

**STEVENSON'S
SHRINE: THE RECORD
OF A PILGRIMAGE**

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Stevenson's Shrine: The Record of a Pilgrimage by Laura Stubbs

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LAURA STUBBS

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Stanza naves him in flowers
For seven years, 1864

The Grave

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THE RECORD OF A PILGRIMAGE

By LAURA STUBBS

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CHAPTER I

"The first love, the first sunrise, the first South Sea Island, are memories apart and touch a virginity of sense."

"My soul went down with these moorings whence no windlass may extract nor any diver fish it up."

Robert Louis Stevenson.

I A LOVER of the man, personally unknown to me, save through the potency of his pen, journeyed across the world in order to visit his grave, and to get into direct touch with his surroundings.

The voyage to the Antipodes does not come within the compass of this little book ; enough that in September, 1892, I left Auckland (New Zealand) in the Union Company's Steamship Manipouri, for a cruise among the South Sea Islands, and that our first port of call was Nukualofa, one of the Tongan group.

Here I stood on a little grass-covered wharf, and, looking down through the translucent water, made my first acquaintance with a coral garden. Oh! that wonderful water world with its wealth of sprays, flowers, and madrepores, amongst which the tiny rainbow-coloured fishes darted in and out like submarine humming-birds—wingless, but brilliant—living flecks of colour, flashing through a fairy region. The unreality of the scene took hold of me. If this were real I must be enchanted, looking downwards with enchanted eyes.

As one who dreams I walked inland, following a most fascinating green turf path soft as velvet to the tread. There are no roads in Nukualofa, green turf paths serve instead; indeed the whole of the little island, with its long stately avenues of coconut palms, its sheltering bowers of banyan trees, its groups of bananas, and groves of orange and other tropical trees too numerous and too varied to describe, seems one beautiful and universal park. Every few minutes I came across a vivid patch of scarlet, yellow, or white hibiscus; great trailing lengths of blue convolvulus, many tendrilled and giant blossomed, garlanded the trees, and not unfrequently flung an almost impenetrable barrier across the path. These paths are separated from the universal park by—a fencing of barbed



The [unclear]

A CORAL GARDEN