

Robert Louis Stevenson

# KIDNAPPED

*With an Introduction by John Seelye  
and a New Afterword by Claire Harman*



SIGNET CLASSICS



Robert Louis Stevenson

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**Robert Louis Stevenson** (1850-94) was born in Edinburgh. In the brief span of forty-four years, dogged by poor health, he made an enormous contribution to English literature with his novels, poetry, and essays. The son of upper-middle-class parents, he was the victim of lung trouble from birth, and spent a sheltered childhood surrounded by constant care. In 1880, he married Mrs. Fanny Osbourne, a woman ten years his senior. The balance of his life was taken up with his unremitting devotion to work, and a search for a cure to his illness that took him all over the world. His travel essays were published widely, and his short fiction was gathered in many volumes. His first full-length work of fiction, *Treasure Island*, was published in 1883 and brought him great fame, which only increased with the publication of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). He followed with the Scottish romances *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). In 1888, he set out with his family for the South Seas, traveling to the leper colony at Molokai, and finally settling in Samoa where he died.

**John Seelye** is a leading American Studies scholar and professor of English at the University of Florida at Gainesville. He is the author of *The True Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Prophet Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature*.

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# INTRODUCTION

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland, the son and grandson of men preeminent as civil engineers, a profession for which he was himself intended, but was prevented from entering because of congenital bad health. He spent much of his adult life traveling about in a futile search of an environment that would help him throw off the lung disease from which he suffered, a quest that ended in the South Seas, where he died in his forty-fourth year. Educated at the University of Edinburgh, Stevenson thought briefly of becoming a lawyer, but instead turned his journeys in quest of health into literature. Though we think of him primarily as an author of romances, like Mark Twain—whose work Stevenson admired—he began his career as a travel writer.

*An Inland Voyage*, about a trip by canoe through France and Belgium, was published in 1878, followed by his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, in 1879. He also wrote essays, represented by the collection entitled *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), and was regarded as a brilliant practitioner of the art. But it was his writings about travel that determined his subsequent career as a writer of romantic adventure stories, in which lengthy and hazardous journeys play an important part. His European travels also influenced his personal life, for it was while he was in France that he met an American woman, Mrs. Fanny Osbourne, a talented painter some years his senior, with whom he fell in love. In 1880, he took passage on an immigrant ship for America in order to reunite in California with Mrs. Osbourne, whom, shortly after her divorce, he married.

The newlyweds remained for a brief time in the United States, an episode recorded in his book *The Silverado Squatters* (1883), but perhaps the most important immediate result of the union was *Treasure Island*. Originally conceived as an improvised entertainment for his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, the novel was first published in serial form in a magazine for children in 1881 before appearing as a book two years later. A critical success, *Treasure Island* set Stevenson on a new career writing adventure fiction aimed at young readers that attracted adults as well, including both Mark Twain and Henry James, Jr., as well as Andrew Lang, an influential critic of the day. Despite the psychological complexities of Stevenson's next novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and the dark even literally haunted aspects of life that characterize a number of his shorter stories, like "The Merry Men" and "Thrawn Janet" (1887), the author was known in his day primarily as a writer of books for boys. *Treasure Island* was followed by *Kidnapped* (1886), *Prince Otto* (1887), and *The Black Arrow* (1888), and his poetry was aimed at the same youthful audience, as suggested by the title of his popular collection, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885).

Only in his last novel, *Weir of Hermiston* (1896), did Stevenson break free from this lucrative though presumably limited vein. But to the regret of his admirers he died before he could finish the tale of a son cruelly victimized by a tyrannical father. Yet like so many of Stevenson's extended fictions, his last was a melodrama characterized by often tragic misunderstandings, gothic settings and actions, and an overall atmosphere of mystery. The negative filial element likewise can be found in his boys' books, as any number of critics have noted, in which the heroes are often orphans who find father figures in older but duplicitous men, a repetition that has been attributed to Stevenson's unhappy relationship with his own father.

Not only was Thomas Stevenson disappointed that his son was unable to follow him in his profession, but the two differed often angrily on matters of religion, Louis (as he was called) being

unsympathetic to the strict Presbyterianism of the older man. And yet it can also be said that the genre in which his talent flowered is literally overpopulated by orphans. It is a stock situation presumably taken from the fairy-tale tradition which was so influential on the emerging literature aimed exclusively at children written in Great Britain and the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century. David Copperfield and Jane Eyre are two early examples in kind. Cut away from adult care, the orphan is also free of adult supervision, a dual situation that accentuates both sentimental and adventurous possibilities.

There is, it must be said, very little of the sentimental in the boys' books of Stevenson, whose most famous creation, Jim Hawkins, grieves more over the death of the pirate Billy Bones than over that of his father, both losses having occurred simultaneously. *Kidnapped* likewise begins with the death of David Balfour's father, which inspires little grief in the hero. But it does set him loose in the world with little more than the parting, Polonius-like advice of the village pastor, Mr. Campbell. Whereas Hawkins's inheritance (from Billy Bones, not his father) is a map promising great wealth, its counterpart in *Kidnapped* is a sealed envelope addressed by David's father to his estranged brother Ebenezer Balfour "of Shaws," which likewise promises much. But it is not long before considerable differences in the fates of the two young heroes begin to operate.

Indeed, because *Kidnapped* was the second of Stevenson's so-called "boys' books," there is an inevitable inclination to compare it to the first, published only three years earlier, and the two books differ greatly. *Treasure Island* seems to have been mostly an impromptu performance, written in virtual collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, and with considerable input by Stevenson's father, Thomas. It is purely a fantasy, having no firm roots in historical matters, and comes closer to the notion of Stevenson as a writer who derived his materials from dreams than do most of his other works. *Kidnapped*, by contrast, is a carefully constructed fiction, with intentionally strong connections to historical circumstance, namely the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion in Scotland.

Likewise, *Treasure Island* as a place is geographically impossible, for though presumably located in the Caribbean, it is given flora and fauna transplanted from California, including redwood trees and rattlesnakes. It is, as has been suggested, an imaginative reconstruction of the Monterey Peninsula where the author was reunited with Fanny Osbourne. *Kidnapped*, on the other hand, takes place in geographically authentic locations, and while both novels are given frontispiece maps drawn by Stevenson, the sea-chart of *Treasure Island* is once again purely imaginary, whereas the map found at the start of *Kidnapped* is a reasonable facsimile of a verifiable location. The difference in maps is entirely in keeping with the difference between the two books in which they are placed.

Actually, one may read *Treasure Island* without consulting Stevenson's map, which the author drew so as to validate events in an entirely imaginary location—the map, that is to say, is dictated by what happens in the book. By contrast, the reader uninformed about the geography of the Scottish isles is really helped by the map in *Kidnapped*, where the characters must deal with a very real and often dangerous landscape. These are not incidental differences: In his second adventure story for boys, Stevenson abandoned imaginary locations and events for the authentic grid, the longitude and latitude, if you will, of historical romance, the literary form invented by the Scottish writer with whom he is invariably compared, Sir Walter Scott. We need not here get into a lengthy discussion of definitions—enough has been written about the literary romance as a genre to fill a very long shelf—to understand that a historical romance employs verifiable circumstances derived from important events of the distant past in order to provide a frame for otherwise extraordinary actions. The heroes or heroines are generally fictional creations, but they encounter in their adventures historical personages.

Stevenson is on record as having been critical of Henry Fielding for having set *Tom Jones* during

the period of the Jacobite Rebellion without a single mention of what Stevenson thought of as a historical event of considerable importance. He perhaps had that presumed deficiency in mind when he set *Kidnapped* during the aftermath of the war, which was a Tory, Catholic, Scottish and futile attempt to restore the Stuart dynasty (the line of James I of England, hence “jacobite”) to the British throne. It is useful here to point out that Stevenson was a Scotsman and Fielding was not, and that the Jacobite Rebellion was to Scotland what the Civil War was to the United States, a conflict that served not only to divide a country, but whose consequences were long felt by the defeated.

Still, Emily Dickinson wrote on in Amherst during the 1860s without a thought to the Civil War and Henry W. Longfellow produced his *Tales of a Wayside Inn* and James Russell Lowell his *Firestone Travels* during the same period, yet both men as we know were acutely aware of what was happening outside their study doors. We might also note that as the American Revolution was being waged, the English dramatist William Brinsley Sheridan wrote two of his most famous comedies, *The Rivals* and *School for Scandal*, and Fanny Burney wrote *Evelina* without mentioning that cosmic circumstance, yet surely the War for Independence had far vaster consequences for Great Britain than did the earlier Jacobite business.

But the attempt to restore the Stuart line, which originated with James VI of Scotland who became James I of England in 1603, was important to natives of Scotland, especially after it was absorbed as part of Great Britain. Notably, Sir Walter Scott’s career as a romantic historian began with *Waverley* in 1812, which is set during the Jacobite Rebellion, and involves the titular hero, Edward Waverley, in the rebel cause, very nearly at the cost of his life. Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* is perhaps as much in debt to Scott’s romance about the rebellion as it is to the rebellion itself, but that is only one of a number of textual echoes that give a second dimension to what is primarily a tale of hairbreadth adventures.

Now the adventure romance is but a side step away from two other genres, the classical epic and the picaresque tale, and in many ways shares features of both. It lacks the seriousness of the one and the inconsequentiality of the other, and merges great events with humorous circumstances into which the hero is frequently (and literally) hurled. The classical epic, whether by Homer or Virgil, distinguished by high seriousness and traditionally joins the cosmic to the microcosmic. It involves gods in the affairs of heroes, who are great men made even greater by the connection. The picaresque tale, by contrast, is microcosmic in its setting and characters, the both of which are drawn from common—even low—life, and events, rather than being dictated by the gods, seem largely a matter of chance and coincidence. Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, that influential but inimitable book, is often classified as belonging to the picaresque, but it is truly in a category by itself, being a burlesque of the medieval version of epic describing the adventures of knights at arms, stories that gave “romance” its earlier meaning, suggesting the marvelous and the unlikely.

To add further complexity to this matter, we can add that Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* *Apprenticeship* was among the many novels influenced by *Don Quixote*. Goethe’s story of a wandering youth made wiser by his encounter with the world was the first example of the *Bildungsroman*, which we may translate as “novel of education.” Characteristically, such novels are concerned with the travels of a very naive youth, one who often (like Quixote) has learned about life from reading highly imaginative and idealistic fiction, and who discovers there is a wide disparity between such literature and reality. Scott’s *Waverley*, which we have already cited in connection with *Kidnapped*, was an early example of the *Bildungsroman* in English, and gave ideological complexity to the picaresque elements of the adventure story.

*Tom Jones* is generally regarded as the finest example of picaresque in the English language. There is nothing Quixotic about Fielding’s hero, whose contact with romantic (or any) literature

apparently slight, and whose romp through the countryside and the city serves chiefly as an occasion to play off his rural innocence against the wiles of the wily world, from which (unlike Goethe's hero) he emerges virtually unchanged. Stevenson's grumble about Fielding's avoidance of the great Jacobite Rebellion should serve as notice, because on one dimension *Kidnapped* is a revision of *Tom Jones*, that we have a youthful hero brimming with rural innocence who eventually gets very much involved in the aftermath of the attempt to restore the Stuarts to the throne. Like Tom Jones, David Balfour has been cheated of his birthright, and like him he eventually succeeds in regaining it, although much of what happens in between has very little to do with that frame. *Kidnapped* lacks the neat tripartite structure of Fielding's novel, whose geography is divided into Country, Road, City, thereby permitting a satiric anatomy of the entire British social scene, but it does have a certain unity, derived from the twofold nature of the hero's journey.

The story begins with David's setting out from home, following the death of his widowed father, virtually penniless but with great expectations of coming into some kind of inheritance, a hope identified with the contents of the sealed envelope addressed to his uncle. These expectations come less than naught: Ebenezer Balfour is a miserly rascal, who for reasons eventually made clear sees it that David is "trepanned," i.e. shanghaied aboard a ship bound for the Carolinas, where he will be sold into indentured servitude. This voyage proves to be a long one in terms of time, as the ship battles head winds and strong tides, but it does carry David far from home, and after a series of nearly fatal adventures, the hero finds himself cast up on what appears to be a desert island off the coast of a wild part of Scotland. The balance of the romance concerns his attempts to return whence he came and claim the inheritance his uncle has kept from him, a journey that begins with him stripped of everything save the clothes on his back.

The map accompanying the book provides a diagram of the circuitous shipboard voyage westward and the relatively straightforward line tracing David Balfour's arduous journey over land as he seeks to go home. And it is, notably, this second journey that occupies most of the story, not the voyage overseas, reminding us that one of the greatest stories of adventure, the *Odyssey*, was likewise about a frequently interrupted return trip. It is this characteristic that distinguishes Stevenson's adventurous romance from so many others of the genre, which often are concerned with a quest requiring an extended journey in an outward direction into unknown and dangerous territory. Derived from knightly romance, this quest motif was used by Scott in *Waverley*, resulting in one of the definitive differences between *Kidnapped* and its great model. Like young Waverley, Balfour finds himself in the dangerous terrain of the Scottish Highlands, but where Scott's hero makes his way into the disputed territory overland, and by a series of symbolic stages, David Balfour is virtually tossed up into a place he had no desire to reach.

Stevenson famously celebrated "chance" as an essential factor of his romantic fiction, which we have already defined as an element of the picaresque, and, far more than in *Treasure Island*, it is chance that dictates what happens to David. Where Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* calls most of the shots, even in his "mistakes" making what turn out to be the correct moves, David seldom understands at the time what is happening, is caught up in actions over which he has no control, and places himself, will he nil he, under the control and direction of others. Again and again in telling his story he tells us that he had no inkling of what was about to befall him. Here too he resembles Waverley, who like so many of Scott's "heroes" is weak-willed and easily manipulated by stronger, single-minded characters, often with dangerous consequences.

For David, the sequence starts with his miserly uncle, but is most extensively demonstrated by his travels with Alan Breck, a courageous if vainglorious advocate of the Jacobite cause, with whom the

youthful hero moves through the perilous terrain occupied by the disenfranchised rebels and threatened by the redcoat soldiers of King George, who are on watch for any sign of further insurrection. Like Edward Waverley, David Balfour is suspected of complicity in the Jacobite conspiracy, and like him also he is caught up in the wake of a determined champion of that cause, Waverley's case the foolhardy but courageous Fergus Mac-Ivor. Much has been written about the pairing of David with Alan—the wary, Protestant lowlander keeping company with the fiery Catholic Highlander, the two making up the whole of an ideal hero—observations that resemble what Coleridge said about Sancho Panza and Don Quixote, but it is a match clearly derived from Scott's great romance of the Rebellion.

There is no need here to line out the other parallels with *Waverley* for us to understand Stevenson's dual indebtedness to both Fielding and Scott, nor are these the only operating influences. The name Balfour's uncle, Ebenezer, inescapably evokes the most famous miser of them all, Scrooge in Dickens's *Christmas Carol*, and there are a number of similar touches borrowed from Dickens, including the deft characterizations of the colorful persons David encounters in his own pursuit of great expectations. Likewise, the bond that grows between the young hero and the renegade Jacobite seems to evoke the friendship between Huck Finn and the fugitive slave, Jim, in the novel by Mark Twain that Stevenson surely read before beginning his own picaresque tale. Not surprisingly, Leslie Fiedler's thesis, once notorious but now increasingly conventional, classed both of those intense male relationships as examples of literary homoeroticism. It is an argument given even more strength by Stevenson's instance, whose hero though a lad of seventeen seems absolutely unaware of the opposite sex.

This pileup of literary parallels—and there are others—is accumulated here only to suggest that Stevenson's tale of adventure, which in his dedicatory letter he defines as having been written chiefly to entertain (that is to say *not* to instruct, the function of so much earlier literature for young readers) is given considerable complexity by the literary contexts from which it emerged. One needn't be aware of these connections to enjoy the story—I am one of a great many who read the book as a child, quite innocent of them—but they do for older readers lend a depth of resonance to what at first appears to be a random sequence of events given unity by the inevitable presence of the first-person narrator who is the protagonist of his own story.

To put it another way, David Balfour may not be a quixotic hero who sees life as through a library window, but Robert Louis Stevenson was a text-burdened novelist, who worked his own emerging novels through a literary grid. Defoe, Dickens, and Dumas, Fielding and Scott, Twain and Hawthorne (whose story "My Kinsman, Major Molineaux" seems to have influenced the opening section of the romance, as David asks a number of people about his own kinsman, Ebenezer Balfour), each is evoked to a greater or lesser degree. The result is like those pictures, also intended for children, where the landscape proves to be made up of hidden faces and figures, which emerges as we scrutinize the scenery. But, and this should be the main point here, the romance like the picture has its own integrity that transcends the parts from which it is constructed. Once again, the young reader for whom the book was aimed can enjoy it without being aware of the many analogous texts from which it is derived, and of course so can we. But our experience is all the richer for the awareness, which lends multiple dimensions to what is primarily a simple plotline, lacking the ideological matrix that gives complexity to *Waverley*.

Where Scott clearly disapproved of the Jacobite cause, viewed as a destabilization of the progressive direction in which a unified (and Protestant) Great Britain was moving, Stevenson evoked the rebellion and its aftermath in the service of entertainment only, providing the ingredient of dang

essential to an adventure story. As in much of his fiction, the moral element is likewise muted, so that a character like Captain Hoseason resembles Long John Silver in mingling admirable and detestable characteristics, and has in his employ a man like Mr. Riach, who though virtually a pirate is good of heart, as well as Mr. Shuan, who like a character from Dickens seems inexplicably evil. Colin Ross Campbell of Glenure, like Alan Breck an historical personage and his counterpart, being long anticipated as the villain of the piece, appears only momentarily before he is murdered, and in such a way that our pity (to say nothing of our surprise) is evoked.

Even the despicable Ebenezer Balfour, who, like Oliver Twist's half-brother Monks, schemes for the destruction of the hero, is in the end given a generous allotment rather than the death he so richly deserves and to which in a novel by Scott (or Dickens) he would be sentenced. Stevenson may indeed have looked to these earlier writers for inspiration, but unlike them he avoids melodramatic oppositions and conclusions. Indeed, *Kidnapped* does not even attain a conventional ending, but simply stops as David approaches the bank from which he will obtain his long-sought fortune. It is a *clausura interrupta* that leaves the hero (and presumably the reader) mourning his separation from his great and good friend, Alan Breck, rather than anticipating the riches soon to be his.

It is obvious that Stevenson planned to provide a sequel, which he did after much delay, writing *Catriona* just before he died, a book that most critics have regarded as significantly different from *Kidnapped*, indeed from much of his earlier fiction, in that the hero actually falls in love. But the suspended conclusion provides another marked difference to *Treasure Island*, which has such a tidy ending, save perhaps for a final accounting of the miserable pirates left on the island with the great bars of silver still hidden in Ben Gunn's cave. The reader is assured that "all went well" with both David Balfour and his good friend, Alan Breck, but is teased by Stevenson's refusal to list the particulars. It is a signal perhaps that the author was entering a somewhat different relationship with his audience, that he had discovered the kinds of authorial power implicit in the story of adventure which was to keep the reader in the same suspenseful matrix that surrounds the hero.

That is, although the providential favor that seems to operate in all of Jim Hawkins's actions is largely missing from the chance-determined events of *Kidnapped*, the romance presumes a world in which the author has the controlling hand. It is Stevenson after all who creates the circumstances besetting the hero, who brings him to the dark tower at Shaws, who shanghaies him aboard the *Covenant*, who shipwrecks him, then draws him into the historical murder of Glenure, only to rescue him after a sequence of perilous adventures. David concludes by crediting "the hand of Providence" with having led him to the doors of the British Linen Company's bank, but this is a very rare concession to divinity. And as if to prove who is in charge, David's remark is immediately followed by Stevenson's interruption as the omnipresent "editor," of whom we have likewise heard nothing up to this point, but whose role we are suddenly left to confront as the action ends.

Such a conclusion brings the reader smack up against the fact of authorship, ending the intended participation in events that narratives of adventure encourage by the use of suspenseful action. In effect, the reader is wakened from the long dream to which Stevenson so often compared his art of fiction, with the sudden recognition that what has happened is entirely the invention of the author, a literary event that is made up (as the adult reader should recognize) by elements derived from other literary events. Indeed, the plotline of *Kidnapped* is derived from Scott's famous formula of pursuit, capture, and escape, which served Fenimore Cooper (another of Stevenson's models) and any number of other adventure writers so well. And that Stevenson would leave the reader standing with the hero at the entrance to the bank where his future fortune resides suggests his debt to Dickens as well, who invented the device warranted by the serial publication of his novels, which ended each installment by

leaving the hero (and reader) anticipating yet another event whose nature will be disclosed in the next month's issue of the magazine.

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Let us therefore end by recalling how David is nearly killed by his uncle by having him climb total darkness a flight of stairs that leads to nowhere, a version of the oubliettes found in medieval dungeons, unlighted stairs leading downward to a fatal last step that drops the victim into a deep pit. Because, like David, the reader is very much in the hands of another person, who relishes the power given to him by his imagination, creating a world very much like those dangerous seas in which his famous grandfather and namesake, Robert Stevenson, erected lighthouses, but where no lighthouses exist.

Instead we have dark towers and looming promontories, like the great rock on which David and Alan take refuge, only to find themselves surrounded the next morning by an encampment of British troops and very nearly killed by the unrelenting heat from the sun. Nor need we ask who provided the rock, who summoned the troops, and who caused the sun to rise, only at the last minute providing the chance that allows the hero and his friend to escape what they thought to be a refuge but which proves to be a trap. David Balfour may not know what lies ahead of him, but Stevenson does, that maker of labyrinths through which his heroes thread their way, the omnipresent intelligence who ever and again invents circumstances credited by David to chance.

—John Seelye



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# KIDNAPPED

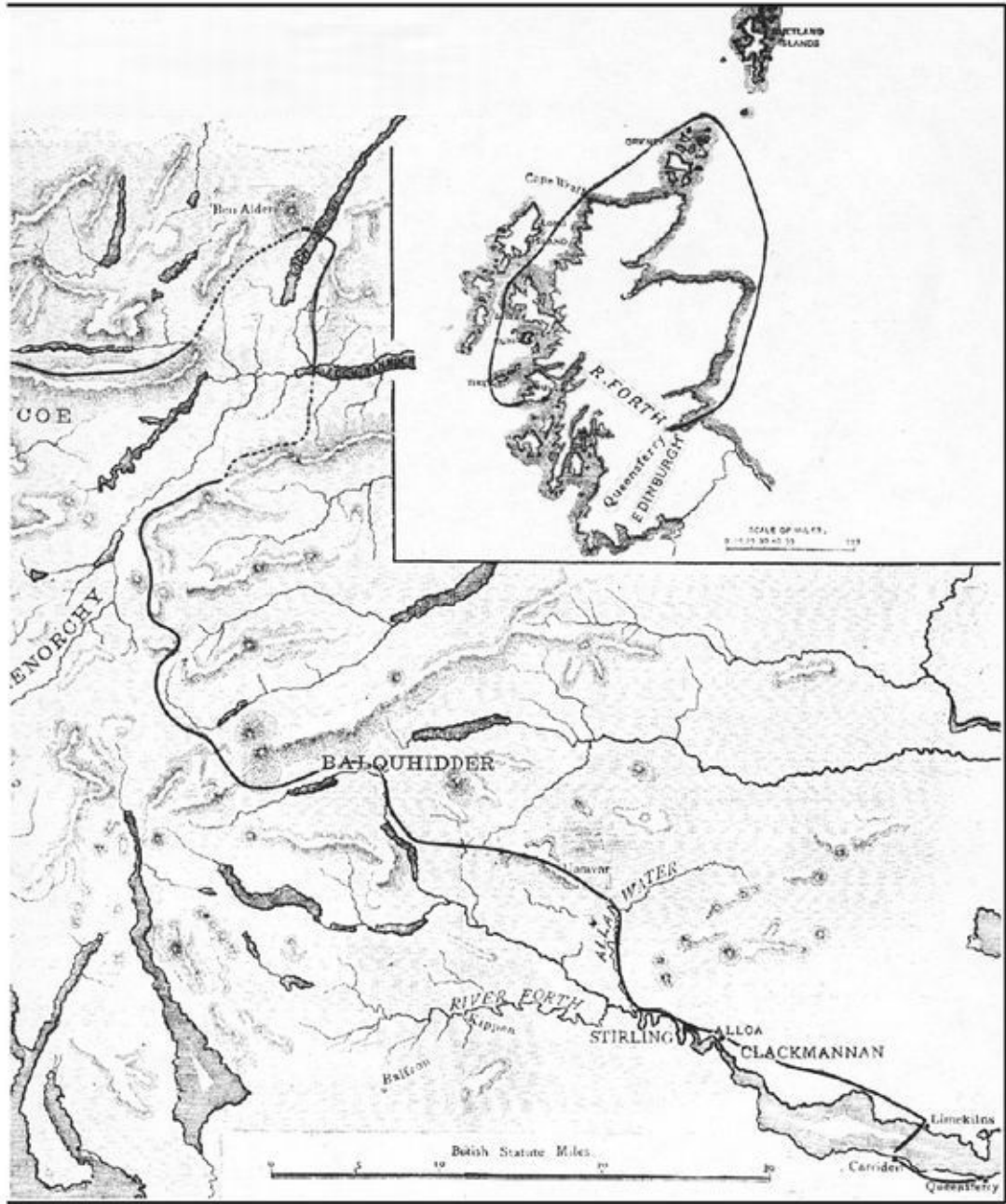
*Being memoirs of the adventures of DAVID BALFOUR; in the year 1751:  
how he was kidnapped and cast away; his sufferings in a desert isle; his journey in the Wild  
Highlands;*

*his acquaintance with ALAN BRECK STEWART and other notorious Highland Jacobites; with all  
that he suffered at the hands of his uncle,  
EBENEZER BALFOUR OF SHAWS, falsely so-called; written by himself, and now set forth by  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON*

---

SKETCH of the CRUISE of the BRIG COVENANT  
And the probable course of DAVID BALFOUR'S WANDERINGS.





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## DEDICATION

MY DEAR CHARLES BAXTER:

If you ever read this tale, you will likely ask yourself more questions than I should care to answer, as for instance how the Appin murder has come to fall in the year 1751, how the Torran rocks have crept so near to Earraid, or why the printed trial is silent as to all that touches David Balfour. These are nuts beyond my ability to crack. But if you tried me on the point of Alan's guilt or innocence, think I could defend the reading of the text. To this day you will find the tradition of Appin clear in Alan's favour. If you inquire, you may even hear that the descendants of "the other man" who fired the shot are in the country to this day. But the other man's name, inquire as you please, you shall not hear for the Highlander values a secret for itself and for the congenial exercise of keeping it. I might go on for long to justify one point and own another indefensible; it is more honest to confess at once how little I am touched by the desire of accuracy. This is no furniture for the scholar's library, but a book for the winter evening schoolroom when the tasks are over and the hour for bed draws near; and hence Alan, who was a grim old fire-eater in his day, has in his new avatar no more desperate purpose than to steal some young gentleman's attention from his Ovid, carry him awhile into the Highlands and the last century, and pack him to bed with some engaging images to mingle with his dreams.

As for you, my dear Charles, I do not even ask you to like this tale. But perhaps when he is old your son will; he may then be pleased to find his father's name on the flyleaf; and in the meanwhile it pleases me to set it there, in memory of many days that were happy and some (now perhaps pleasant to remember) that were sad. If it is strange for me to look back from a distance both in time and space on these bygone adventures of our youth, it must be stranger for you who tread the same streets—who may tomorrow open the door of the old Speculative, where we begin to rank with Scott and Robert Emmet and the beloved and inglorious Macbean—or may pass the corner of the cloister where that great society, the L. J. R., held its meetings and drank its beer, sitting in the seats of Burns and his companions. I think I see you, moving there by plain daylight, beholding with your natural eyes those places that have now become for your companion a part of the scenery of dreams. How, in the intervals of present business, the past must echo in your memory! Let it not echo often without some kind thoughts of your friend,

R. L. S.

*Sherryvore , Bournemouth.*

## I SET OFF UPON MY JOURNEY TO THE HOUSE OF SHAWS

I WILL begin the story of my adventures with a certain morning early in the month of June, the year of grace 1751, when I took the key for the last time out of the door of my father's house. The sun began to shine upon the summit of the hills as I went down the road; and by the time I had come as far as the manse, the blackbirds were whistling in the garden lilacs, and the mist that hung around the valley in the time of the dawn was beginning to arise and die away.

Mr. Campbell, the minister of Essendean, was waiting for me by the garden gate, good man! He asked me if I had breakfasted; and hearing that I lacked for nothing, he took my hand in both of his and clapped it kindly under his arm.

“Well, Davie, lad,” said he, “I will go with you as far as the ford, to set you on the way.”

And we began to walk forward in silence.

“Are ye sorry to leave Essendean?” said he, after a while.

“Why, sir,” said I, “if I knew where I was going, or what was likely to become of me, I would tell you candidly. Essendean is a good place indeed, and I have been very happy there; but then I have never been anywhere else. My father and mother, since they are both dead, I shall be no nearer to Essendean than in the Kingdom of Hungary; and, to speak truth, if I thought I had a chance to better myself where I was going I would go with a good will.”

“Ay?” said Mr. Campbell. “Very well, Davie. Then it behoves me to tell your fortune; or so far as may. When your mother was gone, and your father (the worthy, Christian man) began to sicken for his end, he gave me in charge a certain letter, which he said was your inheritance. ‘So soon,’ says he, ‘as I am gone, and the house is redd up and the gear disposed of’ (all which, Davie, hath been done), ‘give my boy this letter into his hand, and start him off to the house of Shaws, not far from Cramond. This is the place I came from,’ he said, ‘and it’s where it befits that my boy should return. He is a steady lad,’ your father said, ‘and a canny goer; and I doubt not he will come safe, and be well liked where he goes.’ ”

“The house of Shaws!” I cried. “What had my poor father to do with the house of Shaws?”

“Nay,” said Mr. Campbell, “who can tell that for a surety? But the name of that family, Davie boy, is the name you bear—Balfour of Shaws: an ancient, honest, reputable house, peradventure in the latter days decayed. Your father, too, was a man of learning as befitted his position; no man more plausibly conducted school; nor had he the manner or the speech of a common dominie; but (as ye will yourself remember) I took aye a pleasure to have him to the manse to meet the gentry; and those at my own house, Campbell of Kilrennet, Campbell of Dunswire, Campbell of Minch, and others, and well-kenned gentlemen, had pleasure in his society. Lastly, to put all the elements of this affair before you, here is the testamentary letter itself, superscribed by the own hand of our departed brother.”

He gave me the letter, which was addressed in these words: “To the hands of Ebenezer Balfour Esquire, of Shaws, in his house of Shaws, these will be delivered by my son, David Balfour.” My heart was beating hard at this great prospect now suddenly opening before a lad of seventeen years of age.

the son of a poor country dominie in the Forest of Ettrick.

“Mr. Campbell,” I stammered, “and if you were in my shoes, would you go?”

“Of a surety,” said the minister, “that would I, and without pause. A pretty lad like you should get Cramond (which is near in by Edinburgh) in two days of walk. If the worst came to the worst, and your high relations (as I cannot but suppose them to be somewhat of your blood) should put you to the doo, ye can but walk the two days back again and risp at the manse door. But I would rather hope that ye shall be well received, as your poor father forecast for you, and for anything that I ken come to be a great man in time. And here, Davie, laddie,” he resumed, “it lies near upon my conscience to improve this parting, and set you on the right guard against the dangers of the world.”

Here he cast about for a comfortable seat, lighted on a big boulder under a birch by the trackside, sat down upon it with a very long, serious upper lip, and the sun now shining in upon us between two peaks, put his pocket handkerchief over his cocked hat to shelter him. There, then, with uplifted forefinger, he first put me on my guard against a considerable number of heresies, to which I had no temptation, and urged upon me to be instant in my prayers and reading of the Bible. That done, he drew a picture of the great house that I was bound to, and how I should conduct myself with its inhabitants.

“Be soople, Davie, in things immaterial,” said he. “Bear ye this in mind, that, though gentle born, ye have had a country rearing. Dinnae shame us, Davie, dinnae shame us! In yon great, muckle<sup>1</sup> house with all these domestics, upper and under, show yourself as nice, as circumspect, as quick at the conception, and as slow of speech as any. As for the laird—remember he’s the laird; I say no more of honour to whom honour. It’s a pleasure to obey a laird; or should be, to the young.”

“Well, sir,” said I, “it may be; and I’ll promise you I’ll try to make it so.”

“Why, very well said,” replied Mr. Campbell, heartily. “An now to come to the material, or (to make a quibble) to the immaterial. I have here a little packet which contains four things.” He tugged it, as he spoke, and with some great difficulty, from the skirt pocket of his coat. “Of these four things the first is your legal due: the little pickle money for your father’s books and plenishing, which I have bought (as I have explained from the first) in the design of reselling at a profit to the incoming dominie. The other three are gifties that Mrs. Campbell and myself would be blithe of your acceptance. The first, which is round, will likely please ye best at the first off-go; but, O Davie, laddie, it’s but a drop of water in the sea; it’ll help you but a step, and vanish like the morning. The second, which is flat and square and written upon, will stand by you through life, like a good staff for the road and a good pillow to your head in sickness. And as for the last, which is cubical, that’ll see you, it’ll see my prayer.ful wish, into a better land.”

With that he got upon his feet, took off his hat, and prayed a little while aloud, and in affecting terms, for a young man setting out into the world; then suddenly took me in his arms and embraced me very hard; then held me at arm’s length, looking at me with his face all working with sorrow; and then whipped about, and crying good-bye to me, set off backward by the way that we had come at a sort of jogging run. It might have been laughable to another; but I was in no mind to laugh. I watched him as long as he was in sight; and he never stopped hurrying, nor once looked back. Then it came upon my mind that this was all his sorrow at my departure; and my conscience smote me hard and fast, because I, for my part, was overjoyed to get away out of that quiet countryside, and go to a great busy house, among rich and respected gentlefolk of my own name and blood.

“Davie, Davie,” I thought, “was ever seen such black ingratitude? Can you forget old favours and old friends at the mere whistle of a name? Fie, fie; think shame!”

And I sat down on the boulder the good man had just left, and opened the parcel to see the nature

my gifts. That which he had called cubical, I had never had much doubt of; sure enough it was a little Bible, to carry in a plaidneuk.<sup>2</sup> That which he had called round, I found to be a shilling piece; and the third, which was to help me so wonderfully both in health and sickness all the days of my life, was a little piece of coarse yellow paper, written upon thus in red ink:

*To Make Lilly of the Valley Water.*—Take the flowers of lilly of the valley and distil them in sack, and drink a spooneful or two as there is occasion. It restores speech to those that have the dumb palsey. It is good against the Gout; it comforts the heart and strengthens the memory; and the flowers, put into a Glasse, close stopt, and set into ane hill of ants for a month, then take it out, and you will find a liquor which comes from the flowers, which keep in a vial; it is good, ill or well, and whether man or woman.

And then, in the minister's own hand, was added:

Likewise for sprains, rub it in; and for the cholic, a great spooneful in the hour.

To be sure, I laughed over this; but it was rather tremulous laughter; and I was glad to get my bundle on my staff's end and set out over the ford and up the hill upon the farther side; till, just as I came on the green drove-road running wide through the heather, I took my last look of Kilmessendean, the trees about the manse, and the big rowans in the kirkyard where my father and mother lay.

## I COME TO MY JOURNEY'S END

ON THE forenoon of the second day, coming to the top of a hill, I saw all the country fall away before me down to the sea; and in the midst of this descent, on a long ridge, the city of Edinburgh smoking like a kiln. There was a flag upon the castle, and ships moving or lying anchored in the firth; both which, for as far away as they were, I could distinguish clearly; and both brought my country head into my mouth.

Presently after, I came by a house where a shepherd lived, and got a rough direction for the neighbourhood of Cramond; and so, from one to another, worked my way to the westward of the capital by Colinton, till I came out upon the Glasgow road. And there, to my great pleasure and wonder, I beheld a regiment marching to the fives, every foot in time; an old red-faced general on a grey horse at the one end, and at the other the company of Grenadiers, with their Pope's hats. The pride of life seemed to mount into my brain at the sight of the redcoats and the hearing of that merry music.

A little farther on, and I was told I was in Cramond parish, and began to substitute in my inquiries the name of the house of Shaws. It was a word that seemed to surprise those of whom I sought my way. At first I thought the plainness of my appearance, in my country habit, and that all dusty from the road, consorted ill with the greatness of the place to which I was bound. But after two, or maybe three had given me the same look and the same answer, I began to take it in my head there was something strange about the Shaws itself.

The better to set this fear at rest, I changed the form of my inquiries; and spying an honest fellow coming along a lane on the shaft of his cart, I asked him if he had ever heard tell of a house they called the house of Shaws.

He stopped his cart and looked at me, like the others.

"Ay," said he. "What for?"

"It's a great house?" I asked.

"Doubtless," says he. "The house is a big, muckle house."

"Aye," said I, "but the folk that are in it?"

"Folk?" cried he. "Are ye daft? There's nae folk there—to call folk."

"What?" says I; "not Mr. Ebenezer?"

"Ou, ay," says the man, "there's the laird, to be sure, if it's him you're wanting. What'll like be your business, mannie?"

"I was led to think that I would get a situation," I said, looking as modest as I could.

"What?" cries the carter, in so sharp a note that his very horse started; and then, "Well, mannie," he added, "it's nane of my affairs; but ye seem a decent-spoken lad; and if ye'll take a word from me ye'll keep clear of the Shaws."

The next person I came across was a dapper little man in a beautiful white wig, whom I saw to be a barber on his rounds; and knowing well that barbers were great gossips, I asked him plainly what so



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