

- Robert Louis Stevenson - His life and works. -

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Then we see a man, who is fired by genius, full of bright thoughts and with a clear and faultless style of expressing them. a man who not only writes of men but is a man himself. and who when we read him makes us to wonder if such perfect expression can come from mortal man: when, I say, we see such an one succumb to disease in the prime of his manhood and in the harvest time of his genius. after he is taken from us we realize how great has been our loss. and wonder if after all he was not some spirit who was here but for a little time to brighten up this gray old world of ours by telling us of the customs and manners of a different people.

Such a man was Robt. Louis Stevenson and with his death on the third of last December Scotland lost another of her list of famous writers and the world one of its most valuable contributors to its storehouse of knowledge and romance.

He was one of the few writers whose personality reached through his books to his readers and it is through them that we get at the real life and character

of the man. His stories tell us of physical intellectual and moral fight. The idea of conflict always interested him. He thus reveals his own character and life which was a continual struggle with disease.

He was born, as many of our other great men were under very ordinary circumstances. His father being a light-house builder while his grand father was the inventor of the famous revolving light. Robt. Louis had the advantages of the schools of his native city - Edinburgh. and also of the ministry at that place. It was the desire of his father that he should take up somewhat the same line of work as he himself had done but much to his disgust and much against his will the willful one took up literature as a profession, and he made it a profession in the strictest sense of the word. He did not believe that art was inherited but that it had to be learned like any other trade. This developed a style which many think too literary and self conscious. too artificial. but nevertheless he gained a consummate mastery of a singularly ornate style - I

bird with words" he said and while he did not bliss in the spontaneity of art or in inspiration he developed by incessant practice and mimicry of great models a style peculiarly his own - one which is pleasing and might serve as a model itself for learners. Force, and beauty, of expression.

He has also been criticised for being too much with words and that, unlike Dickens and Thackeray he lacked experience which can only come by being in direct contact with his fellow men. If this is true it is probably due to his forced isolation from all human society on account of his health.

By some he is objected to on the ground that his scenes are laid in unfamiliar places and that the customs and habits of his characters are not like our own - that people like to read of what is familiar to them. This is true. Stevenson has nothing to do with the drudge and the nature of routine. everything with him must be impulse and instinct. He paints the upheaval of men's spirits - He was not a woman hater for he made

a good and loyal husband to a true and loving wife but his choice of characters forbade his introducing them as they were not adapted to his style of writing.

They and love affairs find but little place in his writing but for all that they are interesting and even fascinating for the simple reason that they are different from the common run of books and from our every day existence - and when one reads he wants to be interested as well as instructed - Life's peaceful employment and woman's sphere he does pass by but he rivets the "day-at-times" by glimpses into an unknown world - a world strange and different from their own. he introduces new scenes, and people with different customs - he works upon the imagination and it is here that he shows the mastery of his craft by the brilliancy of his style and the distinctness with which he portrays the emotions and incidents in the lives of his characters. This does not necessarily create in the reader a roving Gypsy-like disposition dissatisfied with his life and surroundings but rather makes

him to appreciate the advantages which he enjoys and also lets his imagination have full sway by following a master of the English language.

In Stürmer's books of travel one looks rather to interest than to geographical exactness.

Nearly every type of character may be found in his books.

In "Prince Otto" we have the political schemer, the man without decision, and the fond plotting woman. In "Kidnapped" fugitives from justice - seekers of sensation in the "Suicide Club" - traders in "South Sea Tales" - speculators in "The Wreckers" - Purveyors of transcendental medicines in "The Story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". People violently and boisterously in love in his earlier tales.

In "Treasure Island" we have a story of piracy and this novel reaches the high water mark of technical perfection among the romances of this century. Who having read this thrilling narrative will ever forget it? Stürmer is at his best in the portrayal of a villain and in "Treasure Island" there are any number of them so he is at his

best all of the time - The story opens
 with a description of "Admiral Bentou", which
 is an inn, and its curious lodger, who is
 an old sea captain and pirate - Jim
 Hawkins the innkeeper soon tells the story.
 The descriptions are most vivid and
 the analysis of the emotions, feelings, and
 motives of the characters is perfect. As an
 example of wicked, cunning, underhand
 plotting and deceit the sea cook "Silas"
 is an admirable example. While in
 direct contrast is placed "Smollet", the
 captain of the crew in search of the treasure,
 who is the embodiment of honor, patience,
 kindness and yet withal far seeing and
 just. Jim Hawkins who is a mere lad
 and in reality the hero of the tale seems
 a little over drawn but Stevenson succeeds
 in making us all admire the boy with
 which he overcame all the obstacles and
 in finally succeeding in gaining his
 purpose. The description of the mutiny
 and the attack of the mutineers is one of
 the best in English. He introduces one rather
 striking character and one which only a
 master would undertake to handle. Ben Gunn

a man who had been isolated on Treason Island for a number of years. Stevenson seems almost a wizard when he comes to describe this man — a man with thoughts and ideas different from any one else caused by his long banishment from human society.

Some object to the book — saying that it puts unsafe ideas into the heads of the young and untaught and gives a charm to the life of a pirate in their eyes that seems wholly desirable. But it rather shows up the life of the people engaged in piracy in such a light as to make it any thing but desirable. All of the hideous sides of such a life are shown and contrasted with the lives of pure, good, true, and noble men. and rather makes the reader look to something higher.

Though it is his stories that are at present attracting most attention and that are condemned by some and commended by others — it is perhaps as an essayist who wrote novels that wrote novels that future generations will know him.

In his "Studies of Men and Books" he shows

his power as a critic as well as his power to analyze human character.

The moralizing vein in his nature from the Scotch finds vent in his essays.

Stimson preached optimism and believed that cheerfulness and gentleness cause morality and that these are the perfect virtues. These his virtues are very conspicuous in his own life - He roamed the wide world over in search of health and on his journeys suffered much - refined by suffering his kindness and gentleness to the natives of Samoa made them almost to worship him as is shown by their treatment during his final illness and the maternal way in which they bore him on their shoulders to the summit of Pala Mt. and there in the land where he had worked with them and for them and where he had found temporary relief from his intense suffering they kindly and maternally laid to rest their most devoted friend and champion and the greatest novelist of his time.

Critics have been at work on the

problem as to what part of his work was due to the efforts of his step-son Lloyd Osbourne, with whom he wrote several books. But, as yet, they have been unable to detect just what his influence was. But this young writer's work will be carefully watched for and studied so it appears from time to time to see if the spirit of his great master rests upon him and also to ascertain if possible what his part was in Osbourne's work.

He also wrote several plays with Mr. Huby but they do not take well where set. "Dr. Jekyll" and "Mr. Hyde" has been set as a play and is quite a success.

His poetry was also unsuccessful. It was too artificial and he followed too closely after his models. Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson. "Underwoods" it is claimed, is the most imitative of any established author's work. Osbourne realized this himself and often referred to it.

He has been accused of plagiarism in that he followed Washington Irving whom he studied and greatly admired. His work has however a distinct characteristic.

color of its own. Thackeray was his one superior in finish and felicity of manner.

In summing up and reviewing his work his name will be handed down in literature as an essayist and a novelist. When his work has been tried by the fire of time it will come out bright and shining and Robt. Louis Stevenson will have become a classic.