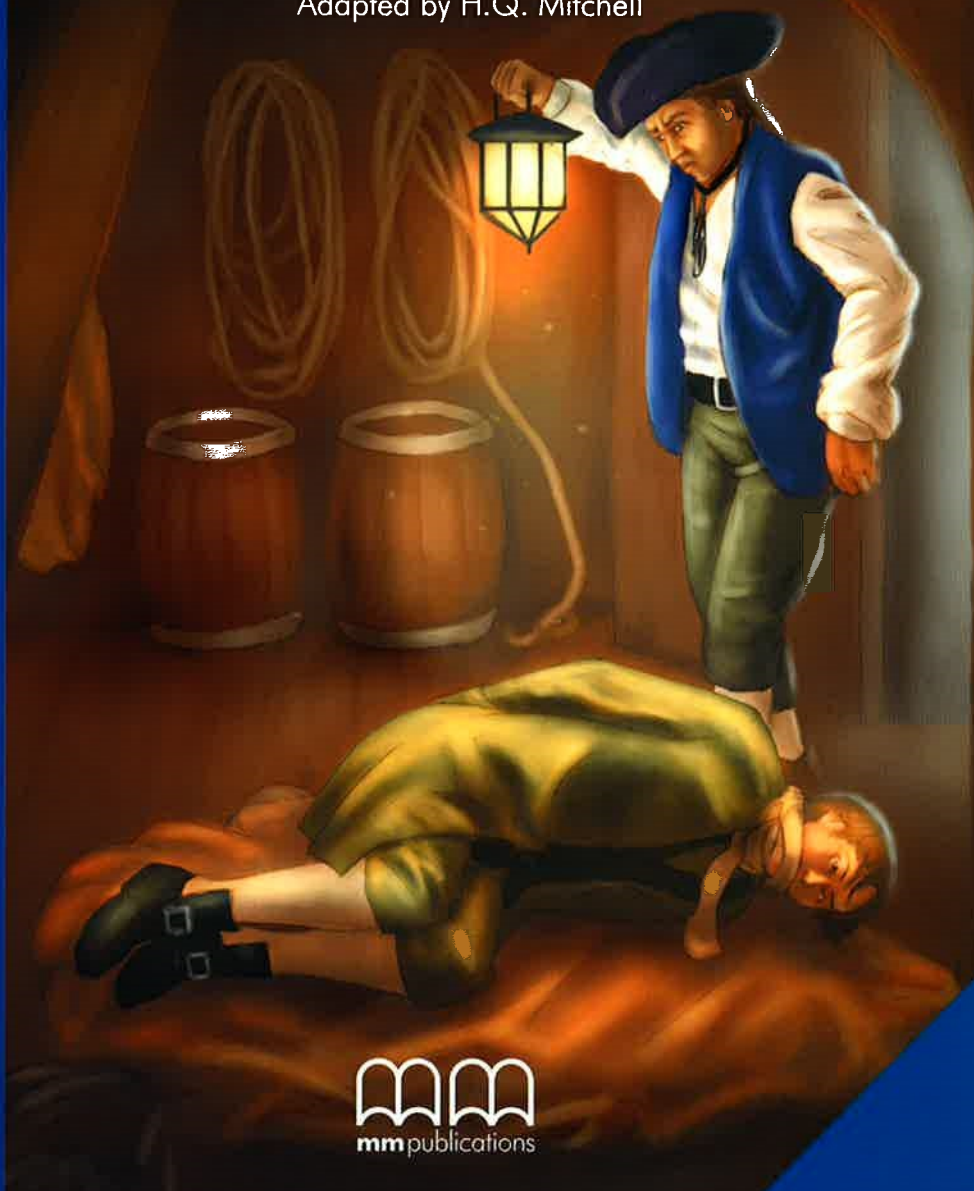


ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Kidnapped

Adapted by H.Q. Mitchell



Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 13 November, 1850. He wrote many books, but he is especially famous for his adventure stories.

Stevenson's poor health made him spend a lot of time in bed from an early age. Later, he attended university to become an engineer like his father and grandfather, but during a sea voyage with his father he changed his mind and dedicated himself to writing. His father, however, wanted him to have a university degree, so Stevenson went back to school and studied law.

In 1883 *Treasure Island* was published. It was a great adventure story and the book made him famous. Other books followed, many of which were very successful too. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) and, of course, *Kidnapped*.

The book was first published in *Young Folks* magazine from May to July 1886 and it has remained very popular. Many famous writers such as Henry James, Jorge Luis Borges and Seamus Heaney have expressed their admiration for it.

It is a "boy's novel" with a historical background and a lot of adventure, based on the true events of 18th century Scotland and in particular the "Appin Murder" near Ballachulish in 1752. That was when Colin Campbell, the king's agent in Scotland, was shot dead by Scottish rebels in the area of Appin.

David Balfour, the main character, is kidnapped because his greedy uncle wants to steal his property. The boy has numerous adventures while he tries to return home and claim what is rightfully his. On the way, he is falsely accused of the murder of Colin Campbell and has to hide in the Scottish highlands living a life on the run until his name is cleared.

Alan Stewart, David's friend and companion, and many more of the characters in the novel, were actually real people.

The book has been adapted several times for cinema, comics and television. One of the latest films based on Stevenson's novel is the 1995 TV film with Armand Assante as Alan Stewart and Brian McCardie as David Balfour.

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CHAPTER 1

ONE FINE SPRING MORNING, IN JUNE OF THE YEAR 1751, A YOUNG man named David Balfour was getting ready to leave his village in Scotland, for the first time in his life.

The village priest, Campbell, was waiting for him outside the church. "Davie, my boy, I'll walk with you a while," the older man said to him. And they walked together for a while.

"Are you sorry to leave?" asked the priest.

"Well, I have been happy here, but I have never been anywhere else. My father died some years ago, and now my mother is dead too. It seems like the right time to see more of the world. However, I'm not exactly sure where to go," answered the boy.

"There I can help you," said Mr Campbell. "When your mother fell sick, she left me this letter for you. You should take this to a house, not far away, near Cramond, named Shaws. All I know, David, is that you have the same name as that of the family in Shaws house: Balfour."

The priest gave David the letter and he saw it was for Ebenezer Balfour, of Shaws house. He felt very excited at making a new start in life, and Shaws house sounded interesting.

Then Mr Campbell handed David a package. "There are things in here to help you. David, make sure you behave properly, and obey the Master of the house," he said and hugged David. "I have nothing more to tell you. Good luck, my boy!" he said and walked back to the village.

David sat on a rock for sometime, feeling very sad to leave. Then he opened the package. There was a small envelope with money from the sale of his parents' things and some gifts from Mr Campbell: a small Bible and a silver coin.

The next day, David stood on a hill, looking down on the great city of Edinburgh. He asked the way to Cramond, and when he got there, he began asking people how to get to Shaws house. But everyone looked at him strangely, and seemed unwilling to talk about the house.

Finally, he asked an old woman. She looked at him angrily, then





pointed at a large house in the distance. "That is Shaws house!" she screamed. "And when you go, you can tell the Master there that I, Jenny Clouston, curse him." She spat on the ground and walked away.

David was puzzled and scared. Why did everyone hate Shaws house so much? It looked pleasant, surrounded by fields of sheep. What was happening? Finally, he decided to find out. After all, the only family he now had was there.

As he came closer, he could see that the house wasn't as lovely as he first thought. It was dirty and in need of repair.

He knocked at the large door and some time later, a window opened on the first floor. An old man with a pistol appeared. "What do you want?" he said.

"I have a letter for Mr Ebenezer Balfour," David replied.

"Leave it at the door and go!" shouted the man.



David got angry. "I will not! It is about me! I am David Balfour, and I will put the letter into Master Balfour's hand only!" he said.

The old man mumbled something and then he said, "I suppose your mother's dead? Well, I'll let you in."

The man opened the door and took David to the kitchen. It had almost nothing in it, except a broken table and two chairs. "Sit down, David," said the man. "Have some porridge. Now, give me the letter. I'm Ebenezer Balfour, your uncle."

The food looked bad, but David sat down. "Do you know what's in the letter?" asked Ebenezer. David shook his head.

"How long has your mother been dead?" asked the man again.

"Three weeks, sir," said David.

"Well, David, what did she tell you about me, or Shaws house?" asked his uncle.

"Not a word, sir," answered the boy.

Ebenezer was silent for a while, and he seemed to be thinking. Then he said, "Well, well, it's time to sleep. I'll take you to your bed."

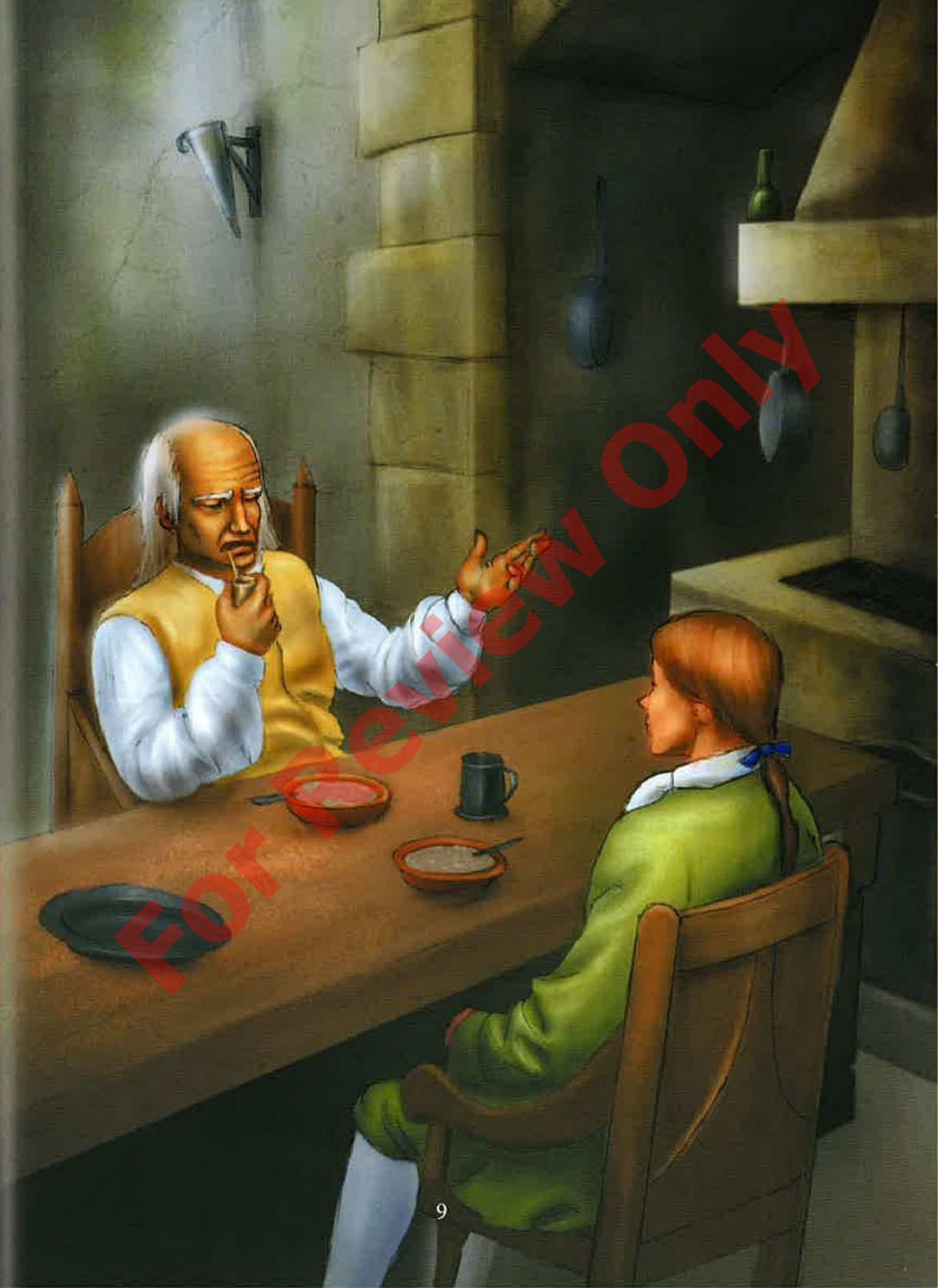
He took David through a dark passage. He had no candles and David could hardly see. "I have no lights, Davie. I'm afraid of fires starting up," said Ebenezer. He led David into a room, and locked the boy in. The room was damp and cold. David spread out his cloak, and lay upon it. He didn't sleep and he kept thinking. He was completely surprised at his uncle's strange behaviour. Why did he lock him into the room? Why did he not trust David? Why had he let the house become so dirty and broken?

He banged on the door and shouted, "Hey! Let me out!" His uncle unlocked the door, and a little later David sat in the kitchen with him.

Ebenezer was silent, smoking his pipe. "Well, Davie," he said, "I must see if I can find the right job for you. Maybe the army, maybe in the law courts." Then he began to talk about the history of the great house. David remembered the old woman he had met. She had pointed at the house, and cursed it. He told Ebenezer and he became very angry. "That old witch! I'll have her put on trial!" shouted the man and he stood up. "I have to go now and I'll have to lock you out while I'm gone," he said. Now David became angry too. "Uncle, you treat me badly, and I see you don't trust me! I'd better go back to my first home!"

"Now, David, please calm down," said the man, "you're not yet used to how I do things, that's all. Soon, we'll agree about things. As for now... well, I just won't go."

David stared at him. He was amazed. His uncle had decided to stay because he did not want to leave him alone in the house!



CHAPTER 1

Comprehension

1 Decide if the following statements are True or False. Write T or F in the boxes.

- Both of David's parents are dead.
- David will live with the village priest, Campbell.
- The priest gave David a letter from his mother.
- Campbell gave David a small Bible and a silver coin.
- People were willing and happy to show David the way to Shaws house.

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2 Choose a, b or c to complete the following sentences.

- David Balfour
 - was the village priest.
 - lived in Scotland.
 - wrote his mother a letter.
- Mr Campbell
 - gave David a package.
 - told David to leave the village forever.
 - went to Cramond with David.
- An old woman in Cramond
 - happily helped David find Shaws house.
 - was unwilling to talk about Shaws house.
 - cursed the Master of Shaws house.
- Mr Ebenezer Balfour
 - was a kind man.
 - was David's uncle.
 - lived in a lovely house.
- Ebenezer decided
 - not to leave David alone in his house.
 - to sleep on his cloak.
 - to cook a delicious bowl of porridge for David.

Vocabulary

3 Complete the sentences using the words in the box.

interesting spring sad angrily puzzled house porridge

- Jamie was _____ at Hank's strange behaviour at last night's party.
- Eric and Jessica have just moved in their new _____.

3. Last night I watched a very _____ documentary on global warming.
4. Mrs Davis stared at the children _____ because they were very noisy in class.
5. After his dog went missing, Grant was very _____.
6. My most favourite season is the _____.
7. Mr Anderson always has _____ for breakfast, he says it's very healthy.

4 Find the words in Chapter 1 to match the definitions below. The first letter has been given to you.

1. A small town v _____ (page 4)
2. A round-shaped metal piece used as money c _____ (page 4)
3. The capital city of Scotland E _____ (page 4)
4. A small gun held with one hand p _____ (page 5)
5. An ugly unpleasant old woman w _____ (page 8)

Follow-up activities

5 Discuss.

1. Why was David sad to leave the village? If you had to leave your home town how would you feel and who would you miss the most?
2. David wants to see more of the world. If you could travel to see the world, where would you go first and why?
3. Why do you think the people in Cramond were unwilling to help David find Shaws house?
4. Why do you think Ebenezer did not want David alone in his house?

6 Imagine you are David and have been locked in your room by your uncle. Write an entry in your diary expressing what happened and how you feel about it. (60-80 words)