

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

EVEN lacking the luster shed upon it by one of the foremost writers of the nineteenth century, the name of Stevenson would have been of note, for before that writer's birth two generations of his family which bore it, had achieved a worldwide reputation as engineers.

Robert Stevenson, the first of these, has gone down into history as builder of the Bell Rock beacon, though that famous tower was only one of many noble works—including lighthouses, bridges, and roads—designed and executed by him in the fifty years he served as chief engineer to the Scottish lighthouse board.

Of Robert Stevenson's thirteen children three sons embraced their father's profession and ably carried on his work, and the youngest of these, Thomas, is known as an authority on engineering, as well as the father of a remarkable son. Among the professional labors for which he and his brothers are known were the building of Skerryvore and other lighthouses, and the improvement of many harbors and rivers. He contributed much to the science of lighthouse illumination, bringing to perfection the revolving light. A sketch of him has been given us by his son in "Memories and Portraits," where we read:

"He was a man of a somewhat antique strain: with a blended sternness and softness that was wholly Scottish . . . ; with a profound essential melancholy of disposition and (what often accompanies it) the most humourous geniality in company; shrewd and childish; passionately attached, passionately prejudiced; a man of many extremes. . . . His talk, compounded of so much sterling sense, and so much freakish humour, and clothed in language so apt, droll, and emphatic, was a perpetual delight to all who knew him. . . . His use of language was both just and picturesque."

In a study of Robert Louis Stevenson we find that nearly all of the qualities here ascribed to the father were reproduced in the son.