

11 HOWARD PLACE,
EDINBURGH.

7/2/92

My dear Mother

I rejoice to hear that you have
done the deed. But you must take all
possible care of yourself: for he's never
so dangerous as in retreat. What you want
is change of air & rest. Can't you take
it. We shall be down at the sea-side
soon; & then?

Every body seems to have enjoyed the
stage.

Yours ever,

W. E. W. [underlay]

also my new book (of verse) is with
the Bloomin' printer. [the Song of the Sinner]

69 COLVIN (SIDNEY). About 135 A. L. s. (one incomplete, and one in pencil), 12 telegrams and 3 enclosures. Various dates from 1878 to 1894, and various addresses, chiefly the British Museum. To Charles Baxter, on Stevenson's affairs. Also 6 letters or copies of letters from R. McClure and other publishers, on "David Balfour", and A. L. s. from Charles Baxter to Lord Guthrie, concerning the whole correspondence. Together about 157 pieces containing about 520 pp., chiefly 12mo. A few of the letters are signed with initials.

The general range of the correspondence has already been indicated, and it is impossible to give more here than a few brief extracts. In the early letters, while Colvin was still at Cambridge, there are full references to family affairs. On Dec. 22, 1879, he deprecates the attitude of Stevenson's father to R. L. S.'s marriage; is afraid that R. L. S. may settle down to inferior work; wants him to come back where he can mix with his intellectual equals; and is always willing to help financially as well as in other ways.

He is frank about Henley: "*My own desire, after experience, has been certainly to give him a wide berth, as a dangerous friend: but not to quarrel, or make others quarrel, with him. But he seems born to leave himself unfriended in the long run.*" He discusses R. L. S.'s political position as "King of Samoa", but is afraid he has been too headstrong in stirring up trouble with the German officials and community. Stevenson's different works and what is happening to them are constantly referred to, the point of view all the way through being solicitude for R. L. S. Incidentally R. L. S. shows himself a rather shrewd business man: "*I have just raised my American publishers to 15 pc by the simple process of announcing to them that it was so*"—and he believes that "*if Cassell's were taken graciously by the beard, they might be raised to 20 pc*". Colvin does not quite agree about the shrewdness: there is a chance of litigation in Samoa which may not come to much, "*though it is a form of expenditure which I believe he would enjoy, as he enjoys most others*". But the general tone is quiet and kindly, though he can criticise at times, and decidedly does not like "The Ebb-Tide" and some other productions.

In October 1894, he tells Baxter that Stevenson is tired of "St. Ives" and would like to lay it aside for a year, and perhaps "*make something of it after all. Instead of that I have to kick against the pricks, and break myself, & spoil the book, if there was ever anything to spoil, which I am far from saying . . .*" And so he would like to lay it aside, and turn to something else; and Colvin would like to let him, for just a year. In less than two months R. L. S. laid all his work aside, permanently.

11 Howard Place Edinburgh

7/2/92

My dear Watson

I rejoice to hear that you have done the
Fiend. (*) But you must take all possible care of yourself,
for he's never so dangerous as in returns. (2) What you want
is change of air and rest. Can't you take it? We shall be down
at the sea-side soon; and then?

Every body seems to have enjoyed The Maze.

Yours Ever

W. E. H.
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(*) my new book (of verse) is with the bloomin' printers.

(*) one word indecipherable, but it is probably Fiend, in other
words influenza.

The recipient of the letter is H. B. Marriott Watson, a friend
and contributor to the Scots Observer. Henley was the editor of
that journal for some years.

The new book of verse was his "The Song of the Sword and Other
Verses" published by David Nutt in the Strand 1892. This letter
was bought with a copy of the book in question in 1922

(Collection of Captain F. L. Pleadwell)