TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

THE CHILDREN'S POETRY OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Texas Christian University in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English.

May, 1953

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study of the children's poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson is the product of two years of study and research. The results have been made possible by the help of many people, without whose interest and assistance this thesis could not have been completed.

Most of all I owe deepest gratitude to Dr. Troy C. Crenshaw for leading me into the path of children's literature and for his assistance as advisor to my thesis; and to Mrs. Bertie H. Mothershead for encouragement and helpfulness in obtaining copies of rare materials. To many others I owe great thanks: to Dr. L. Moffitt Cecil for his help in choosing Robert Louis Stevenson as my subject; to all my teachers, and especially to Drs. Corrie W. Allen, Paul Dinkins and Warren W. Wood for their interest in my work; and to the library staff of Texas Christian University for their assistance. I am thankful as well for the moral support of an ardent Stevensonian, Mr. J. C. Furnas.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL

The Place of Stevenson in the History of Children's Poetry

Most readers of Stevenson cherish their memories of A Child's Garden of Verses, and can recall some of the poems that have stayed forever fresh in their minds. To many people it is surprising that the poetry from the Garden is the first genuine children's poetry.

If Robert Louis Stevenson's intent had been to follow along in the paths already set in poetry for children, he would still have had few predecessors, that is, writers of poetry for children, to draw upon. Before the poets conceived the idea of writing expressly for children, the English child adopted for himself such poetical pieces as suited his purposes, from Shakespeare and Bunyan, for instance.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is considered the first poet to write verses especially for children,[1] to try

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[1] Matthew Prior's poetry on childhood also belongs to this period. However, poetry about childhood has no place in this chapter. To the category belongs Wordsworth, who is considered the poet of childhood (A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood (New York, 1922), p. 299.) The Wordsworthian touch is mostly concerned with deifying the child, with eulogizing him, while describing his every activity from infancy to school age. His poetry is a play more upon the feelings created in adults as they watch the state of being called childhood than upon the emotions that are to be found in children themselves.

to appeal to them through the medium of poetry. Controversially, he was also a party to the typical nonconformist attitude of his period toward children. It was an attitude of rejection rather than acceptance--to love children more was to love God less. In a poem titled "The Hazard of Loving the Creatures" Watts expresses this feeling:

> Nature has soft and powerful bands,
> And Reason she controls;
> While children with their little hands
> Hang closest to our souls.
>
> Thoughtless they act th' old Serpent's part;
> What tempting things they be!
> Lord, how they twine about our heart,
> And draw it off from thee![2]

His "Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth" recognizes their importance in the observation, "the children of the present age are the hope of the age to come."[3] The discourse is, of course, didactic, attempting to mold children into miniature idealizations of

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[2] Ibid., p. 221.

[3] Isaac Watts, The Improvement of the Mind; to which is added a Discourse on the Education of Children and Youth (London, 1837), p. 285.

their elders. His own precocity (he could read Latin at the age of five, and wrote devotional pieces at the age of eight) may have made him feel himself an authority on the rearing of children: early the child must learn the importance of religion, and early his natural powers must be turned to constructive works, with evils guarded against, and the education of a daughter differing from that of a son.

In spite of these non-conformist views, Watts appreciated the interests of children, and recognized that they could also get some pleasure from learning. His book of Divine Songs for Children (1715) is highly moralizing, to be sure, but some of the Songs still live, precursors of real children's poetry. Still known, but not by its title, "Against Idleness and Mischief," is:

> How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour,
> And gather honey all the day
> From every opening flower!

And his "Cradle Song" will not be forgotten:

> Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber;
> Holy angels guard thy bed;
> Heavenly blessings without number
> Gently falling on thy head.

Isaac Watts deservedly holds the place of first poet for children because of his willingness, or his condescension, as Samuel Johnson discerns, "to lay aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion"[4] for children. His place is best summarized by Babenroth:

> Severely limited as he was by his antecedents and environment, Watts is not altogether a bigot in his life or in his songs for children.[5]

Next in chronological sequence is William Blake (1757-1827). Written and engraved and printed by himself, Blake's Songs of Innocence did not make a deep impression when they first appeared in 1789, mainly because of the limited printing. Many years were to pass before his genius as a poet for children was recognized. His verse is the "first clear musical note in poetry for children."[6] Although his poems

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[4] Samuel Johnson, "Watts," Lives of the English Poets (Oxford, 1905), III, 307.

[5] Babenroth, op. cit., p. 228.

[6] Annie E. Moore, Literature Old and New for Children (Boston, etc., 1934), p. 281.

were not written expressly for children, they are, nevertheless, poetry for children because "it was contrary to Blake's nature to have the child's natural desires fettered and bound."[7] His poetry speaks with the voices of children, and interprets the thoughts and understanding of small human beings. He wrote "as from the heart of a child,"[8] from a baby reaching out to unhappy orphan chimney sweeps.

Blake was a "Singer of Songs,"[9] with boys and girls singing his songs, and none of them greatly concerned with moralistic principles. His attitude was the child's attitude wherein no moralistic bogies entered. He believed in freedom, "cried out in fiery aphorism at the sight of caged and suffering animals, and of children cribbed, confined or cruelly treated."[10] He frequently used the animal motif, and "The Tiger"

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[7] Babenroth, op. cit., p. 273.

[8] Ibid., p. 284.

[9] May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (New York, 1947), p. 133.

[10] Moore, op. cit., p. 283.

is the best known of his animals:

> Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
> In the forests of the night,
> What immortal hand or eye
> Could frame thy fearful symmetry.

Blake also wrote Songs of Experience (1794) in the same vein, but the Innocence poems are more appealing to children. Some good children's pieces, however, come from the Songs of Experience, as "The Tiger" quoted above and the "Introduction":

> Piping down the valleys wild,
> Piping songs of pleasant glee,
> On a cloud I saw a child
> And he laughing said to me:
>
> "Pipe a song about a lamb!"
> So I piped with merry cheer.
> "Piper, pipe that song again;"
> So I piped; he wept to hear.

Blake's place in the history of poetry for children is also summarized by Babenroth:

> In so far as he has advanced from negative protest to a positive vision, he is one of those who, beginning with the liberalizing Shaftesbury, lead to Herbart in pedagogy and Stevenson and Field in poetry. They left far behind them the traditional didactic spirit and looked upon the child with a feeling heart and clear understanding that were, as in Blake, inspired by respect and reverence for child nature.[11]

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[11] Babenroth, op. cit., p. 278.

Blake left little impression on the poets for children who immediately followed him. The two sisters, Ann and Jane Taylor (1782-1866, 1783-1824) "are credited with being the first English authors to write wholly for children."[12] They were literary descendants of Watts and borrowed from the Divine and Moral Songs, distilling the moralistic at its worst, but never achieving the serene beauty of some of his best religious poetry. Some of their verses did venture further into the child's world of play, with an occasional verse unmarred with moral lessons. Their first published book of verses, Original Poems for Infant Minds (1804), received such popular acclaim that other books followed, Rhymes for the Nursery (1806) and Hymns for Infant Minds (1808). No one has ever forgotten "The Star":

> Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
> How I wonder what you are!
> Up above the world so high,
> Like a diamond in the sky.

In the history of English poetry for children, Edward Lear (1812-1888) is a predecessor of Stevenson,

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12 Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 102.

his first Book of Nonsense being published in 1846, four years before Stevenson's birth. Lear's poetry, however, in spite of the delight it affords, belongs to the province of nonsense verse instead of children's poetry. After Mother Goose, he is "chronologically the first poet with which to conjure laughter."[13] Gosse feels that his nonsense appeals more to the grown-up child, and thus his verse is appreciated more by parents than by children.[14]

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), like Blake, is a Singer of Songs, "who chose at times to turn her talent toward writing very simple little poems for young children."[15] Her verses in Sing Song (1872) are very high in tonal quality, and "provide the young child with an ideal introduction to lyric poetry because they lead him imperceptibly from the patter of nonsense verse to the subtle and lovely cadences of authentic poetry."[16] Christina Rossetti is Blake's "direct successor in all respects except chronological

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[13] Ibid., p. 79.

[14] Edmund Gosse, Questions at Issue (London, 1893), p. 246.

[15] Moore, op. cit., pp. 294-295.

[16] Arbuthnot, op. cit., pp. 140-141.

order,"[17] and is at the same time a reflector of the nonsense of Mother Goose.

Kate Greenaway represents another upward step toward genuine children's poetry, although hers is still poetry for children, undistinguished as verse, but written with artless gaiety, the charm of her own illustrations making up for what the verses lack.[18] With Kate Greenaway we are brought right up to Robert Louis Stevenson and the time of A Child's Garden of Verses. The incident that tied the two writers together and started Stevenson's composing of children's poetry is variously related by his biographers, but such accounts are all based on Graham Balfour's report of Stevenson, who in 1880, having read Greenaway's newly published Birthday Book for Children, decided that the rhymes would not be hard to do.[19]

The children in Kate Greenaway's paintings are familiar to many today, but there is not much of her

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[17] Moore, op. cit., p. 295.

[18] Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 103.

[19] Graham Balfour, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1901), I, 299.

verse that is still remembered. A bit of her verse which does survive and which has a right to be remembered is

> Little wind, blow on the hill-top
> Little wind, blow down the plain;
> Little wind, blow up the sunshine,
> Little wind, blow off the rain.

The total amount of poetry for children which has survived from these predecessors of Stevenson is slender, a few gems of verse for children from each of these poets will probably live forever. Kate Greenaway's verses are the least recalled of the group, and the critics who claim that Stevenson imitated her[20] have only as their foundation Balfour's report that Stevenson had his idea of writing poetry for children from having glanced through a book of Greenaway's.

In summary, it may be mentioned that the foundation of poetry for children upon which Stevenson stood historically includes the following: Watts, Blake, the Taylors, and--to a certain extent--Greenaway. Writers of books on children's literature are generally agreed upon calling these verses poetry for children.

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[20] Cf. particularly J. A. Steuart, Robert Louis Stevenson (Boston, 1924), I, 394.

A clear statement of the differences between the two types of verse is as follows:

> . . . two kinds of poetry have been written for children. The first is truly children's poetry, in which the writer catches the child's point of view and expresses what the child would say in the way he would say it if he had the power. Such is the child's own poetry. The second is poetry for children, written by the adult, either interpreting his own childhood from his present point of view or setting forth what he wants the child to see or appreciate; this last is likely to be didactic.[21]

It is at this point that Stevenson emerges, the first writer of children's poetry, the "poet laureate of childhood"[22] with no real contender until A. A. Milne appeared. Nor did Stevenson write only a few gems of children's poetry; he wrote it repeatedly and "with a sureness of touch that shows him a true interpreter of the child."[23] His is children's poetry, with the genuineness and high quality of all poetry, not just nonsense poetry nor lyric poetry nor songs.

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[21] Edna Johnson, Carrie E. Scott, and Evelyn R. Sickels, Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston, 1940), p. 862.

[22] Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 105.

[23] Johnson et al., op. cit., p. 863.

A hundred years lapse between Isaac Watts and Robert Louis Stevenson, and a like number between Stevenson's birth and the present generation. There are those who might argue that Stevenson is too old-fashioned for today's children. If such is true, then Mother Goose, too, is outdated. The test is not in the age of composition but in the timelessness of appeal. And one cannot deprecate the substance because it contains a few words that have no meaning for children today. This may not matter greatly. Little Miss Muffett's tuffet has no meaning to children, but it is still one of the first rhymes even the smallest child learns to lisp. Appreciation of poetry does not depend upon word definition, a true critic will say. What does matter is that the poetry be genuine and contain the imagery of the child. Children in their discerning way are loyal to the best. There were only a few writers of poetry for children before Robert Louis Stevenson; there are only a few writers of children's poetry since Stevenson. It is hard to find many that are as good as A. A. Milne and Walter de la Mare. Edward Lear belongs to the region of nonsense verse, almost a suspended

figure, living in a world all his own. There are few critics who will choose children's poets other than Stevenson, Lear, and Milne.[24] There are those critics who will even go so far as to call Stevenson "the world's greatest writer of verse for children."[25]

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[24] Clifton Fadiman has added himself to the list of critics on children's literature by his article in Holiday, XII, August, 1952.

[25] C. M. Curry and E. E. Clippenger, Children's Literature (Chicago, 1920), p. 380.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL

A. The Child of the Child's Garden[1]

The life of Robert Louis Stevenson reads like one of his own adventure stories, and the color of his ancestral background is no less than the color and charm in any one of his writings.

After several generations of a family of engineers succeeded each other as builders of beacons for the lost at sea, there appeared a writer--and a poet--who preferred to pursue the art of literature rather than the art of architecture. The love of man and the love of nature have an affinity; they could not help but be the foremost urge in the family of Stevensons, builders of the Bell Rock Lighthouse,[2] an engineering

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[1] Three biographies are used as the main sources for this chapter: Rosaline Masson, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1923); Graham Balfour, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1901); and J. C. Furnas, Voyage to Windward; The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1951).

[2] The Bell Rock Lighthouse has been the subject of painting and poetry. The English painter, J. M. W. Turner, in the painting "Bell Rock Lighthouse," has caught the effect of savage seas, darkening skies of bleak Scottish shores with the lighthouse caught in a steady light. Sir Walter Scott wrote a few lines of verse in the Lighthouse album at the time of his visit in 1814. Southey's ballad "The Inchcape Rock" celebrates the legend by which the area gained the name of Bell Rock.

feat extraordinary even by today's standards. With generations in such close contact with the sheer forces of nature such as the building of lighthouses entails, it would seem natural that a son should appear who would express these forces of nature and this love of humanity in words. The poet gives his own reasons for working with literature instead of engineering lighthouses:

> Say not to me that weakly I declined
> The labours of my sires, and fled the sea,
> The towers we founded and the lamps we lit,
> To play at home with paper like a child.
> But rather say: In the afternoon of time
> A strenuous family dusted from its hands
> The sand of granite, and beholding far
> Along the sounding coast its pyramids
> And tall memorials catch the dying sun,
> Smiled well content, and to this childish task
> Around the fire addressed its evening hours.[3]

Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson was born November 13, 1850, at Edinburgh and named after his two grandfathers, an engineer and a minister. Seemingly a robust baby at first (like the other Stevensons), the child soon developed pulmonary chronic illnesses that were to remain a part of his being all his life. The climate of

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[3] Stevenson, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson (South Seas ed.; New York, 1925), XIV, 99.

Edinburgh--the grit, and chill and salty haar[4]--combined with an inherited weak chest (handed down from his Balfour grandfather to his mother), probably made inveterate these illnesses. An over-developed consciousness of illness in the Stevenson household, aided not only by a delicate mother, but by Balfour uncles who were doctors, caused much more concern over a sickly child than was ordinary.

Into this household, with a mother too often ill to attend a sick child, came a nurse, a young woman from the Highlands with the "lovely, utterly Scottish"[5] name of Alison Cunningham. The full nature of the Scot was hers: loyal, a covenanter, unwavering in Calvinistic theology, clear-skinned and stiff-backed. The child Louis called her "Cummy," a name that is still known to well-versed readers of A Child's Garden of Verses. Cummy called her little charge "Lou."

Stevenson's biographers have been inclined to take an attitude toward his life and developing his early

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[4] Masson, op. cit., p. 25.

[5] Furnas, op. cit., p. 9.

childhood accordingly. He was either the product of precocity, or of ill health, or of his well-to-do Victorian environment. None of these, however, expresses the life of a child as a child must see it. Most of us forget that life to small human beings is very beautiful. Robert Louis Stevenson seems to have been endowed with the miracle of not just remembering but reliving those incidents of a child's life which are important to children.

Autobiography abounds in all of Stevenson's works; it is possible to reconstruct much of his early life from his Child's Garden, or as Balfour states, to use "direct evidence from the best possible source."[6] Stevenson himself referred to the Verses in a letter to Alison Cunningham as "this little book, which is all about my childhood."[7]

A child's home is his world; its walls are the

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[6] Balfour, op. cit., I, x.

[7] Stevenson, Letters, II, 120. The Letters are actually volumes XXIX to XXXII of the South Seas edition of Stevenson's Works, but since the Letters are subdivided into volumes I to IV, those numbers will henceforth be used in this study.

boundaries in which he is safe; its activities cover all his needs: food, sleep, love, and play. All these components are to be found in A Child's Garden of Verses.

The bleak and chill Edinburgh weather was not wholly excluded from well-to-do homes. Louis's birthplace, at 8 Howard Place, was given up in 1853 for a more prosperous house at 1 Inverleith Place, whose chill and damp probably worked inroads upon his health. In another three years the family moved to a more sunny home at 17 Heriot Row.

Louis's memories, it is to be assumed, are more concerned with the Heriot Row house, but he did retain earlier memories of the Inverleith Place house, where the elements seeped in,

> Whenever the wind is high,
> All night long in the dark and wet.
> (IX. "Windy Nights")

He speaks of this home thus:

> I remember with particular pleasure running upstairs in Inverleith Terrace with my mother--herself little more than a girl--to the top flat of this our second house, both of us singing as best we could "We'll all go up to Gatty's room, to Gatty's room," etc., ad lib.; Gatty

> being contracted for Grandpapa, my mother's father, who was coming to stay with us. I mention that because it stands out in stronger relief than any other recollection of the same age. I have a great belief in these vivid recollections; things that impress us so forcibly as to become stereotyped for life have not done so for nothing.[8]

Stevenson's mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour Stevenson, was a sweet-natured young woman, "fair and tall, gentle, shrewd, and graceful, with great gray eyes,"[9] who was playmate as well as mother to her only child. Scottish economy would be a rule of the master of the house,

> You must still be bright and quiet,
> And content with simple diet.
> (XXVII. "Good and Bad Children")

But when the master was away, mother and son indulged in dishes the father disliked and helped themselves "to the top of the cream instead of stirring it to thrifty uniformity."[10] The child of the Garden saw in his mother the person who administered to his comforts. And Lou, when tucked into bed, and

> When my mama puts out the light,
> (IV. "Young Night Thought")

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8 Balfour, op. cit., I, 37.

9 Furnas, op. cit., p. 5.

10 Ibid.

might close his eyes with a "Goodnight, my jewelest of mothers."[11] Her last thought each night was of him:

> Then, when mamma goes by to bed,
> She shall come in with tip-toe tread,
> And see me lying warm and fast
> And in the Land of Nod at last.
> (XLI. "North-West Passage")

Louis's father, Thomas Stevenson, was stern and religious and loving, and with a humor that did not always show, but was deep-rooted nevertheless. It was the father who dubbed the baby "Smout," a Scots word for baby salmon.[12] The father was not much in evidence in the Victorian household, but when the rage of fever was too much for the little boy, his father would, as Louis said, sit "by my bedside and feign conversations with guards or coachmen or innkeepers, until I was gradually quieted and brought to myself."[13]

To the child of the Garden his father was a big figure, an awesome man:

> And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be.
> (XXX. "The Lamplighter")

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11 Balfour, op. cit., I, 32.

12 Ibid., I, n., 35.

13 Ibid., I, 40.

He was a wonderful man of whom a little boy could feel proud. There was a direct bearing between this "richness" and the goodness, for

> The child that is not clean and neat,
> With lots of toys and things to eat,
> He is a naughty child, I'm sure--
> Or else his dear papa is poor.
> (XIX. "System")

His father was also a person the child could approach to solve a problem. A stone that the child found became a treasure which must be submitted to the father's inspection:

> For though father denies it, I'm sure it is gold.
> (The Child Alone: V. "My Treasures")

The child was not a bit abashed at the sturdy practicality of the father.

The third and only other person of importance in the home of the Child's Garden was the nurse. Alison Cunningham entered the Stevenson household as Lou's nurse, and there she stayed; her life was dedicated to the child in her care and had a fitting reward in Stevenson's reciprocal dedication of the Child's Garden to her. She is also the Alison Hastie of David Balfour and the Kirstie of Weir of Hermiston. As Furnas expresses it, "Her love for him and his for her were clear as her own complexion."[14] Each of her highly

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[14] Furnas, op. cit., p. 9.

personal characteristics left its impression upon the boy, the "bad" ones no less than the good. The first lines of the dedication of the Child's Garden sum up what she did for him:

> For the long nights you lay awake
> And watched for my unworthy sake:
> For your most comfortable hand
> That led me through the uneven land:
> For all the story-books you read:
> For all the pains you comforted:
> For all you pitied, all you bore,
> In sad and happy days of yore.
> ("To Alison Cunningham; From Her Boy")

A detailed analysis of each of the items reveals what they totaled up to: For the long nights you lay awake . . . Most of all, it would seem, Stevenson remembered the illnesses that beset him as a child. Colds (although they were not called such in those days) beset him continually. Night time was a particularly hard time for him, his temperature rising and the unrest of sleeplessness aggravated by the noise of stormy weather. Cummy stayed always awake, keeping the boy's mind off his pains by telling him stories. Some of her tales were not designed to produce sleep. Well versed in Scottish traditions, she sang country ballads, repeated the "inspired doggerel"[15] of the Metrical

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15 Ibid., p. 10.

Versons of the Psalms, read aloud from the Bible and Bunyan, and told the blood congealing tales of the Covenanters. It is no wonder then, that Lou saw terror in the night when the stormy wind gained the imaginative figure of a horseman:

> All night long in the dark and wet,
> A man goes riding by.
> Late in the night when the fires are out,
> Why does he gallop and gallop about?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> By at the gallop he goes, and then
> By he comes back at the gallop again.
> (IX. "Windy Nights")

For all the story books you read . . . It was not only the Bible and Bunyan that Cummy read to her little charge. Stevenson's sense of the romantic could have been early gained from the "penny-paper serials written for the Victorian servant,"[16] a type of "sinful" entertainment with such titles as "The Baronet Unmasked," "So and So Approaching the Mysterious House," "The Discovery of the Dead Body in the Blue Marl Pit," and "Dr. Vargas Removing the Senseless Body of Fair Lilias."[17]

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[16] Ibid., p. 12.

[17] Stevenson, "Popular Authors," Works, XXVII, 27.

There were Cummy's favorite authors as well, "M'Cheyne and others, Presbyterians of the straitest doctrine," and "the covenanters, Wodrow, Peden, and others."[18]

For all the pains you comforted: for all you pitied, all you bore, in sad and happy days of yore . . . Stevenson was grateful for the total of all the good that his nurse had been to him. Considered in the present day, there was the grim also. Her nature, over-rich in superstitions, enlivened the boy's imagination, true, but also accentuated the fears that came with the night: the nightmares, the feverish deliriums. The nurse also imposed a stiff religiosity upon the child. His mother recorded in her "Baby Book" how Lou was expected to react patiently to prayer at the age of thirty months. Furnas suggests that the mother viewed this with amusement rather than alarm.[19] The effect, however, was left upon the small boy and his night fears, not upon the man and his opinions. Fear, in children, is sometimes an ecstasy, making a moment a concentration of emotion, an intensity of living that grown-ups lose through the gain of reasoning. Stevenson calls it being "not quite frightened, but in a state of miserable

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[19] Furnas, op. cit., n. 24, p. 494.

exaltation."[20]

Cummy's teaching and admonishing and their effect appear in the Child's Garden, moreover:

> And I must off to sleepsin-by, and not forget my prayer.
> I know that, till to-morrow I shall see the sun arise,
> No ugly dream shall fright my mind, no ugly sight my eyes.
> (XX. "A Good Boy")

The night--it is always the night that takes on the characteristics of the mysterious:

> The haunted night returns again.
> (XLI. "Northwest Passage")

But Cummy was not wholly stoical; she could be merry and lively, sing and dance, and read to "her boy" with great dramatic feeling,[21] and as Lou remembered, "more patient than I can suppose an angel."[22]

It might be said that there were two children in the Child's Garden, the child alone and the child who had cousins to play with, a division that some writers have noted.[23] In his father's big house at Edinburgh

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[20] Stevenson, Letters, I, 213.

[21] Balfour, op. cit., I, 43.

[22] Masson, op. cit., p. 35.

[23] Laura L. Hinkley, The Stevensons: Louis and Fanny (New York, 1950), p. 10.

the "Child Alone" had as his focal point the surroundings of a mature world, his parents and his nurse, all bounded by indoor walls. On the other hand there was the child among children, escaped to the country, with the other children to play with in the whole out-of-doors. The main body of poems in the Child's Garden are concerned with the happier situation, the events of the out-of-doors. Placed after these poems, as if secondary, are a group titled, "The Child Alone," which are not less important, nor less indicative of child nature. All children (if we could but remember) have their inner resources which they draw upon as the situation demands. Robert Louis Stevenson had many demands made upon these inner resources because of illness and lack of youthful companionship. There is more poetic expression because it dipped a little deeper down into the well of emotion. That it does not seem exemplary of true child thought is also because it goes a little farther beyond what a normal child has to reach for in an environment of other children and plenty of play.

Even then, play is most important to the child

alone. Lacking playmates, he will invent one, as in "The Unseen Playmate":

> When children are happy and lonely and good
> The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood.
> (The Child Alone: 1, "The Unseen Playmate")

His place in the scheme is clearly understood:

> Nobody heard him and nobody saw,
> His is a picture you never could draw,
> But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,
> When children are happy and playing alone.

And best of all, he cooperates wonderfully in all the play the child alone might invent:

> He lies in the laurels, he runs on the grass,
> He sings when you tinkle the musical glass.

He understands child philosophy:

> He loves to be little, he hates to be big,
> 'Tis he that inhabits the caves that you dig;

and even adds a little child psychology:

> 'Tis he when you play with your soldiers of tin
> That sides with the Frenchmen and never can win!

He is friend, playmate, and protector:

> 'Tis he, when at night you go off to your bed,
> Bids you go to your sleep and not trouble your head;
> For wherever they're lying, in cupboard or shelf,
> 'Tis he will take care of your playthings himself!

The playthings of the lonely child, as with any child, are of great importance; they are the stepping-stones to the real things. There are ships:

O it's I that am the captain of a tidy little ship,
Of a ship that goes a-sailing on the pond;
And my ship it keeps a-turning all around and all about;
But when I'm a little older, I shall find the secret out
How to send my vessel sailing on beyond.
(The Child Alone: II. "My Ship and I")

And there are blocks:

What are you able to build with your blocks?
Castles and places, temples and docks.
(The Child Alone: VI. "Block City")

There are the toys that have only intrinsic value:

These nuts, that I keep in the back of the nest
Where all my lead soldiers are lying at rest,
Were gathered in autumn by nursie and me
In a wood with a well by the side of the sea.

This whistle we made (and how clearly it sounds)
By the side of a field at the end of the grounds.
Of a branch of a plane, with a knife of my own,
It was nursie who made it, and nursie alone!

The stone, with the white and the yellow and grey,
We discovered I cannot tell how far away;
And I carried it back although weary and cold,
For though father denies it, I'm sure it is gold.

But of all my treasures the last is the king,
For there's very few children possess such a thing;
And that is a chisel, both handle and blade,
Which a man who was really a carpenter made.
(The Child Alone: V. "My Treasures")

Worlds of his own are developed by the child alone:

Down by a shining water well
I found a very little dell,
No higher than my head.
The heather and the gorse about
In summer bloom were coming out,
Some yellow and some red.

I called the little pool a sea;
The little hills were big to me;
   For I am very small.
I made a boat, I made a town,
I searched the caverns up and down,
   And named them one and all.

And all about was mine, I said,
The little sparrows overhead,
   The little minnows too.
This was the world and I was king;
For me the bees came by to sing,
   For me the swallows flew.

The grown-ups, however, had a way of projecting themselves into this world:

. . . . . .

At last I heard my mother call
Out from the house at even fall
   To call me home to tea.

And I must rise and leave my dell,
And leave my dimpled water well,
   And leave my heather blooms.
Alas! and as my home I neared,
How very big my nurse appeared,
   How great and cool the rooms!

(The Child Alone: III. "My Kingdom")

There was the vastly important world of story-books, of course, available to the child alone, and he made great use of them especially during the times when other kinds of play must be put aside, as in winter:

Summer fading, winter comes--
Frosty mornings, tingling thumbs,
Window robins, winter rooks,
And the picture story-books.
(The Child Alone: IV. "Picture Books in Winter")

And in the evening when stories can become realities:

> At evening when the lamp is lit,
> Around the fire my parents sit;
> They sit at home and talk and sing,
> And do not play at anything.
>
> Now, with my little gun, I crawl
> All in the dark along the wall,
> And follow round the forest track
> Away behind the sofa back.
>
> There, in the night, where none can spy,
> All in my hunter's camp I lie,
> And play at books that I have read
> Till it is time to go to bed.
> (The Child Alone: VII. "The Land of Story-Books")

Summers meant not only sunshine and warmth and better health to the child of the Child's Garden; it meant visits to his grandfather's house, Colinton Manse, in the suburban area near Edinburgh, at the foot of the Pentland Hills. There young Lou came in good working and playing proximity with his many cousins, most of them Balfours. He could also forget disagreeable things, as one of his essays reveals:

> Out of my reminiscences of life in that dear place, all the morbid and painful elements have disappeared. I remember no more nights of storm; no more terror or sickness. Beyond a thunderstorm when I was frightened, after a half make-believe fashion, and huddled with my cousins underneath the dining-room table; and a great flood of the river, to see

> which my father carried me wrapped in a blanket through the rain; I can recall nothing but sunshiny weather . . . . There is something so fresh and wholesome about all that went on at Colinton, compared with what I recollect of the town, that I can hardly, even in my own mind, knit the two chains of reminiscences together; they look like stories of two different people, ages apart in time and quite disimilar in character.[24]

The Manse, to Robert Louis Stevenson, was a "great and roomy house"[25] dramatically situated between the Water of Leith and the Kirk cemetery.

At Colinton there were mainly two grown-ups to supervise the brood of children that were generally visiting from many parts of the world. Lou's grandfather was, of course, there, almost an unapproachable dignitary and one to be reverenced, who had a "beautiful face and silver hair."[26] He hardly came down into the child's world, and "had no idea of spoiling children, leaving all that to my aunt."[27] There is no mention of him in the Child's Garden.

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[24] Balfour, op. cit., I, 47.

[25] Stevenson, "The Manse," Works, XIII, 60.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 61.

The most important person in this child's world was Aunt Jane:

> Chief of our aunts--not only I
> But all your dozen of nurselings cry--
> What did the other children do?
> And what were childhood, wanting you?
> (Envoys: III. "To Auntie")

Jane Whyte Balfour had been a wit and a beauty in her youth, but a tragic accident on horseback rendered her nearly deaf and blind. All her energies were then turned into the management of her father's home and all the children that went with it.[28] She was very much in evidence around the Manse, and her presence was felt by "her children":

> Whenever Auntie moves around,
> Her dresses make a curious sound;
> They trail behind her up the floor,
> And trundle after through the door.
> (XV. "Auntie's Skirts")

The children at Colinton Manse played a large part in the Child's Garden. There were Tom and Willie, Johnnie, Mary Jane, Peter, Maria, Henrietta and Minnie. Lou had his favorite cousins, remembered by Envoys to the Verses. Bob, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson, was his favorite, and also remained Lou's best friend in

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[28] Balfour, op. cit., I, 53.

later life. But, strangely enough, although many other cousins are named in the Child's Garden, Bob is not. Bob Stevenson was more a part of Lou's life in Edinburgh. We know that Bob is the cousin in the essay "Child's Play,"[29] an essay which could easily enough be called an introduction to the Child's Garden. In "Child's Play" the cousins make play of eating:

> When my cousin and I took our porridge of a morning, we had a device to enliven the course of the meal. He ate his with sugar, and explained it to be a country continually buried under snow. I took mine with milk, and explained it to be a country suffering gradual inundation.[30]

At Colinton, Lou's two favorite playmates were Henrietta and Willie, the children of his mother's sister, Mrs. Ramsay Traquair.[31] In the Envoy "To Willie and Henrietta" Stevenson dedicates their share in his childhood:

> If two may read aright
> These rhymes of old delight
> And house and garden play,
> You two, my cousins, and you only, may.

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29 Ibid., p. 58.

30 Stevenson, "Child's Play," Works, II, 126.

31 Balfour, op. cit., I, 51.

You in a garden green
With me were king and queen
Were hunter, soldier, tar,
And all the thousand things that children are.

They played at pirates.

Three of us afloat in the meadow by the swing,
Three of us aboard in the basket on the lea.

And Henrietta, being the only girl, sailed under the title of the Princess Royal, and Lou won, in a "furious contest,"[32] the title of Prince Albert, leaving sulky Willie with the lesser title of Prince of Wales. The royal squadron sailed their buck basket on the grass about half-way between the swing and the gate and then the Pirate Squadron hove in sight upon the weather bow:

Hi! But here's a squadron a-rowing on the sea--
Cattle on the meadow a-charging with a roar!
Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as mad as
they can be,
The wicket is the harbour and the garden is
the shore.
(VII. "Pirate Story")

All the children's play at the Manse, indoors and out, called for vivid imagination, a concentration of powers toward the necessity of play. Ships were made:

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[32] Stevenson, Letters, II, 168. This incident is described in a letter to Henrietta, who had inquired of Stevenson whether the poem titled "Pirate Story" was not concerning the three cousins at play at Colinton Manse.

We built a ship upon the stairs
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,
And filled it full of sofa pillows
To go a-sailing on the billows.
(XIII. "A Good Play")

The "most martial manner" was observed:

Bring the comb and play upon it!
Marching, here we come!
Willie cocks his highland bonnet,
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,
Peter leads the rear;
Feet in time, alert and hearty,
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner
Marching double-quick;
While the napkin like a banner
Waves upon the stick!
(XXII. "Marching Song")

The wonders of the weir, the Water of Leith, never ceased to be of interest to the children:

Here is the mill with the humming of thunder,
Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,
Here is the sluice with the race running under--
Marvellous places, though handy to home.
(XXVI. "Keepsake Mill")

And no less are the glories of the hayloft:

O what a place to clamber there,
O what a place for play,
With the sweet, the dim, the dusty air,
The happy hills of hay!
(XXXIX. "The Hayloft")

However sufficient the grounds and house at Colinton Manse would seem to be, there was still the

dream of far-distant places which Louis Stevenson must have carried all his life. From a swing could be seen:

> Up in the air and over the wall,
> Till I can see so wide,
> Rivers and trees and cattle and all
> Over the countryside--
> (XXXIII. "The Swing")

But from a cherry tree were to be seen vaster areas:

> I saw the next door garden lie,
> Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
> And many pleasant places more
> That I had never seen before.
>
> I saw the dimpling river pass
> And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
> The dusty roads go up and down
> With people tramping into town.
>
> If I could find a higher tree
> Farther and farther I should see
> To where the grown-up river slips
> Into the sea among the ships.
>
> To where the roads on either hand
> Lead onward into fairy land,
> Where all the children dine at five,
> And all the playthings come alive.
> (VIII. "Foreign Lands")

The Verses that concern Stevenson's life at Colinton Manse exemplify the active child at play, especially out-of-doors. The tone of the poetry is happy, and the whole reflects the joyful heart of a child.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL

B. The Man of the Child's Garden

The youth and early manhood of Robert Louis Stevenson were spent mostly in what he professed to be idling, but were, in reality, spent in trying to show his parents that he had not the heart for the study of either engineering or the law, studies which he pursued at Edinburgh University. His intent lay in learning the art of writing, an interest his father could not understand; and his trials were greater because of clashes with his father over his interests, his behavior, and religion. His apprenticeship in writing concerned itself with impersonating favorite writers such as Sir Thomas Browne, Bunyan, Hazlitt, Lamb, Hawthorne and Montaigne. In his studies he did get so far as to obtain his license to practice law, but again poor health intervened to keep him from having to do something he did not want to do. With almost no money and without the knowledge of his parents, but with the grudging assistance of his friends, Colvin and Henley, a recalcitrant Louis suddenly departed for America to wait for the divorce of an extraordinary woman eleven

years older than himself. While waiting, he managed to do some writing and lived frugally on his small savings. He also almost died in neglecting his own health to care for others. His honeymoon was spent in the mountains of California, with his bride nursing him back to health. By this time his parents began to realize that he was determined to become a writer, so a forgiving father made him an allowance and asked his son to return to England with his new family.

The period of Stevenson's life that covers the Child's Garden can be said to begin with his return to England. The period begins with an incident, and an incident can easily lead to a happy idea which in turn makes for happy people. The incident said to have led to Stevenson's conception of the poems in A Child's Garden of Verses is told by his mother and reported in Balfour's Life.[33] Louis's mother had a copy of Kate Greenaway's illustration of a Birthday Book for Children, which, when Louis glanced over it, decided him that similar verses would not be hard to do. Certain critics have cast aspersions upon such an obvious method of "imitation," and the published records

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[33] Balfour, op. cit., I, 229.

of the words of family and friends concerning the Verses are meagre, making it difficult to reconstruct the life of Stevenson in relation to this children's work.

The period was one of extremely poor health, and at the same time one of the happiest periods of his life.

After Stevenson returned in 1880 to England with his bride, the former Mrs. Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, the search for health took the couple for two winters to Davos Platz in the Swiss Alps, accompanied by her son, Lloyd Osbourne, and a pet Skye-terrier, generally called Woggs. Summers were spent in France and England. The published letters of Stevenson reveal the man as most concerned during this period with staying as well as possible and worrying somewhat over financial matters. Although always able to draw financial aid from his father, Stevenson was eager to establish himself as a writer able to live by his pen. At Davos, Louis was not able to make much literary progress. The time was spent mostly on some essays, some poetry, and the little verses he wrote for Lloyd to print on his

toy press.[34]

The summer of 1881 was spent in the pure, bracing air of Braemar in the Scottish Highlands. Here Stevenson began the work on the children's verses, and Balfour reports that about fourteen numbers seem to have been written.[35] Biographers have expressed little interest in this verse writing, probably because Treasure Island was conceived at this time, and Stevenson's interest in the tale was foremost until its publication in a boy's magazine called Young Folks.

Stevenson's doctors felt that a winter in France would be healthful, and Fanny found them a house called La Solitude at Hyères, in the south of France.

Stevenson's literary output while at Hyères consisted of enthusiastic work on Prince Otto; the beginning of The Black Arrow for a youth magazine; and several essays, of which "Old Mortality" stands out as it concerned the death of an old friend, Walter Ferrier, a death which deeply affected Stevenson.

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[34] These poems are now properly grouped as a part of his children's poetry in the Collected Poems edited by Janet Adam Smith (London, 1950). They are Not I and Other Poems, Moral Emblems I and II, The Graver and the Pen, and Moral Tales.

[35] Balfour, op. cit., I, 229.

Work was continued on the children's verses, work which Janet Adam Smith, in writing of the period, called amusing himself by making up rhymes for children. "They had echoes of Marjory Fleming . . . whom he adored."[36] Janet Adam Smith is here referring to a letter Stevenson wrote to William Archer on March 27, 1894:

> Marjorie Fleming I have known, as you surmise, for long. She was possibly--no, I take back possible--she was one of the greatest works of God. Your note about the resemblance of her verses to mine gave me great joy, though it only proved me a plagiarist.[37]

This almost apologetic attitude over his "verse-writing" is evident in the family biographers of Stevenson, indicating that he might not have greatly concerned himself with the children's verses had he not been too ill for other occupation. Balfour reports, "verse-writing with him was almost a resource of illness or of convalescence, and he now took advantage of his

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[36] Janet Adam Smith, R. L. Stevenson (London, 1937), p. 74. Margaret Fleming (1803-1811) is one of the very few people with such a short life to get into a biographical dictionary (Dictionary of National Biography, ed. by Leslie Stephen and Sydney Lee (London, 1921-22), VII, 281.) She was often called Pet Marjarie or Marjoie, and was the special friend of Sir Walter Scott. Her early death probably ended what could have been a writer's career, as her talent at poetry and literary reflection was evident long before her death.

[37] Stevenson, Letters, IV, 269.

recovery to increase the poems of childhood (for which his first name was Penny Whistles), until they amounted to some eight-and-forty numbers."[38] Balfour is referring to a serious hemorrhage which Stevenson had had, and which confined him to a darkened sick room with his right arm bound to his body. Fanny Stevenson elaborates somewhat upon this illness in one of her prefaces to Stevenson's works:

> After a terrible hemorrhage, he fell a victim to sciatica, and at the same time was temporarily blind from an attack of opthalmia. Not only was all light excluded from the room where he lay, but on account of the hemorrhage his right arm was closely bound to his side.... Across his bed a board was laid on which large sheets of paper were pinned; on these, or on a slate fastened to the board, he laboriously wrote out in the darkness, with his left hand, many more of the songs of his childhood.[39]

A month was spent in this silence and immovability.[40] Some of the time Mrs. Stevenson entertained him by making up tales which later became a part of The Dynamiter, and as Balfour says, "when these were at an end, he continued the Child's Garden, writing down the new verses

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[38] Balfour, op. cit., I, 245.

[39] Stevenson, Complete Poems, with prefaces by Mrs. Stevenson. (Biographical edition; New York, 1917), pp. ix-x.

[40] Janet Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 74.

for himself in the dim light with his left hand."[41] It was a period of poetic creativity for him, for at this time he also wrote "Requiem," generally considered the best of his poems.

Fanny Stevenson's daughter, Isobel Osbourne Strong Field, has contributed some information to these family reminiscences, although "Belle" did not live with the Stevensons during the period of production of the Verses:

> I heard both R. L. S. and his wife (my mother) tell about the publication of "A Child's Garden of Verse." Louis thought little of these poems but waked up to interest at Fanny Stevenson's suggestion that they might be good enough for a book. Some my mother had rescued from the waste-paper basket (which she always examined carefully before the contents were allowed to be thrown out). One or two were found scribbled on the margins of magazines or on the backs of discarded manuscript sheets . . . .[42]

Belle reiterates her theory in her autobiography:

> In long hours of sickness and enforced rest from serious work he scribbled verses to pass the time. He thought so little of these that "The Child's Garden of Verse" and "Underwoods" would not have been printed had not many a poem been rescued from the margins of magazines, the fly-

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41 Balfour, op. cit., I, 254.

42 Isobel Osbourne Strong, "Reminiscences of Stevenson," Saturday Review of Literature, XVI, 9, Sept. 25, 1937.

> leaves of books he was reading, and even the waste-paper basket.[43]

It is interesting to note that it was not only children's verses but other poems that he fashioned in this manner.

Lloyd Osbourne had some opportunity to observe the progress of the children's verses as he lived with his mother and step-father at times during the period. He has written variously upon Stevenson, his best account being An Intimate Portrait of RLS. Lloyd does not, regretfully, give the attention to the Child's Garden that one would hope for. He makes only one report, that Stevenson's attitude "was more of an indulgent indifference once the poems had been collected."[44]

Not one of these family reports represents the direct opinion of Robert Louis Stevenson concerning his children's verses, as there is no published formal statement. The apologies that his family make for the verses need be accepted only as indicating that they thought apology called for.

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[43] Isobel Osbourne Field, This Life I've Loved (New York, 1937), pp. 26-27.

[44] Lloyd Osbourne, An Intimate Portrait of RLS (New York, 1924), p. 46.

The best source for the opinion that Stevenson had of his children's verses comes from the author himself. In his published letters (there is always the fear that Sidney Colvin, as editor of the Letters, has left out some word regarding the poems that would help to enlighten us) Stevenson speaks often of the progress the little book was making toward published form. Through these letters we are able to build a partial, but clear, picture of the story of A Child's Garden of Verses. Louis remembered from Vailima, his last home, that "I was only happy once, that was at Hyères."[45] The reasons for Stevenson's reactions at Hyères have been logically summarized by Furnas:

> Renewed sense of accomplishment, good work done in the teeth of the worst handicaps yet, may have made up much of his "happiness" at Hyères.[46]

If Louis did work on the verses for children only when he was confined to his bed, the accomplishment must have afforded him the greater satisfaction that he was not idle. Since a good part of his childhood was spent in a sickbed, it is very easy to surmise that the bed-

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45 Furnas, op. cit., p. 216.

46 Ibid., p. 219.

fast man would be more easily reminded of events that occurred at the time of childhood illnesses, a conclusion that Furnas comes near reaching.[47] The affinity is undeniable--the sick man and the sick boy--it could almost be said that the end product is a foregone conclusion.

Stevenson's first mention in his published letters of his work on the verses is, fittingly, to Alison Cunningham in which he informs her of the dedication:

> . . . But the real reason why you have been more in my mind than usual is because of some little verses that I have been writing, and that I mean to make a book of; and the real reason of this letter (although I ought to have written to you anyway) is that I have just seen that the book in question must be dedicated to
>
> Alison Cunningham,
>
> the only person who will really understand it.[48]

It is not in the least hard to understand Louis's dedication of a book to his childhood nurse and most steadfast companion, but he must have feared that others

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47 Ibid.

48 Stevenson, Letters, II, 112-113.

might not understand, especially, it is to be presumed, since one's childhood is theoretically most concerned with one's parents. In a letter to his mother, not included in the published letters, Louis explains this:

> I stick to what I said about Cummy: which was that she was the person entitled to the dedication; if I said she was the only person who would understand, it was a fashion of speaking; but to Cummy the dedication is due because she has had the most trouble and the least thanks. Ecco! As for auntie, she is my aunt, and she is a lady, and I am often decently civil to her, and I don't think I ever insulted her; four advantages that could not be alleged for Cummy. That was why, out of the three of you, I chose Cummy; and that is why I think I chose right.[49]

As has been stated, Stevenson led at Hyères--in the south of France among dive trees and fragrant roses, sheltered on the inland side by a steep hill crowned by an ancient mediaeval fortress, and open to the sea two and a half miles away--a happy life in spite of frequent debilitating illnesses. There were visits from friends and his cousin Bob, although it is suspected that Fanny did not encourage such encounters--Fanny,

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[49] William Harris Arnold, "My Stevensons," Scribner's, LXI (Jan., 1922), 192.

the jealous guardian of her husband's health. In lieu of visits, there was much exchange of correspondence with his friends; there was the added necessity of carrying on the business details of the publication of his work. A good part of these letters exist in published form (again, always giving cause for wonder as to what might have been omitted). As will be seen, these letters afford much aid in visualizing the man of the Child's Garden. Daiches marks the letters as important, "indispensable to anyone who wishes to understand his mind and personality."[50] The record is like a chronicle of friendships, as Will Low does title a book,[51] a chronicle of people, famed in their own right, who were true friends to Stevenson. A friend in Louis's day, had, as Furnas points out, "a significant warmth greater than ours now permit,"[52] which would almost be a blood-brother attachment allowing for the inner revealing of souls.

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[50] David Daiches, Robert Louis Stevenson (Norfolk, Conn., 1947), p. 190.

[51] Will H. Low, A Chronicle of Friendships, 1873-1900 (New York, 1908).

[52] Furnas, op. cit., p. 39.

The winters spent at Davos Platz had gained for Louis a friend, John Addington Symonds, the writer. Symonds, too much the aesthete, considered Louis under-educated,[53] and felt that Stevenson in turn did not disguise a dislike of Symonds's writing.[54] But friends they became at Davos, and friends they remained (the only friend that Stevenson ever lost was Henley). We would wish that we knew what Symonds thought of Stevenson's work on the children's verses, but evidence of any such opinion does not appear in the published letters of either man. Symonds must have been aware of the work in progress, for Stevenson notified him in a letter dated February, 1895 from Bournemouth that "my Child's Verses come out next week."[55]

His old friends from University days were still around him, especially Charles Baxter. It was while Louis was confined to Hyères that another comrade of his so-called Bohemian days, James Walter Ferrier, died of drink and tuberculosis. Louis, being faced for the

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[53] John Addington Symonds, Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds; Collected and Edited by Horatio F. Brown (New York, 1923), p. 111.

[54] Ibid., p. 130.

[55] Stevenson, Letters, II, 245.

first time with the hand of death within his own circle, was so dangerously shaken by the loss that he was forbidden by Fanny to write about it. He later wrote his essay "Old Mortality" as a remembrance of Ferrier, who "walked among us, both hands full of gifts."[56]

The literary output from Stevenson's hand during this period--novels: Prince Otto and Black Arrow; essays: "A Penny Plain," and "The Character of Dogs"; a short story, "The Treasure of Franchard" (which has had near as much influence of late as Treasure Island, particularly as a vehicle for motion pictures); and his verse--are significant, as Furnas says, "of coming shifts in his techniques."[57] To Prince Otto may be attributed, as Furnas continues, "The last gasp of the 'sedulous ape.'"[58] Louis had found the words of life here; his child's poetry, though unequal, as Gosse says, are no less a part of his art than his other work.

Judging from the enthusiasm expressed in his correspondence, Stevenson's great interest was in Prince Otto, a work that he liked when he was at it,[59]

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56 Stevenson, "Old Mortality," Works, XIII, 30.

57 Furnas, op. cit., p. 217.

58 Ibid.

59 Stevenson, Letters, II, 120.

but he thought it not without merit even though queer and "a little, little bit free."[60] Work on the children's verses went slowly because he was "deep, deep, ocean deep in Otto."[61] Knowing its drawbacks, he still hoped for the best, and felt he could not let loose of it: "for me it is my chief o' works."[62]

Prince Otto may not have contributed more to Stevenson's art than to relieve him of his sedulity, a fact that he was aware of at the time.[63] Furnas further says:

> Ability to admire Otto has been said to be the test of the true Stevensonian--say rather "fanatic." This was not the vein in which Louis's future lay or ever had lain. Its one service to him was finally to get off his laboring chest the impulse to spin words and ideas for their own sakes.[64]

Work--pure labor--Stevenson had already realized was the only means to an accomplished art, and his advice to his step-son was such:

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60 Ibid., p. 127.

61 Ibid., p. 151.

62 Ibid., p. 181.

63 Janet Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 70.

64 Furnas, op. cit., p. 217.

> . . . My success has been due to my really remarkable industry--to developing what I had in me to the extreme limit. When a man begins to sharpen one faculty, and keeps on sharpening it with tireless perseverance, he can achieve wonders. Everybody knows it; it's a commonplace, and yet how rare it is to find anybody doing it--I mean to the uttermost as I did. What genius I had was for work.[65]

In the stimulus of a new idea, Stevenson wrote many of his children's verses at Braemar when the idea presented itself to him, and about fourteen in number were accomplished.[66] There seems to have been no appreciable work continued on the verses until he was confined to his room at Hyères, unable to do little more than watch Mrs. Stevenson play solitaire, and write a good many more of the verses, a fact that Fanny has reported to us. Moreover, as Furnas feels, work on the Child's Garden "was another matter altogether. It was excellent escape from the red-soaked handkerchief and the taste of organic iron in the mouth."[67] Somewhere, far back along the line, perhaps even from the beginning, it was decided that a volume of children's

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65 Osbourne, op. cit., p. 132.

66 Balfour, op. cit., I, 166.

67 Furnas, op. cit., p. 219.

verses would be a good thing for Stevenson to publish. It can be assumed that Fanny had a great deal to do with it, and that W. E. Henley and Sidney Colvin, his literary agents as well as good friends, were in favor of the idea.

Once there were enough of the verses to warrant consideration as a publication, Stevenson did take a lively and active interest in its progression as an accomplished book, if we are to judge by his Letters rather than by Lloyd Osbourne's report of "indulgent indifference."[68] Stevenson is straightforward concerning the poetry in his letters to Sidney Colvin, but more the interested arbiter and more argumentative and revealing with his old friend Henley.

Stevenson's friendship with Colvin dates back to his university days, when he met the essayist and art critic through Mrs. Fanny Sitwell, a person whom Furnas calls "the most decorative of all major influences on Louis's life."[69] Colvin's influence upon Stevenson corresponds with Mrs. Sitwell's, and he was to sponsor

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68 Osbourne, op. cit., p. 46.

69 Furnas, op. cit., p. 74.

Louis; or as Louis credits him, "it was he who paved my way in letters."[70] Colvin, enigmatic, taciturn, was a person in strange contrast to Stevenson's eloquent vivacity. Robert Louis Stevenson was able to know and judge his friends according to their worth. In a little-known letter to a Tahitian chieftain, preparing him for a meeting with Colvin, he informs the chief that Colvin "is my most valued friend and a man of the most exceptional distinction." Colvin's personality is explained to the chief, "I wish to assure you if you find him at first sight anything dry it is a question of manner and you will soon see how noble and kind a nature lies behind."[71]

More important to the Child's Garden than Colvin, again judging from the Letters, was William Ernest Henley, whose friendship dated back to 1875. The first meeting of the two poets was dramatic enough to please the soul of any Stevenson enthusiast. Henley, a great hulk of a man, with red hair and tangled red beard, was to become to Stevenson, "my dear excellent,

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[70] Stevenson, "Memoirs of Himself," Works, XIII, 291.

[71] Maryland Allen, "South Sea Memories of R.L.S.," Bookman (New York), XLIII (Aug., 1916), p. 595.

admired, volcanic angel of a lad, trusty as a dog, eruptive as Vesuvius, in all things great, in all the soul of loyalty."[72] Henley had been hospitalized in Edinburgh for weeks, undergoing revolutionary treatment for tuberculosis of the bone, in which one foot had been amputated. John Silver was to be a prototype of Henley. His aid to Stevenson as his unpaid literary agent could be considered as part payment for the moral and financial support Louis gave to him in those early days of their friendship when Louis greatly relieved the tedium of the bedfast man by visits and carriage drives around Edinburgh. There was much alike in the two men, particularly their aversion to the prim moral code of the Victorian. Gosse suggested in a letter to John Drinkwater that the "thrillingly sentimental" in Henley's poetry was much influenced by Stevenson.[73] Drinkwater, however, does not seem to accept this idea in his essay on Henley.[74] Not only regrettable but ineffably sad was the breaking of their friendship,

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[72] Stevenson, Letters, II, 150.

[73] Evan Edward Charteris, The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse (New York, 1931), p. 398.

[74] John Drinkwater, "William Ernest Henley," The Muse in Council (Boston, 1925), pp. 205-223.

when the personality of a third person, Louis's wife, pulled the friends apart, Henley denunciatory of her and Stevenson faithfully standing by her. Had the quarrel occurred before the Child's Garden was published, without a doubt the book of verses would have suffered greatly.

The man of the Child's Verses that we come to know, to summarize, was a happy but very sick man, away from home but in close communion with family and friends. According to Colvin's editorial note, Stevenson was, by March 1883, beginning to send home some of the manuscript copy of the children's verses.[75] A title had not yet been settled upon; "A Child's Garden of Verses" had not even been thought of. Stevenson was inclined to call them only verses for children. In this March of 1883, while on a visit from Hyères to Nice, Louis wrote enthusiastically to Henley (he was often more friendly in his salutory to Henley than he was to Colvin):

> My Dear Lad,--This is to announce to you the MS. of Nursery Verses, now numbering XLVIII pieces or 599 verses, which, of course, one might augment ad infinitum.[76]

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[75] Stevenson, Letters, II, 113-114.

[76] Ibid., p. 114.

For Stevenson to have counted up the number of the poems and then the number of verses in the poems is not strange. Often in his correspondence he discussed the amount of work he had accomplished, and by way of showing his correspondents how much the work came to, he cited his handwritten work as being comparable to so many pages in the Cornhill Magazine, to which he had often contributed, giving everyone an easy mind's-eye picture as to his production.

He had definite ideas as to the format of the book, as he continues his letter to Henley, using as comparison his book Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes:

> I do not want a big ugly quarto. I want a refined octavo, not large--not larger than the Donkey Book, at any price.

And he continues the discussion, dividing the poems according to verses and lines, and position of titles, figuring up to seventy-eight or eighty pages of letter-press.[77]

The poet seems to be aware that crowding the verses would not be an attraction to children. We get the feeling that he is thinking of his young readers. Except for some discussion on illustrating

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[77] Ibid.

the book, which we shall go into later, Stevenson draws his conclusion as to the physical appearance of the book, feeling endeared to it, no doubt, and alluding to one of his favorite poets, Heinrich Heine:

> But now you see my book of the thickness, since the drawings count two pages, of 180 pages; and since the paper will perhaps be thicker, of near two hundred by bulk. It is bound in a quiet green with the words in thin gilt. Its shape is a slender tall octavo. And it sells for the publisher's fancy, and it will be a darling to look at; in short, it would be like one of the original Heine books in type and spacing.

Illustrating the prospective book must have been early considered, although Colvin's editorial note does not tell us when. His comment is that "no illustrated edition was as a matter of fact produced until 1896."[78] Colvin's information, to be more factual, is incorrect. An edition of the poetry, illustrated by Charles Robinson, came out in America in 1895.[79] This illustrated edition gave reviewers a chance to make some near prophetic statements, as appears in the Atlantic Monthly, "One is tempted sometimes to think that Robert Louis Stevenson's eternity of praise is to come through this little book."[80]

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78 Ibid.

79 Stevenson, A Child's Garden of Verses (New York, 1895).

80 "Comment on New Books," Atlantic Monthly, LXXVII (Mar., 1896), p. 423.

The attention to minute details indicates that illustrating the book was a matter of great moment to Stevenson. To Cummy, to whom he had a way of simplifying things, he explains that illustration was important, "without which no child would give a kick for it."[81] The letter to Henley continues on the subject of illustration:

> The designs should not be in the text, but facing the poem; so that if the artist liked, he might give two pages of design to every poem that turned the leaf, i. e. longer than eight lines, i. e. to twenty-eight out of the forty-six. I should say he would not use this privilege (?) above five times, and some he might scorn to illustrate at all, so we may say fifty drawings. I shall come to the drawings next.[82]

For Stevenson to say "the designs should not be in the text" was for him to want something a little different from the usual illustrating of children's books that was popular in the eighteen eighties. A view of the historical background of children's book illustrating will elucidate this statement. The illustrating of children's books in England had only come into its own in the early nineteenth century with the introduction to children's books of George Cruikshank's combination

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81 Stevenson, Letters, II, 141.

82 Ibid., p. 114.

of "lively imagination and high good humor with fine drawing,"[83] and of the artists who followed him, Richard Doyle and John Tenniel--the black and white artists with the clever and fanciful touch of the cartoonist. By 1850, the year of Stevenson's birth, all these artists were active, and it is to be assumed that Louis saw their work as a child. That Louis was also familiar with the work of the artists active in the eighteen eighties is evidenced in his letters; we shall be much concerned with these artists later.

The method of illustrating was chiefly what one would call border-illustration. A page of poetry would often be ringed with a fine border of objects represented in the poem, and other objects, such as birds, flitting about among the words of poetry. Sometimes there would be more illustration than there were words on the page. For Stevenson to desire illustrations separate from the text would seem that he wanted the verses to stand for themselves. That Stevenson wondered

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83 Bertha E. Mahony, compiled with Louise Payson Latimer and Beulah Folmsbee, Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744-1945 (Boston, 1947), p. 37.

whether or not this was a good idea may be assumed by the question-mark he places after the "privilege" of the artist.[84] With possibly fifty drawings in the volume, Stevenson was assuring plenty of pictorial delight to his potential readers.

Interest in illustration did not stop with the format of the book. Stevenson jotted down many ideas for the illustrations as he wrote his letter to Henley:

> IV. The procession--the child running behind it. The procession trailing off through the gates of a cloudy city.

This is the poem "Young Night Thought" which did not change its position (No. IV) in the final assembly of the verses. The first and last verses are:

> All night long and every night,
> When my mama puts out the light
> I see the people marching by,
> As plain as day, before my eye.

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[84] As a matter of passing interest, the present-day popular Golden Books came out with a "Big" edition right after the centenary of Stevenson's birth with selections from the Garden done in a splurge of two-dimensional color and many double-page spreads of illustrations by Alice and Martin Provensen. Except for the modern touch that would naturally not be familiar to Stevenson, one can imagine the delight that would be his over the book.

. . . . . .

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep
Until we reach the town of Sleep.

One of the poems considered for a double illustration was "Foreign Lands":

> IX. Foreign Lands.--This will, I think, want two plates--the child climbing, his first glimpse over the garden wall, with what he sees--the trees shooting higher and higher like the beanstalk, and the view widening. The river slipping in. The road arriving in Fairyland.

Illustration such as this would increase the visual imagery of the poem, imagery not completely expressed by the words of the poem. "Foreign Lands" became number VIII instead of IX in the final printing.

With the poem "Windy Nights," where one would almost expect Stevenson to elaborate considerably, he only pictures the child in bed listening and the horseman galloping. A more suitable description of the poem lies in the storm he describes in a letter to Mrs. Sitwell:

> It was the horrible howl of the wind round the corner; the audible haunting of an incarnate anger about the house; the evil spirit that was abroad; . . .

> O How I hate a storm at night! . . . .
> I always heard it, as a horseman riding
> past with his cloak about his head, and
> somehow always carried away, and riding
> past again, and being baffled yet once
> more, ad infinitum, all night long.[85]

Stevenson was to develop this imagery into his essay, "Nuits Blanches."

On the other hand his ideas on illustrating "My Ship and I" are hardly in tune with the active rhythm of the poem:

> XII. The child helplessly watching his
> ship--then he gets smaller, and the doll
> joyfully comes alive--the pair landing
> on the island--the ship's deck with the
> doll steering and the child firing the
> penny cannon. Query two plates? The
> doll should never come properly alive.

Future illustrators of the poem were to miss this point altogether.[86] The number XII assigned to the poem was to become number II in The Child Alone group.

The play in "A Good Play" is often referred to by critics as one of Stevenson's best images of childhood ("We built a ship upon the stairs/All made of the back-bedroom chairs"). Stevenson imagines the poem illustrated

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85 Stevenson, Letters, I, 212-213.

86 Cf. The Big Golden Book (New York, 1951).

thus:

> XV [XII]. Building of the ship--storing her--Navigation--Tom's accident ["But Tom fell out and hurt his knee"], the other children paying no attention.

The child's almost brutal disregard for others' pains is well remembered by Stevenson. The truth of this had been made forcibly apparent to Stevenson as he once lay ill:

> Once, when I was groaning aloud with physical pain, a young gentleman came into the room and nonchalantly inquired if I had seen his bow and arrow. He made no account of my groans, which he accepted, as he had to accept so much else, as a piece of the inexplicable conduct of his elders; and like a wise gentleman, he would waste no wonder on the subject.[87]

Stevenson mentions in this letter to Henley that he had already sent his "notion" of "The Wind," so we know of a letter that has not been published or has more likely been lost to us.

Several ideas are offered for illustrating "Foreign Children," some of which carry a hint of satire:

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[87] Stevenson, "Child's Play," Works, II, 122.

> XXXVI [XXVIII]. Foreign Children.--The foreign types dancing in a jing-a-ring, with the English child pushing in the middle. The foreign children looking at and showing each other marvels. The English child at the leeside of a roast of beef. The English child sitting thinking with his picture-books all round him, and the jing-a-ring of the foreign children in miniature dancing over the picture-books.[88]

How many children would really like to see the characters from their picture books coming out of the pages!

Some times a poem seems to defy Louis's imagination, and through his letter to Henley he places a question directly to the artist, "Dear artist, can you do me that?"[89] Only the number of the poem is given. If it, number XXXIX, remained the same by the time Penny Whistles was set in print, it would be "The Sun's Travels."

"My Bed Is a Boat" is another poem which he does not name but which we can definitely understand by his pictorial description:

> XLII [XXXI]. The child being started off--the bed sailing, curtains and all, upon the sea--the child waking and finding himself at home; the corner of toilette might be worked in to look like the pier.

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88 Stevenson, Letters, II, 116-117.

89 Ibid., p. 117.

And such is the case, too, with his picture ideas for "The Land of Story-Books":

> XLVII [The Child Alone: VII]. The lighted part of the room, to be carefully distinguished from my child's dark hunting grounds. A shaded lamp.

Stevenson was to add one more suggestion to the list, more as an afterthought:

> I may as well add another idea; when the artist finds nothing much to illustrate, a good drawing of any object mentioned in the text, were it only a loaf of bread or a candlestick, is a most delightful thing to a young child. I remember this keenly.[90]

The form of the book, we must agree, was of immense concern to Louis, but he concedes the artist's priority:

> Of course, if the artist insists on a larger form, I must, I suppose, bow my head. But my idea I am convinced is the best, and would make the book truly, not fashionably, pretty.

Louis's ideas on how he should like some of the children's verses to be illustrated are not only good, they are vivid, and reveal not a little artistic inclination. When he was barely six, as Rosaline Masson reports, Louis could only print characters and could not read, but he could draw, with pictures "full of movement and extraordinary imagination."[91]

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90 Ibid., p. 115.

91 Masson, op. cit., p. 31.

The matter of obtaining an illustrator seemed to have rested with Henley, if we are to judge from the Letters, and by the tone of Stevenson's letter to Henley dated May, 1883, from Hyères. Henley and he had been having some discussion as to possible illustrators. Stevenson writes:

> By the way, my view is to give the Penny Whistles to Crane or Greenaway. But Crane, I think, is likeliest; he is a fellow who, at least, always does his best.[92]

Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway were two of the foremost color illustrators of their day. One would almost expect Louis to think of Kate Greenaway as a possible illustrator of his book in view of the fact that a book of hers led to his own writing of children's poetry. That he may not have thought too much of her work can also be surmised. Her grave and proper figures of children were strictly an expression of her own personality; they were representations of an era already past, with emphasis upon the costume of the children, and the children placed in the midst of a Greenaway English garden, "clipped yew hedges, ivy-grown walks and fruit trees abloom."[93] The Greenaway style of

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92 Stevenson, Letters, II, 128.

93 Mahony, Latimer, Folmsbee, op. cit., p. 75.

costume became a rage in her time, and has had periodic revivals ever since. The point that most interests us about Greenaway is that she did not care to illustrate other people's texts. She was, nevertheless, deluged with requests and her sentiments were, as her biographers report, that "every amateur, who wrote a fairy story or a child's book or a book of verses, and wished to float in on the sea of her popularity, applied to her to illustrate it."[94] We are particularly interested in the listing of "books of verses." We can very nearly assume, had she been asked, that Greenaway would have summarily disregarded the request to illustrate Penny Whistles. In 1885 an edition of her own Marigold Garden came out as well as some cat pictures for a new edition of Ruskin's Dame Wiggins of Lee and Her Seven Wonderful Cats, and the drawings for Bret Harte's The Queen of the Pirate Isles.[95]

Stevenson's choice of Crane was more than likely based upon personal acquaintance with both the man and

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[94] Marion Harry Spielmann and George S. Layard, Kate Greenaway (New York, 1905), p. 79.

[95] Mahony, Latimer, Folmsbee, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

his work. Walter Crane was the first artist in England to be associated with Edmund Evans, the pioneer in English color printing. Crane, an artist's son, and Evans were crusaders against the crude, almost vulgar, sixpenny books being peddled to children in 1865. His "use of flat, almost primitive colors, bold, black outline drawn with a sure stroke, an ever-present sense of design,"[96] was characteristic of his work.

The two artists, writer and painter, were introduced to each other in 1878 by Sidney Colvin,[97] and met each other a few times at the Savile Club. Crane remembers these meetings, Louis standing as the center of an admiring circle in the smoking room of the club, talking very much in the same manner as he wrote. Crane's impression of Stevenson was one of artificiality,[98] which indicates, perhaps, that Stevenson's preoccupation with style was showing in his manner. The meeting of the two people was brought about as a means to request the illustration of a frontispiece by Crane of Louis's

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96 Ibid., p. 56.

97 Walter Crane, An Artist's Reminiscences (New York, 1907), p. 196.

98 Ibid., p. 198.

first book, An Inland Voyage, and the next year he did the frontispiece for Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes. It is interesting to note that none of Stevenson's biographers have brought out these chance meetings with Crane, more evidence of the disregard that has been connected with Stevenson's children's poetry. That Stevenson developed many literary friends at the Savile Club is emphasized; such friends as Colvin, Gosse, Henley, and Fleeming Jenkin were available to Stevenson at the Club as well as Walter Pollock, W. K. Clifford, and Saintsbury.[99] By 1874 Crane had gained an esteemed place in the world of children's literature, and it would not be hard to say that Stevenson was acquainted with a larger field of children's literature than has hitherto been supposed.

However, what interests us most about Crane's relationships with Stevenson is that after their few chance meetings and the illustrations he did for the two books, Crane was never to see Stevenson again, and in his own words, "nor was I called upon again to

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[99] Furnas, op. cit., p. 100.

illustrate anything of his."[100] We cannot help but wonder why Crane was not asked to illustrate the Child's Garden. Not only had Colvin introduced the two men, but Henley was well acquainted with the artist, enough to give Austin Dobson an introduction to him.[101]

Children's books by Crane were appearing every year. His Slate and Pencil-vania: Being the Adventures of Dick on a Desert Island appeared the same year as the Garden.

Actually, there were not many good illustrators of children's books available to Stevenson. With George Cruikshank and Dicky Doyle as illustrators in black and white and the two color artists, Greenaway and Crane, the foremost illustrators of the period were represented except for one, Randolph Caldecott. The latter is best remembered in America, and his name is honored by the Caldecott Award, presented annually to the best illustrated children's book. Caldecott

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[100] Crane, op. cit., p. 198.

[101] John Henry Robertson (John Connell, pseud.), W. E. Henley (London, 1949), p. 97.

had been known to Stevenson for quite some time. In a letter to Colvin from America, Louis mentions that Henley had proposed that Caldecott illustrate "Will O' the Mill."[102] From this we can also surmise that Henley may have tried Caldecott for the Child's Garden. Another painter of the period, Harrison Weir, was doing much in the field of children's illustration, his concern being chiefly the portraying of animals. His book Animal Stories, Old and New appeared in 1885.[103] One cannot imagine Weir illustrating the Garden, where animal imagery is almost negligible.

Perhaps it should not be considered strange, then, that the Child's Garden was finally published without illustration. The field of children's literature and illustration was represented by a select group, it can almost be said, who were exclusive in the field. Except for one piece of adolescent literature, Treasure Island, Stevenson had contributed nothing to the field. There might have even been some professional jealousy over seeing an essayist and travel-book writer enter the field

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102 Stevenson, Letters, I, 367.

103 Dictionary of National Biography (2nd sup.; 1901-1911), p. 628.

of children's literature. Did they have a way of knowing that for the first time children's poetry instead of poetry for children was appearing?

Although Stevenson does not seem to show so much concern over the illustrating of his other books, the undertone of his letters carries an urgency in wanting to see the Garden illustrated. Illustration must have generally been a matter of interest to him. Stevenson was the first to develop his writing in the atmosphere of artists, not writers, when he spent his early manhood in France with his cousin, Bob, a developing artist, spending their time in artists' colonies. Furnas says, "Louis found artists admirable company. He even tried his hand again at sketching and had an occasional fit of this pasttime the rest of his life."[104] William P. Trent reproduced some pencil drawings from Stevenson's notebooks in Stevenson's Workshop, which Trent suggests might have been intended to indicate the illustration of some of his work.[105]

Besides what was surely absorption of interest on

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104 Furnas, op. cit., p. 118.

105 Stevenson, Stevenson's Workshop (ed. by W. P. Trent)(Boston, 1921), p. 19.

his part in getting his book of verses illustrated, Stevenson exhibited some concern over the title of the prospective book. It was his habit, early in the making of the book, to refer to it mostly as his children's verses, or the "Nursery Verses" as he announces the book in his letter to Henley dated March, 1883. An actual title came more as an afterthought, with so much discussion of the illustrations:

> O I forgot. As for the title, I think "Nursery Verses" the best. Poetry is not the strong point of the text, and I shrink from any title that might seem to claim that quality; otherwise we might have "Nursery Muses" or "New Songs of Innocence" (but that were a blasphemy), or "Rimes of Innocence": the last not bad, or--an idea--"The Jews' Harp," or--now I have it--"The Penny Whistle."[106]

Nursery Rhymes was more or less an accepted title at that time for verses for children, and we see Stevenson not trying to be different or "sensational" as the term has come to be applied to the present-day book. That Stevenson did not think much of his verses may have been deduced from his statement that poetry was not the strong point of the text. We find Stevenson at all times reluctant to apply the term "poetry" to

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[106] Stevenson, Letters, II, 115.

the Child's Garden, a reluctance which, in all reasonableness, can be called only half-assertive. By using the words "Muses," and "New Songs of Innocence," Stevenson is thinking of other poetry.

The use of the titles "New Songs of Innocence" and "Rimes of Innocence" is most interesting. It reflects not only a knowledge of Blake but a possible influence of Blake upon the verses. The few critics who have made any analysis of the verses make little mention of any influence by other poets upon Stevenson's poetry as a whole. Daiches notes the fact that the biographer rather than the critic has made most use of the verses.[107] We would hardly agree that to imitate Blake's title would be a blasphemy, but the Child's Garden and Blake's Songs of Innocence treat entirely different aspects of childhood. The Auslander-Hill critique on the Songs of Innocence gives us a means of comparison:

> It was a book of startling simplicity that Rousseau would have loved. It was full of a reverence and a keen delight in nature and a spontaneous quality . . . .[108]

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[107] Daiches, op. cit., p. 173.

[108] Joseph Auslander and Frank Ernest Hill, The Winged Horse . . . (Garden City, N. Y., 1930), p. 230.

Where Stevenson lived in the childhood of play, Blake lived in the childhood of nature.

We find Stevenson arriving quickly at the happy title of Penny Whistles, a title that was to stick with the verses almost to its final published form. He enlarges upon the title in his letter by envisioning the title page:

> The Penny Whistle
> Nursery Verses
> By
> Robert Louis Stevenson
> Illustrated by _____ _____ _____
>
> And here we have an excellent frontispiece, of a party playing on a P. W. to a little ring of dancing children.
>
> The Penny Whistle
> is the name for me.
>
> Fool! this is all wrong, here is the true name:
>
> Penny Whistles
> For Small Whistlers.
>
> The second title is queries, it is perhaps better as simply PENNY WHISTLES.

And he adds a little jingle:

> Nor you, a Penny Whistler, grudge
> That I your instrument debase:
> By worse performers still we judge,
> And give that fife a second place!

> Crossed penny whistles on the cover, or else a sheaf of 'em.[109]

There is no doubt that Penny Whistles is a title that would appeal to all children. The imagery is more

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109 Stevenson, Letters, II, 115-116.

in Stevenson's vein than A Child's Garden of Verses. He had a penchant for anything that could be obtained for a penny. One of the most vivid influences upon his childhood was the juvenile theatres called "Skelt's Juvenile Drama," which could be had for "A Penny Plain, and Twopence Coloured," and which became the subject of an essay. Stevenson had an addiction to the tinny little whistles that could be bought for a penny. He must have carried one around with him, as various of his friends have remarked seeing Louis preoccupied with playing on the small instrument. Will Low, as Stevenson's step-daughter reports, made a painting of him sitting under an apple tree playing on his penny whistle.[110] The diversion of penny whistling was sometimes used, as E. F. Benson uses it, as an indication that Stevenson lacked moral stamina and mental courage.[111] It was penny version books that Stevenson carried around with him while he was going through his period of self-imposed training in the art of writing.

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[110] Field, op. cit., p. 110.

[111] E. F. Benson, As We Were; A Victorian Peep Show (London, 1930), p. 276.

That Stevenson chose and continued to use the title Penny Whistles almost up to the final publication of the poems is not a piece of whimsy on his part, but another reflection of things childhood, and even things poetic. In speaking of A Child's Garden of Verses, critics and biographers alike speak of the existence of the book first as Penny Whistles without any note of explanation. Trent, in his edition of Stevenson's poems, says, "Stevenson, in his humorous way, called it for a long time 'Penny Whistles.'"[112] Humor was hardly the sense Stevenson reacted to in any of his children's poetry. The only time that Stevenson appears to be derogatory in his use of the word "penny" is when he refers to himself as "an aching, fevered, penny-journalist" in a letter to Henley.[113]

Imagery of "penny things" is rare in the Child's Garden. There is one use of the word, when the child fires his penny cannon from the bow of his ship in "My Ship and I."

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112 Stevenson, The Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1900), p. xii.

113 Stevenson, Letters, II, 128.

The problem of a title for the book was discussed with Colvin as well as Henley. Stevenson suggests some different titles to Colvin, "The Innocent Muse," "A Child's Garden of Rhymes," "Songs of the Playroom," and "Nursery Songs."[114] We here see Stevenson still playing with the idea of giving the book an ordinary title, as most of the children's books were then titled, and still thinking of and best liking a title, "The Innocent Muse," that is a reflection of Blake. It is here, we also note, that Stevenson seems to come upon the "child's garden" idea, first suggesting "A Child's Garden of Rhymes." George S. Hellman in his first group of "hitherto unpublished" poems printed for the Bibliophile Society, suggests that the title of the Child's Garden may have come to Louis from a poem he had written back in 1872,[115] the first verse of which is:

> Had I the power that have the will,
> The enfeebled will-a modern curse--
> The book of mine should blossom still
> A perfect garden-ground of verse.[116]

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114 Ibid., II, 130.

115 Stevenson, Poems by Robert Louis Stevenson, Hitherto Unpublished (Boston, 1916), p. 89.

116 Stevenson, The Complete Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1923), p. 330.

One would almost be inclined to say that the use of such a formal title in contrast to the almost casual Penny Whistles shows the influence of Fanny Stevenson.

So the children's poems were to become two books. First proofs were set up by the Cambridge University Press in 1883[117] and distributed among friends and possible illustrators under the title of Penny Whistles. Only three copies of the book are known to be in existence. These copies are now in the collections of E. J. Beinecke at Yale University Library, the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Collection at Harvard, and Colonel Richard Gimbel, Department of Air Science and Tactics, Yale University. The most interesting of the three copies is the Beinecke copy. It is Stevenson's own proof copy and has remarks by both Henley and Colvin. The final book, A Child's Garden of Verses, was published in March, 1885 by Longmans, Green and Company in England and Charles Scribner's Sons in America.

We have some idea, from his letters and his proof copy of Penny Whistles, of how Stevenson felt about

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[117] Stevenson, Collected Poems (ed. by Janet Adam Smith)(London, 1950), p. 550.

many of his verses. He seemed to be inclined to take Henley's advice, if we are to gather from some of the letters ("I shall try to do the Whistle as suggested...[118]), although a perusal of the W. E. Henley proof copy of Penny Whistles, which is now in the collection of Colonel Richard Gimbel, might prove to be more enlightening. Stevenson was more at odds with Colvin, and his step-daughter seems to have her own opinion of the relationship of the two friends as she states in her autobiography:

> Sidney Colvin took his position as mentor and critic so seriously that his letters almost invariably depressed Louis, and I felt he was making an effort when he answered them. I wanted to say, "why bother about what that old fuss-budget thinks?" For I had a very poor opinion of him as a critic.
>
> I had seen the first print or sample copy of A Child's Garden of Verse, then called The Penny Whistle, which Colvin had returned after crossing out most of the poems that have since become so popular. Over The Lamplighter, he wrote in red pencil, "Obsolete." The Swing, he considered silly; scorned My Shadow. If Louis had followed his advice the most charming verses in that volume would have been left out.[119]

Belle Osbourne is here giving vent to a very evident

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118 Stevenson, Letters, II, 151.

119 Field, op. cit., p. 297.

dislike of Colvin. On Stevenson's proof copy Colvin's comment on "The Lamplighter" is, "the Lamplighter being an extinct animal to the modern child," and to "The Swing" he suggests deletion because it is "commonplace." There is no notation made on this copy concerning "My Shadow." In a letter to Colvin we see a further insight into Stevenson and his work on the children's verses. Colvin may not have cared for the trochaic line, but Stevenson did: "I love the occasional trochaic line; and so did many excellent writers before me."[120] And where Colvin dubbed "A Good Boy," "priggish,"[121] Stevenson's remark is, "If you don't like A Good Boy, I do."[122] This is the preacher in Stevenson showing through. Where Colvin would try to change the vocative in "The Wind," Stevenson's reply is, "I don't care; I take a different view of the vocative." Colvin was inclined to be a little too precise, one must feel, when he calls "bewild'ring" a cockney rhyme because Stevenson wanted it to rhyme with "children," in the second verse of "Good and Bad Children."[123] Stevenson's

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120 Stevenson, Letters, II, 152.
121 Cf. Beinecke copy, p. 9.
122 Stevenson, Letters, II, 152.
123 Cf. Beinecke copy, p. 15.

answer in his letter shows him almost making a retort, "Bewildering and childering are good enough for me. These are rhymes, jingles; I don't go for eternity and the three unities." W. E. Henley makes a remark on this point too, on the proof copy, under Colvin's remark of the cockney rhyme. Henley adds, one would say tersely, "Cf. Keats and Mrs. Browning." On another poem, "Looking Forward,"

> When I am grown to man's estate
> I shall be very proud and great,
> And tell the other girls and boys
> Not to meddle with my toys.

which can so easily be classified as the epitome of a child's ideals, Colvin criticized:

> Jerky metre, I don't think the dropping of a first syllable suddenly at the beginning of the line is permissible in a set of lines like this. Qy?
>
> And teach the other girls and boys . . .[124]

And Henley again disagrees with Colvin. "Don't matter a bit," is his decision. The poem remained as it was.

Colvin was for deleting many of the poems. He made twelve deletion marks on the Stevenson proof copy, and nine of the poems did not appear in A Child's Garden, although some of the poems removed had no deletion marks

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[124] Ibid., p. 5.

on them. Stevenson says in his letter to Colvin:

> I will delete some of those condemned, but not all. I don't care for the name Penny Whistles; I sent a sheaf to Henley when I sent 'em. But I've forgot the others. I would just as soon call 'em "Rimes for Children" as anything else. I am not proud nor particular.[125]

We see Stevenson now deciding against Penny Whistles as a title, yet undecided what to call the verses. The decision as to title must have caused him a good deal of trouble.

This is not to say that Stevenson did not care much for the poems. In a letter to Cummy he says:

> I have been adding some more poems to your book. I wish they would look sharp about it; but, you see, they are trying to find a good artist to make the illustrations, without which no child would give a kick for it. It will be quite a fine work, I hope. The dedication is a poem, too, and has been quite a long while written but I do not mean you to see it till you get the book; keep the jelly for the last, you know, as you would often recommend in former days, so now you can take your own medicine.[126]

We do not particularly meet up again with any correspondence from Stevenson regarding the Verses until November, 1884. Louis and Fanny had returned to England

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125 Stevenson, Letters, II, 152.

126 Ibid., p. 141.

and were living at Bournemouth, and were to move into a home of their own, named Skerryvore, which Thomas Stevenson had presented to his daughter-in-law. Colvin reports, editorially, that the question of illustrating the book had not taken effect,[127] but even at this late date, four months before publication, Stevenson still had hopes of illustrating the book, if not in England, then in America, as he writes to his good friend, Will H. Low that he will send him copies of "A Child's Garden" (the title is evidently decided) with the possibility of Low trying for an illustrated edition in America.[128] But somehow Stevenson failed to mail the letter to Low and it is January 3, 1885 before he finishes the letter, still hopeful for an illustrated edition:

> And here has this been lying near two months. I have failed to get together a preliminary copy of the Child's Verses for you, in spite of doughty efforts; but yesterday I sent you the first sheet of the definitive edition, and shall continue to send the others as they come. If you can, and care to, work them--why so, well. If not, I send you fodder. But the time presses; for though I will delay a little over the proofs, and though it is even possible they may delay the English issue until Easter, it will certainly not be later. Therefore pertend, and do not get caught out. Of course, if you can do

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127 Ibid., p. 221.

128 Ibid.

> pictures, it will be a great pleasure to me to see our names joined; and more than that, a great advantage, as I daresay you may be able to make a bargain for some share a little less spectral than the common for the poor author. But this is all as you shall choose: I give you carte blanche to do or not to do.[129]

Will Hicok Low had been a friend of Stevenson's from the days in France when Louis met Fanny. By the time of the Child's Garden Low's reputation in America had reached a high standard with his versatility in decorative wall paintings, stained glass, where he worked with John La Farge, portrait painting and book illustration in black and white. Low was Louis's closest friend among American artists.[130]

When the book of verses was finally published in March of 1885, Louis's reactions as shown to his friends were various. To Edmund Gosse, who had always been one of Stevenson's most devoted friends, he writes:

> I have now published on 101 small pages The Complete Proof of Mr. R. L. Stevenson's Incapacity to Write Verse, in a series of graduated examples with table of contents.[131]

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129 Ibid., p. 222.

130 Furnas, op. cit., p. 103.

131 Stevenson, Letters, II, 247.

Nevertheless, Stevenson rates the book an accomplishment as he continues:

> I think I shall issue a companion volume of exercises: "Analyse this poem. Collect and comminate the ugly words. Distinguish and condemn the chevilles. State Mr. Stevenson's faults of taste in regard to the measure. What reasons can you gather from this example for your belief that Mr. S. is unable to write any other measure?"

There is no doubt that Stevenson was full of the verses, as Rosaline Masson expresses it;[132] and must have been, as any artist is, afraid of his work in the bright light of accomplishment:

> They look ghastly in the cold light of print; but there is something nice in the little ragged regiment for all; the blackguards seem to me to smile, to have a kind of childish treble note that sounds in my ears freshly; not song, if you will, but a child's voice.

A child's voice--Stevenson has himself given the sum total that makes the Verses children's poetry. Gosse had already offered Louis his opinion of the verses when he saw them in proof. He considered them as a whole unequal, but the best as "simply splendid,"[133] and thought Louis especially first rate at his insight into child nature, particularly the notion of children being

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132 Masson, op. cit., p. 217.

133 Charteris, op. cit., p. 157.

serious, and grown-up people idle persons who play at nothing."[134] The verses served as a reminder to Gosse of how important to them was the play of his own young children. (Many parents today could use the Verses as a textbook on how to understand children). Gosse was to say later, "The first thing which struck the reader of A Child's Garden was the extraordinary clearness and precision with which the immature fancies of eager childhood were reproduced in it."[135]

The friendship of Stevenson and William Archer was first established through a review Archer made of A Child's Garden. Although the review was anonymous, Stevenson sought out the writer in order to thank him. It was Archer who noted the resemblance of the poems to Marjorie Fleming, a "plagiarism" that Stevenson was proud of.[136]

The last three years of Louis's life in his own country were spent at Bournemouth. The author, upon publication of the Garden was calling himself "The Hermit of Skerryvore" because good health was still persistently evading him; his friends were frequent

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134 Ibid.

135 Edmund Gosse, Questions at Issue (London, 1893), p. 241.

136 Stevenson, Letters, IV, 269.

visitors; he made the acquaintance of Thomas Hardy; his successful Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Kidnapped followed on the heels of the Child's Garden; the unsuccessful collaboration with Henley on plays was done at Bournemouth, too. But still Louis was to look back upon the period and think of the "pallid brute that lived in Skerryvore like a weevil in a biscuit."[137] When Thomas Stevenson died, the only thing that had a moral hold on Louis in England was removed, and he was to set sail westward, thereon to continue west until he found his own resting place seven years later high on Mount Vaea in Samoa.

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[137] Balfour, op. cit., II, 2.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL

A. A Child's Garden of Verses and Penny Whistles

The collection of children's poetry titled A Child's Garden of Verses consists of sixty-four poems, including the dedicatory poem to Alison Cunningham. In the main body there are forty-one poems; The Child Alone group contains nine poems; Garden Days, eight; and Envoys, six. When the poems were put into proof under the title of Penny Whistles, forty-eight poems were printed without any particular grouping.

Penny Whistles should be considered as a test copy of the verses, copies of which were circulated among friends and artists--the friends to criticize and the artists to view for possible illustration. We know of only three of the friends who received copies of the proof sheets: W. E. Henley, Sidney Colvin, and Edmund Gosse. There are only three known copies of Penny Whistles extant, all to be found at Harvard and Yale Universities.

The value of Penny Whistles is not negligible. To the bibliophile it reveals some information as to change

in format of the Garden; to the researcher it gives a little more of the poetry of Stevenson; to the lover of Stevenson it breathes a little of the soul of the man. The book also shows the conscientious effort Stevenson put into the work. In an unpublished letter to Colvin, Stevenson wrote: "I never knew anything cost me so much actual pain as this morsel of re-arrangement."[1]

Nine of the poems in Penny Whistles were omitted from the Child's Garden. All but three were poems which both Henley and Colvin agreed were best left out.[2] These nine poems were privately printed in 1912 by Luther S. Livingston with the title Verses by R.L.S.[3]

The first poem to be deleted was a simple little four-line verse titled "Bull Hunt":

> Papa is away to the office I see
> And Johnnie has gone to the school.
> Come Peter, and sit in the corner with me,
> And pretend to be hunting a bull.[4]

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[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, Collected Poems (ed. by Janet Adam Smith; London, 1950), n., p. 48 and p. 550.

[2] This is evidenced by the handwriting on the Beinecke copy of Penny Whistles. Colvin's and Henley's deletion marks are to be found on the poems left out. In cases where Colvin suggested deletion and Henley called for "stet," the poems remained.

[3] A copy of this collectors' item is in the collection of the Library of Texas Christian University.

[4] Robert Louis Stevenson, Penny Whistles (Cambridge, 1883), p. 2.

It is a verse strictly on the level of the child speaking. Another of the poems deleted is "The Hunt Interrupted," which could easily be the last verse of the poem above:

> Hi! nursie, you come back again,
> Behind the deodar,
> For that's the place I'm going to hunt
> Where all the tigers are.[5]

A long poem titled "Lesson on the Sea"[6] is well named in that it does seem to sum up some of the imagery of water--rivers and streams, rain and rain-pools, and the distant, wide sea--which is predominant in the Child's Garden. The ocean is like a culmination of all the things water can be:

> The sea is the largest of waters I hear,
> And behold! it is full to the brim,
> For the sun to go down in when evening draws near
> And the birds and the boaties to skim.
>
> The ships may go sailing before them for days,
> And the birds may go flying at will,
> But they never arrive at the end of their ways
> For the sea is in front of them still.
>
> It tosses the seaweed and shells on the sand
> For the children to play with on shore;
> And it tumbles and roars at the edge of the land
> As the beasts in menageries roar.

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[5] Ibid., p. 8.

[6] Janet Adam Smith reproduced the poem in her "Notes" to the Collected Poems, pp. 551-552.

The rain of the skies and the rivers that haste,
All run to the sea without halt;
But the rain and the rivers are sweet to the taste,
And the sea is unpleasantly salt.

Most wonderful things are observed on the land
Like the wind and the Chinaman's wall,
There are thousands of things that we can't understand,
But the sea is the greatest of all.[7]

We have no knowledge why this poem was omitted from the Garden. Deletion was suggested by neither Colvin nor Henley. One change is suggested on the Beinecke proof-copy by someone (it seems to be Colvin) that the last line of the fourth stanza, "And the sea is unpleasantly salt," be changed to "And the sea is all bitter and salt." Perhaps the poem was considered too grown-up or out of the general context of the verses. Truly the poem is introspective in vision, delves deeper inward than most of the Garden verses. One cannot say, however, that it is beyond a child's understanding. Children know "there are thousands of things that we can't understand," but it worries a child not at all; there is enchantment in the unknown, and the wide sea casts the greatest spell.

This vision of the unknown is expressed again in a poem called "The Garden Door," but the rhythm is uneven

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[7] Stevenson, Penny Whistles, p. 13.

and the sense not quite clear:

> The world is quite a foreign place
> for little children's feet,
> There are so many borders
> where we're not allowed to go;
> The flowers that are so beautiful,
> we are not meant to eat;
> And many things we ask about,
> we're told we're not to know.
>
> But patience, little children,
> let us wait a year or more;
> We're growing very rapidly
> and soon we shall be men,
> When we're a little older
> we'll unbar the garden door,
> And off to follow fortune
> over mountain, over glen![8]

And again, this poem is not marked for deletion on the proof-sheets, but its omission from the Garden is not a loss. A reflection of much the same feeling may be found in the "Looking Forward" verse of the Garden:

> When I am grown to man's estate
> I shall be very proud and great,
> And tell the other girls and boys
> Not to meddle with my toys.

Formal social events are not portrayed in the Garden, so "Birthday Party" is actually out of the context:

> Laughing and leaping and blindman's-buff,
> All of us merry and none of us rough!
>
> Now for the supper, and what do you think?
> Trifle and ices and engus to drink!

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[8] Ibid., p. 9.

Cracker and caramel, apple and quince,
Here is a birthday to honour a Prince![9]

The last line has strong reflections of the last line in "Happy Thought":

I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

"Birthday Party" did not meet the approval of either Colvin or Henley. Colvin commented, "I've read almost the same lines on Xmas Crackers."[10]

The poem "Little Boy Blue" seems to be the only poem in all Stevenson's children's poetry which parodies a familiar rhyme from Mother Goose. Colvin did not consider it very good and Henley was plainly, if not emphatically, for deletion:

Little Boy Blue,
Come blow me your horn!
We are all going through
The clover and corn.

Before I was up,
You blew from the hill,
The swallows had heard you
And sang on the sill.

Come out to play--
It was that, that you said--
All the day long,
And go weary to bed!

Little Boy Blue,
Go trotting before!
Give us a lead
And a tune or two more.

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[10] Ibid. We assume that "crackers" is the word Colvin uses; the word is badly scrawled.

Little Boy Blue,
Come blow me your horn!
We are all going through
The clover and corn. [11]

If ever an influence of Kate Greenaway is sought after, it might be said that the last three poems to be omitted from the Garden indicate such an influence, especially the poem, "A Proper Pride":

Now, Jennie, don't be silly,
there are girls and there are boys,
And different kinds of children
must have different kinds of toys.
For some are all for driving whips
and things with which to strike,
And others take to tea-cups
and to rattles and the like;
And some can play with soldiers,
and the rest with women dolls--
So I'll play with you keeping shop
but not at making calls.[12]

Mutual sentiment is expressed in Greenaway's "Wishes," the last two lines of which are:

But what's the use of wishing it--
Boys never can be girls.[13]

Incidentally, neither Colvin nor Henley suggested deletion of "A Proper Pride."

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[11] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[12] Ibid., p. 15.

[13] Edna Johnson, Carrie E. Scott, Evelyn R. Sickels, comp., Anthology of Children's Literature (Boston, 1948), p. 885.

Two other little poems convey more the attitude of the period on what poetry for children should be. "A Song of Days" is one:

> Wheat bread and honey,
> Ice-cake and fool,
> Saturday for money,
> Monday for school!
>
> Play and work and eating
> All the week along--
> Sunday go to meeting
> With the new clothes on![14]

And "Good News" is another:

> God's in the blue, and cares for you;
> Angel and fairy fly.
> Sunshine and sleep, and swallows and sheep
> And flowers to please the eye!
>
> Merry to bed, O flaxen head!
> Merrily rise to play!
> There is no fear--your mother is near,
> And bright is the face of day![15]

We are inclined to agree with Colvin that this poem is "out of the key."[16]

With perhaps the exception of "Lesson on the Sea" these poems were best omitted from the Garden.

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[14] Stevenson, Penny Whistles, p. 9.

[15] Ibid., p. 21.

[16] Ibid.

Specific criticism of A Child's Garden of Verses has been practically confined to anthologies and text-books of children's literature. The best and most thorough of these is, of course, May Hill Arbuthnot in Children and Books. Arbuthnot discusses the poems according to their fidelity to child nature and their musical qualities, and notes the types of play the poems represent. Her discussion of motifs is confined to the frequency of night images in the poems.[17] All in all, the Arbuthnot analysis is highly satisfactory for its place in a text book on children's literature.

David Daiches[18] seems to be the only critic to treat at any length the Verses in their place as a part of Stevenson's art. Of the symbols represented in the Verses Daiches notes the attention given to the "travel" motif which can be found so often throughout the poems, not only in the act of travel and the visions of foreign

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17 May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (New York, 1947), pp. 105-111.

18 David Daiches, Robert Louis Stevenson (Norfolk, Conn., 1947). Janet Adam Smith does not offer us any specific criticism of the Child's Garden in her Introduction to the Collected Poems.

places, but in the modes of travel; the river, the sea, the winding road, and the idea of maps and adventure. Other motifs he discusses are the seasons, and the "somewhat prim morality" of some of the poems.[19] Daiches' conclusion seems to be that the poems represent "a deliberate attempt on Stevenson's part to recapture the sights, sounds and emotions of his childhood,"[20] even though the underlying emotion of the verses is an adult one. A comparison with Stevenson's "successor," A. A. Milne, is made, just as Stevenson has been in turn compared with the earlier Blake. A few of the technical aspects of the poems are discussed. All in all, the analysis seems to cover the salient aspects of the Garden, and with the attention they deserve.[21]

Imagery--the sense experience--is so abundant in

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19 Ibid., p. 182.

20 Ibid., p. 181.

21 At the time of this writing, an edition of A Child's Garden of Verses was brought to our attention published for the Limited Editions Club with an introduction by William Rose Benet and illustrations by Roger Duvoisin. The introduction is mostly biographical with little criticism.

A Child's Garden of Verses that any short analysis of the poetry usually confines itself to a discussion of one or two of the prominent motifs; most of the critics of children's literature give us a little of his imagery. Arbuthnot and Daiches have captured the two major motifs, night and travel, and a careful study of the poems reveals that these two motifs are intricately interwoven so that the one reflects the other. The child goes to bed only to imagine travels of all sorts; his bed becomes a boat ("My Bed Is a Boat"); his thoughts after he has been put to bed are of a parade of marching people ("Young Night Thoughts"); or of a galloping rider, as in "Windy Nights"; he goes to another world altogether, an exclusive world in "The Land of Nod." It is the intrinsic world of the child that is expressed, the world of himself, as it were, of aloneness, into which he can retire and give expression to his emotions--emotions that are valued by the child as much as they can be by the adult, except more wonderful to the child because he does not try to explain them, and the experience is still new. Night is the means, or even the excuse, for entering this little world, and the strictly material means for

reaching this world is through the modes of travel. Travel leads away from where he is to where he would like to be. So a stream or a road winding away into the distance, a boat, galloping horses, and even the modern train, all become physical means to an emotional gratification. In "Young Night Thoughts" the child does not wish to go alone to the town of sleep, so he lines the way with all the types of people he knows and loads them down with all sorts of things so that "every kind of beast and man is marching in that caravan." When he wishes to go alone, he makes a boat of his bed in "My Bed Is a Boat," and bids farewell to "friends on shore" not without taking a few material things like toys and wedding-cake--not plain, everyday cake but the wonder-worded wedding cake--so that he is not entirely cast off from things that he knows. The child is naively willing to accept the fanciful, but it is a little harder for him to accept the totally unknown; because this world has its fearful side, as in "The Land of Nod," the strangest things and frightening sights, and at the same time the beautifully poetic:

> All alone beside the streams
> And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

One of the most vivid of night images is gained in "The Moon" contrasting the many sides of the stealth and mystery of night with the lone yellow light of the moon which reveals all. But the most vivid of all Stevenson's numerous night-travel images is in "Windy Nights" where the beat of the galloping horseman, now receding, now approaching, "low and loud," is like a physical impact upon the reader, and the sounds become audible, "whenever the trees are crying aloud," until the reader feels as though he were enveloped in a wave of sound and motion.

Visions of travel, however, are not confined to night. There are many poems that show travel: the child seeing "Foreign Lands" from a cherry tree, expressing the wish fulfillment in "Travel," wondering where the river takes the boats in "Where Go the Boats?" The only actual physical experience with travel in the Child's Garden is in "From a Railway Carriage," which creates the beat of the wheels of the train as it goes over the breaks in the tracks. We are reminded, too, that the greater part of Stevenson's books published before the Child's Garden were travel books, and that the influence of George

Borrow is indicated, mostly in the conception of the joys and glories of vagabondage.[22]

And visions of night do not always appear with the travel images, although the feeling of motion is poetically conveyed in "Northwest Passage," along with the feeling that the night is alive. It stares in the window, crawls into corners and hides from the light, and moves with the candle flame. The light of the night which reveals its activities is graphically expressed in "The Moon." There is no better selection of pure sensations than those evoked by the squalling cat and squeaking mouse, and the howling dog, and the emerging of danger and thieves with the darkness.

All this is not to say that the child prefers night and dreams to day and play. Rather it is the utilization of an otherwise useless time for something that is interesting to the child. Sometimes it is very hard to be reconciled to the night, as in "Bed in Summer":

> In winter I get up at night
> And dress by yellow candle-light
> In summer, quite the other way,
> I have to go to bed by day.

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22 Cambridge History of English Literature (ed. by A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller; Cambridge, 1907-1916), VI, pp. 258-259.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

This poem helps to give the feeling that at times night is only a suppression to the active child.[23] Balfour reports from Louis's mother's diary, dated 18th April, 1856:

> Smout can't understand the days getting longer, and says he "would rather go to bed at the seven o'clock that used to be."[24]

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[23] The same sentiment is expressed by Blake in "Nurse's Song":

> No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
> And we cannot go to sleep;
> Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
> And the hills are all covered with sheep.

William Blake, Poems (ed. by W. B. Yeats; New York, n. d.), p. 59.

[24] Graham Balfour, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson (New York, 1901), I, 45.

Stevenson expresses this reluctance to go to bed in more than one of the Garden poems, as in "Northwest Passage":

> Must we to bed indeed? Well then,
> Let us arise and go like men.

The equally expressed reluctance to get out of bed is, strangely enough, used only once in the Child's Garden. That instance is in "Time to Rise," a verse that is set to music today for aspiring pianists in their beginning year:

> A birdie with a yellow bill
> Hopped upon the window sill,
> Cocked his shining eye and said:
> "Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head!"

The subtle reference to a lazy young fellow is indirect but effective. The brevity of the poem only serves to emphasize the imagery. How an opposite effect can be obtained with the same sentiment is portrayed by A. E. Housman in one of his Last Poems:

> Yonder see the morning blink:
> The sun is up, and up must I,
> To wash and dress and eat and drink
> And look at things and talk and think
> And work, and God knows why.
>
> Oh often have I washed and dressed
> And what's to show for all my pain?
> Let me lie abed and rest:

Ten thousand times I've done my best
And all's to do again.[25]

Using Housman's poem here serves only the purpose of drawing attention to the lack of futile emotions in Stevenson's poem.[26] Futility is not expressed in the

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[25] A. E. Housman, The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman (New York, 1940), p. 110.

[26] A similarity of Housman's poetry to some of Stevenson's is noted by William Rose Benet in his introduction to the Child's Garden, as well as Janet Adam Smith in her edition of the Collected Poems. Housman used Stevenson's "Requiem" as the basis for a most beautiful memoriam to"R. L. S.":

Home is the sailor, home from sea:
Her far-borne canvas furled
The ship pours shining on the quay
The plunder of the world.

Home is the hunter from the hill:
Fast in the boundless snare
All flesh lies taken at his will
And every fowl of air.

'Tis evening on the moorland free,
The starlit wave is still:
Home is the sailor from the sea,
The hunter from the hill.

Child's Garden. The emotion of fear is plentifully conveyed, but it is an emotion of ecstasy rather than futility.

Too often critics have tried to attach some sense of futility to the Garden by emphasizing the amount of sickness that is portrayed in the verses as against what should normally be healthy activity as the true essence of childhood. The method of criticism lies rather in a preconceived idea of the exotic Stevenson searching for health than an honest search for the motif of sickness in the Child's Garden. "The Land of Counterpane" is the poem most naturally used in this instance, which starts, "When I was sick and lay a-bed." The line immediately conveys the impression that the illness is temporary, and the poem goes on to show a child who is used to play, continuing his play in bed, and active play at that: soldiers at war, ships in fleets, and miniature cities, under the eye of a child who feels himself a giant supervising all before him on the counterpane. An interesting parallel to "The Land of Counterpane" is Randall Jarrell's "A Sick Child":

The postman comes when I am still in bed.
"Postman, what do you have for me today?"
I say to him. (But really I'm in bed)
Then he says--what shall I have him say.

"This letter says that you are president
Of--this word here; it's a republic."
Tell them I can't answer right away.
"It's your duty." No, I'd rather just be sick.

Then he tells me there are letters saying
everything
That I can think of that I want for them to
say.
I say, "Well, thank you very much. Goodby."
He is ashamed, and turns and walks away.

If I can think of it, it isn't what I want.
I want . . . I want a ship from some near star
To land in the yard, and beings to come out
And think to me: "So this is where you are!"

"Come." Except that they won't do,
I thought of them . . . And yet somewhere
there must be
Something that's different from everything,
All that I've never thought--think of me! [27]

We do not claim the direct influence of Stevenson upon Jarrell; Jarrell's sick child is removed from Stevenson's by a century, and has gained the twentieth century vision of outer worlds, yet the underlying emotions in both poems are the same: the child is temporarily sick and resorts to play to keep occupied. If Stevenson's

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[27] Randall Jarrell, "The Sick Child" (Poem). The Nation, CLXIX (Oct. 15, 1949), 374.

images are simpler, they are of the world the nineteenth century child knew. Yet these children are using their time while in a sick bed thinking by imagining worlds that are greater than they are, and visions that are beyond them. Again, Jarrell, too, conveys the image of travel, twentieth century travel into outer spaces, be it noted, yet imagery that has strong attraction to the child. Stevenson also wrote a poem called "The Sick Child,"[28] but there is little resemblance of it to Jarrell's poem. In Stevenson's poem the child is very sick and expresses his fears to his mother, who in turn tries to soothe him without showing her own growing fears. The poem is another autobiographical expression of Stevenson's childhood. Stevenson would not write a poem like Jarrell's, but he would be in full accord with it.

Outside of "The Land of Counterpane" there is not another poem in the Garden that specifically mentions a sick child. The emphasis is not, therefore, upon the sick child imagery conveyed in the Verses, but upon the

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[28] Stevenson, Underwoods, "XXVI." Collected Poems, p. 136.

connotation in the minds of critics: Stevenson was a sickly child; therefore his children's poetry expresses the emotions of a sick child. The emotions of his poetry are spiritual, not pathological; he is indulging the pleasures of his heart, not unburdening the pains of his flesh.

Children's poetry has been so intimately tied up with animal and fairy motifs that one would expect Stevenson to have used them to some extent. The motifs, however, take a minor place in the Verses. There is one poem, "The Cow," given directly to an animal, the portrait of a placid old animal munching clover in a field. Other animals mentioned are those connected with the far-away places in Stevenson's predominant use of the travel motif. Fairies are used mostly as comparative material and these, again, in relation to the travel motif: trains travel faster than fairies, and the pictures conjured in story-books are of flying fairies. Stevenson may take us to fairyland, but we may not see many fairies when we get there.[29]

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[29] Rose Fyleman is the poet of fairies. Where Stevenson may take one to fairyland, Fyleman brings the fairies to earth where they play about in a very human way (Blanche Ethel Weekes, Literature and the Child (New York, 1935), p. 178).

The morality tag has often been attached to the Verses, especially by critics today, as though it were taboo to lecture to little children through their own literature. It is reactionary criticism, the desire to swing to the complete opposite of the didactic literature out of which Stevenson's children's poetry emerges. Some morality, what is basically an inherited trait in Stevenson, is only natural. For one thing, the man liked to preach. When he told Colvin in his letter, "If you don't like A Good Boy, I do,"[30] he was asserting his privilege to be a moralist if he chose. Daiches describes some of the moralistic poetry as the "somewhat prim morality"[31] of the self-satisfied child, and goes on to explain that there is thus a "goody-goody note in many of the poems which may sound hypocritical, but which in fact represents accurately, though in a deliberately simplified form, Stevenson's mood when he began working on the collection,"[32] and cites the verse "A Thought" as an example:

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30 Stevenson, Letters, II, 152.

31 Daiches, op. cit., p. 182.

32 Ibid., p. 183.

It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink,
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place.

The best example of the moralistic poem in the collection is "A Good Boy," the one which Stevenson liked best and shows him moralizing at his worst, in a smug and "goody-goody" way:

I woke before the morning, I was happy all the day,
I never said an ugly word, but smiled and stuck to play.

And now at last the sun is going down behind the wood,
And I am very happy, for I know that I've been good.

My bed is waiting cool and fresh, with linen smooth and fair,
And I must off to sleepsin-by, and not forget my prayer.

I know that, till to-morrow I shall see the sun arise,
No ugly dream shall fright my mind, no ugly sight my eyes.

But slumber hold me tightly till I waken in the dawn,
And hear the thrushes singing in the lilacs round the lawn.

It needs be noted, too, that to be good had its reward, although the recompense of sweet dreams is an adult reward and hardly one that a child would consider rewarding in his childish lack of conscientiousness.

But Stevenson also sought to make excuses for some

of his didactically tinged verses, as in "Whole Duty of Children":

> A child should always say what's true
> And speak when he is spoken to,
> And behave mannerly at table;
> At least as far as he is able.

What Stevenson tries to teach in this poem is what a parent tries to teach, yet at the same time the poet realizes that there are limitations to a child's own moralistic views and it is enough that he try as far as he is able. Stevenson may have been influenced in this poem by the Bible, as in Ecclesiastes 12:13:

> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commands: for this is the whole duty of man.

But Christian terminology, as found in Blake's poetry for children, is not to be found in the Child's Garden.

On the other hand, the two-line verse "Happy Thought" is slyly moralistic:

> The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

It contains, as Furnas points out about the Garden as a whole, "too many back-handed flicks of the essential Louis,"[33] and is not in the least representative of

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[33] Furnas, op. cit., p. 220.

child thought. Nor can we say that meliorism is a doctrine of Stevenson's. Balfour gives what he reports as the original version of the poem:

> The world is so great and I am so small,
> I do not like it at all, at all.[34]

This version is more true to child thought; it shows him overwhelmed by the immensity of the world, yet fighting back in the only way that he can, by showing dislike, a dislike emphasized in repeated words. The moral of fight is a doctrine of Stevenson's. Although the two lines of "Happy Thought" are probably the most oft-repeated of Stevenson's Garden verses, its prim optimism is not nearly as poetic as the original version. William Rose Benet in his introduction to the Child's Garden notes this fact, calling the two versions "a complete bouleversement of attitude."[35] We have Balfour's word that the two lines are the earlier version of the poem, but his information must stand as a piece of family recollection, because, most interestingly, the lines are to be found on a page from one of Stevenson's notebooks[36] without correction or any indication that

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[34] Balfour, op. cit., I, 40.

[35] Stevenson, A Child's Garden of Verses, p. ix.

[36] Stevenson, Stevenson's Workshop (ed. by W. P. Trent; Boston, 1921), facsimile no. 5.

they tie in with the later poem. Stevenson's step-daughter confirms, it would seem, our suspicions that Louis did not care for the published version of the poem. She says:

> Stevenson thought the verse, "The World Is so Full of a Number of Things" not worth printing, but Fanny Stevenson fought for it valiantly.[37]

The subject of nature in the Child's Garden has not received much treatment critically. When one thinks of nature in relation to the Verses one thinks of the out-of-doors. Even the use of the word "garden" in the title brings connotations of the out-of-doors. Nature, in its abstract sense, is not handled by Stevenson in his children's poetry. The attitude of Child in Nature is one that belongs to Blake. The nature that we see in the Garden concerns the things in nature that a child is educated to: he learns the names of flowers from his nurse in "The Flowers," the habits of birds are studied in "Nest Eggs." Some mysticism in nature, but hardly anything like that of Blake's, is expressed in The Child Alone group of poems where the child seems to be more free to investigate

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[37] Isobel O. Strong, "Reminiscenses of Stevenson." Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (Sept. 25, 1937), 16.

such matters, as in "My Kingdom," where the mysterious surroundings of a little dell cause the small one to envision a world in proportion to himself. The seasons, as aspects of nature, receive some treatment. There are bonfires in the fall in "Autumn Fires"; the sun stands for summer in "Summer Sun" and the "Sun's Travels"; and the long day is felt in "Bed in Summer," contrasting the short day of winter in "Winter-Time"; and winter is the time of reading books, in "Picture-Books in Winter," and dreaming before the fire, as in "Armies in the Fire," the time of the indoors. On the other hand, the time of spring is not expressed as are the other seasons; it is only implied in "Nest Eggs" and elsewhere in the child's gladness to be out-of-doors.

A good many of the poems in the Garden are full of rhythm and sing for themselves when read out loud so that they appeal greatly to children even without the words being thoroughly understood. The greatest appeal of Mother Goose, it has been surprisingly noted, is this lilting rhythm, and many children who love Mother Goose grow up without ever knowing what many of the verses mean. To attach so many adult values to the Child's Garden is therefore unnecessary. A child's criticism

is neither moralistic nor altruistic. His criticism rests entirely upon how much tingling sensation he receives from the reading of poetry--how much rhythm it contains, how vivid are the word pictures.

The technical aspects of the Child's Garden, when considered, are fairly simple, but this is a fact which makes the poems first rate children's poetry. The most evident device used is the rhyming couplet, a most happy choice. It brings rhyming lines close together to make the child quickly and easily recognize them as rhymes and introduces him early to one of the devices which help to create poetry. Gosse, as a matter of fact, because of these couplet-rhymes, affiliates Stevenson with the school of poets who first broke away from heroic verse, Swift, Lady Winchilsea, Green and Dyer.[38]

"A Good Boy," quoted above, is an example not only of rhyming couplets but of verses limited to two lines each. One of the most dramatic of the poems using couplets is "A Good Play," in which stairs and back-bedroom chairs are instruments in the exciting action aboard a ship, and sofa pillows aid in sailing over the billows.

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[38] Edmund Gosse, Questions at Issue (London, 1893), p. 252.

The alternating rhyme is used as frequently, to be sure, as the couplet, and helps to indicate Stevenson's accomplishment in children's poetry. Where the couplet is used in poems of long lines, in most cases, the alternate rhymes are, again, evident to a child's eye. A good example of this is "Singing," which is musical even without the suggestion of its title:

> Of speckled eggs the birdie sings
> And nests among the trees;
> The sailor sings of ropes and things
> In ships upon the seas.
>
> The children sing in far Japan,
> The children sing in Spain;
> The organ with the organ man
> Is singing in the rain.

Besides its rhythm with the predominance of "s" and "r" sounds creating a singing motion, and its rhymes, the travel motif is conspicuous. The poem, one can say, is an example of almost all the poetic devices Stevenson uses to create his children's poetry.

Other technical devices, such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, are liberally sprinkled through the poems in the Child's Garden. The repeating of words is more evident, as in "Looking-Glass River":

> Down in cool places,
> Dim and very cool.

Recurrent words are often combined with alliteration, consonance, and assonance, as in these two verses from "Keepsake Mill," and a rhythm is created that the child never tires of:

> Sounds of the village grow stiller and stiller
> Stiller the note of the birds on the hill;
> Dusty and dim are the eyes of the miller,
> Deaf are his ears with the moil of the mill.
>
> Years may go by, and the wheel in the river
> Wheel as it wheels for us, children, to-day,
> Wheel and keep roaring and foaming for ever
> Long after all the boys are away.

We have noted that the poem "Lesson on the Sea" from Penny Whistles is introspective in aspect. It might be observed that introspection is an aspect of literature which has little place in children's poetry. We have already seen that children are not greatly concerned with morals, and by the same token their emotional reaction to phenomena is more an acceptance of them rather than a questioning of their reason for being.[39] One might consider "Where Go the Boats?" as introspective when the child asks, "Boats of mine a-boating--/ Where will all come home?"; or the wonder of "The Wind"; or the unexplainable yearning

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[39] By comparison we can say that Blake's poetry is highly introspective.

of the child in "The Lamplighter" ("O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night!").

But the Envoys may be considered wholly introspective. Here Stevenson is not only thinking, in a poetic way, of those people who played a part in the Child's Garden; he is also evoking a train of emotional reactions which involve a bit of soul searching. When he speaks "To Willie and Henrietta," he reminds them that they can vicariously enjoy their childhood again by watching their successors play, even though he adds:

> But time which none can bind,
> While flowing fast away, leaves love behind.

This regret for fleeting youth carries on into the poem "To Minnie":

> The eternal dawn, beyond a doubt,
> Shall break on hill and plain,
> And put all stars and candles out
> Ere we be young again.

It is interesting to note just what emotional reactions can be evoked from the Child's Garden. Furnas could not help but make a comparison (though he considered it unimportant) of T. S. Eliot and the poem "To Minnie," "in its self-consciously poignant use of others' weightier verse as flavoring."[40] When Edna

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[40] Furnas, op. cit., note 16, p. 519.

St. Vincent Millay's personal papers were sorted after her death a copy of "Nest Eggs" was found in her handwriting, copied when she was about eight years old, and it was at first thought to be a piece of her own juvenilia.[41]

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[41] Vincent Sheean, "Edna St. Vincent Millay." Vogue (Aug. 12, 1951), p. 142. See also Vincent Sheean, The Indigo Bunting (New York, 1951), p. 115.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL

B. Other Children's Poems

To Stevenson's children's poetry belongs the group of poems which he wrote mostly at Davos Platz for his step-son to print on his toy press. There are several groups: Not I and Other Poems, two groups of Moral Emblems, The Graver and the Pen, and Moral Tales.

Lloyd Osbourne was a boy of twelve when the Stevensons spent the winter of 1881-1882 at Davos, and a toy press was his prized possession. He printed at first concert programs, invitations, and lottery tickets, but soon graduated to printing, for sale, the verses written by Stevenson, and illustrated by woodcuts also made by him.[1]

Not I and Other Poems is a group of four poems, the last three of which are unimportant in that they deal directly with "the printer and the bard, in pressless Davos,"[2] and seem to set forth the purpose of the printing. The first Poem "Not I" is interesting enough:

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[1] Stevenson, Collected Poems, (Ed. by Janet Adam Smith; London, 1950), p. 557.

[2] Ibid., p. 414.

Some like drink
In a pint pot,
Some like to think;
Some not.

Strong Dutch Cheese,
Old Kentucky Rye,
Some like these;
Not I.

Some like Poe
And others like Scott,
Some like Mrs. Stowe;
Some not.

Some like to laugh,
Some like to cry.
Some like chaff;
Not I.

The poem is interesting in its grouping of likes and dislikes and in its rhythm, recommending itself like song. There is a touch of Lear about it.

The group of poems in Moral Emblems I and II all depend upon the woodcuts that accompany each verse for complete understanding. For instance, the "Trumpeting Jumbo" in IV of Moral Emblems I may or may not be understood to be an elephant, but the woodcut with it should make it clear that an elephant is referred to. The travel motif is used in number III, which has a title, "A Peak in Darien":

Broad-gazing on untrodden lands,
See where adventurous Cortez stands;
While in the heavens above his head,
The Eagle seeks its daily bread.
How aptly fact to fact replies.
Heroes and Eagles, hills and skies.
Ye, who contemn the fatted slave,
Look on this emblem and be brave.

Each of the verses in Moral Emblems holds forth with a moralistic preachment, but these morals are mildly stated, as if in half earnest. One would hardly call them primly moralistic, as some of the verses are in a Child's Garden. The sense of play is felt throughout.

Six poems under the title The Graver and the Pen; or, Scenes from Nature with Appropriate Verses are more in the vein of the Child's Garden. The Proem shows the Neo-Classic trend toward didacticism, the artist wandering in the meadow wherever the muses lead, a treatment of nature which is not penetrating. The poem "The Precarious Mill" uses a subject found often in the Garden:

Alone above the stream it stands,
Above the iron hill,
The topsy-turvy, tumble-down
Yet habitable mill.

Still as the ringing saws advance
To slice the humming deal,
All day the pallid miller hears
The thunder of the wheel.

He hears the river plunge and roar
   As roars the angry mob,
He feels the solid building quake,
   The trusty timbers throb.

All night beside the fire he cowers:
   He hears the rafters jar:
O why is he not in a proper house
   As decent people are!

The floors are all aslant, he sees,
   The doors are all a-jam;
And from the hook above his head
   All crooked swings the ham.

"Alas," he cries and shakes his head,
   "I see by every sign,
There soon will be the deuce to pay,
   With this estate of mine."

We feel, apart from the fine rhythm, that the poem is all in fun, greatly aided by the almost flippant ending.

Another poem, "The Disputatious Pines," can be said to anticipate Stevenson's Fables:

The first pine to the second said
"My leaves are black, my branches red;
I stand upon this moor of mine,
A hoar, unconquerable pine."

The second sniffed and answered "Pooh!
I am as good a pine as you."

"Discourteous tree," the first replied,
"The tempest in my boughs had cried,
The hunter slumbered in my shade,
A hundred years ere you were made."

The second smiled as he returned:
"I shall be here when you are burned."

So far dissension ruled the pair,
Each turned on each a frowning air,
When flickering from the bank anigh,
A flight of martins met their eye.
Sometime their course they watched; and then
They nodded off to sleep again.

The moral of the old pine and the young pine will not be lost upon children, but the last verse is more for adult understanding, an understanding, however, that is truly poetic in conception.

The two long narrative poems in Moral Tales continue in the sense of apologue. The story of "Robin and Ben: or, the Pirate and the Apothecary" carries a moral which is almost lost in the high adventures of Robin, who is described as

Wild as the wild Bithynian Camels,
Wild as the wild sea-eagles--

and the smug complacency of Ben who

Tended his shop with learned air,
Watered his drugs and oiled his hair,
And gave advice to the unwary,
Like any sleek apothecary.

The moral of the tale unwinds itself in the ending as to which is the lesser of two evils, "battle and blood, death and disease," or cold-blooded murder for a little profit. Stevenson is preaching, if preach he must, the moral of adventure and of the Fight.

Some of these miscellaneous poems may not be considered strictly children's poetry, but viewed in the light in which they were written--as entertainment for a boy of twelve--they do not fall short of the aim of children's verse.

Some of Stevenson's Ballads have been used successfully with older children in the schoolroom. "Heather Ale" is the best example, considered "powerfully dramatic" by some critics of children's literature.[3] The ballads concerning the South Sea islands, "The Song of Rahero" and "The Feast of Famine," offer subject matter to the adolescent which he does not often find in poetic form.

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[3] Charles Madison Curry and Erle Elsworth Clippinger, Children's Literature (Chicago, 1927), p. 381.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Shadow and the Substance

Robert Louis Stevenson loved to describe a river; and the growth of children's poetry may be compared to the progress of one of the streams he describes. Stevenson shows a river in the poem "Where Go the Boats?" on which green leaves float and become little boats to the imaginative child. The progress of the leaves shows the way of the river as it flows onward to its destiny in the sea. Isaac Watts, in writing his poetry for children, was setting a few poems, like leaves upon a river, on the course that children's poetry was to take. The widening of the river into the boundless expanse of the sea represents the extent to which children's poetry expands in Robert Louis Stevenson.

The generally accepted fact that A Child's Garden of Verses is autobiographical is proven when put to the test. The Verses are a biography of children's actions, their reactions, dreams and half-expressed hopes; it is also critical biography. In the Garden

we find Stevenson not only recording the child's play that he remembered; we find him remembering the pangs of being and the fears of an outside world bigger than himself. We find, most of all, the growth of a small being, in his wonders and his final acceptance of a world that is to be his.

A perusal of the various biographies of Robert Louis Stevenson shows a great neglect on the part of the biographers in developing Stevenson's life as it has a bearing upon the Child's Garden. David Balfour, a cousin of Stevenson's, set the mode by indicating that the Verses were a pasttime to be made use of when Stevenson was too ill to do anything else. Stevenson's wife and her two children echo this opinion. Each of the succeeding biographers was to reflect the sentiment more or less. Some few of these, however, did note that the Verses were important, although still allotting their composition to periods of illness. But an opinion does not make a fact. It cannot be said that Stevenson composed children's poetry only when he was bedfast. His notebooks, showing verses written for the Garden interspersed with other poetry and notes, indicate that

he could have, and probably did, work at some of the poems at other times.

Careful study of the life of Stevenson during the time he wrote his Penny Whistles (a development which no biographer of Stevenson has attempted), reveals the man of the Child's Garden as a person more in harmony with his children's poetry than has hitherto been held. There can now be no doubt as to the complete interest and absorption that was Stevenson's regarding his children's poetry. His light words spoken of his little verses must be taken as modesty, as an unwillingness to express sentiment over a type of poetry generally accepted as not very important. Stevenson's contacts with the people, especially the artists, who were making history in the realms of poetry and illustrations for children were, in many cases, intimate contacts. They were a part of his life, and must have contributed to his growth as a writer. Stevenson's closest friends, Mrs. Fanny Sitwell, Sidney Colvin, and W. E. Henley, played an important part in his maturing into a writer. Each took an active interest in the production of A Child's Garden as a book. If it had not been important

to Louis, it would not have been important to them. Fanny Stevenson played just as important a role in the Child's Garden. Her eagerness to keep in all the little didactic poems resulted from her conception of what poetry for children should be. Her real contribution to the Garden was love and care, attention and easement to the sick man who had the poetry in his soul. No influence exerted by anyone was greater than the poet's own desire to produce for children the poetry that was his because he had lived intensely as a child those things that are the essence of his poetry.

An analysis of the poems of the Garden reveals that Stevenson has captured the imagery that is dear to childhood, and this, together with his own eternal childlike viewpoint, reveals the poet as creator of poetry that becomes the child's own. The prevalence of travel motifs and images of the night in the poems shows Stevenson creating a more poetic feeling in children's poetry--a feeling of how great the excitement of living can be to children. The imagery reveals a truth: that children have not yet reached any satiety, and that they enjoy eagerly the adventure and mystery

that travel and night motifs evoke. The naivete of childhood is not diminished by an abundance of ethereal images. There are plenty of other images, of story books and everyday activities. And the world of play, the very essence of child being, is given the most important role in the Child's Garden.

Robert Louis Stevenson's essay "Child's Play," published seven years before A Child's Garden of Verses, could, as has been mentioned, easily be considered an introduction to the Verses. An analysis of his children's poetry has shown that this poetry came out of the very stuff of his being. Yet none of all this factual analysis suggests what the poetry has meant to the children of the world in the seven decades of its existence. This poetry has been, and will continue to be, the expression of what is closest to a child's heart. As Stevenson says,

> Children are even content to forego what we call the realities, and prefer the shadow to the substance.[1]

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[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, "Child's Play," Works, II, 126.

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