

Shorter Catechism, and the evolution from a sort of chaos of a fine and harmonious personality, is a study which proves most attractive. There is, indeed, so vital a connection between the man and his work, that they can hardly be considered apart, and his writing is pervaded by the fragrance of an irresistible charm which speaks straight to the heart, but fades under description. Much of the earlier work, it is true, stands upon its own merits—the atmosphere of some of the essays collected as *Memories and Portraits* is tranquil and impersonal, and these might have been written by anyone gifted with an observant eye and ear, and a fastidious choice of words. *Virginibus Puerisque* is at times comical in the very aloofness with which the most intimate of relationships and the most discomposing of man's experiences are treated. The author discourses of *Falling in Love* and *Truth in Intercourse* as if he were in a dream, or writing for the inhabitants of Mars. But, as far as I can see, he had not yet fallen in love himself. He had passed through some bitter experiences. A variety of circumstances, the want of harmony between himself and his surroundings, the stress of what he calls a damnatory creed, parental disappointment and disapproval—all these things resulted in a period of tumult and revolt whose violence was commensurate with the originality and intensity of the nature they invaded. It is impossible to read the record of this time of rebellion without keen regret; yet, given his nature and environment, the disturbance was not only inevitable, but profitable. Judged by appearances he would seem to have been nothing better than wayward, eccentric and vain, and he says he was idle. What high sense of duty, true humility, and unflagging industry were included in him, time, trial, and circumstances conspired to bring to light.

Among the other problems of this time the choice of a profession pressed upon him. This is the time of the pencil and the penny notebook—the period of the “sedulous ape.” Some of his critics, anxious to warn lovers of Stevenson against the enthusiastic admiration which easily besets them, have told us that here is proof of his weakness; he had not real genius, only talent, and the appreciative imitative faculty; he was no “natural force let loose,” rather a refined and beautiful artist, an admirable executant; he had nothing particular to say, and was only anxious to learn how to say it. He will tell you himself, however, what part of his life this was—the time of apprenticeship. “Like it or not,” he says, “that is the way to learn to write; so Keats learned.” And Sydney Colvin, his mentor and lovingly severe critic, says it was the inward activity and its need of expression that urged him to these exertions, while the ever-receding high ideal kept him and self-satisfaction apart. His attempts were not soon crowned with success in the material