Robert Louis Stevenson's Revisions to "The Merry Men"

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While staying with his wife and mother at Kinnaird Cottage near Pitlochry in mid-1881, R.L. Stevenson wrote at least three Scottish short stories, "The Body-Snatcher," "Thrawn Janet" and "The Merry Men," with the intention of putting them in a collection titled *The Black Man and Other Tales*. Of these stories, "The Merry Men" seems to have been the most difficult to complete: as Fanny Stevenson has remarked, the story "did not come so easily as *Thrawn Janet*, and never quite satisfied its author..." In fact, Stevenson revised "The Merry Men" at least twice before its final publication, in book form, almost six years later.

"The Merry Men" was begun under the different title, "The Wreck of the Susanna." By mid-July 1881, Stevenson had written "to the middle of Chapter IV," but even at this early stage he considered that the story needed to be re-written: "Like enough, when it is finished I shall discard all chapterings; for the thing is written straight through. It must, unhappily, be re-written—too well written not to be." However, a first draft was completed by the end of July and by August, when Stevenson
left Pitlochry, the story was still unrevised: "Goodness knows when I shall be able to re-write; I must first get over this copper-headed cold." From August onwards, Stevenson's attention was taken up with *Treasure Island*, and he did not come to revise "The Merry Men" until the end of 1881 or early 1882 when he was at Davos in Switzerland. This revised version was sent to Leslie Stephen, and "The Merry Men" was thus first published in two parts in Stephen's *Cornhill Magazine*, vol. xlv, No. 270 (June 1882) and vol. xlv, No. 271 (July 1882), exactly one year after it was begun.

The first Pitlochry draft of the story is not available, but Stevenson's letters to Sidney Colvin and W.E. Henley in mid-1881 suggest that several changes at least were made in the *Cornhill* version. The earlier title, "The Wreck of the Susanna, indicates that the ill-fated Christ-Anna in "The Merry Men" initially had a different name. In a letter to Henley in July, Stevenson listed the name of the Spanish ship in his Pitlochry draft as the "Santma Trinid", but it is changed in the later *Cornhill* version to the *Espirito Santo*. The name-changes to both ships in the *Cornhill* version give them a Christian significance they previously did not have: as a consequence, they are more obviously contrasted to the diabolic characteristics of the sea and the "Merry Men" in particular, to which they (along with Uncle Gordon Darnaway) fall victim. In his letter to Henley, Stevenson also listed the title to Chapter III in the Pitlochry draft as "Past and Present in Sandag Bay", but in the later *Cornhill* version, it is changed to "Land and Sea in Sandag Bay" (although this is badly mis-spelt in the June number of *Cornhill Magazine*, as "Lad and Leo in Sandag Bay"). However, Stevenson's brief outline of the five chapters of his Pitlochry draft in his letter to Henley indicates that the story remained fundamentally unchanged in its "revised" form in *Cornhill Magazine*. Interestingly, in this later version, Stevenson did not (as he told Henley he would) "discard all chapterings."

In April 1884, almost two years after the first publication of the story in *Cornhill Magazine*, Stevenson wrote to his father, "*The Merry Men* I mean to make much longer, with a whole new dénouement, not yet quite clear to me." Although he did not re-write "The Merry Men" as thoroughly as this letter might suggest, Stevenson did make a number of interesting and important changes to the *Cornhill* version at some time between
this date and the time of the story's second publication, in The Merry Men and Other Tales in February 1887. It appears, then, that Stevenson worked on "The Merry Men" intermittently over a period of some five-and-a-half years, producing three versions: the first Pitlochry draft (never published, but outlined briefly in his letter to Henley in July 1881); a "revised" version published in Cornhill Magazine in June and July 1882; and a second and more substantially revised version published in book form in 1887. The two revisions, over such a long period of time, may lend support to Fanny Stevenson's claim in her "Prefatory Note" to The Merry Men and Other Tales, that Stevenson "had succeeded in giving the terror of the sea, but had failed to get a real grip on his story" (p. xiii).

It may be useful to provide a complete list of differences between the Cornhill version of "The Merry Men" and the final version published in The Merry Men and Other Tales. The changes made to the Cornhill version are often minor and often involve accidentals or ways of spelling or presenting a word, especially a Scots word. But a number of longer passages were also substantially altered for the final version, and in one case a long passage from the Cornhill version is omitted altogether. Most of the substantial changes affect those passages presenting dialogue between Charles Darnaway and Mary Ellen (in Chapters II and IV), and those passages concerning the negro or "black man" (in Chapter V). The changes concerning the negro show how Stevenson attempted to revise or improve upon the concluding events in "The Merry Men" (although it cannot be said that he gave the story "a whole new dénouement"). For example, he rejected those descriptions in the Cornhill version which made the negro appear comical and simple and which gave the "dialogue" between the negro and Charles Darnaway a light-hearted quality. Instead, the negro in the final version becomes a more potent and serious symbol of the "black man" or "fallen king" (p. 50). The changes concerning the negro also show Stevenson putting into practice his technique of "condensation" when writing shorter fiction, of "always cutting the flesh off the bones" so that "all the more neutral circumstances are omitted." Indeed, these changes make the last chapter of the story somewhat shorter (rather than, as Stevenson had intended in his letter to his father in April 1884, "much longer") than the Cornhill version.
The following list will indicate all the differences between the earlier Cornhill version and the final version of "The Merry Men," including accidentals (changes involving commas, semicolons, hyphens, and so on) and changes in spelling or presentation of single words. The Cornhill version will occupy the left-hand side of the page, while the final version (as published in the Tusitala Edition, vol. viii, pp. 3-56) will occupy the right-hand side. Changes in single words will be listed on their own (for example, aweful becomes awful); but where changes involve more than one word or where they involve the insertion of new words or new passages, the last and first word common to both versions will also be given (for example, moorcocks. as I used to say; and becomes moorcocks; and). Where more than one line is involved, a dividing type-stroke will be included in the passage. Remarks on particular changes (for example, misprints or misreadings) will be given through an accompanying footnote.

La Trobe University, Melbourne

_Cornhill_, vol. xliv, No. 270 (June 1882)

p. 676, l. 7 lowland
l. 9 Islands;
l. 17 lowlands;
ll. 26-7 moorcocks, as I to/say; and
ll. 32-3 Ben/Ryan, the

p. 677, l. 2 Ryan.
l. 8 away, 15
l. 40 Ryan.

p. 678, l. 16 cauldrons
l. 17 Roost
l. 33 befel

p. 679, l. 29 the name of Spain, from which
l. 41 king's
l. 43 James's

p. 680, l. 11 her, with
l. 18 sea-gulls,

_The Merry Men and Other Tales_

p. 3, l. 9 Lowland
l. 12 islands;
l. 22 Lowlands;
p. 4, l. 8 moorcocks; and
ll. 5-6 Ben/Kyaw. The

p. 5, l. 33 Kyaw.
p. 6, l. 21 cauldrons
l. 23 Roost
p. 7, l. 3 befell
p. 8, l. 17 the more of the way in which
l. 31 King's
l. 33 Jamie's
p. 9, l. 14 her with
l. 23 sea gulls,
I. 23 old, long-
I. 36 aweful
p. 681, l. 14 were new chairs
l. 14 kitchen, covered
l. 44 clean strae
p. 682, l. 4 yees;16
l. 17 old, stained
l. 25 this
l. 26 have
l. 26 no?
I. 27 fur
l. 29 fur
l. 29 no
l. 30 fur
l. 32 girgie,"18
l. 33 ha'e
l. 33 no
l. 39 10th
l. 46 put
p. 683, l. 13 back spang
l. 18 wan chancy
l. 19 ha'e
l. 27 ha'e't
l. 32 acquaint
l. 33 sea, though I'm
no misdoobtin' inspiration.
But, troth,
l. 34 wasnae20
l. 34 wasnae
l. 36 spectacle
l. 40 draggons22
p. 684, l. 10 fiddling sinful
l. 15 "Oh, aye!"
l. 32 growing,
l. 32 sea beasts
l. 43 ha'e
l. 43 louped
l. 46 fur
p. 685, l. 2 have
l. 4 ane
l. 4 sic like,

l. 10, l. 6 old long-
I. 21 aweful
p. 11, ll. 12-3 were/chairs
l. 13 kitchen covered
p. 12, l. 11 clean-strae
l. 19 eyes;
l. 35 old stained
p. 13, l. 6 thir17
l. 6 hae
l. 7 no'?
l. 9 for
l. 10 for
l. 10 no'
l. 12 for
l. 14 girzie,"
l. 15 hae
l. 15 no'
l. 23 10
l. 33 pit19
p. 14, l. 9 back-spang
l. 16 wanchancy
l. 17 hae
l. 26 hae't
l. 33 acquaint
l. 33 sea. But troth,
l.33 wasna
l.34 wasna
l.36 spentacle21
p. 15, l.2 draygons
ll.19-20 fiddling,/-sinful
l.25 "Ou, ay!"
p. 16, l.5 growin',
l.5 sea-beasts
l. 19 hae
l.19 lowped
l.23 for
l.25 hae
l. 27 an'
l. 27 sic-like,
RLS's Revisions to The Merry Men

l. 13 No"
l. 14 ha' e
l. 15 Gobart;
l. 21 no
l. 24 couldnae
l. 31 tops
l. 32 it? It
l. 34 crawin'
p. 686, l. 32 beneath
l. 32 Aye?
l. 32 wullit?"
l. 36 "Aye,
l. 40 there, waitin' as
l. 42 "You'll

p. 687, l. 26 north isles
l. 26 southward, blue
l. 28 awhile
l. 40 we all
ll. 43-6-p. 688, ll. 1-6
money. All my days I
have/loved and honoured
you; the love and the
honour keep on growing/
with the years; I could
not think to be happy or
hearty in my life/with­
out you. Do you think
you could take me for a
husband?"/

"I would not ask a
better," she replied./
"Well then," said I,
"shake hands upon it."/
She did so very heartily;
and "That's a bargair,
lad," said she,/which
was all that passed bet­
ween us on the subject,
for though I loved/her,
I stood in awe of her
tranquility of charac-
l. 39 "No"
About her father she would tell me nothing, only

in fear, "do ye no' like me?"/

"Oh, Charlie man," she said, "is this a time to speak/of it? Let me be a while: let me be the way I am; it'll/not be you that loses by the waiting!"

I made out by her voice that she was near-ly weeping,/and this put me out of any thought but to compose her./"Mary Ellen," I said, "say no more: I did not come/to trouble you: your way shall be mine, and your time/too; and you have told me all I wanted. Only just this/one thing more: what ails you?"/

She owned it was her father, but would enter into no/particulars, only

p. 688, l. 8 havenae
l. 10 lang
l. 16 spearing
ll. 30-1 Danna-/
ways.

p. 689, l. 5 Ryan
l. 11 evolving
l. 29 west
l. 42 oversea;
ll. 46 outwardly honour
l. 46 misfortune. But I

p. 690, l. 5 Ryan
l. 10 evolvering
l. 16 west
l. 29 oversea;
ll. 46 outwardly honour
l. 46 misfortune. But I
p. 690, ll. 3-4 me/even
l. 4 fear that
l. 8 the last circle of
l. 9 both having

l. 14 Swedish
l. 20 sight indeed,
l. 20 tears
l. 23 voiceless
l. 44 rocks four or
five fathoms

p. 691, ll. 2-3 show what it
was,/but
l. 4 and a faint lap,
and now and then a dying

l. 31 ships drifted
l. 39 scoured like
an alley
ll. 39-40 and even/behind
me,

p. 692, l. 19 breeding place
l. 41 lopsidedly,
l. 42 curious
l. 43 the clefts and roots
of
l. 46 go when

p. 693, l. 8 left go, leaped

l. 9 on to the
l. 13 this
l. 15 Brean
l. 21 again, and

p. 694, l. 11 boathook
l. 38 larger

p. 695, l. 4 adventures, poor,
l. 5 lawless, filled
l. 14 lying to
l. 21 coast the

l. 6 me even
l. 6 fear, that
l. 12 the first arc of
ll. 13-4 both/masts
having
l. 20 Norwegian
l. 27 sight, indeed,
l. 27 emotion
l. 31 noseless

p. 26, l. 17 rocks several
fathoms
ll. 22-3 show/that it was
water but
ll. 24-5 and now and/
then a faint lap and a
dying

p. 27, l. 20 ships, drifted
l. 29 scoured into the
likeness of an alley
l. 30 and before me,

p. 28, l. 23 breeding-place
p. 29, l. 12 lop-sidedly,
l. 13 carrion
l. 14 the grain and the
clefts of
l. 18 go, when
ll. 28-9 left hold of/the
tangle, leaped
l. 30 on the
l. 35 their
l. 37 ocean

p. 30, l. 5 again and
p. 31, l. 13 boat-hook
p. 32, l. 8 longer
l. 23 adventures—poor,
l. 24 lawless—filled
l. 36. lying-to

p. 33, l. 6 coast, the
Cornhill, vol. XLV, No. 271
(July 1882).

p. 56, l. 3 gable end
  l. 10 there, that
  l. 16 treasure ship;
  l. 30 "Aye, aye,
p. 57, l. 5 vain for
  l. 7 laying
  l. 16 hadnae
  l. 17 couldnae
  l. 20 bony!?41
  l. 27 maunnnae
  l. 27 maunnnae
II. 29-30 for 't'!"/
     A sense of loathing
     began to fill my
     l. 33 Cherlie,"42
     l. 35 bony!"43
     l. 46 man, that
     l. 46 pared44
p. 58, II. 18-9 laughing. Right
or wrong, we have to/
marry. If
  l. 27 you
  l. 28 havenae
II. 37-41 so."
     I could never
     rightly tell the reason;
     but at this, like a poor
child, I/began to cry.
She came over to me, and
put her hand upon my
shoulder/kindly./
"Charlie,
  l. 41 neednae
  l. 42 house, and
II. 42-3 stranger/—
     though well loved, I
can tell you that; take

p. 34, l. 1 gable-end
  l. 13 there that
  l. 20 treasure-ship;
p. 35, l. 9 "Ay, ay,
  l. 22 vain, for
  l. 24 lying,
  l. 35 hadna
  l. 37 couldna
p. 36, l. 2 bonny!"
  l. 10 maunna
  l. 11 maunna
II. 13-4 for 't'!"/
     Something like fear
     began to creep into my
     l. 18 Charlie;"46
     l. 20 bonny!"
     l. 33 man that
     l. 33 pored
p. 37, II. 18-9 laughing./
If46
  l. 28 ye
  l. 29 havena
p. 38, II. 2-5 so."/
     I was a while silent,
     not knowing what to say;
     and/when I roused my
head at last to speak,
she got before me./

"Charlie,"46
  l. 5 needna
  l. 6 house and
  l. 7 stranger; take
ll. 44-5 folk. It'll/not be me that blames you, Charlie. If you
l. 46 years from now, you
l. 46-p. 59, ll. 1-3 would be blythe and, welcome still; and there's not a soul in Aros but would say the same/with me."

"Mary
p. 59, ll. 3-4 said,./yes.

ll. 4-5 am; whatever you/wish, I wish; as
l. 7 around
ll. 11-2 of/your uncle, poor man, till
l. 14 upon her father. All
l. 19 February 11, when

l. 29 dryshod
l. 29 overlong

p. 60, l. 13 watch. I need not say I
l. 14 more so, as,
l. 26 ocean;
l. 45 Roost. It was there, it
ll. 45-6 seemed,./that was

p. 61, l. 24 a leap and a toss
l. 34 vice, was
l. 44 eyes
l. 45 Charlie, man,

p. 62, ll. 10-1 sea,./wantin'
l. 12 cannae
l. 12 daurnae
ll. 23-35 morning."/For a moment, he stood stupe-fied; then, the whisky working in his/brain, he

ll. 8-9 folk, and if you
l. 10 years syne, you47 ll. 10-11 would find me aye waiting."/
"Mary48

l. 12 said as good as yes.49
l. 13 am; as
l. 15 round
l. 21 of my father till
ll. 23-4 upon/my uncle. All
ll. 29-30 February/the tenth, when50

p. 39, l. 3 dry-shod
l. 4 over-long

p. 40, l. 1 watch. I
l. 2 more readily as,
l. 16 sea;

p. 41, ll. 1-2 Roost. There,/it
l. 2 seemed, was
l. 33 a toss

p. 42, l. 6 vice was
l. 18 eye
l. 20 Charlie man,
l. 34 sea wantin'
l. 36 canna
l. 36 daurna

p. 43, ll. 10-11 morning."/
Suddenly,
began to gesticulate, and
to bow, and to step to
and fro, and/back and
forward, in a sort of
formless dance. We could
hear him/accompany his
movements, now with a
snatch of a sea-drinking
song;/now, as he bettered
the pace, with such cries
as young men utter in
a/reel; and now, as again
he moved more slowly,
with old Scottish psalm/
tunes and verses of the
Psalms of David. Some	
times a gust would/strike
and almost overthrow him;
sometimes great, lashing
sprays fell/upon us and
hid him from our sight;
and again, in a lull, we
could hear/the words of
his soag, and see him
modulate his steps and
gestures to/the air ./

Suddenly,

ll. 41-3 command. My
uncle, too./had heard it,
and had ceased his dance.
He, and I, and Rorie,/crouching together
l. 43 edge, waited,
P. 63, l. 16 bank; and there my
own emotion was relieved
by tears. As

ll. 34-5 of/my duty to
Mary to
P. 64, l. 18 driftwood
l. 21 no
l. 21 no

l. 19 command. Crouching together

l. 20 edge, we waited,
P. 44, ll. 4-5 bank./As

P. 45, l. 3 of duty to

P. 46, l. 2 drift-wood
l. 5 no'
l. 5 no'
RLS's Revisions to *The Merry Men*

1. 25 night, as
1. 27 "no so bad
1. 28 cannae
1. 29 ord'nar;
1. 36 o'

p. 65, l. 3 further."

11. 8-9 is/As great
11. 9 sea billows
11. 11 dinnae
11. 11 dare
11. 12 nae
11. 12 amnae
11. 17 subject. But
11. 19 stimulant; and
11. 23 bow
11. 24 stem
11. 25 grave, I

p. 66, l. 10 eyes; and
11. 15 It was not possible

111. 21-2 us. Then/he
stoope and clasp his
hands, as if in supplica-
tion. At

11. 23 revived; and
111. 23-4 near./He dropped

111. 25-6 hesitations,
crouching and clasp his
hands, and/making a
world of gesticulative
signals. At

11. 27 uneasiness, I
11. 30 further
11. 31 had an indifferent
reputation.
11. 36 castaway's, the
11. 46 negro

p. 67, l. 4 halfway
11. 9 one besides that
11. 11 negro

1. 10 night as
1. 12 "no' as bad
1. 14 canna
1. 15 ordnar;
1. 23 of
1. 39 farther."

p. 47, 11. 5-6 is./Or great
11. 6 sea-billows
11. 8 dinna
11. 9 daur
11. 9 no'
11. 10 am no'
11. 16 subject; but
11. 18 stimulant, and
11. 23 stem
11. 24 stern
11. 26 grave I

p. 48, l. 27 eyes, and
11. 34 It seemed scarce
possible

p. 49, l. 4 us. At

11. 4 revived and
111. 5-6 near, and he,
on his part./dropped
11. 7 hesitations. At

11. 8 uneasiness I
11. 12 farther
11. 13 had a sorry repu-
tation
11. 19 castaway's the
11. 31 black
11. 36 half-way

p. 50, l. 3 one, besides, that
11. 6 black
ll. 12-32 with undisguised alarm. As I came nearer, I held out my hand; and the poor creature ran to it, kissed it, and placed it on his heart, breaking at the same time into a torrent of words that were incomprehensible to me. My eyes filled with tears, partly at his gratitude, partly at thought of the far different scene in February; but I signed to my castaway that I was unable to comprehend him, and tried him with a few words, first of English and then of Gaelic, in vain. It was plain that we should have to rely upon the language of looks and gestures; and I was reminded of a book that I had read, *Robinson Crusoe*, where, upon an island in a far part of the world, another Englishman relates difficulties of the same nature with another negro. I motioned him to follow me, which he readily did. As we passed the grave, I paused and raised my eyes and hands to heaven in token of respect and sorrow for the dead. As if to show that he understood

ll. 7-30 with folded arms, like one prepared for either destiny. As I came nearer, he reached forth his hand with a great gesture, such as I had seen from the pulpit, and spoke to me in something of a pulpit voice, but not a word was comprehensible. I tried him first in English, then in Gaelic, both in vain; so that it was clear we must rely upon the tongue of looks and gestures. Thereupon I signed to him to follow me, which he did readily and with a grave obeisance like a fallen king; all the while there had come no shade of alteration in his face, neither of anxiety while he was still waiting, nor of relief now that he was reassured; if he were a slave, as I supposed, I could not but judge he must have fallen from some high place in his own country, and fallen as he was, I could not but admire his bearing. As we passed the grave, I paused and raised my hands and eyes to heaven...
me, he fell at once upon his knees and appeared to offer up a prayer, looking up when he had done, nodding and smiling, with an irreverence that somewhat shocked my notions of religion. Then he turned, pointed to my uncle, whom we could just see perched upon the top of Aros, and touched his head to indicate that he was mad.

I was anxious if possible to discover whether he had belonged to the schooner. We

p. 68, l. 1 negro
ll. 2-3 scene, mingling and distinguishing the different parts with what seemed to me the talent of an actor; now
l. 7 boatman. Lastly,

ll. 10-6 comrades. Throughout the performance, for I can call it nothing else, he assumed in turn the part and the grimace of every character he represented; now strutting and

ven in token of respect and sorrow for the dead; and, as if in answer, bowed low and spread his hands abroad; it was a strange motion, but done like a thing of common custom; and I supposed it was ceremonial in the land from which he came. At the same time he pointed to my uncle, whom he could just see perched upon a knoll, and touched his head to indicate that he was mad.

We

p. 51, l. 10 black
l. 11 scene, now

ll. 16-7 boatman; but all with the same solemnity of manner, so that I was never even moved to smile. Lastly, ll. 21-3 comrades; and thereupon folded his arms once more, and stooped his head, like one accepting fate.
turn-ing out his toes,
now squinting and hanging
the lips, so that, had I
known/the parties, or
even seen them nearer
hand, I might have recog-
nised each/as he ap-
peared./

The

ll. 18-33 surprise, and,
I thought, little sorrow;
his gestures seemed/to
indicate a philosophical
acquiescence in the laws
of nature and the/common
fate of man; and next
moment he had picked a
flower and was/trying to
explain to me, as I
thought I gathered, some
virtue latent in/the
plant, now in words, now
by vigorous pantomime,
smiling the while/from
ear to ear./

There was something
in this poor castaway
that engaged my affec-
tionate interest. For all
his height, which was
almost gigantic, and his/
strength and activity,
which seemed truly for-
imidable, he appealed to
me/rather as a child than
as a full-grown man. In
our necessary panto-
mime, he plainly found
the relish of play; his
eye and his mind were/
continually wandering;

ll. 25-34 surprise nor/
sorrow, and, with a sud-
den lifting of his open
hand,/seemed to dismiss
his former friends or
masters (which-/ever
they had been) into
God's pleasure. Respect
came/upon me and grew
stronger, the more I
observed him;/I saw he
had a powerful mind and
a sober and severe/char-
ger, such as I loved
to commune with; and
before/we had reached
the house of Aros I
had almost forgotten,
and/wholly forgiven him,
his uncanny colour./
To 62
and I have never seen any one who smiled so/often or so brightly. Even his black face was beauti-
ified; and before/we reached the house of Aros I had entirely conquered the first repul-/sion of his looks./

To

l. 38 still ravenously eating

p.69, l. 19 negro

p.70, l. 4 negro

ll. 4-46-p. 71, ll. 1-8

me. His terror/at the ideas was/­extreme; the more I insisted, the more abject became his signals of/re­luctance and peti­tion; and when at last, weary with the whole busi­ness, I swam back again to Aros, he greeted my arrival with the most/speaking pantomime of af­fection, submission, and gratitude for his/escape./

"Poor lamb," said Mary, "he durstn't. And I'll tell ye one thing./Charlie Darnaway: whether he was sent here in Hea­ven's anger or/Heaven's mercy, I would think shame upon the house of Aros if we/drove him forth. Man, or bairn, or beast, I can hardly tell which to/think him, he

p. 52, l. 1 still eating

l. 33 black

p. 53, l. 16 black,"

l. 32 black

ll. 32-9-p. 54, ll. 1-2

me. He signed, with the/same clearness and quiet as before, that he knew not the/art; and there was truth apparent in his signals, it would/ have occured to none of us to doubt his truth; and that/hope being over, we must all go back even as we came to/the house of Aros, the negro walking in our midst without embarras­ment./

All we could do that day was to make one more attempt/to communi­cate with the unhappy madman. Again he/was
shall have a seat at the fireside and a spoon at the table for me."

Even Rorie was of much the same way of thinking. "He will be a fine, canny body at all," was his opinion of the negro; and I can hardly explain how glad I was to hear their verdict. Perhaps his special gratitude to myself had touched me; but I have never felt a more affectionate pity for any creature calling himself man. Indeed, in the long hours that followed, he began to show a sympathy with our sorrow and an intelligent understanding of its cause and nature, that endeared him equally to all. I could never reproduce in words the series of fantastic gestures and grimaces by which he managed to explain his meaning; it was a strange business, and made stranger by the glee and the noisy laughter with which he perceived he had been understood. He must have closely and thoughtfully observed our comings and goings, and the behaviour of the maniac on the hill; for, absurd as it may seem, we
owed to his suggestion
the simple and obvious
plan by/which food was
conveyed to my uncle.
Acting, as he had done
before,/two parts in suc-
cession, he climbed the
hill with a basket in
the/character of Rorie,
oberved him from the
hilltop in that of the
mad-/man; came higher as
Rorie, ran away as my
uncle; as Rorie, left
the/basket on the summit
and descended to the
house; returned as my/
uncle to his perch, and,
finding the basket,
opened it with every sign
of/joy, and supped with
the most laughable and
unnecessary details, such/
as licking the lips and
fingers or smacking glut-
tonously with the/mouth./
It was like a ray of
light to the rest of us,
and no sooner understood/
than put in execution.
Rorie carried it out,
Rorie speechless in ad-
mira-/tion of the negro.
From that moment, in
fact, the Hebridean ser-
vant/began to regard our
castaway with eyes of
singular respect, like
some/odd sort of collie,
especially intelligent
and kind. And it is here,
among all these events, that I can see most plainly the mark of the hand of God. Judging by guess, I should have thought this superstitious old fellow would have held the stranger in the extreme degree of horror. But his superstitions were of another order; he had not been fed in youth, like my uncle among the Camerons, on tales of the devil appearing in the similitude of a black man, and, with cozening words and specious pretexts, luring men to ruin. It was rather as an animal than as a fiend that Rorie thought of our visitor, and as he found him more and more human in his ways, he came more and more both to admire and condescend.

Again my uncle was really p. 71, ll. 13–8 hour. The black once more embraced and kissed my hand with the same humble gratitude. He even offered to follow me, but when I signed to him to stay with Rorie, he cheerfully obeyed, nodding and smiling to his new companion.
RLS’s Revisions to The Merry Men

1. 25 negro  
2. 32 Within Rorie  
3. 32 snoring

4. 39-40 stars, the countless regents of the moon/rained

5. 46 kinsman’s voice;

p. 72, l. 20 bloom, upon

6. 22 of sea

7. 27 further

8. 44 but, high

Ibid., p. 162.

9. On 21 December 1882, Stevenson wrote to the new editor of Cornhill Magazine, James Payn (who had replaced Leslie Stephen), and complained that the publication of "The Merry Men" in Cornhill had "contained numerous errors because it was printed before Stevenson had returned his proof," G.L. McKay: (comp.), A Stevenson Library: Catalogue of a Collection of

NOTES

1"Prefatory Note," The Merry Men and Other Tales, Tusitala Edition (London, 1923-4), VIII, xiii. All further references to this edition will be incorporated into the text.

2The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, Tusitala Edition, II, 151. All further references will be abbreviated to Letters.

3Letters, II, 160.

4Ibid., p. 160

5Ibid., p. 162.

6Stevenson remarked that the story was "finished at Davos" in a letter to George Iles, 29 October 1887, Bookman, No. 7 (February 1895), p. 136.

7Letters, II, 163.

8Ibid., p. 160.
Writings by and about Stevenson formed by Edwin J. Beinecke (New Haven, 1951), III, 1009 (Beinecke 3214). However, the title of Chapter III notwithstanding, the number of actual misprints in the Cornhill publication of "The Merry Men" is not particularly large.

10See Letters, II, 160.

11Ibid., p. 303.

12Ibid., III, 177.


14The name Ben Ryan was used throughout Cornhill No. 270, but in Cornhill No. 271 the name is changed to Ben Kyaw, with the following apology attached to the end of the story: "NOTE: In the first part, Ben Kyaw was accidentally printed Ben Ryan," Cornhill Magazine, XLV, No. 271 (July 1882), p. 73. This "accident" may not have been the magazine's, however; in the outline of the five chapters of his Pitlochry draft to Henley (that is, before revising the story for Cornhill), Stevenson called his mountain Ben Ryan, Letters, II, 160. He may have forgotten to alter the name when submitting the revised version of his story to Cornhill; or, the name-change may have been a last-minute decision made only in time to be included in the second part of the story.

15The comma here is a misprint: the word marks the end of a sentence.

16The Scottish word yees is used here by the narrator, Charles Darnaway, in his description of his uncle's features. Although Charles sometimes slips into Scots in dialogue (especially with Mary Ellen), he tells his story in English. Indeed, outside of the recorded dialogue, yees is the only Scottish word to appear in Charles's story, and Stevenson might have
changed it to *eyes* later on for the sake of consistency.

17 Both *this* and *thir* (Scottish for "these") make sense in their context.

18 The *g* in *girgie* is probably a misreading of Stevenson's *z*.

19 Here, in Uncle Gordon's dialogue, Stevenson has changed the English *put* to the Scottish *pit*.

20 In Scottish negatives such as *wasnae* or *couldnae*, the final *e* is included throughout the *Cornhill* version but omitted in the final book version.

21 This is a misprint.

22 The first *g* in *draggons* is probably a misreading of Stevenson's *y*.

23 The *o* in *Gobart* is probably a misreading of Stevenson's *a*.

24 Again, in Uncle Gordon's dialogue, Stevenson has changed the English *tops* to the Scottish *taps*.

25 The change here gives the sentence a slightly different meaning: Uncle Gordon points to a sea-rune or "scart" that is either *beneath* or *wast* ("west of") the "grey stane."

26 The sentence here does not quite make sense without the word *with*: this is probably a misprint.

27 In the earlier *Cornhill* version, the dialogue between Charles and Mary is brief and direct, with Mary accepting Charles's marriage proposal with a kind of boyish enthusiasm. In the final book version, however, their dialogue is much longer, and both characters are less certain of their feelings. Charles's marriage proposal is treated less directly (he changes his question from *Do you think you could take me for a husband?* to *do ye no' like me?*), and although there is a certain affirmation of love in Mary's answer, the issue is postponed rather than agreed upon. Mary no longer has the *tranquility of character* evident in the
earlier *Cornhill* version, though Charles still seems to be *in awe* of her.

28 Here, in Mary Ellen's dialogue, Stevenson has changed the Scottish *lang* to the English *long*.

29 This is a misprint; or, the *a* in *spearing* may be a misreading of Stevenson's *i*.

30 This is a misprint.

31 The misprinting of Chapter III's title has been noted.

32 Stevenson may have thought that the word *peak* gave the impression that Aros was more mountainous than he intended it to be.

33 Both *evolving* and *revolving* make sense in their context, although it is likely that the latter is correct.

34 *East* is indicated by the story.

35 Both descriptions make sense in their context.

36 *Swedish* and *Norwegian* refer here to the location of the city, Christiania. The latter is correct, since Christiania was the earlier name given to Norway's capital, Oslo.

37 The words *voiceless* and *noseless* describe the figure-head, an angel, of the wrecked ship, the *Christ-Anna*. Both make sense, though it is not at all clear why the change to *noseless* was made. It may have been a misprint for *noiseless*.

38 Charles is looking out under water here, so that the descriptions in both versions make sense.

39 The word *curious* is probably a misreading of the word *carrion*, although, again, both make sense in their context.

40 This is probably a misprint.
Given the earlier remarks on the treatment of Charles's marriage proposal, it is significant that the final book version omits the corresponding sentence.

In the *Cornhill* version, Mary Ellen is again presented as "tranquil" and perhaps even maternal (so that, with her, Charles is *like a poor child*). In the final book version, Charles manages to remain composed at Mary's declaration of loyalty to her father.

Here, in Mary Ellen's dialogue, Stevenson has changed the English from *now* to the Scottish *syne*.

In the *Cornhill* version, Mary Ellen's remarks to Charles are less personal: she presents her feelings in a communal way (*there's not a soul in Aros but would say the same with me*), whereas in the final book version she presents her feelings alone.

Again, the sense of commitment between Charles and Mary Ellen is less direct in the final book version.

The date given in the final book version is correct: it has already been established that the *Christ-Anna* was wrecked on February 10th (see *Cornhill*, XLV, No. 270 [June 1882], p. 682, l. 39; and *The Merry Men and Other Tales*, p. 13, l. 23).

It is not clear why this passage, showing Uncle Gordon's drunken dancing while a ship comes to grief in the turbulent "Merry Men" below, should be omitted from the final book version. The passage underlines the sense (also present in the final book version) that Uncle Gordon comes to "resemble" the "Merry Men" themselves: his wild dance recalls the "dancing" of the "Merry Men," and so on. The passage also shows a
fundamental connection between Uncle Gordon's growing madness and his background as a strict Cameronian, so that he sings, among other things, the metrical Psalms of David.

52 This is the second time that Charles sheds a tear in the Cornhill version. As indicated, both displays of emotion are omitted from the final book version.

53 Here, in Uncle Gordon's dialogue, Stevenson has changed the English dare to the Scottish daur.

54 The omission of this description of the castaway negro in the final book version provides an early example of how Stevenson later rejected any suggestion that the negro is servile (or, "suppliant").

55 Again, with the omission of this description in the final book version, the negro becomes less "suppliant." In the earlier Cornhill version, the castaway negro is much more animated and much less dignified (as the description shows) than he is in the final book version.

56 The change from negro to black in the final book version is important, since it underlines the symbolic function of the negro as (to Uncle Gordon, at least) the "black man" or devil. This change occurs eight times.

57 The opening changes indicate most clearly just how the negro's character has been altered. In the earlier Cornhill version, he responds to Charles with undisguised alarm, while in the final book version he confronts Charles with folded arms: that is, he has become (as he was not before) a figure of dignity and seriousness. The negro's animated behavior in the Cornhill version also contrasts with the final book version where, now, there is no shade of alteration in his face. In the final book version, the negro's "Man Friday" characteristics are also omitted. The sense of the negro as the "black man" or devil is also made more apparent in the final book version, where Charles now considers him to be a fallen king, fallen from some high place, and so on. It may be interesting to speculate whether Charles, in his admiration for the negro, is deceived (like many characters in
Scottish folk-tales) by the apparently innocent appearance of the devil. In the Cornhill version, Charles sheds a tear a third time, but again this is left out of the final book version. Note also that Stevenson uses the word *knoll* again in the final book version (see *The Merry Men and Other Tales*, p. 23, l. 9).

58 With the omission of this description in the final book version, the negro again becomes less animated.

59 This extra description in the final book version underlines again the new seriousness or *solemnity* of the negro's character.

60 This is a misprint for *part*.

61 Again, the lengthy description of the negro's animated behavior is omitted in the final book version, replaced by a sense of his dignity and "solemnity."

62 The turnabout in the characterization of the negro is again indicated in these two corresponding passages. In the earlier Cornhill version, the negro is a *child* who enjoys *pantomime* and *play*; while in the final book version, he has, by contrast, a *sober and severe character*. Charles's admiration of this "sober and severe" character interestingly reflects on his own status in the story.

63 Obviously, the corresponding passage in the final book version is very much condensed: to quote from the Cornhill version itself, Stevenson seems to have omitted all the *laughable and unnecessary details*. The Cornhill version is interesting for several reasons, however. For example, it shows that Mary Ellen, rather than Charles, is instrumental in keeping the negro on the island: this is important in any discussion of Charles's ultimate responsibility for his uncle's death at the story's end. The Cornhill version also provides an explanation as to why Uncle Gordon should regard the negro with horror: it is because he had been fed on Cameronian folk-tales about the devil appearing as the "black man." This explanation is omitted from the final book version, or rather, it is incorporated into the figure of the *black* himself who is, now, more obviously symbolic of the "fallen king."