

AN ECHO

By Sir James M Barrie, OM

AS I never saw Stevenson face to face I have no right to be in this volume; but I should like to step into some obscure corner of it so that I may cheer and cheer as the procession of him goes by. Such a fine array of flag-bearers, Colvin, Gosse, Archer, Lady Colvin and many another, the much loved Colvin always to be thought of first — I should forget to couple Mary Lamb with Charles as soon as think of R. L. S. without taking off my hat to Sidney Colvin. Even now when you sit with Colvin you feel that Stevenson is nearer than in any other mortal room ; some very slight disturbance of the atmosphere and he would break into the conversation.

When I came to London there was a blank spot in it; Stevenson had gone. It could not be filled till he came back, and he never came back. I saw it again in Edinburgh the other day. It is not necessarily that he was the greatest, I don't think he was the greatest, but of the men we might have seen he is the one we would like best to come back.

Had he lived another year I should have seen him. 'All plans arranged for a visit to Vailima, to settle on those shores for ever,' he wrote, or something to that effect, 'and if my wife likes you, what a time you will have, and if she does not, how I shall pity you.'

There is some waterfall at the top of which I was to sit, let go, and in a second or two come to my senses in a glassy pool. I was warned that the natives would not think much of my works until I had done that. I can't think I should have done it, but there is no telling if he had been there to bid me let go. I was elaborating a scheme for taking him by surprise, explaining a rakish craft that bore him off in the night and made him walk the plank, when the news came that he had gone up the hill behind Vailima for the last time.