

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

There is a well-known sonnet of W. E. Henley's which sums up in brief space the outward man, and some of the mind of his friend, Robert Louis Stevenson. I am glad to quote it by way of frontispiece to my paper. Being an epitome, it naturally leaves much unsaid. A photograph, however good, must be a representation of the original only at a certain fixed point in time, and we shall see how Stevenson outgrew the character here depicted.

“Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered; in his face —
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity —
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion, impudence, and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical.
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist;
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Anthony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.”

Human nature is, as we all know, a bundle of contradictions, but here is a character in which variableness seems the constant factor, and contradictoriness runs riot. This man was so complex, so many-sided, that, while as yet he had not found the clue to life, he confused himself and confounded his neighbours. The steady growth into prominence, of that part of Stevenson's nature which Mr. Henley charges to the