

The Later Phase of the "Casco"

By A. Stanley Deaville

PART II

In the first portion of the article published in our October number, the author described a visit which he paid to the "Casco," then lying idle in the harbor at Victoria. The "Casco," the schooner which conferred a new lease of life upon Robert Louis Stevenson, and which was immortalised by him in certain of his writings, is now at Vancouver being prepared for the part she is to take in the great exhibition at San Francisco, the scene of some of her early associations.

WHEN Robert Louis Stevenson sailed into the Southern Pacific upon a chartered private yacht, it was no mere idle pleasure-seeking whim he sought to gratify. He was playing a desperate game for grim stakes—fortune, happiness, health (ay, even life itself) hung trembling in the balance—he placed nearly all he had upon the venture, and won. For a few brief active years he was permitted to enjoy comparative health in a portion of the world which had attracted him from early youth, surrounded by "God's sweetest creatures—Polynesians," and best of all, to produce some of his finest work in his new island home.

The story of his wanderings in the Western Hemisphere, which ended upon one of the "ultimate isles" of the South Pacific, begins with the bitter disagreement, in 1879, between Stevenson and his father, upon the subject of his possible marriage with the California lady who had captivated his heart in the artistic community of Grez. Mrs. van de Grift Osbourne had passed through a bitter matrimonial experience which ruined her domestic happiness through no fault of her own, and was living in the French village while the education of her children was in progress. The story of her wrongs, which reached Stevenson through the other members of the community, excited his quixotic sense of chivalry and heartfelt pity.

Pity developed into admiration, admiration into passion, and the determination was made that, should this lady be freed from her matrimonial bonds, and placed at liberty to follow her own inclinations, he would offer her his heart and hand. Of course his Scottish parents were highly incensed; a bitter controversy followed, and

the result was that the delicate, carefully nurtured son of hitherto indulgent parents was left without means of support, to shift for himself.

Meanwhile Mrs. Osbourne returned to California, leaving R. L. S. with nothing but "unappeasable longing and regret" to take her place. The obstacles to marriage were apparently so insurmountable as to make hope seem senseless, but he never wavered; with unswerving resolution he followed her to California, with no better excuse than that he longed to be near the object of his adoration. The story of his hardships on the journey is left imperishably to us in the "Amateur Emigrant." It was a bitter experience for him, and he arrived in San Francisco in wretched health. One kindly woman, with whose family he lodged, has earned wide spread recognition through her kindness to him. He spent some months in picturesque Monterey, eked out a miserable existence by strenuous literary labors, and in December he returned to San Francisco almost penniless. He lodged in humble quarters on Bush Street—there is a legend that he tried to make a living by writing for the local papers, but his contributions were turned down and occupied all spare moments in writing the "Amateur Emigrant."

He fell ill; the realisation of his hopes seemed as far away as ever; but just as the future was taking on its blackest hue, and hope seemed dead, Mrs. Osbourne followed the advice of all her friends and obtained a divorce. On the 19th of May, 1880, Robert Louis Stevenson was married to Fanny van de Grift, the "steel-true, blade-straight comrade" which the august