

world and claim to control material laws by ignoring them are sovereigns without kingdoms and without subjects. By refusing to use the knowledge of the ages they deny evolution and interrupt intercourse between themselves and their neighbors, whose propositions and rule of life they ridicule.

Finally, true religion consists in recognizing evil and its insidious appeals to the body, in admitting the carelessness of the spirit when the flesh conquers it and in accepting the responsibility of the spirit for the body's conduct.

**THE PASSING SHOW**  
WILLA CATHER

"I have trod the upward and the downward slope,  
And I have endured and done in days before;  
And I have hoped, and said farewell to hope,  
And I have lived and loved, and shut the door."

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

I believe that as one's experience enlarges one loses the more physical attributes of hero-worship, that is, the personality and individual life of brilliant men ceases to interest one keenly, and that one is quite content to take the work apart from the workman and to lose sight of the man in contemplating the artist. But certainly when Mrs. Isabelle Strong, Stevenson's step-daughter and amanuensis arrived in Pittsburg, I felt a very sharp attack of that devotional curiosity which one usually knows very little about after one is eighteen. I wanted to see this woman who had lived under the same roof with that blithe and gallant spirit, who had shared his exile in the south seas, who had witnessed that long, manful struggle against disease, who had written down the text of those incomparable romances as they first fell from his lips. This personal affection for Stevenson is common among all people who find a peculiarly delicate pleasure in his words, and who are, as Andrew Lang put it, sealed of the tribe of Louis. Without doubt Stevenson's was the most winning and lovable personality in modern letters, and those who have come fully under his subtle influence are more jealous of his reputation than was he himself. I fancy Charles Lamb must have had something of this potent personal charm, but certainly no writer of this generation has approached it.

As to the lecture which Mrs. Strong delivered here on 'Stevenson in Samoa' I can say very little for it. It was all Samoa and no Stevenson. She told us how clothes are made in Samoa, and instructed us carefully as to the roasting of pigs and the sauces wherewith they should be eaten, but of R. L. S., she said no effectual word. Moreover, I dislike the principle of the thing; one resents the commercial uses which Mr. Stevenson's family persistently make of his memory. It was only after the lecture was over, in the seclusion of a quiet room looking out upon the hills of the park where the autumn sunshine burned upon the colored foliage and the amber leaves rustled down through the blue hazy air, that I persuaded Mrs. Strong to talk of Stevenson himself. There, with the pictures she had taken of him in Samoa, and pages of his dictation still fresh in her memory, one began to feel quite in his atmosphere, and the blue hills off against the sky line recalled a little that mountain far away on the Pacific, where he sleeps, who is so well remembered.

Everyone knows the romance of

Stevenson's life; how he met Mrs. Strong's mother in France before her separation from Mr. Osbourne, a California merchant, and after her return to the Pacific coast decided that life on the other side of the Atlantic was impossible for him. When he resolved to come to America, his father naturally bitterly opposed it and refused to supply the funds for such a mad errand. Stevenson, up to that time had been busy learning the technique of his craft and had produced very little beyond a few essays, and essay-writing is not a highly remunerative occupation under the most fortunate conditions. "We have no courage now-a-days," he once wrote, but certainly he did not lack it then. Almost entirely without resources, he burned his ships behind him and set his face toward the west and the future. He crossed the Atlantic steerage, traversed the continent in an emigrant car, and reached California only to fall into a long and serious illness through which Mrs. Osbourne nursed him, marrying him immediately after she secured her divorce. Mrs. Osbourne had, when he married her, two children; Lloyd, who afterward collaborated with Mr. Stevenson, and Isabelle, now Mrs. Strong, who became his amanuensis and secretary.

"His method of composition," said Mrs. Strong, "it was slow and laborious—laborious sometimes even to painfulness, as he believed all good work must be. He would pace the floor with a tiny slip of card laid full of notes in his hand, dictating to me so slowly that I was easily able to write it out in long hand, and he was scrupulously careful to dictate the punctuation, as that was rather a hobby of his. Perhaps he would finish a chapter that day. Then, the next morning he would read it over, usually with many a shake of the head, and with a sigh would rise and gird himself for the battle, probably throwing the entire chapter into the fire and carefully dictating it over again, recasting and revising it until it was sometimes scarcely recognizable. Perhaps it would remain in that form, but the chances were that he would lay it by for a week and then take it up and work it over again and again. Only once did I know him to shorten this process and write without revision, and that was in his last and uncompleted novel, 'Wier of Hermiston.' He abandoned 'St. Ives' in a fit of boyish enthusiasm for the new tale, and it came from his brain white hot, full formed and word perfect. He was master of it from the first, his hand never faltered or knew uncertainty. On the very morning of his death he said to me, 'I see the whole thing as clearly as I see you, the book already exists, it is!' He, who was always so modest about his work, always ready to poke fun at it, said that 'Wier of Hermiston' would be his masterpiece. On that last morning he dictated with astonishing ease and fluency, at the very high tide of his power."

Only a few hours later the stroke came which stilled the delicate machinery of that subtle brain forever, and from that low coral shore there went out a tidal wave of loss and sorrow that was felt around the world.

"I think," continued Mrs. Strong, "that there were as many as twelve different endings written for 'The Ebb Tide,' and no villain was ever killed with more difficulty than Huish. When I went to bed at night his fate would be settled in one way, but when I got up in the morning I would hear Mr. Stevenson and my brother discussing an entirely different situation. 'What is this?' I would cry, 'last night Huish was to die by falling into a sugar vat in Samoa.' 'Nonsense,' Louis would reply with a shrug of the shoulders, 'that is all ancient history. Today he

is run to earth in London, while attempting to burn a woman's wrist with the stump of his cigar, as she is holding on to the strap of an omnibus.' His picturesque career was finally ended by vitriol, much to our surprise, but very many were the deaths he died before he could be dead indeed. He wrote 'The Master of Ballantrae' in Honolulu, and fell into a state of utter despair as to the ending, offering twenty dollars to any one of us who could suggest what to do with the Master.

"In his dictation he was always highly dramatic. I well remember how gaily the work went on in 'St. Ives.' He would dictate the conversation of the old Scotch drover in heavy dialect, with many a 'Hoo! mon,' and then, throwing his head on one side and twirling his mustache, he would deliver the lines of the young Frenchman with the utmost lightness and esprit. I remember he told me that once, while writing 'The Master of Ballantrae,' he assumed, as he thought, exactly the sinister expression which he wished the Master to wear, and on rushing to the glass was astonished and not a little disappointed to find only the too familiar countenance of Louis Stevenson, much twisted and ludicrously awry."

When questioned as to Mr. Stevenson's musical accomplishments upon the flageolet, which he so often referred to in his 'Vailma Letters,' and which he seemed to be much prouder of than of what he sometimes termed "my damned literature," Mrs. Strong laughed heartily.

"O, that was only one of his games that he took seriously. He understood the theory of music perfectly, but he played miserably. He used to insist upon executing classical music upon that doleful, wheezy, little flageolet, and the sound of it used to drive us frantic. The amusing part of it was that he was exceedingly vain of it. Then he was ambitious to get up a string quartette. He coaxed my poor brother into sawing on the violin, and though I have no more music in me than a hen, insisted that I should accompany them on the piano. He spent whole days writing out our parts for us. But he reached his Waterloo when he insisted that my mother should learn some instrument to make out his quartette. She would say repeatedly, 'No, I will do anything else for you Louis, but a joyful noise into you I will not make.' Not to be discouraged, he sent secretly to Sidney and had a triangle sent on to Samoa, and I think that one of the most real disappointments of his life was that mother flatly refused to sit and beat that triangle."

"He took all his games just that seriously, and he played games all his life. He had no patience or tolerance for people who could not play, he considered them a cumbrance of the earth and a heaviness to the spirit. Once a little boy was playing ship on the library couch while Louis stood drumming on the window pane. Several times the child hoisted his toy sail and took it in, but at last, growing tired of the business, he got down and started to trot out of the room. Louis turned to him in a fit of downright vexation, remarking in an agrieved tone, 'you might at least have the imagination or the courtesy to swim out.' I know nothing more characteristic of him than that."

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**CLUBS.**

[LOUISA L. RICKETS.]

**CALENDAR OF NEBRASKA CLUBS.**

October

- 21. History Art c., Roman Invasion of Germany, Life of Herman.....Seward
- 21. Woman's c., James I, Charles I, a Divine right of Kings. 2. Long Parliament. Civil War.....Syracuse
- 23. K. P. E. O. c., American Literature, Lincoln
- 23. Sorosis, American Sculptors and Artists, Stanton
- 24. Century c., Reformation and religious condition of Holland in the 16th Cen., Lincoln
- 24. Woman's c., France under Philip Augustus.....Mindon
- 25. Current Literature.....Falls City
- 25. Literature.....Exeter
- 27. Self Culture c., Adelina Patti, Melba, Calve, Origin of popular songs, St. Paul
- 28. XIX Century c., Painting in Flanders, Seward
- 31. Woman's c., Education.....Fairbury

**OFFICERS OF N. F. W. C., 1899 & 1900.**

- Pres., Mrs. Anna L. Apperson, Tecumseh.
- V. P., Mrs. Ida W. Blair, Wayne.
- Cor. Sec., Mrs. Virginia D. Arup, Tecumseh.
- Rec. Sec., Miss Mary Hill, York.
- Treas., Mrs. H. F. Donné, Crete.
- Librarian, Mrs. G. M. Lambertson, Lincoln.
- Auditor, Mrs. E. J. Hainer, Aurora.

The fifth annual meeting of the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs was held in York on October 10th to the 13th inclusive, by invitation of the York city federation of women's clubs. I think it was the concessions of opinion that this was the largest and most enthusiastic convention in the history of our federation. Only two years ago and the smaller cities in our state were lamenting that *par necessitate* in the future Omaha or Lincoln must be the meeting place because of the size of the convention to be entertained. But a year ago at Omaha the intrepid club women of York extended a cordial invitation to the State federation to meet with them this fall. With some hesitation—for fear of imposing too heavy a burden upon the hospitality of York—the executive board decided to accept. Faith in the York women was justified by the perfect manner in which they cared for the wants of their guests. One lady told me that they had meetings innumerable the past four months and that for the past four weeks they had thought and talked of nothing else but how they might best express their welcome to these coming club sisters. When we arrived in York about one P. M., on Tuesday afternoon the very air was vibrant with welcome. The depot was surrounded by an array of surries and phaetons each one in charge of a hostess whose smile of welcome made glad the heart of the weary travelers. From that moment until we left, the city was placed at our disposal. From the president of the York federation of women's clubs to the mayor of the city, everyone, even to the boy pages, (who were in constant attendance upon the delegates, ready to supply all wants, even horses and carriages) made us feel we were special guests for whose coming they had been eagerly waiting. The plan of the York ladies for entertaining the federation was unique and very satisfactory. From the depot the ladies were taken directly to the Fraternity Hall, a beautiful new building just completed by the five fraternities of York as a union temple for their lodges. Here a committee in waiting rapidly assigned the delegates to the hospitably homes which were not satisfied if they secured only one delegate.

All meals could be secured within a block's distance from Fraternity Hall where a large house had been arranged as a restaurant with two competent ladies in charge. The feeling of independence accorded each delegate who was thus enabled to pay for her own meals was another of the many tactful