

History of Cartography Project No. 2: A Treasure Map

Commentary

This year's passage includes the famous aphorism of Robert Louis Stevenson: "I am told there are people who do not care for maps, and find it hard to believe" which is usually quoted out of context. It appears in Stevenson's account of how *Treasure Island* came to be written: the treasure map directly inspired the novel. This account first appeared in *The Idler Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* for August 1894, and also in *McClure's Magazine* Vol. III, No. 4, New York, September 1894, pp. [283]-293. It was reprinted with small changes in some subsequent editions of *Treasure Island*, such as Scribner's Biographical Edition, 1923, which corrected some words in the original. For this version, I have preserved the original punctuation of the passage, but have changed three words appearing in the later version that affect the sense of the passage. These are indicated by footnote numbers in the text.

1. Original has "paused."
2. Original has "character."
3. Original has "papers."

The map was illustrated in the first edition of *Treasure Island* (London: Cassell and Company, 1883) and was printed--apparently by the wood-engraving technique--in gray, with brown, red, and blue overprinting to

imitate hand-writing. It is very difficult to reproduce and has frequently be redrawn for various editions.

Stevenson's original map was apparently lost by the publisher, and had to be redrawn with the help of his father. The story is recounted by Stevenson elsewhere in *The Idler* article: "But the adventures of *Treasure Island* are not yet quite at an end. I had written it up to the map. The map was the chief part of my plot. . . . The time came when it was decided to republish, and I sent in my manuscript, and the map along with it, to Messrs. Cassell. The proofs came, they were corrected, but I heard nothing of the map. I wrote and asked; was told it had never been received, and sat aghast. It is one thing to draw a map at random, set a scale in one corner of it at a venture, and write up a story to the measurements. It is quite another to have to examine a whole book, make an inventory of all the allusions contained in it, and, with a pair of compasses, painfully design a map to suit the data. I did it; and the map was drawn again in my father's office, with embellishments of blowing whales and sailing ships, and my father himself brought into service a knack he had of various writing, and elaborately forged the signature of Captain Flint, and the sailing directions of Billy Bones. But somehow it was never *Treasure Island* to me."

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