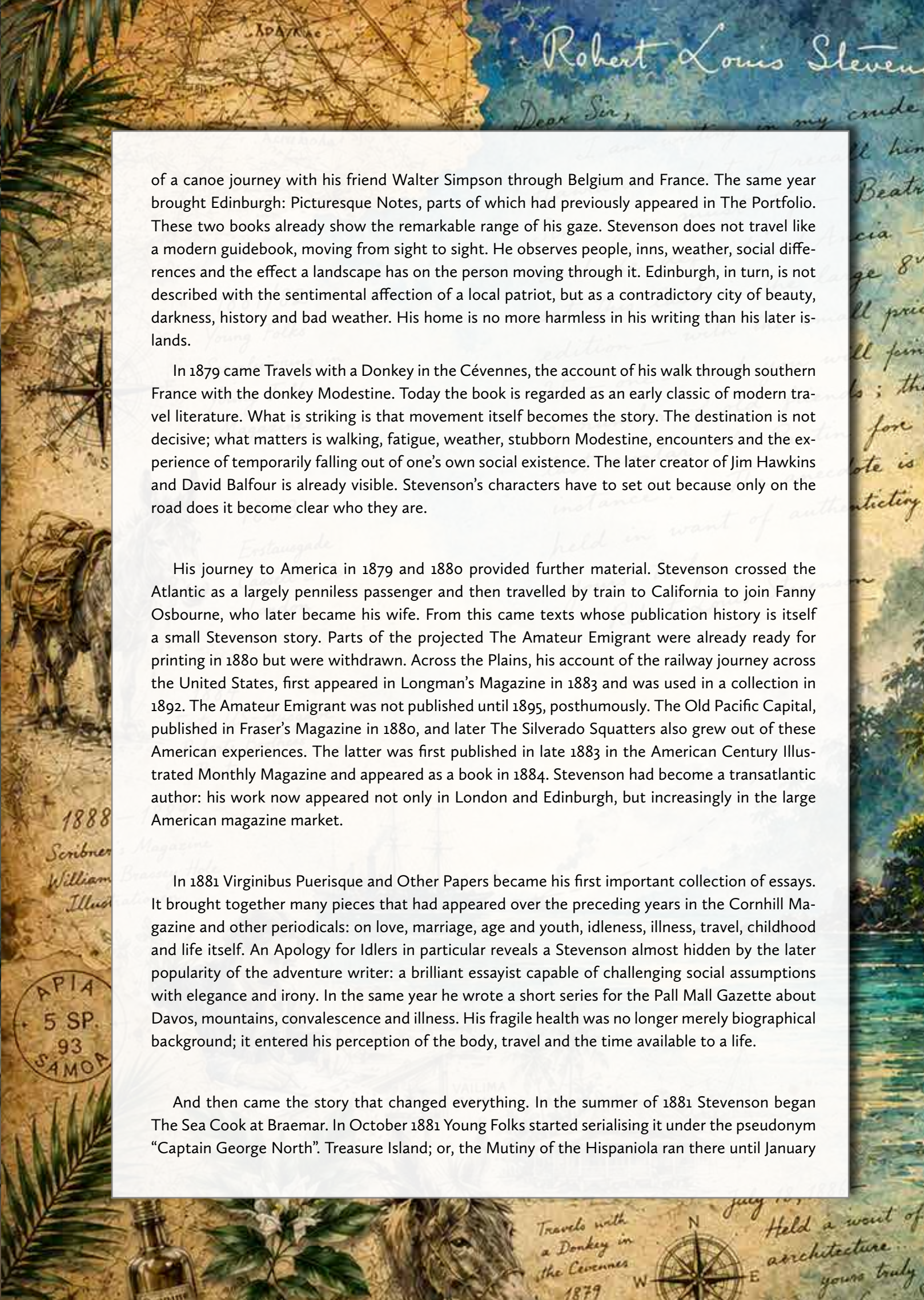
Long John Silver ist einer der komplexesten Charaktere der Weltliteratur. Charmant, bedrohlich, verführerisch und klug – ein Pirat, der mehr ist als ein Schurke.

„Fifteen men on the dead man's chest –  
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!”  
– Robert Louis Stevenson

ENTDECKEN SIE MEHR  
KARTEN, ROUTEN, ORTE

- REISEROUTEN
- BILDERGALERIE
- ZEITLEISTE
- HÖREN & LESEN





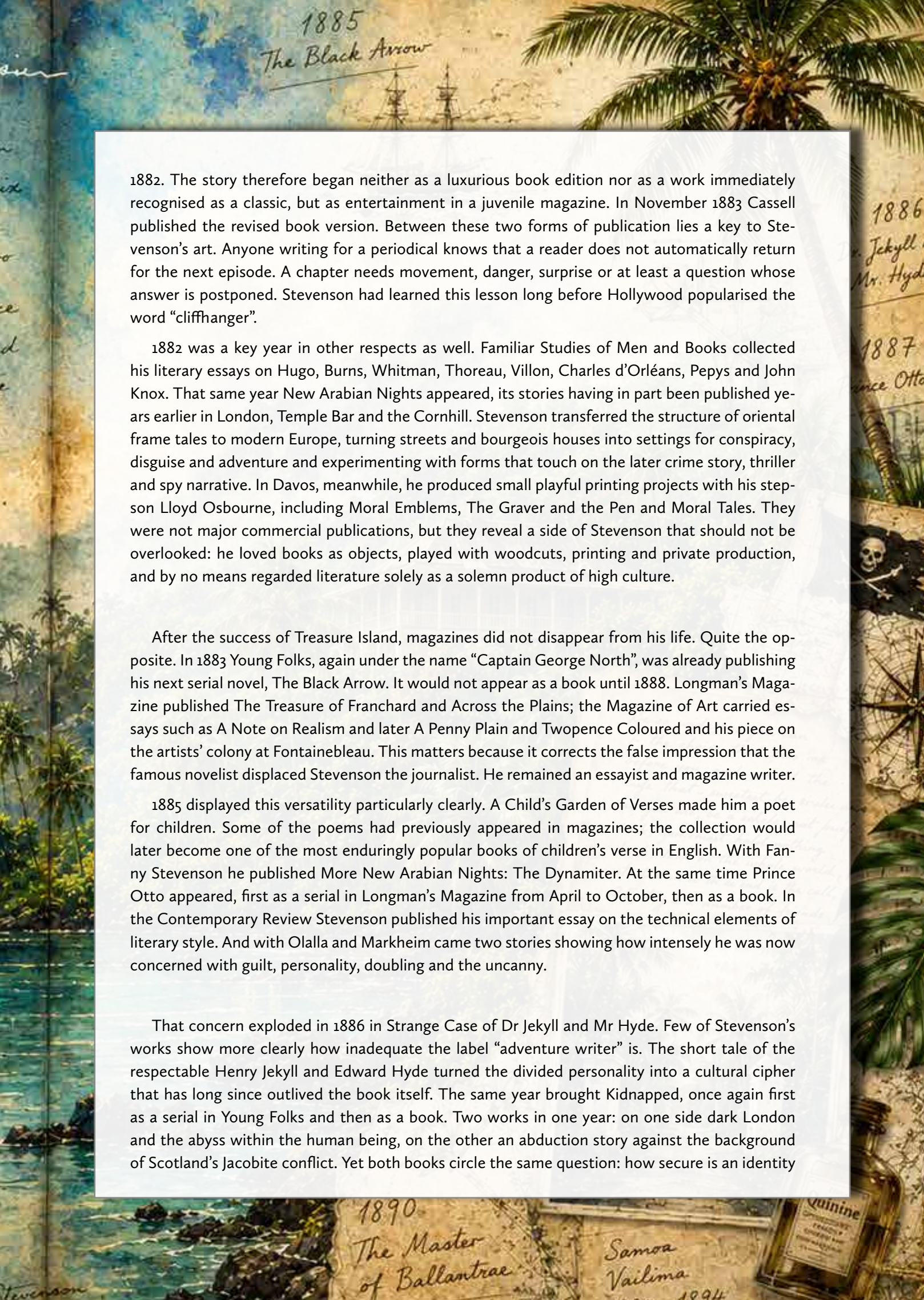
of a canoe journey with his friend Walter Simpson through Belgium and France. The same year brought *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes*, parts of which had previously appeared in *The Portfolio*. These two books already show the remarkable range of his gaze. Stevenson does not travel like a modern guidebook, moving from sight to sight. He observes people, inns, weather, social differences and the effect a landscape has on the person moving through it. Edinburgh, in turn, is not described with the sentimental affection of a local patriot, but as a contradictory city of beauty, darkness, history and bad weather. His home is no more harmless in his writing than his later islands.

In 1879 came *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, the account of his walk through southern France with the donkey Modestine. Today the book is regarded as an early classic of modern travel literature. What is striking is that movement itself becomes the story. The destination is not decisive; what matters is walking, fatigue, weather, stubborn Modestine, encounters and the experience of temporarily falling out of one's own social existence. The later creator of Jim Hawkins and David Balfour is already visible. Stevenson's characters have to set out because only on the road does it become clear who they are.

His journey to America in 1879 and 1880 provided further material. Stevenson crossed the Atlantic as a largely penniless passenger and then travelled by train to California to join Fanny Osbourne, who later became his wife. From this came texts whose publication history is itself a small Stevenson story. Parts of the projected *The Amateur Emigrant* were already ready for printing in 1880 but were withdrawn. Across the Plains, his account of the railway journey across the United States, first appeared in *Longman's Magazine* in 1883 and was used in a collection in 1892. *The Amateur Emigrant* was not published until 1895, posthumously. *The Old Pacific Capital*, published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1880, and later *The Silverado Squatters* also grew out of these American experiences. The latter was first published in late 1883 in the *American Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* and appeared as a book in 1884. Stevenson had become a transatlantic author: his work now appeared not only in London and Edinburgh, but increasingly in the large American magazine market.

In 1881 *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers* became his first important collection of essays. It brought together many pieces that had appeared over the preceding years in the *Cornhill Magazine* and other periodicals: on love, marriage, age and youth, idleness, illness, travel, childhood and life itself. An *Apology for Idlers* in particular reveals a Stevenson almost hidden by the later popularity of the adventure writer: a brilliant essayist capable of challenging social assumptions with elegance and irony. In the same year he wrote a short series for the *Pall Mall Gazette* about Davos, mountains, convalescence and illness. His fragile health was no longer merely biographical background; it entered his perception of the body, travel and the time available to a life.

And then came the story that changed everything. In the summer of 1881 Stevenson began *The Sea Cook at Braemar*. In October 1881 *Young Folks* started serialising it under the pseudonym "Captain George North". *Treasure Island*; or, the Mutiny of the *Hispaniola* ran there until January



1882. The story therefore began neither as a luxurious book edition nor as a work immediately recognised as a classic, but as entertainment in a juvenile magazine. In November 1883 Cassell published the revised book version. Between these two forms of publication lies a key to Stevenson's art. Anyone writing for a periodical knows that a reader does not automatically return for the next episode. A chapter needs movement, danger, surprise or at least a question whose answer is postponed. Stevenson had learned this lesson long before Hollywood popularised the word "cliffhanger".

1882 was a key year in other respects as well. Familiar Studies of Men and Books collected his literary essays on Hugo, Burns, Whitman, Thoreau, Villon, Charles d'Orléans, Pepys and John Knox. That same year New Arabian Nights appeared, its stories having in part been published years earlier in London, Temple Bar and the Cornhill. Stevenson transferred the structure of oriental frame tales to modern Europe, turning streets and bourgeois houses into settings for conspiracy, disguise and adventure and experimenting with forms that touch on the later crime story, thriller and spy narrative. In Davos, meanwhile, he produced small playful printing projects with his stepson Lloyd Osbourne, including Moral Emblems, The Graver and the Pen and Moral Tales. They were not major commercial publications, but they reveal a side of Stevenson that should not be overlooked: he loved books as objects, played with woodcuts, printing and private production, and by no means regarded literature solely as a solemn product of high culture.

After the success of *Treasure Island*, magazines did not disappear from his life. Quite the opposite. In 1883 *Young Folks*, again under the name "Captain George North", was already publishing his next serial novel, *The Black Arrow*. It would not appear as a book until 1888. Longman's Magazine published *The Treasure of Franchard* and *Across the Plains*; the Magazine of Art carried essays such as *A Note on Realism* and later *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured* and his piece on the artists' colony at Fontainebleau. This matters because it corrects the false impression that the famous novelist displaced Stevenson the journalist. He remained an essayist and magazine writer.

1885 displayed this versatility particularly clearly. *A Child's Garden of Verses* made him a poet for children. Some of the poems had previously appeared in magazines; the collection would later become one of the most enduringly popular books of children's verse in English. With Fanny Stevenson he published *More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter*. At the same time *Prince Otto* appeared, first as a serial in Longman's Magazine from April to October, then as a book. In the *Contemporary Review* Stevenson published his important essay on the technical elements of literary style. And with *Olalla* and *Markheim* came two stories showing how intensely he was now concerned with guilt, personality, doubling and the uncanny.

That concern exploded in 1886 in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Few of Stevenson's works show more clearly how inadequate the label "adventure writer" is. The short tale of the respectable Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde turned the divided personality into a cultural cipher that has long since outlived the book itself. The same year brought *Kidnapped*, once again first as a serial in *Young Folks* and then as a book. Two works in one year: on one side dark London and the abyss within the human being, on the other an abduction story against the background of Scotland's Jacobite conflict. Yet both books circle the same question: how secure is an identity

when the familiar order collapses?

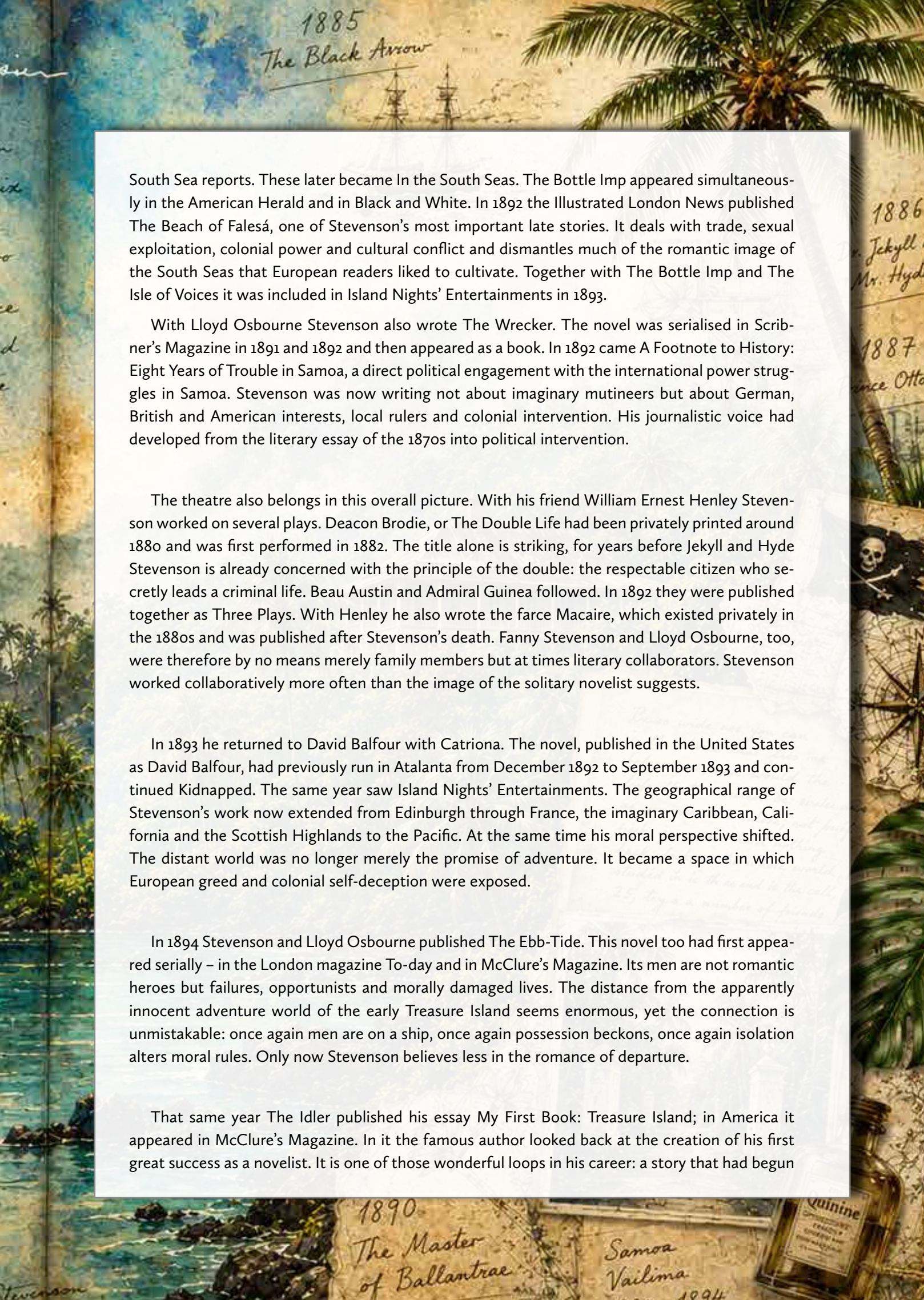
In 1887 Stevenson again gathered numerous previously scattered works. *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* brought together stories such as *Will O' the Mill*, *Markheim*, *Thrawn Janet*, *Olalla* and *The Treasure of Franchard*, some of which had appeared in magazines years earlier. *Memories and Portraits* collected autobiographical and essayistic pieces on family, friends, conversation, childhood, art and literature. With *Underwoods* he also published a collection of poems, individual pieces of which had previously appeared in the *Magazine of Art*, *Century Magazine*, *Cornhill Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Fraser's Magazine* and other periodicals. The supposed novelist was therefore working simultaneously as storyteller, memoirist, critic and poet. In *The British Weekly* he published *Books Which Have Influenced Me*, in the *Contemporary Review* political and autobiographical essays, and in *Scribner's Magazine* recollections. The boundaries between private life, literary criticism and public authorship became increasingly permeable.

In 1888 Stevenson began an especially intensive collaboration with *Scribner's Magazine*. Almost month by month it published essays: *A Chapter on Dreams*, *The Lantern Bearers*, *Beggars*, *Pulvis et Umbra*, *Gentlemen*, *Some Gentlemen in Fiction*, *Popular Authors*, an addendum to *An Inland Voyage*, *A Letter to a Young Gentleman Who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art*, *memories of Fife*, *The Education of an Engineer* and finally *A Christmas Sermon*. Many of these pieces were collected in 1892 in *Across the Plains With Other Memories and Essays*. In parallel, in 1888 Stevenson published *Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin*, a biography of his friend and former professor, and at last the book version of *The Black Arrow*. This year in particular shows how wrong it would be to regard the magazine writer as merely an early phase. Stevenson was now internationally known – and still wrote continuously for periodicals.

His next major literary work likewise appeared first in serial form. *The Master of Ballantrae* ran in *Scribner's Magazine* from November 1888 to October 1889 and was published as a book in 1889. The story of the brothers James and Henry Durie is among Stevenson's darkest works. Again we meet doubling: charm and morality, attraction and destruction, brother and counter-brother. That same year *The Wrong Box*, written with Lloyd Osbourne, appeared – a black comedy of inheritance, supposed corpses and a grotesque chain of misunderstandings. By then Stevenson had long since abandoned any stable genre classification.

Poetry remained present alongside prose. Ballads appeared in 1890. The same year Stevenson first published in the *Scots Observer* and then as a separate pamphlet *Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Doctor Hyde of Honolulu*. It was an angry defence of the Belgian priest Damien de Veuster, who had worked among people with leprosy on Molokai. The text is crucial to the overall picture, for here we encounter neither adventure novelist nor aesthetic essayist but a public intellectual prepared to risk his literary reputation in a moral intervention.

In the South Seas the connection between periodical and book became especially intense once more. In 1891 the *New York Sun* and the British magazine *Black and White* serialised his



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

South Sea reports. These later became *In the South Seas*. *The Bottle Imp* appeared simultaneously in the *American Herald* and in *Black and White*. In 1892 the *Illustrated London News* published *The Beach of Falesá*, one of Stevenson's most important late stories. It deals with trade, sexual exploitation, colonial power and cultural conflict and dismantles much of the romantic image of the South Seas that European readers liked to cultivate. Together with *The Bottle Imp* and *The Isle of Voices* it was included in *Island Nights' Entertainments* in 1893.

With Lloyd Osbourne Stevenson also wrote *The Wrecker*. The novel was serialised in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1891 and 1892 and then appeared as a book. In 1892 came *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*, a direct political engagement with the international power struggles in Samoa. Stevenson was now writing not about imaginary mutineers but about German, British and American interests, local rulers and colonial intervention. His journalistic voice had developed from the literary essay of the 1870s into political intervention.

The theatre also belongs in this overall picture. With his friend William Ernest Henley Stevenson worked on several plays. *Deacon Brodie, or The Double Life* had been privately printed around 1880 and was first performed in 1882. The title alone is striking, for years before *Jekyll and Hyde* Stevenson is already concerned with the principle of the double: the respectable citizen who secretly leads a criminal life. *Beau Austin* and *Admiral Guinea* followed. In 1892 they were published together as *Three Plays*. With Henley he also wrote the farce *Macaire*, which existed privately in the 1880s and was published after Stevenson's death. Fanny Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, too, were therefore by no means merely family members but at times literary collaborators. Stevenson worked collaboratively more often than the image of the solitary novelist suggests.

In 1893 he returned to David Balfour with *Catriona*. The novel, published in the United States as *David Balfour*, had previously run in *Atalanta* from December 1892 to September 1893 and continued *Kidnapped*. The same year saw *Island Nights' Entertainments*. The geographical range of Stevenson's work now extended from Edinburgh through France, the imaginary Caribbean, California and the Scottish Highlands to the Pacific. At the same time his moral perspective shifted. The distant world was no longer merely the promise of adventure. It became a space in which European greed and colonial self-deception were exposed.

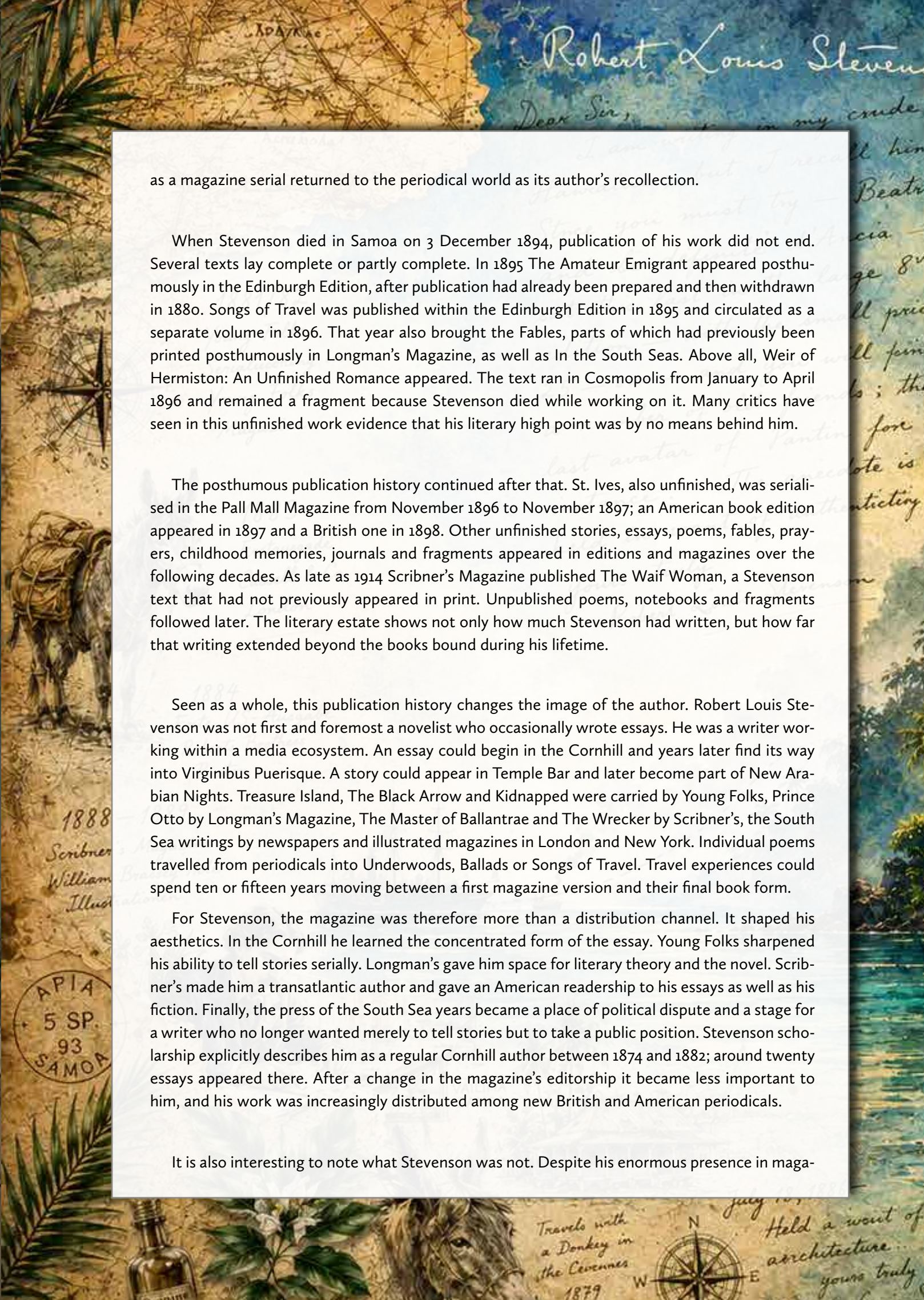
In 1894 Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne published *The Ebb-Tide*. This novel too had first appeared serially – in the London magazine *To-day* and in McClure's *Magazine*. Its men are not romantic heroes but failures, opportunists and morally damaged lives. The distance from the apparently innocent adventure world of the early *Treasure Island* seems enormous, yet the connection is unmistakable: once again men are on a ship, once again possession beckons, once again isolation alters moral rules. Only now Stevenson believes less in the romance of departure.

That same year *The Idler* published his essay *My First Book: Treasure Island*; in America it appeared in McClure's *Magazine*. In it the famous author looked back at the creation of his first great success as a novelist. It is one of those wonderful loops in his career: a story that had begun

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine



as a magazine serial returned to the periodical world as its author's recollection.

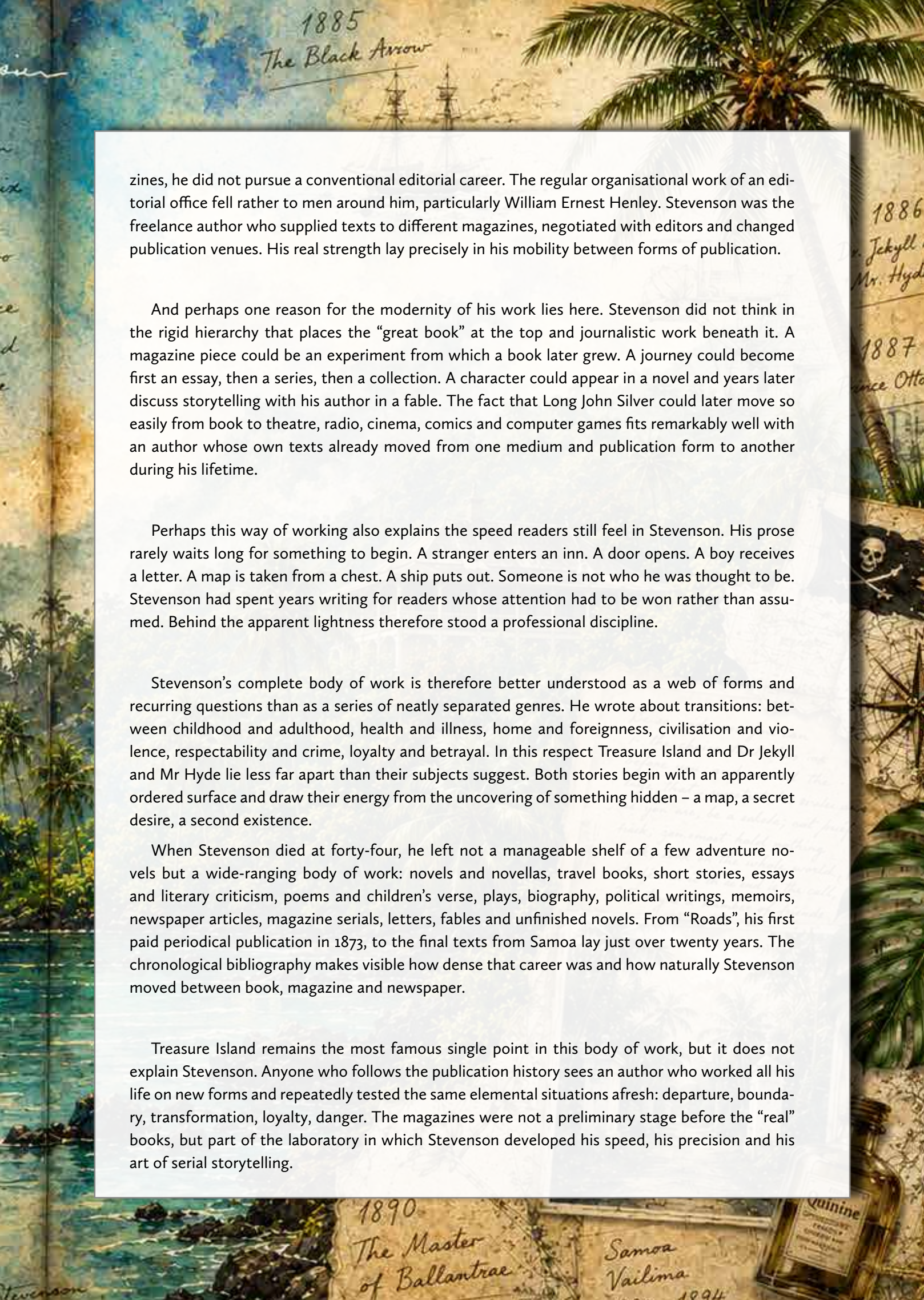
When Stevenson died in Samoa on 3 December 1894, publication of his work did not end. Several texts lay complete or partly complete. In 1895 *The Amateur Emigrant* appeared posthumously in the Edinburgh Edition, after publication had already been prepared and then withdrawn in 1880. *Songs of Travel* was published within the Edinburgh Edition in 1895 and circulated as a separate volume in 1896. That year also brought the *Fables*, parts of which had previously been printed posthumously in *Longman's Magazine*, as well as *In the South Seas*. Above all, *Weir of Hermiston: An Unfinished Romance* appeared. The text ran in *Cosmopolis* from January to April 1896 and remained a fragment because Stevenson died while working on it. Many critics have seen in this unfinished work evidence that his literary high point was by no means behind him.

The posthumous publication history continued after that. *St. Ives*, also unfinished, was serialised in the *Pall Mall Magazine* from November 1896 to November 1897; an American book edition appeared in 1897 and a British one in 1898. Other unfinished stories, essays, poems, fables, prayers, childhood memories, journals and fragments appeared in editions and magazines over the following decades. As late as 1914 *Scribner's Magazine* published *The Waif Woman*, a Stevenson text that had not previously appeared in print. Unpublished poems, notebooks and fragments followed later. The literary estate shows not only how much Stevenson had written, but how far that writing extended beyond the books bound during his lifetime.

Seen as a whole, this publication history changes the image of the author. Robert Louis Stevenson was not first and foremost a novelist who occasionally wrote essays. He was a writer working within a media ecosystem. An essay could begin in the *Cornhill* and years later find its way into *Virginibus Puerisque*. A story could appear in *Temple Bar* and later become part of *New Arabian Nights*. *Treasure Island*, *The Black Arrow* and *Kidnapped* were carried by *Young Folks*, *Prince Otto* by *Longman's Magazine*, *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Wrecker* by *Scribner's*, the *South Sea* writings by newspapers and illustrated magazines in London and New York. Individual poems travelled from periodicals into *Underwoods*, *Ballads* or *Songs of Travel*. Travel experiences could spend ten or fifteen years moving between a first magazine version and their final book form.

For Stevenson, the magazine was therefore more than a distribution channel. It shaped his aesthetics. In the *Cornhill* he learned the concentrated form of the essay. *Young Folks* sharpened his ability to tell stories serially. *Longman's* gave him space for literary theory and the novel. *Scribner's* made him a transatlantic author and gave an American readership to his essays as well as his fiction. Finally, the press of the *South Sea* years became a place of political dispute and a stage for a writer who no longer wanted merely to tell stories but to take a public position. Stevenson scholarship explicitly describes him as a regular *Cornhill* author between 1874 and 1882; around twenty essays appeared there. After a change in the magazine's editorship it became less important to him, and his work was increasingly distributed among new British and American periodicals.

It is also interesting to note what Stevenson was not. Despite his enormous presence in maga-



zines, he did not pursue a conventional editorial career. The regular organisational work of an editorial office fell rather to men around him, particularly William Ernest Henley. Stevenson was the freelance author who supplied texts to different magazines, negotiated with editors and changed publication venues. His real strength lay precisely in his mobility between forms of publication.

And perhaps one reason for the modernity of his work lies here. Stevenson did not think in the rigid hierarchy that places the “great book” at the top and journalistic work beneath it. A magazine piece could be an experiment from which a book later grew. A journey could become first an essay, then a series, then a collection. A character could appear in a novel and years later discuss storytelling with his author in a fable. The fact that Long John Silver could later move so easily from book to theatre, radio, cinema, comics and computer games fits remarkably well with an author whose own texts already moved from one medium and publication form to another during his lifetime.

Perhaps this way of working also explains the speed readers still feel in Stevenson. His prose rarely waits long for something to begin. A stranger enters an inn. A door opens. A boy receives a letter. A map is taken from a chest. A ship puts out. Someone is not who he was thought to be. Stevenson had spent years writing for readers whose attention had to be won rather than assumed. Behind the apparent lightness therefore stood a professional discipline.

Stevenson’s complete body of work is therefore better understood as a web of forms and recurring questions than as a series of neatly separated genres. He wrote about transitions: between childhood and adulthood, health and illness, home and foreignness, civilisation and violence, respectability and crime, loyalty and betrayal. In this respect *Treasure Island* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* lie less far apart than their subjects suggest. Both stories begin with an apparently ordered surface and draw their energy from the uncovering of something hidden – a map, a secret desire, a second existence.

When Stevenson died at forty-four, he left not a manageable shelf of a few adventure novels but a wide-ranging body of work: novels and novellas, travel books, short stories, essays and literary criticism, poems and children’s verse, plays, biography, political writings, memoirs, newspaper articles, magazine serials, letters, fables and unfinished novels. From “Roads”, his first paid periodical publication in 1873, to the final texts from Samoa lay just over twenty years. The chronological bibliography makes visible how dense that career was and how naturally Stevenson moved between book, magazine and newspaper.

*Treasure Island* remains the most famous single point in this body of work, but it does not explain Stevenson. Anyone who follows the publication history sees an author who worked all his life on new forms and repeatedly tested the same elemental situations afresh: departure, boundary, transformation, loyalty, danger. The magazines were not a preliminary stage before the “real” books, but part of the laboratory in which Stevenson developed his speed, his precision and his art of serial storytelling.

# Das Gesicht der Schatzinsel

Die Anfänge  
1880er–1890er

Dunkel, geheimnisvoll  
und voller Moral.  
Piraten als Warnung  
und Faszination.



## 140 Jahre Buchcover und die Erfindung des Piraten

Seit 1883 hat jede Generation die »Schatzinsel« neu erfunden – und mit ihr den Piraten. Buchcover sind mehr als Verpackung: Sie zeigen, wie sich unsere Vorstellung von Abenteuer, Freiheit und Gefahr verändert hat.



EIN BUCH.  
TAUSEND GESICHTER.

Ob bedrohlich oder romantisch,  
realistisch oder fantastisch:  
Jede Gestaltung erzählt auch die  
Geschichte ihrer Zeit.



## Internationale Perspektiven 1950er–heute

Andere Kulturen,  
andere Blickwinkel.  
Die Schatzinsel wird  
vielfach neu gedeutet.



COVER, DIE VORSTELLUNG  
UND REALITÄT PRÄGEN

Kinder blättern, bleiben  
stehen – und träumen.  
Ein Cover kann den  
Wunsch nach Abenteuer  
wecken. Und es kann  
Klischees verändern.

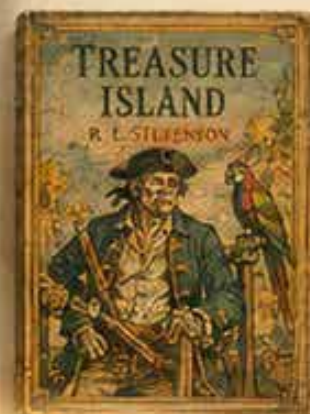


## Frühes 20. Jahrhundert 1900er–1930er

Illustration wird zum  
Ereignis. Detailreiche  
Helden, dramatische  
Szenen, exotische Welten.

## Klassische Abenteuer 1940er–1960er

Mut, Action, große  
Bilder. Der Pirat wird  
zur Ikone –  
abenteuerlich und  
heldenhaft.



### DAS IKONISCHE COVER VON 1911

Diese Ausgabe von  
N. C. Wyeth prägte  
wie kaum eine andere  
das Bild des Piraten  
für Generationen –  
und wurde selbst zur  
Schatzkarte der Fantasie.

## Moderne Interpretationen 1970er–heute

Neue Stile, neue Fragen.  
Manchmal düster,  
manchmal verspielt –  
immer überraschend.



### EINE GESCHICHTE, DIE WEITERGEHT

Auch in Zukunft wird die  
„Schatzkarte“ neue Gesichter  
erzielen. Denn solange wir  
träumen, wird es Piraten  
geben – in Büchern, in Bildern  
und in unserer Fantasie.



# Stevenson – Ein Leben für Geschichten



## Kindheit in Schottland

Am 13. November 1850 wurde Stevenson in Edinburgh geboren. Die rauen Hügel, Burgruinen und Geschichten seines Landes prägten seine Fantasie früh.

„Unter dem  
Vorzelt des  
Himmels ist  
Platz für alle.“  
– R. L. Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) war Dichter, Abenteurer und ein feiner Beobachter der Welt. Seine Geschichten begeistern seit Generationen – voller Mut, Fantasie und Mitgefühl für die Menschen am Rand.

## Kränkel in Schottland

Am 13. November 1850 wurde Stevenson in Edinburgh geboren. Die rauen Hügel, Burgruinen und Geschichten seines Landes prägten seine Fantasie früh.

## Ein leidenschaftlicher Leser

Bücher waren seine besten Freunde. Von Shakespeare bis Jules Verne, von der Bibel bis zu den Märchen aus Tausendundeiner Nacht – Stevenson las alles, was er in die Hände bekam.

## Begegnungen & Einflüsse



**William Shakespeare**  
Seine Dramen lehrten Stevenson die Kraft der menschlichen Seele.



**Charles Dickens**  
Von ihm bewunderte er die Wärme für Außenseiter und das Erzählen.



**Jules Verne**  
Seine Romane weckten die Reiselust und den Sinn für das Abenteuer.

## Der Durchbruch – Geschichten, die bleiben

Mit „Die Schatzinsel“ (1883) und „Der seltsame Fall des Dr. Jekyll und Mr. Hyde“ (1886) wurde Stevenson weltberühmt. Er schrieb über das Gute und das Dunkle im Menschen – spannend bis zur letzten Seite.



## Unterwegs in Europa

Er reiste viel – zu Fuß, mit dem Fahrrad und immer mit Notizbuch. In Frankreich fand er Inspiration. Freunde und oft auch Erholung.

Grez-sur-Loire,  
Frankreich

„Die Welt ist  
so voll von einer  
Menge Dinge,  
ich bin sicher,  
wir sollten alle  
glücklich sein.“  
– R. L. Stevenson

## Schottland – Heimat und Inspiration

Die Landschaft seiner Kindheit kehrt immer wieder in seinen Geschichten zurück: stürmische Küsten, Nebel, alte Steine – und der Stolz der Menschen.

## Abenteuer in Amerika

In den USA lernte Stevenson viele Menschen kennen und sah die Gegensätze des Landes. Er liebte die Weite, die Städte – und die Freiheit des Reisens.

## Ein neues Zuhause: Samoa

1889 fand Stevenson auf der Südseeinsel Samoa ein Zuhause. Hier schrieb er, baute, pflanzte – und wurde von den Menschen sehr geschätzt.

## Sein Vermächtnis

Stevenson starb am 3. Dezember 1894. Doch seine Geschichten leben weiter – über Mut, Freundschaft, Gerechtigkeit und die Sehnsucht nach der Ferne.

## Werke, die bleiben

Die Schatzinsel (1883)  
Der seltsame Fall des Dr. Jekyll  
und Mr. Hyde (1886)  
Königsmat (Einführung, 1886)  
A Child's Garden of Verses (1885)  
Reise mit einem Esel durch die  
Cevennen (1879)

DER SELTSAME FALL  
DES DR. JEKYL  
UND MR. HYDE

# Das erste 'Treasure Island Universe'

Lange bevor es Blockbuster-Franchises, Cinematic Universes und Streaming-Spin-offs gab, hat Robert Louis Stevensons *Schatzinsel* (1883) eine Welt voller Abenteuer entfacht – und Generationen von Autoren, Künstlern und Träumern inspiriert.

Sequel, Prequel, Spin-off oder Fortsetzung – die Geschichten kehrten immer wieder zurück zu Piraten, verborgenen Schätzen und der Freiheit der See.

Willkommen im ersten 'Treasure Island Universe' – erschaffen mit Tinte, Fantasie und Fernweh.

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest – Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"



DAS O  
Robert L  
Scha



Jim Hawkins kehrt zurück.  
Neue Reisen, neue Gefahren –  
und die Legende lebt weiter.

## SPIN-OFFS

Neue Perspektiven, neue Helden,  
dieselbe Welt.



Andere Schiffe. Andere Helden.  
Doch überall: Piraten, Karten,  
Geheimnisse und die große See.

## EIN FU VIELE

Autoren, Illustrat  
bauten eine Welt, die i  
Abenteuer v  
Geschichten v  
Der Geist von Treas

## VERBUNDENE

Lose Fäden, starke  
Die Welt w



Orte. Schätze.  
Alles hängt zus  
Alles erzählt v

## KEINE FRANCHISE. NUR GESCHICHTEN, DIE

Treasure Island war n  
Es war der Beginn eines Univers

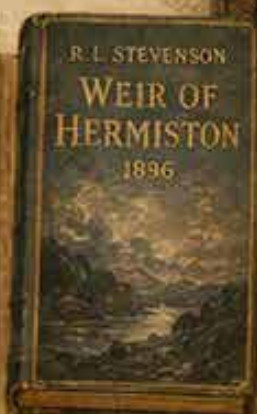
ORIGINAL  
R.L. Stevenson  
Schatzinsel  
1883

"Die Karte ist  
nur der Anfang.  
Die Geschichten  
sind endlos."



## PREQUELS

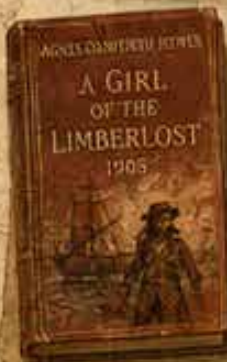
Die Geschichten davor –  
Ursprünge und Hintergründe.



Wer war Billy Bones wirklich?  
Was geschah vor der Karte?  
Die Vergangenheit ruft.

## FORTSETZUNGEN & HOMMAGEN

Immer neue Stimmen,  
immer neue Abenteuer.



Jede Generation schreibt ihre  
Version. Jede Geschichte ein  
neuer Kurs ins Abenteuer.



## GESCHICHTEN

ne Verbindungen,  
d größer.

GOLD  
ON  
NIOLA

Legenden,  
sammeln,  
weiter.

## KEIN MARKETING. DIE WELT EROBERTEN.

mehr als ein Buch.  
ums – und es wächst bis heute.

## CHAPTER 13

# Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

## The Man Who Can No Longer Control Himself

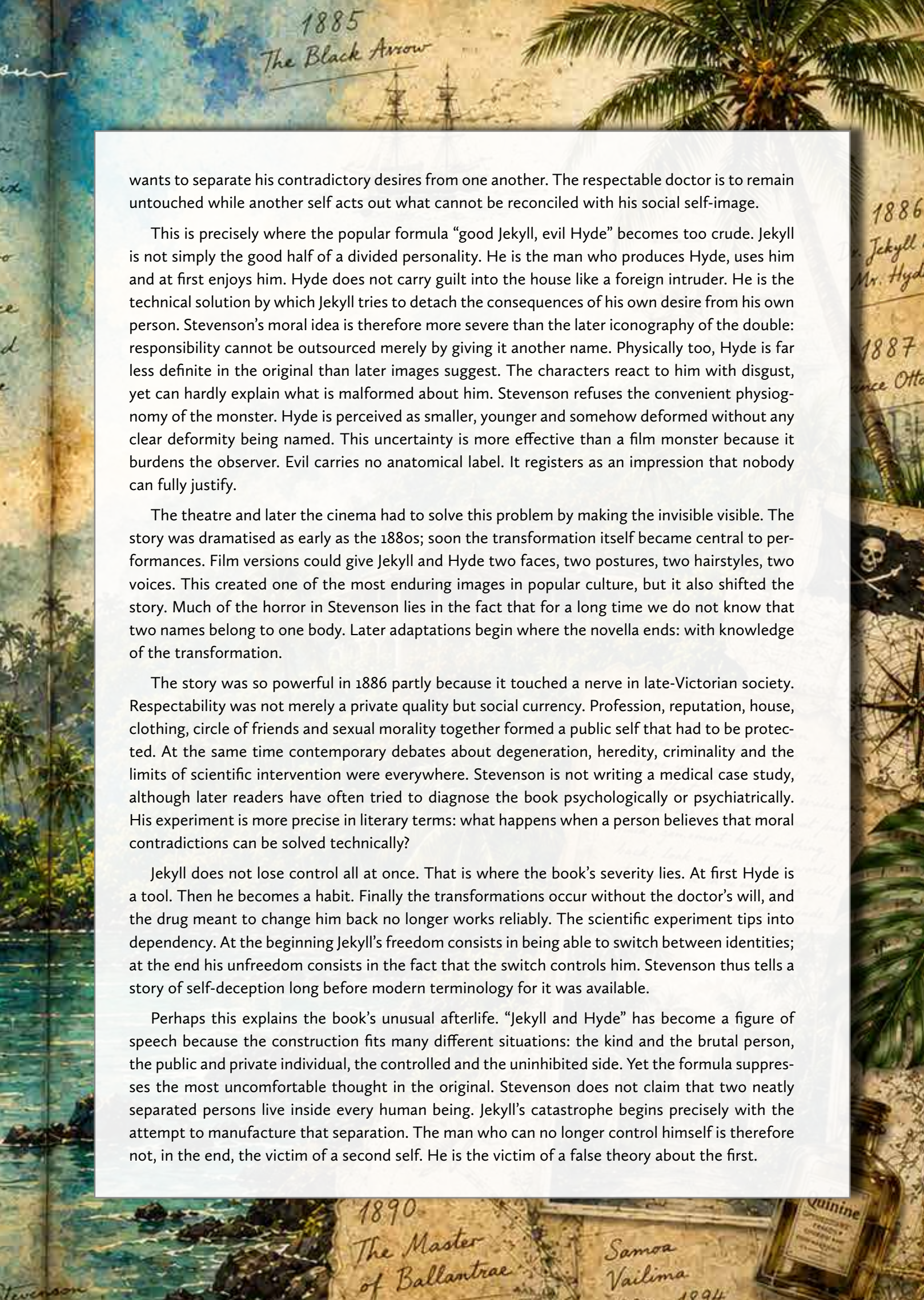
Anyone reading *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* today already knows the decisive trick. For a suspense story, that ought to be a disaster. Ever since theatre, film, advertising and everyday speech fused the two names into a fixed formula, everyone has known that Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde are the same man. Stevenson, however, wrote his tale for readers who did not possess that knowledge. It is therefore worth freeing the book for a moment from its most famous revelation. It then appears not as the story of a spectacular transformation, but as an astonishingly rigorous puzzle about respectability, desire and the limits of self-control.

The central figure of the first two thirds is in fact neither Jekyll nor Hyde. It is the lawyer Gabriel John Utterson, a dry, reserved man who prefers observing to judging. He hears of a small, repellent-looking man who tramples a child at night and then compensates the family with a cheque connected to the respected Dr Jekyll. Utterson suspects blackmail. He knows Jekyll's will, in which Hyde is named as heir, and begins to investigate. Stevenson thereby forces the reader into a very bourgeois form of horror. The uncanny first appears not as a monster, but as an irregularity in documents, relationships, houses and explanations.

London contributes to this effect as well. Jekyll's respectable house has a second entrance, an ugly door through which Hyde comes and goes. The same architecture carries two social meanings. At the front the distinguished doctor receives his friends; at the back disappears a man nobody likes to look at. Stevenson needs no long theoretical explanation for this. The city itself takes over the psychology. Façades, back yards, fog, locked cabinets and nocturnal streets form a moral topography in which public life and the hidden lie only a few steps apart.

The famous story of the book's creation almost fits the subject too well. Stevenson later said that crucial transformation scenes had come to him in a dream. Fanny remembered waking him from a nightmare and hearing him complain that she had interrupted a fine tale of horror. The further legend that Fanny fundamentally criticised the first draft and that Stevenson then burned the manuscript is much less certain; even the Stevenson Archive points out that no conclusive evidence exists for it. The chronology is firmer: Stevenson began work in late September 1885, completed the tale in October, and the book appeared from Longmans, Green on 9 January 1886. The speed of composition should not be confused with thoughtlessness. The finished work is too precisely constructed to be merely the transcript of a dream.

Its true artistic device lies in the delayed explanation. Only at the very end do we receive Lanyon's account of the transformation and then Jekyll's own statement. Stevenson thereby alters almost every earlier scene retrospectively. What had looked like the story of a victim and his blackmailer becomes the story of a man who has built a system in which he hopes to hand responsibility away. Jekyll's experiment does not begin because evil enters him from outside. He



wants to separate his contradictory desires from one another. The respectable doctor is to remain untouched while another self acts out what cannot be reconciled with his social self-image.

This is precisely where the popular formula “good Jekyll, evil Hyde” becomes too crude. Jekyll is not simply the good half of a divided personality. He is the man who produces Hyde, uses him and at first enjoys him. Hyde does not carry guilt into the house like a foreign intruder. He is the technical solution by which Jekyll tries to detach the consequences of his own desire from his own person. Stevenson’s moral idea is therefore more severe than the later iconography of the double: responsibility cannot be outsourced merely by giving it another name. Physically too, Hyde is far less definite in the original than later images suggest. The characters react to him with disgust, yet can hardly explain what is malformed about him. Stevenson refuses the convenient physiognomy of the monster. Hyde is perceived as smaller, younger and somehow deformed without any clear deformity being named. This uncertainty is more effective than a film monster because it burdens the observer. Evil carries no anatomical label. It registers as an impression that nobody can fully justify.

The theatre and later the cinema had to solve this problem by making the invisible visible. The story was dramatised as early as the 1880s; soon the transformation itself became central to performances. Film versions could give Jekyll and Hyde two faces, two postures, two hairstyles, two voices. This created one of the most enduring images in popular culture, but it also shifted the story. Much of the horror in Stevenson lies in the fact that for a long time we do not know that two names belong to one body. Later adaptations begin where the novella ends: with knowledge of the transformation.

The story was so powerful in 1886 partly because it touched a nerve in late-Victorian society. Respectability was not merely a private quality but social currency. Profession, reputation, house, clothing, circle of friends and sexual morality together formed a public self that had to be protected. At the same time contemporary debates about degeneration, heredity, criminality and the limits of scientific intervention were everywhere. Stevenson is not writing a medical case study, although later readers have often tried to diagnose the book psychologically or psychiatrically. His experiment is more precise in literary terms: what happens when a person believes that moral contradictions can be solved technically?

Jekyll does not lose control all at once. That is where the book’s severity lies. At first Hyde is a tool. Then he becomes a habit. Finally the transformations occur without the doctor’s will, and the drug meant to change him back no longer works reliably. The scientific experiment tips into dependency. At the beginning Jekyll’s freedom consists in being able to switch between identities; at the end his unfreedom consists in the fact that the switch controls him. Stevenson thus tells a story of self-deception long before modern terminology for it was available.

Perhaps this explains the book’s unusual afterlife. “Jekyll and Hyde” has become a figure of speech because the construction fits many different situations: the kind and the brutal person, the public and private individual, the controlled and the uninhibited side. Yet the formula suppresses the most uncomfortable thought in the original. Stevenson does not claim that two neatly separated persons live inside every human being. Jekyll’s catastrophe begins precisely with the attempt to manufacture that separation. The man who can no longer control himself is therefore not, in the end, the victim of a second self. He is the victim of a false theory about the first.

*R. L. Stevenson*

*Edinburgh 1886*

RLS

THE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON  
VIRTUAL MUSEUM

# Das Doppelgängerlabor

*Bournemouth, Jekyll & Hyde, London,  
Angst, Moral und Moderne.*

*Bournemouth, im Winter 1885/86.  
Hier, in unserer kleinen Wohnung  
am Strand, wird eine Idee zu  
einer Geschichte – und ein  
Experiment zur Reise in die  
dunkelsten Kammern der Seele.*

*R.L. Stevenson*

← 3 Die Schatzinsel

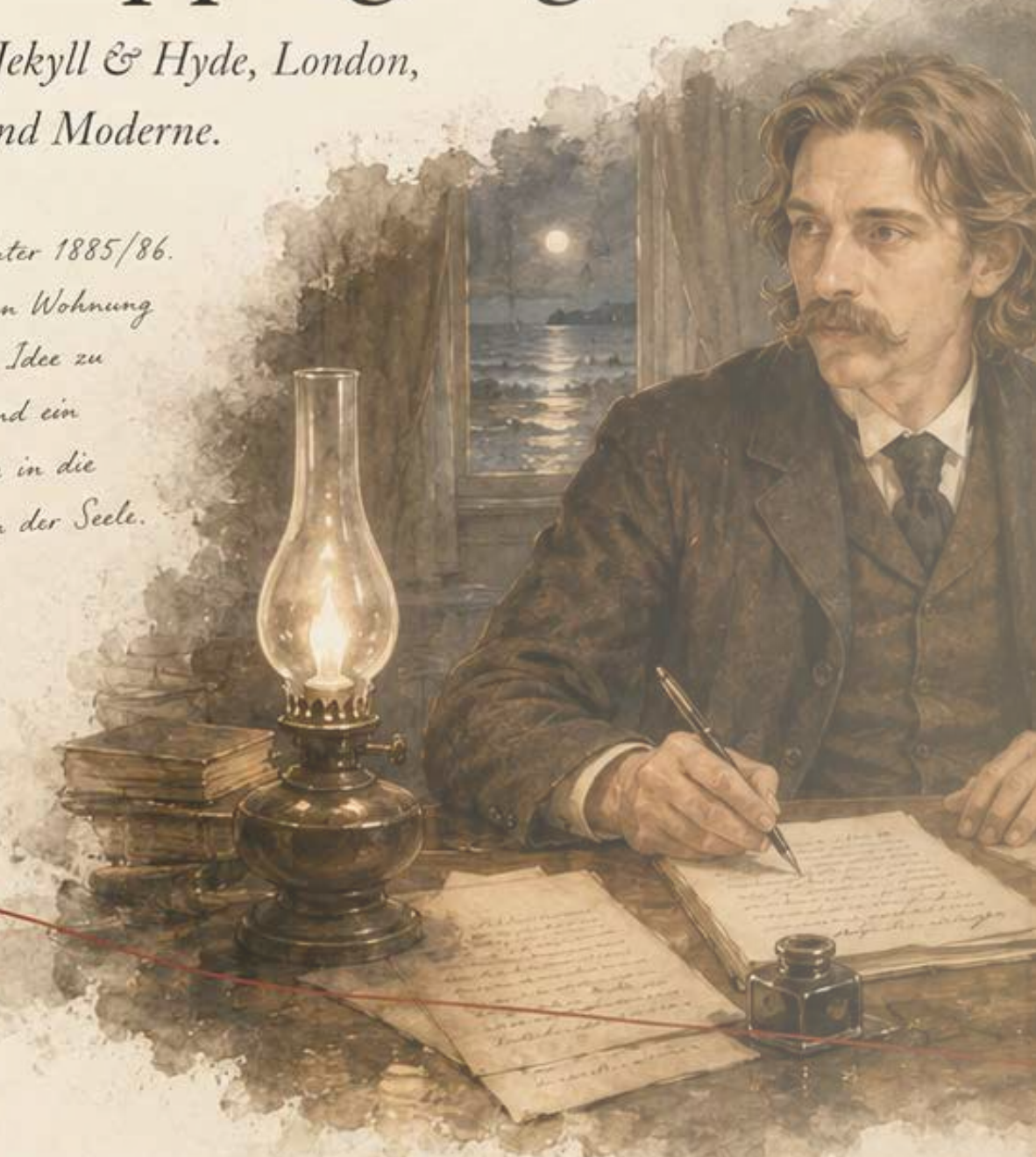


ZIEHEN SIE DIE KARTE  
ENTDECKEN SIE DIE STATIONEN

*for wonder life, &  
for imaginative  
when I am such  
in the world.*

*– R. L. Stevenson*

„Der Mensch



*Home is the sailor,  
home from the sea,  
and the hunter  
home from the hill.*

*- R. L. S.*



*Once printed,  
a story no longer  
belongs to  
its author alone,  
it belongs to  
every reader  
who takes it up.*

*- R. L. S.*

*h trägt zwei Seelen in der Brust. “*

*R. L. Stevenson*



## CHAPTER 14

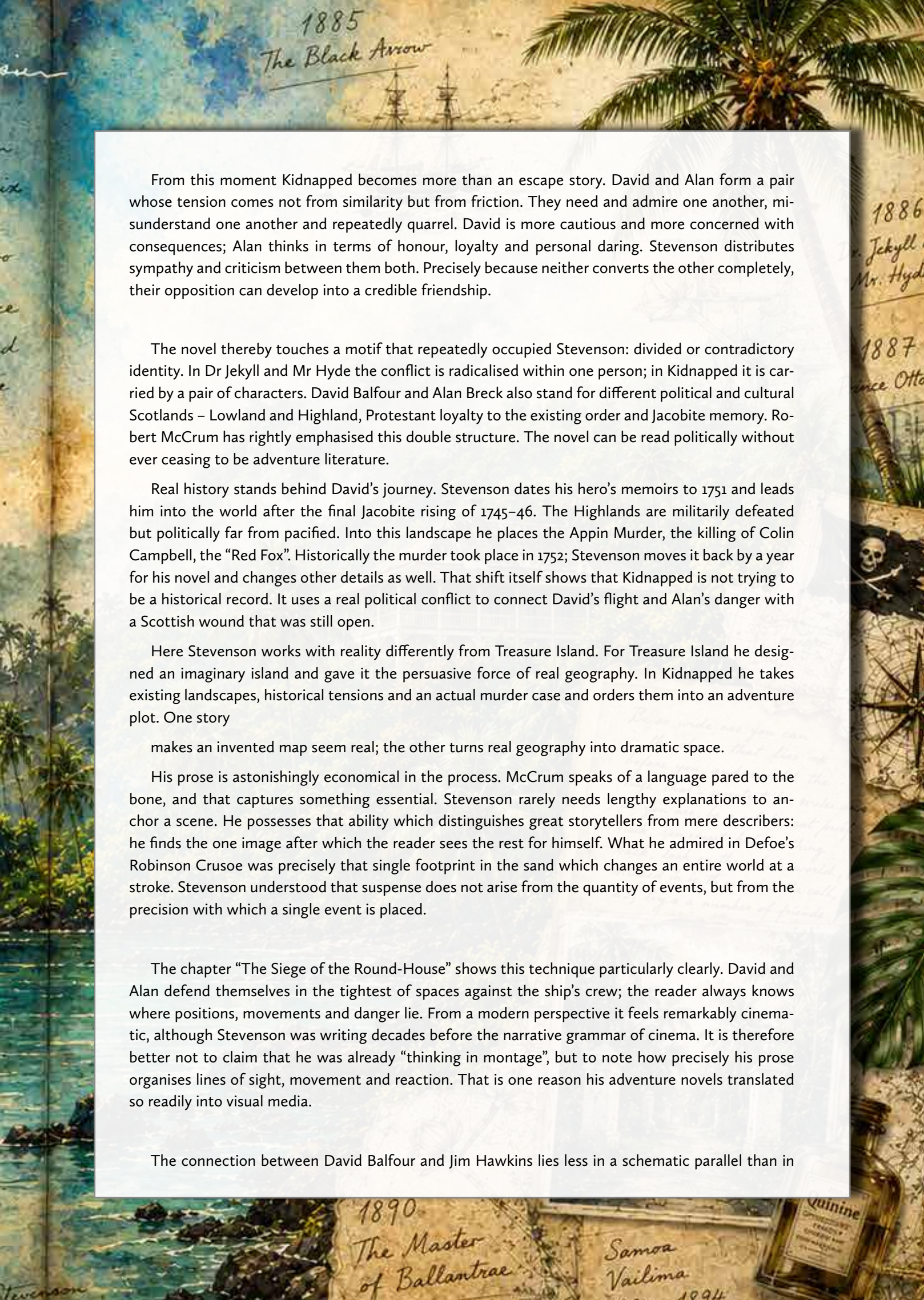
# Kidnapped

## Two Men, Two Scotlands – and Perhaps Stevenson's Most Perfect Adventure Novel

When a writer has achieved worldwide success with an adventure novel, the temptation is obvious: launch the same ship again. A new treasure, a new island, another pirate – and the audience would probably have taken its seats again with gratitude. In 1886 Robert Louis Stevenson did something far more interesting. He kept the engine of *Treasure Island* but left behind almost everything that had made that novel famous. No buried gold, no treasure map, no Long John Silver, no exotic island. Instead he sent a young man on a journey through his own country, through a Scotland scarcely less strange and dangerous than the tropical island on which Jim Hawkins had fought for his life three years earlier. The novel was called *Kidnapped*, and anyone who regards it merely as Stevenson's second great adventure for young readers underestimates one of his richest books. In his selection of the hundred best novels in English for the *Guardian*, Robert McCrum went further still: for him, not *Treasure Island*, not *Jekyll and Hyde*, but *Kidnapped* was Stevenson's masterpiece.

The story begins as simply as Stevenson liked great stories to begin. A young person leaves home. David Balfour is seventeen years old, his parents are dead, and he possesses little more than a hint that the Balfour family may not be as insignificant as his life so far has suggested. He sets out for the House of Shaws, the property of his uncle Ebenezer, and the house itself is already a warning. It is dark, neglected, half-built, a place that looks as though someone had decided halfway through its construction not quite to finish the family that was meant to live there either. Ebenezer Balfour receives his nephew not as a lost relative but as a danger. David soon understands that behind the inheritance lies a story nobody will tell him voluntarily. His uncle first tries to have him killed in an apparent accident and eventually sells him to a ship's captain who is to carry the boy to America. Within a few pages an inheritance dispute becomes a kidnapping. Stevenson needs no long runway. He opens a door, and the trap is already waiting behind it.

Up to this point *Kidnapped* could almost be a relative of *Treasure Island*. Once again a young man is torn from a secure world, once again he steps aboard a ship, once again he has to grow up faster than he would like. But then David meets the man who gives the novel its real tension. Alan Breck Stewart comes aboard like a character from another book: Jacobite, Highlander, soldier, fugitive, supporter of the Stuarts, vain, proud, politically uncompromising, irritable, charming and possessed of an almost unshakeable faith in himself. He wears a belt of gold, a French coat and a past that makes him suspect to the British authorities. To David Balfour, the sober Protestant Scot of the Lowlands, this man ought to represent everything foreign to him. That is exactly why Stevenson makes him David's companion.



From this moment Kidnapped becomes more than an escape story. David and Alan form a pair whose tension comes not from similarity but from friction. They need and admire one another, misunderstand one another and repeatedly quarrel. David is more cautious and more concerned with consequences; Alan thinks in terms of honour, loyalty and personal daring. Stevenson distributes sympathy and criticism between them both. Precisely because neither converts the other completely, their opposition can develop into a credible friendship.

The novel thereby touches a motif that repeatedly occupied Stevenson: divided or contradictory identity. In Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde the conflict is radicalised within one person; in Kidnapped it is carried by a pair of characters. David Balfour and Alan Breck also stand for different political and cultural Scotlands – Lowland and Highland, Protestant loyalty to the existing order and Jacobite memory. Robert McCrum has rightly emphasised this double structure. The novel can be read politically without ever ceasing to be adventure literature.

Real history stands behind David's journey. Stevenson dates his hero's memoirs to 1751 and leads him into the world after the final Jacobite rising of 1745–46. The Highlands are militarily defeated but politically far from pacified. Into this landscape he places the Appin Murder, the killing of Colin Campbell, the "Red Fox". Historically the murder took place in 1752; Stevenson moves it back by a year for his novel and changes other details as well. That shift itself shows that Kidnapped is not trying to be a historical record. It uses a real political conflict to connect David's flight and Alan's danger with a Scottish wound that was still open.

Here Stevenson works with reality differently from Treasure Island. For Treasure Island he designed an imaginary island and gave it the persuasive force of real geography. In Kidnapped he takes existing landscapes, historical tensions and an actual murder case and orders them into an adventure plot. One story

makes an invented map seem real; the other turns real geography into dramatic space.

His prose is astonishingly economical in the process. McCrum speaks of a language pared to the bone, and that captures something essential. Stevenson rarely needs lengthy explanations to anchor a scene. He possesses that ability which distinguishes great storytellers from mere describers: he finds the one image after which the reader sees the rest for himself. What he admired in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe was precisely that single footprint in the sand which changes an entire world at a stroke. Stevenson understood that suspense does not arise from the quantity of events, but from the precision with which a single event is placed.

The chapter "The Siege of the Round-House" shows this technique particularly clearly. David and Alan defend themselves in the tightest of spaces against the ship's crew; the reader always knows where positions, movements and danger lie. From a modern perspective it feels remarkably cinematic, although Stevenson was writing decades before the narrative grammar of cinema. It is therefore better not to claim that he was already "thinking in montage", but to note how precisely his prose organises lines of sight, movement and reaction. That is one reason his adventure novels translated so readily into visual media.

The connection between David Balfour and Jim Hawkins lies less in a schematic parallel than in

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

the way Stevenson binds youthful heroes to morally complicated older men. Both must learn to distinguish social standing from moral reliability. Long John Silver and Alan Breck could hardly be more different: Silver fascinates Jim through the dangerous combination of charm, care and betrayal; Alan becomes David's friend, but remains politically, temperamentally and morally an opposite whom David must challenge. Growing up in Stevenson does not mean copying the stronger man, but maintaining one's own judgement against the force of his attraction.

It is no accident that writers of generations as different as Henry James, Jorge Luis Borges and Seamus Heaney admired *Kidnapped*. Stevenson demonstrates here how pace and literary ambition can go together. The flight through the Highlands remains physically exciting while also becoming an examination of origin, loyalty and national identity. The supposed boys' adventure is not the opposite of the political novel but its popular form.

Robert McCrum's decision to include *Kidnapped* among his hundred best novels in English and to call it Stevenson's masterpiece is therefore less eccentric than it may initially seem. *Treasure Island* produced the stronger icons, Jekyll and Hyde the more famous cultural metaphor. *Kidnapped*, by contrast, combines with particular completeness what Stevenson could do as a storyteller: speed, landscape, historical tension, humour, violence, political ambiguity and a friendship that gives the plot its real depth.

After the worldwide success of *Treasure Island* Stevenson could easily have repeated its mechanics. In *Kidnapped* he did the opposite. He brought the energy of the adventure novel home and discovered in Scotland's landscape, history and internal divisions material that needed no exotic island. That is where the book's confidence lies: Stevenson did not repeat his success; he transformed it.

1888-1889

Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hale  
Illustrations



VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 10, 1879  
Held a wint of  
architecture  
yours truly

1885  
The Black Arrow

1886

Mr. Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887

Prince Otto

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be  
as you are, be a sailor; not  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

The Master  
of Ballantrae

Samoa  
Vailima

1894

Quinine

## The Darker Stevenson

### The Master of Ballantrae, Markheim, Olalla and the Moral Uncertainty of His Later Fiction

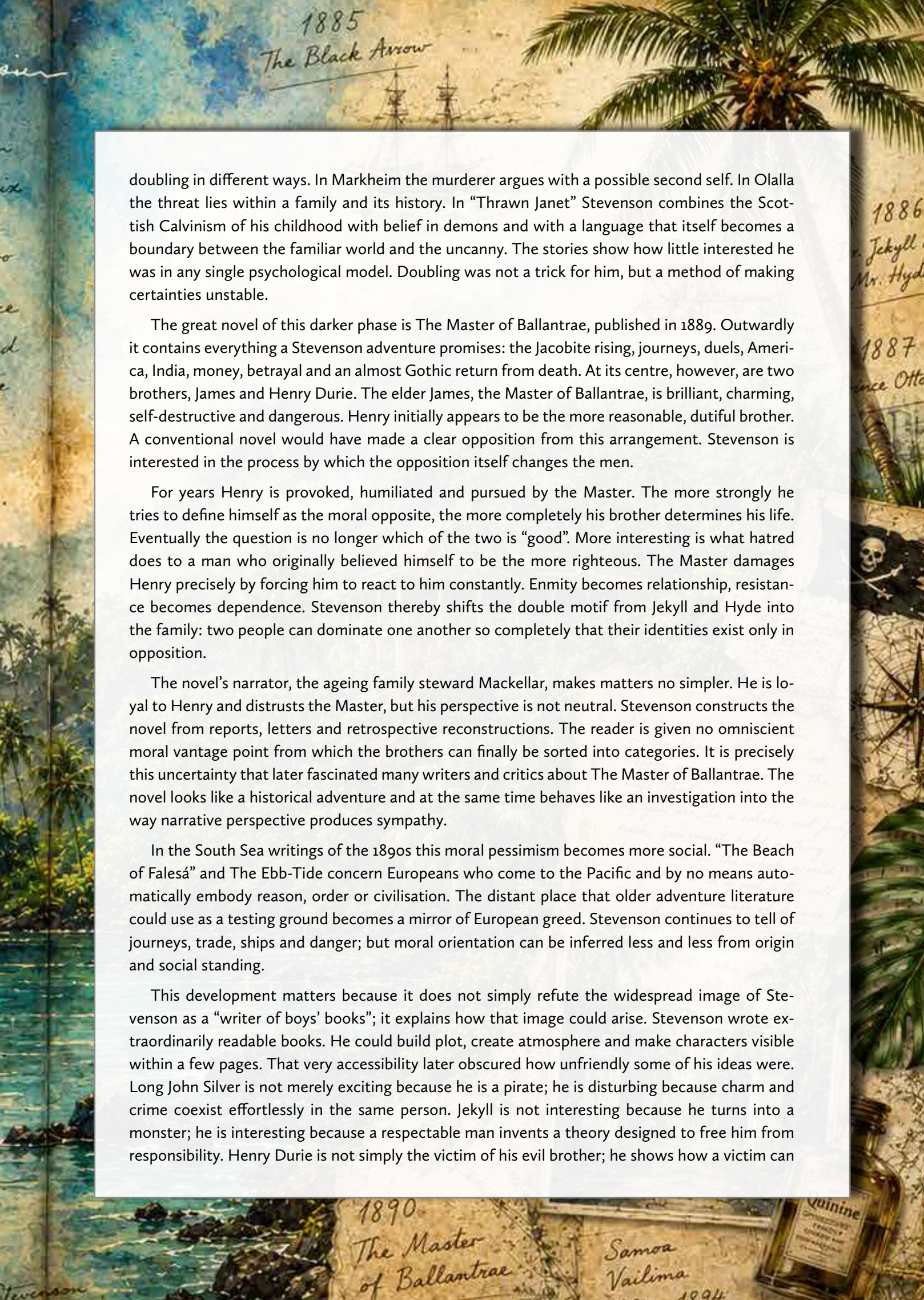
The success of *Treasure Island* secured Robert Louis Stevenson a place in the nursery. Some of his best stories do everything they can not to remain there. By the mid-1880s he was already writing tales in which murder, guilt, heredity, self-deception and moral disintegration became more important than the visible machinery of adventure. What is striking is not that Stevenson suddenly became “dark”. Violence and fear had been present in *Treasure Island* from the beginning. What changes is the extent to which adventure moves inward. The adversary no longer always stands on the far side of the forest or on the deck of a ship. He may be lodged in one’s own character, in a family, in a memory or in a decision made long ago.

“Markheim”, first published in 1885 and later included in *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables*, begins with a murder. Markheim visits an antique dealer on Christmas Day and kills him. Stevenson is hardly interested in the detective-story question of whether the murderer will escape. More important is the conversation that follows. Markheim encounters a mysterious figure who can be read as the devil, conscience, projection or something else. The figure offers him no simple route to redemption. Instead the conversation forces him to look at his own biography without the usual excuses. The real suspense grows from a question that recurs throughout Stevenson’s work: how long can a person continue telling a story about himself when his actions contradict that story?

In “Olalla”, also published in 1885, uncertainty is transferred to a Spanish family whose decline appears physical and moral at once. A wounded English soldier falls in love with Olalla, who lives in an isolated house with her mother and brother. The story draws on ideas of degeneration and heredity that intensely preoccupied the late nineteenth century. Today these biological and social interpretive patterns must be read with caution; they belong to their period. What remains literarily interesting, however, is Stevenson’s refusal of any simple diagnosis. Beauty guarantees no health, ancestry no moral order, love no salvation. The family seems like an organism in which past and body cannot be neatly separated.

“The Body Snatcher” likewise leads into a world in which social respectability and moral abyss stand close together. The story draws on the historical trade in corpses for anatomical schools and recalls the Edinburgh murders of Burke and Hare without simply retelling them. Medical progress requires bodies; the origin of those bodies becomes a question one would rather not examine too closely. Stevenson knew Edinburgh well enough to understand that the uncanny did not have to come from a distant castle. It could live behind the doors of an institution that considered itself rational and modern.

These darker stories are closely related to *Jekyll and Hyde*, yet they develop the problem of



1885  
*The Black Arrow*

1886  
Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde

1887  
since Otto

1890  
*The Master of Ballantrae*

Samoa  
Vailima  
1894

Quinine

Stevenson

doubling in different ways. In *Markheim* the murderer argues with a possible second self. In *Olalla* the threat lies within a family and its history. In "Thrawn Janet" Stevenson combines the Scottish Calvinism of his childhood with belief in demons and with a language that itself becomes a boundary between the familiar world and the uncanny. The stories show how little interested he was in any single psychological model. Doubling was not a trick for him, but a method of making certainties unstable.

The great novel of this darker phase is *The Master of Ballantrae*, published in 1889. Outwardly it contains everything a Stevenson adventure promises: the Jacobite rising, journeys, duels, America, India, money, betrayal and an almost Gothic return from death. At its centre, however, are two brothers, James and Henry Durie. The elder James, the Master of Ballantrae, is brilliant, charming, self-destructive and dangerous. Henry initially appears to be the more reasonable, dutiful brother. A conventional novel would have made a clear opposition from this arrangement. Stevenson is interested in the process by which the opposition itself changes the men.

For years Henry is provoked, humiliated and pursued by the Master. The more strongly he tries to define himself as the moral opposite, the more completely his brother determines his life. Eventually the question is no longer which of the two is "good". More interesting is what hatred does to a man who originally believed himself to be the more righteous. The Master damages Henry precisely by forcing him to react to him constantly. Enmity becomes relationship, resistance becomes dependence. Stevenson thereby shifts the double motif from Jekyll and Hyde into the family: two people can dominate one another so completely that their identities exist only in opposition.

The novel's narrator, the ageing family steward Mackellar, makes matters no simpler. He is loyal to Henry and distrusts the Master, but his perspective is not neutral. Stevenson constructs the novel from reports, letters and retrospective reconstructions. The reader is given no omniscient moral vantage point from which the brothers can finally be sorted into categories. It is precisely this uncertainty that later fascinated many writers and critics about *The Master of Ballantrae*. The novel looks like a historical adventure and at the same time behaves like an investigation into the way narrative perspective produces sympathy.

In the South Sea writings of the 1890s this moral pessimism becomes more social. "The Beach of Falesá" and *The Ebb-Tide* concern Europeans who come to the Pacific and by no means automatically embody reason, order or civilisation. The distant place that older adventure literature could use as a testing ground becomes a mirror of European greed. Stevenson continues to tell of journeys, trade, ships and danger; but moral orientation can be inferred less and less from origin and social standing.

This development matters because it does not simply refute the widespread image of Stevenson as a "writer of boys' books"; it explains how that image could arise. Stevenson wrote extraordinarily readable books. He could build plot, create atmosphere and make characters visible within a few pages. That very accessibility later obscured how unfriendly some of his ideas were. Long John Silver is not merely exciting because he is a pirate; he is disturbing because charm and crime coexist effortlessly in the same person. Jekyll is not interesting because he turns into a monster; he is interesting because a respectable man invents a theory designed to free him from responsibility. Henry Durie is not simply the victim of his evil brother; he shows how a victim can

Robert Louis Stevenson

Dear Sir,

himself be changed by years of enmity.

Stevenson's darker literature therefore does not lead out of adventure. It makes visible what was always present in his adventures. Danger in Stevenson rarely comes only from outside. The most compelling boundary does not run between heroes and villains, but through people who believe themselves to be more unambiguous than they are.

1881/82  
Young Folks  
Serializing in  
Young Folks  
Magazine

1883  
Erstaugabe  
Cassell & Co.  
London

1884  
Erte US-Ausgabe  
Roberts Brothers  
Boston

1888-1889  
Scribner's Magazine  
William Bracey Hole  
Illustrationen



VAILIMA  
SAMOA

Travels with  
a Donkey in  
the Cevennes  
1879



July 10, 1880  
Held a want of  
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1885  
*The Black Arrow*

1886

*Mr. Jekyll*  
*Mr. Hyde*

1887

*Prince Otto*

Be so wide as you can  
in the choice that lies  
before you; and would the  
life that is sweetest be; make  
as you are, be a sailor; not just  
back; you must hold nothing  
back; look on the whole world;  
studied in it is the end is the call  
25; try a number of friends

1890

*The Master*  
*of Ballantrae*

*Samoa*  
*Vailima*

1894

Quinine

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850 – 1894

„Ich schreibe die Schatzinsel  
für meinen Stiefsohn Lloyd –  
und für den Jungen in mir.“



## STEVENSONS LEBENSREISE

- 1850**  
Geboren in  
Edinburgh  
bei
- 1867**  
Studium der  
Rechtswissenschaft  
Rechtsanwalt
- 1873**  
Weltreise mit  
seiner Frau  
Fanny
- 1880**  
Samoa – Jahre  
der Ruhe und  
des Schreibens
- 1883**  
Die Schatzinsel  
erscheint am  
14.11.1883
- 1894**  
Stevenson  
stirbt in Vailima,  
Samoa.



## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON UND DIE ERFINDUNG DES PIRATENROMANS

Mit der Schatzinsel prägte Stevenson das Bild des modernen Piraten  
für Generationen. Die Geschichte von Mut, Verrat und Freundschaft  
wurde zum Urbild des Abenteuerromans.

„Fünfzig Mann auf des toten Mannes Kiste – Jo-ho-ho und 'ne Buddel voll Rum!“

## WARUM DIE SCHATZINSEL?

Stevenson wollte ein Abenteuer erzählen – voller Spannung, Moral und Humor. Er verband eigene Reiseerfahrungen, Seemannsgedichten und die Faszination für Karten, Schiffe und ferne Inseln.

## EINFLÜSSE UND INSPIRATIONEN

- Seefahrerliteratur und Logbücher
- Daniel Defoe: Robinson Crusoe
- Edgar Allan Poe: Spannung und Atmosphäre
- Volksballaden und Piratengeschichten
- Eigene Reisen und Begegnungen



## DIE SCHATZINSEL



Entstehung:  
1881–1882



Dauer:  
etwa 6 Wochen  
intensives Schreiben



Erstveröffentlichung:  
14. November 1883



Illustrationen:  
N. C. Wyeth



Widmung:  
Für Lloyd Osbourne

## TREASURE ISLAND



## DIE WELT VON PIRATEN UND ABENTEURERN





TREASURE  
ISLAND

R. L. STEVENSON

1883

WERK UND  
TREASURE ISLAND

Hier entstand eine der  
Abenteuergeschichten

Die Schatzinsel in vaillima geboren.

Mit Fanny Vandegrift Osborne.

R.L. Stevenson.



Erstausgabe 1883

D WELT  
ND • 1883

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850 – 1894

"Fiction is a truth inside  
the lie."





## DIE SCHATZINSEL

1883

Ein Junge. Eine geheimnisvolle Karte.  
Ein gefährliches Abenteuer.

Mit DIE SCHATZINSEL schreibt  
Robert Louis Stevenson das  
große Abenteuer der modernen  
Literatur – eine Geschichte über  
Mut, Verrat und die Sehnsucht  
nach Freiheit.

„Fünfzehn Mann auf des toten  
Mannes Kiste – Johoho und  
eine Flasche Rum!“



dem Abenteuer



Piraten & ihre Z...

“To travel  
hopefully is  
a better thing  
than to arrive.”

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

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Drei Bände, drei Zugänge, ein Schriftsteller  
von Weltformat: Diese Edition verfolgt  
Robert Louis Stevenson vom Lebensabenteuer  
über die Erfindung der Schatzinsel bis zu seiner  
Wirkung in Literatur, Theater, Film und Popkultur.



Alle



Drei Bücher zu R. L. Stevenson können kostenfrei heruntergeladen werden.

Eine editorische Entdeckungsreise für Leserinnen und Leser,  
die Literatur, Gestaltung und große Erzählwelten schätzen.

Wer die Montblanc Writers Edition schätzt,  
wird auch diese Stevenson-Reihe mit Vergnügen entdecken.

## Preview of VOLUME II

### THE ISLAND

"Treasure Island is not a place. It is an invention we have believed to be real for more than one hundred and forty years."

By the end of this first volume, we know Robert Louis Stevenson: the sickly boy from Edinburgh, the traveller, the essayist, the lover, the storyteller, the man who took a map drawn by a child and turned it into one of the most powerful myths of modern literature. And yet this is where the real story begins.

Volume II – THE ISLAND leaves Stevenson's writing desk behind and follows the Hispaniola out to sea. We set foot on the island with Jim Hawkins, hear the creaking of the masts, the whispering of men on deck, and the cry of a parrot that has long since become part of our cultural memory. We meet Long John Silver not as a caricature of a pirate, but as one of the most remarkable characters of the nineteenth century: genial and murderous, paternal and calculating, traitor and protector at once. And we will see why this man, of all people, has become more enduring than almost every hero in the novel.

The journey continues to Billy Bones and Blind Pew, to the Admiral Benbow, the apple barrel and the mutiny, to Ben Gunn, Captain Smollett and Dr Livesey, to rum, maps, black spots and buried chests. We ask what Stevenson invented and what actually existed. Where did the wooden leg come from? Why does the pirate have a parrot? Did pirates really bury treasure? And how could an adventure story for boys become the blueprint for almost every image of piracy that came after it?

As we travel on, the island keeps growing. It moves from the novel to the stage, into cinema, television, comics, musicals and computer games. Robert Newton gives Long John Silver the voice that would make generations say "Arrr!" Walt Disney turns Stevenson's world into a global visual memory. Illustrators such as N. C. Wyeth transform literature into colour. The Muppets take over the ship. Hollywood reinvents the pirate. And somewhere between Stevenson and Jack Sparrow, we can watch literature become mythology.

Yet behind all of this remains a question that feels surprisingly modern: Why do we still want to go to this island?

Perhaps because Stevenson understood something every great storyteller knows: the treasure is never the most important thing. What matters is who we become while searching for it.

### THE ISLAND

Robert Louis Stevenson and the Invention of the Pirate

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*Ein Leben in drei Reisen*

# Die Insel

*Robert Louis Stevenson und  
die Erfindung des modernen Abenteuers*

1886

*Jekyll  
Mr. Hyde*

1887

*Prince Otto*



Charles Luther Doerr

*herausgegeben von ellenwoods*

BAND II

1890

*The Master  
of Ballantrae*

*Samoa  
Vailima*

1894

Stevenson



**Preview of VOLUME III  
THE WORLD OF STEVENSON**

In the beginning there was Edinburgh. Then came France, the Cévennes, America, California, the South Seas and, finally, Samoa. Robert Louis Stevenson did not spend his life in one place, but along a line that carried him ever farther outward. Anyone who wants to understand his books must therefore look beyond his library. One must follow his journeys.

After the writer and after the island, Volume III – THE WORLD turns its attention to Stevenson the traveller: the man for whom a change of place was never merely a change of scenery, but a way of thinking. He travelled because his health demanded it, because love drew him away, because the confines of Victorian society seemed too narrow – and because he wanted to know how other people lived. Out of this restlessness came literature.

We first follow Stevenson through Europe. Through France, where he paddles a canoe along rivers and later crosses the Cévennes with a stubborn donkey. In inns, on country roads and at unfamiliar tables, he develops the voice that still makes his travel writing feel remarkably modern: curious, self-ironic, attentive to people and sceptical of certainties. Stevenson does not describe sights. He describes what a journey does to the traveller.

Then comes America. Fanny Osbourne, California, the exhausting crossing, poverty, illness, hope. Stevenson stakes everything on a life whose outcome he cannot know. There is something strikingly contemporary about that, too: this nineteenth-century writer does not treat his own biography as a fixed plan, but as a draft that may be rewritten at any moment.

And finally, the Pacific. Tahiti, the Marquesas, Hawaii, Samoa. What begins as a journey becomes a new existence. Stevenson encounters cultures that Europe liked to describe as exotic, but which he increasingly sees as political and social realities in their own right. He writes about colonial power, missionaries, traders, kings and conflicts. The adventure writer becomes the chronicler of a world whose rules he must first learn to understand.

In Samoa he builds Vailima, his house above Apia. The restless traveller becomes a host, a family man, a gardener, a political observer – and remains an author who works on his stories each morning. The Samoans call him Tusitala – the storyteller. It is perhaps the most fitting name Stevenson ever carried.

Volume III is therefore not simply a book about travel. It is about the question of whether a human being can design his own life. About illness and freedom, home and foreignness, love, curiosity and the courage to leave the familiar world behind. And it reveals a Stevenson who appears far more modern than the conventional image of a Victorian writer might suggest.

Because behind all the ships, hotels, railway carriages, tents and islands lies a larger question:

How much of the world does a person need in order to discover who they are? Stevenson's answer was radical. Sometimes you have to leave in order to arrive.

THE WORLD OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Volume III Band II

1885  
*The Black Arrow*

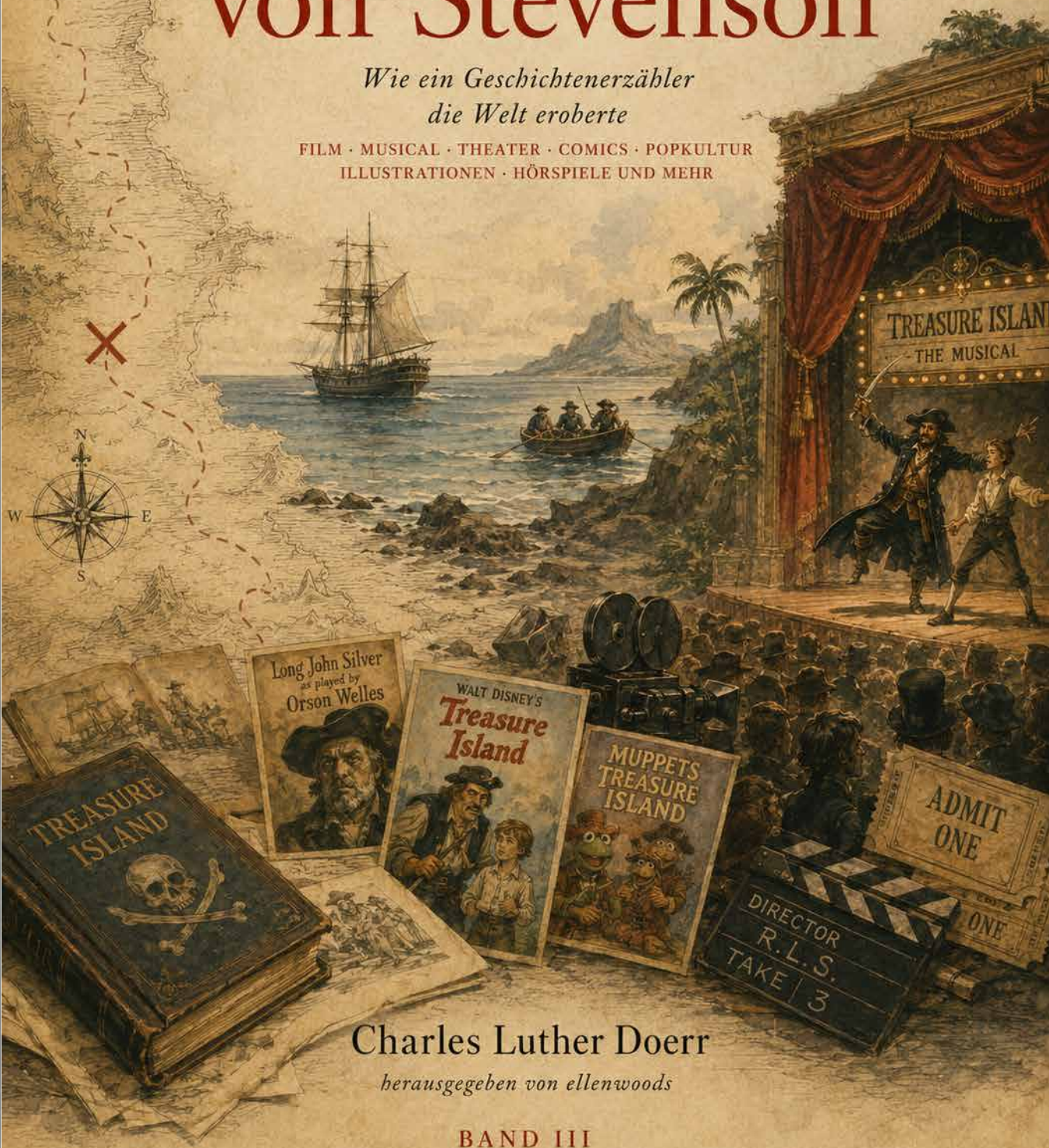
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

*Ein Leben in drei Reisen*

# Die Welt von Stevenson

*Wie ein Geschichtenerzähler  
die Welt eroberte*

FILM · MUSICAL · THEATER · COMICS · POPKULTUR  
ILLUSTRATIONEN · HÖRSPIELE UND MEHR



Charles Luther Doerr

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BAND III



**Every story deserves a writing instrument.**

For many years, ellenwoods has devoted itself not only to exceptional writing instruments but also to the people whose works have shaped the history of literature, art, and culture. Montblanc's celebrated Writers Editions are far more than luxurious fountain pens. They are tributes to authors whose ideas have endured for generations. Each edition takes up motifs from the life and work of the writer it honours, making literature tangible in a distinctive way.

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You will find ellenwoods in the heart of Munich, at Sendlinger Straße 62. Amid historic façades and the lively bustle of the old town, a place awaits you where writing still holds a special place—personal, knowledgeable, and animated by a genuine enthusiasm for the culture of the written word.

Perhaps your next story will begin there.

We look forward to welcoming you.

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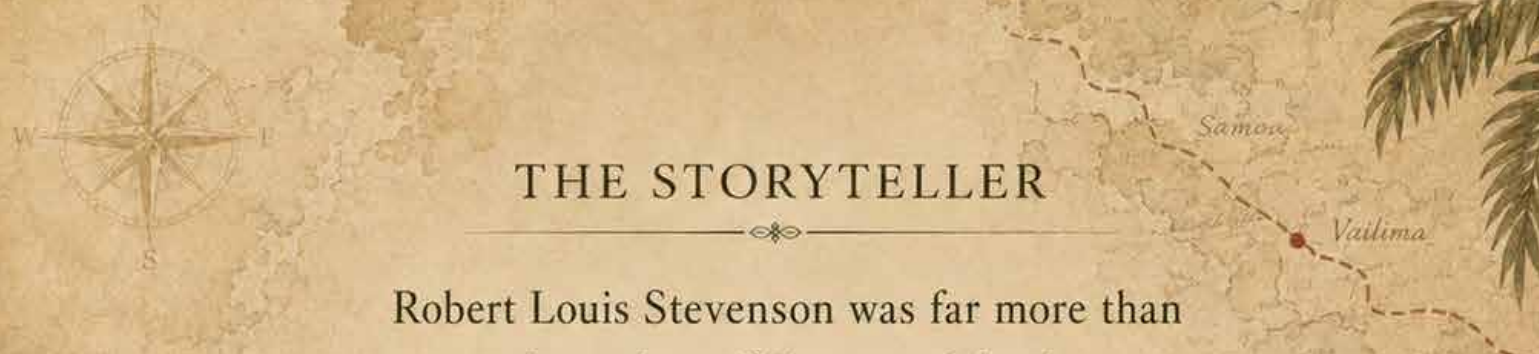
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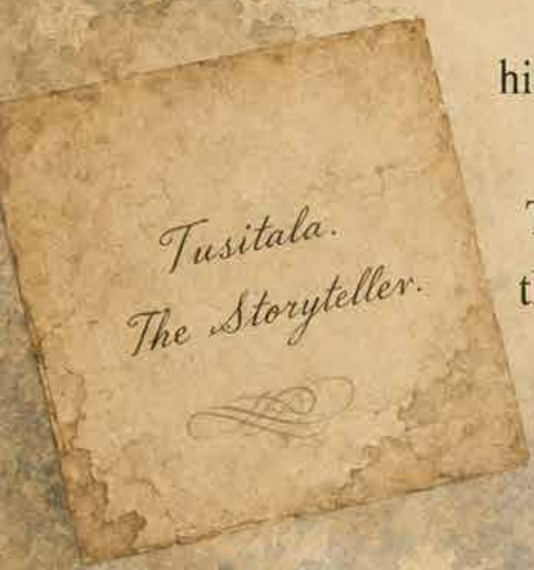
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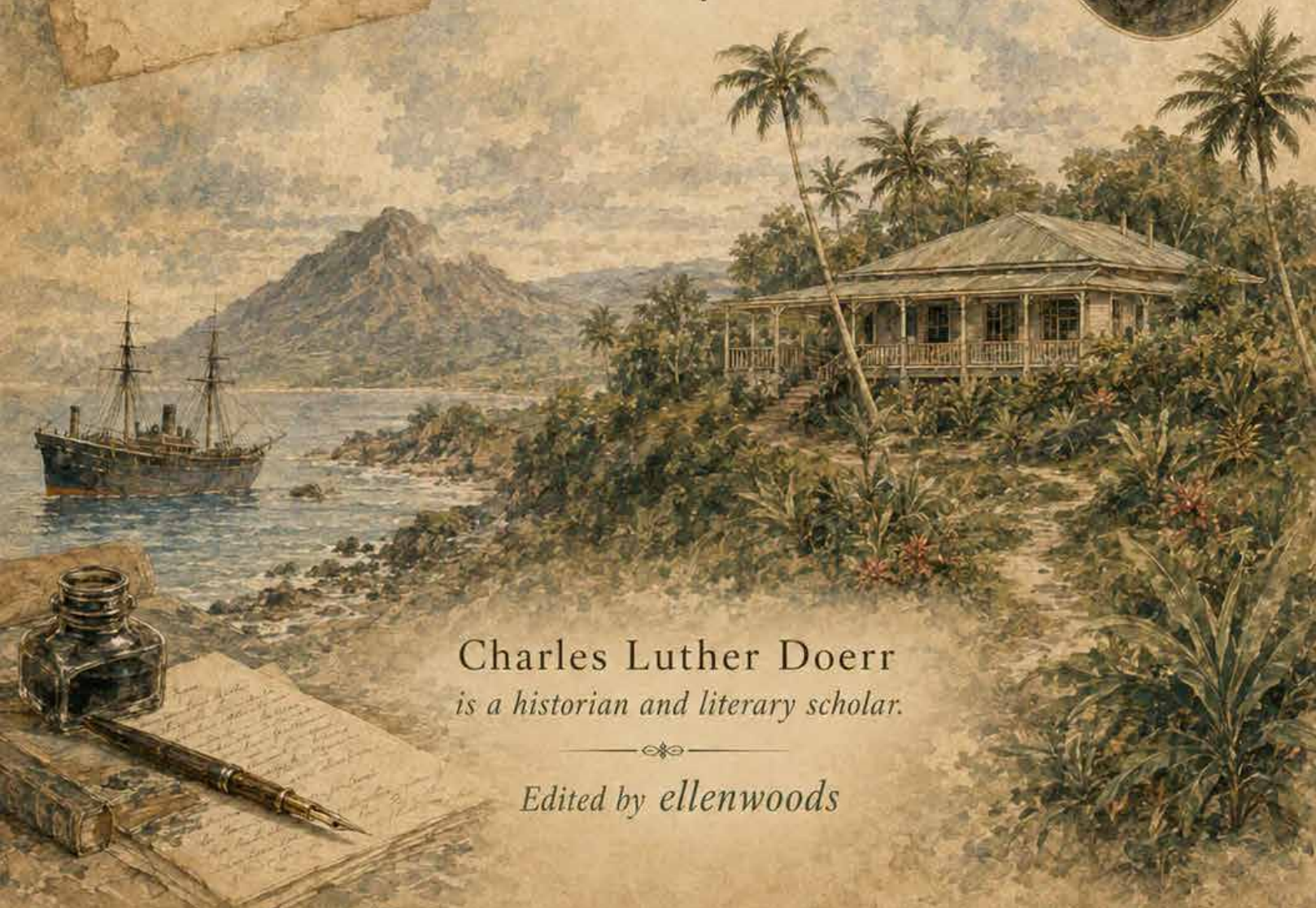


## THE STORYTELLER

Robert Louis Stevenson was far more than  
the author of *Treasure Island*.  
He was a traveler, essayist, novelist, dreamer,  
and restless observer of the world.  
From Edinburgh and the Cévennes  
to California and Samoa,  
his short life unfolded as an adventure  
of mind, style, and imagination.  
This volume follows Stevenson from  
the sick child of Edinburgh to the writer  
the Samoans called Tusitala —  
the storyteller.



*Tusitala.*  
*The Storyteller.*



Charles Luther Doerr  
*is a historian and literary scholar.*

*Edited by ellenwoods*