

**PRAYERS WRITTEN  
AT VAILIMA**

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Prayers Written at Vailima by Robert Louis Stevenson

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**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

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BY  
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**PRAYERS**  
**WRITTEN AT VAILIMA**  
BY  
**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**  
WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION BY  
**MRS. STEVENSON**



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## INTRODUCTION

**I**N every Samoan household the day is closed with prayer and the singing of hymns. The omission of this sacred duty would indicate not only a lack of religious training in the house chief, but a shameless disregard of all that is reputable in Samoan social life. No doubt, to many, the evening service is no more than a duty fulfilled. The child who says his prayer at his mother's knee can have no real conception of the meaning of the words he lisps so readily, yet he goes to his little bed with a sense of heavenly protection that he would miss were the prayer forgotten. The average Samoan is but a

larger child in most things, and would lay an uneasy head on his wooden pillow if he had not joined, even perfunctorily, in the evening service. With my husband, prayer, the direct appeal, was a necessity. When he was happy he felt impelled to offer thanks for that undeserved joy; when in sorrow, or pain, to call for strength to bear what must be borne.

Vailima lay up some three miles of continual rise from Apia, and more than half that distance from the nearest village. It was a long way for a tired man to walk down every evening with the sole purpose of joining in family worship; and the road through the bush was dark, and, to the Samoan imagination, beset with supernatural terrors. Where-

*fore, as soon as our household had fallen into a regular routine, and the bonds of Samoan family life began to draw us more closely together, Tusitala felt the necessity of including our retainers in our evening devotions. I suppose ours was the only white man's family in all Samoa, except those of the missionaries, where the day naturally ended with this homely, patriarchal custom. Not only were the religious scruples of the natives satisfied, but what we did not foresee, our own respectability—and incidentally that of our retainers—became assured, and the influence of Tusitala increased tenfold.*

*After all work and meals were finished, the "pu," or war conch, was sounded from the back veranda and the*