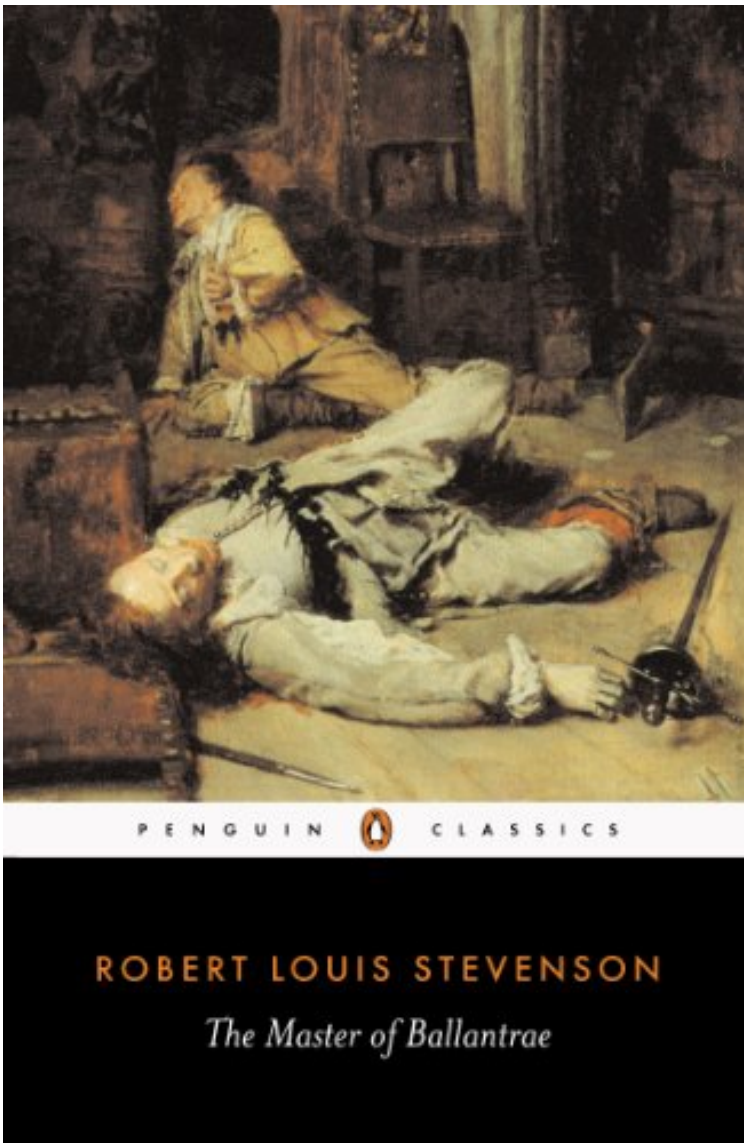


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# The Master of Ballantrae



*Par Adrian Poole, Robert Louis Stevenson*  
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**Description :** Description du produitStevensons brooding historical romance demonstrates his most abiding theme the elemental struggle between good and evil as it unfolds against a hauntingly beautiful Scottish landscape, amid the fierce loyalties and violent enmities that characterized Scottish history. When two brothers attempt to split their loyalties between the warring factions of the 1745 Jacobite rising, one family finds itself tragically divided. Stevensons remarkably vivid characterizations create an acutely moving, psychologically complex work; as Andrea Barrett points out in her Introduction, The brothers characters, not the historical facts, shape the drama.This Modern Library Paperback Classic includes illustrations reproduced from the original edition.

Prsentation de l'diteurSet at the time of the Jacobite uprising, The Master of Ballantrae tells of a family

divided. James Durie, Master of Ballantrae, abandons his ancestral home to support the Scottish rebellion - leaving his younger brother Henry, who is faithful to the English crown, to inherit the title of Lord Durrisdere. But he is to return years later, embittered by battles and a savage life of piracy on the high seas, to demand his inheritance. Turning the people against the Lord, he begins a savage feud with his brother that will lead the pair from the Scottish Highlands to the American Wilderness. Satanic and seductive, the Master was regarded by Stevenson as 'all I know of the devil'; his darkly manipulative schemes dominate this subtle and compelling tragedy. This edition takes as its text the Edinburgh Edition of the novel, the last approved by the author. The introduction considers the novel's inspiration and its place as one of Stevenson's greatest studies in cruelty.

Extrait Preface Although an old, consistent exile, the editor of the following pages revisits now and again the city of which he exults to be a native; and there are few things more strange, more painful, or more salutary, than such revisitations. Outside, in foreign spots, he comes by surprise and awakens more attention than he had expected; in his own city, the relation is reversed, and he stands amazed to be so little recollected. Elsewhere he is refreshed to see attractive faces, to remark possible friends; there he scouts the long streets, with a pang at heart, for the faces and friends that are no more. Elsewhere he is delighted with the presence of what is new, there tormented by the absence of what is old. Elsewhere he is content to be his present self; there he is smitten with an equal regret for what he once was and for what he once hoped to be. He was feeling all this dimly, as he drove from the station, on his last visit; he was feeling it still as he alighted at the door of his friend Mr. Johnstone Thomson, W.S., with whom he was to stay. A hearty welcome, a face not altogether changed, a few words that sounded of old days, a laugh provoked and shared, a glimpse in passing of the snowy cloth and bright decanters and the Piranesis on the dining-room wall, brought him to his bed-room with a somewhat lightened cheer, and when he and Mr. Thomson sat down a few minutes later, cheek by jowl, and pledged the past in a preliminary bumper, he was already almost consoled, he had already almost forgiven himself his two unpardonable errors, that he should ever have left his native city, or ever returned to it. I have something quite in your way, said Mr. Thomson. I wished to do honour to your arrival; because, my dear fellow, it is my own youth that comes back along with you; in a very tattered and withered state, to be sure, but well! all that's left of it. A great deal better than nothing, said the editor. But what is this which is quite in my way? I was coming to that, said Mr. Thomson: Fate has put it in my power to honour your arrival with something really original by way of dessert. A mystery. A mystery? I repeated. Yes, said his friend, a mystery. It may prove to be nothing, and it may prove to be a great deal. But in the meanwhile it is truly mysterious, no eye having looked on it for near a hundred years; it is highly genteel, for it treats of a titled family; and it ought to be melodramatic, for (according to the superscription) it is concerned with death. I think I rarely heard a more obscure or a more promising annunciation, the other remarked. But what is it? You remember my predecessors, old Peter M'Brair's business? I remember him acutely; he could not look at me without a pang of reprobation, and he could not feel the pang without betraying it. He was to me a man of a great historical interest, but the interest was not returned. Ah well, we go beyond him, said Mr. Thomson. I daresay old Peter knew as little about this as I do. You see, I succeeded to a prodigious accumulation of old law-papers and old tin boxes, some of them of Peter's hoarding, some of his father's, John, first of the dynasty, a great man in his day. Among other collections, were all the papers of the Durrisdeers. The Durrisdeers! cried I. My dear fellow, these may be of the greatest interest. One of them was out in the 45; one had some strange passages with the devil; you will find a note of it in Laws Memorials, I think; and there was an unexplained tragedy, I know not what, much later, about a hundred years ago. More than a hundred years ago, said Mr. Thomson. In 1783. How do you know that? I mean some death. Yes, the lamentable deaths of my Lord Durrisdere and his brother, the Master of Ballantrae (attainted in the troubles), said Mr. Thomson with something the tone of a man quoting. Is that it? To say truth, said I, I have only seen some dim reference to the things in memoirs; and heard some traditions dimmer still, through my uncle (whom I think you knew). My uncle lived when he was a boy in the neighbourhood of St. Brides; he has often told me of the avenue closed up and grown over with grass, the great gates never opened, the last lord and his old maid sister who lived in the back parts of the house, a quiet, plain, poor, hum-drum couple it would seem but pathetic too, as the last of that stirring and brave house and, to the country folk, faintly terrible from some deformed traditions. Yes, said Mr. Thomson. Henry Graeme Durie, the last lord, died in 1820; his sister, the Honourable Miss Katherine Durie, in 27; so much I know; and by what I have been going over the last few days, they were what you say, decent, quiet people and not rich. To say truth, it was a letter of my lords that put me on the search for the packet we are going to open this evening. Some papers could not be found; and he wrote to Jack M'Brair suggesting they might be

among those sealed up by a Mr. Mackellar. MBrair answered, that the papers in question were all in Mackellars own hand, all (as the writer understood) of a purely narrative character; and besides, said he, I am bound not to open them before the year 1889. You may fancy if these words struck me: I instituted a hunt through all the MBrair repositories; and at last hit upon that packet which (if you have had enough wine) I propose to show you at once. In the smoking-room, to which my host now led me, was a packet, fastened with many seals and enclosed in a single sheet of strong paper thus endorsed: Papers relating to the lives and lamentable deaths of the late Lord Durisdeer, and his elder brother James, commonly called Master of Ballantrae, attainted in the troubles: entrusted into the hands of John MBrair in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, W.S.; this 20th day of September Anno Domini 1789; by him to be kept secret until the revolution of one hundred years complete, or until the 20th day of September 1889: the same compiled and written by me, Ephraim Mackellar, For near forty years Land Steward on the estates of his Lordship. As Mr. Thomson is a married man, I will not say what hour had struck when we laid down the last of the following pages; but I will give a few words of what ensued. Here, said Mr. Thomson, is a novel ready to your hand: all you have to do is to work up the scenery, develop the characters, and improve the style. My dear fellow, said I, they are just the three things that I would rather die than set my hand to. It shall be published as it stands. But its so bald, objected Mr. Thomson. I believe there is nothing so noble as baldness, replied I, and I am sure there is nothing so interesting. I would have all literature bald, and all authors (if you like) but one. Well, well, said Mr. Thomson, we shall see. [Johnstone Thomson, W.S., is Mr. C. Baxter, W.S. (afterwards the authors executor), with whom, as Thomson Johnstone, Stevenson frequently corresponded in the broadest of broad Scots. The scene is laid in Mr. Baxters house, 7, Rothesay Place, Edinburgh.] Summary of Events During the Masters Wanderings The full truth of this odd matter is what the world has long been looking for, and public curiosity is sure to welcome. It so befell that I was intimately mingled with the last years and history of the house; and there does not live one man so able as myself to make these matters plain, or so desirous to narrate them faithfully. I knew the Master; on many secret steps of his career I have an authentic memoir in my hand; I sailed with him on his last voyage almost alone; I made one upon that winters journey of which so many tales have gone abroad; and I was there at the mans death. As for my late Lord Durrisdeer, I served him and loved him near twenty years; and thought more of him the more I knew of him. Altogether, I think it not fit that so much evidence should perish; the truth is a debt I owe my lords memory; and I think my old years will flow more smoothly, and my white hair lie quieter on the pillow, when the debt is paid. The Duries of Durrisdeer and Ballantrae were a strong family in the south-west from the days of David First. A rhyme still current in the countryside Kittle folk are the Durrisdeers, They ride wi ower mony spears bears the mark of its antiquity; and the name appears in another, which common report attributes to Thomas of Ercildoune himself I cannot say how truly, and which some have applied I dare not say with how much justice to the events of this narration: Twa Duries in Durrisdeer, Ane to tie and ane to ride, An ill day for the groom And a waur day for the bride. Authentic history besides is filled with their exploits which (to our modern eyes) seem not very commendable: and the family suffered its full share of those ups and downs to which the great houses of Scotland have been ever liable. But all these I pass over, to come to that memorable year 1745, when the foundations of this tragedy were laid. *Revue de presse* If a strong story, strongly told, full of human interest, and absolutely original in its situations, makes a masterpiece, then this may lay claim to the title. Arthur Conan Doyle