

STICKIT 125  
A (LONG OVERDUE) REAPPRAISAL OF THE  
STICKIT MINISTER  
AFTER 125 YEARS.



Cally Phillips

FREE FOR MEMBERS OF

The Galloway Raiders

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## CONTENTS:

Destined to be Stickit?

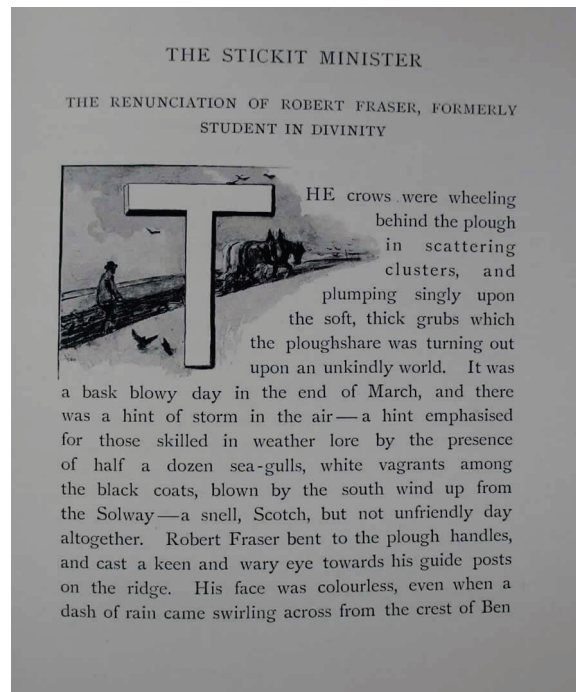
Good enough for RLS is good enough for me.

The Stickit Minister – perspectives.

The Robert Fraser Trilogy.

The Robert Fraser Trilogy – critical reviews.

The Devil is in the detail.



### **A man never destined to be ‘stickit’**

In 1893 S.R.Crockett in his early thirties, married with 2 small children. He was working as a Free Kirk minister in Penicuik, supplementing his income by writing. On March 20<sup>th</sup> he experienced that most profound of experiences – first publication.

He had, of course, been publishing short stories/articles in magazines since his student days in the late 1870s, and he had self-published a volume of poetry under the pseudonym Ford Brereton in 1886, but *The Stickit Minister* was his first ‘real’ published work in book form. Any writer will know the anticipation and fear that goes with that time. Any reader can almost imagine it.

Following publication, in April ‘The Daily Chronicle’ reviewed him as ‘a New Scottish Master.’ Crockett, and *The Stickit Minister* became an overnight success. As his biographer Donaldson notes: ‘Its appearance was timely. The public in the nineties craved above all novelty. The great figures of the Victorian era were all dead. The sense of high purpose which had informed serious literature had relaxed... a new kind of ‘popular’ author was in demand, created by the many magazines with short stories catering for travellers on the rapidly expanding railway services.’

The first edition was dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson. *The Stickit Minister* went into a second edition in early May, reportedly selling 2000 copies in a month. As well as the dedication, the second edition went out complete with a prefatory ‘Letter Declaratory’ to Robert Louis Stevenson’ with whom Crockett had been corresponding since 1888. In March 1893 ‘Crockett sent RLS a copy of *The Stickit Minister* (1<sup>st</sup> edition) with a letter saying that RLS owed him 2 letters. The book didn’t arrive because Crockett didn’t register it. Over the next six months various letters went back and forth between the two.

Piecing together the correspondence between RLS and SRC is a jigsaw fraught with complications, not least because of ‘edited’ versions of the correspondence from RLS’s side and the loss of letters from SRC’s side. This work is ongoing with some on the Raiders website and much more to come.

1893 was a busy year for Crockett. Determined to make hay while the sun shone, he spent the year consolidating, negotiating with his new publisher and expanding his contributions to serial magazines. He was already working on *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and *The Raiders* – the breakthrough for the latter came in August 1893 when he first met the Macmillans of Glenhead. John Macmillan took Crockett into the Galloway hills and he ‘found’ some of

the locations for *The Raiders*. It was to be the beginning of another good and fruitful friendship.

Crockett later wrote: "Before the publication of this book, *The Stickit Minister*, the best expression of my youth, *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, was well in hand. It should have been my third book, but its publication was delayed, and in the meanwhile *The Raiders* was written. This story was begun in January, 1893, and was finished in February, 1894. The actual writing of it only took me two months, the rest of the time was spent in reading up my subject, in taking elaborate notes, and in poring over my maps.'

There is more on the origins of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* and *The Raiders* in Crockett's correspondence with publisher T.Fisher Unwin. Again, this is a work in progress, and the first part is to be found later in this PDF. This correspondence also offers a good insight into the working relationship and the hopes, dreams and realities of Crockett's first foray into book publishing.

Serialisations of what would become the short works published by T.Fisher Unwin in the Autonym Series in 1894, *Mad Sir Uchtred* and *The Playactress* were running in magazines through the autumn. Crockett also spent time nurturing a friendship with J.M.Barrie, another correspondent of RLS, when in London. They spoke of going to visit RLS in Samoa. But real life got in the way of that adventure. Life might have been quite different for both Crockett and Barrie had they gone.

Crockett's third child George was born on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1893, just shy of 9 months after publication of *The Stickit Minister*. Draw your own conclusions! George was subsequently to be immortalised as 'Toady Lion' in Crockett's children fiction and Maisie (his eldest) was already known to all as 'Sweetheart.' Crockett's wife Ruth was ill after George's birth and Crockett was kept busy trying to juggle his life on all fronts.

For Crockett, as for most if not all 'overnight success stories', his success was a long time coming. From 1890 onwards he was more or less editing the Glasgow based 'Christian Leader' magazine singlehandedly. His writing included serials such as *The New Naturalists* and *Literary Vignettes* and it was his work on the serials *Ministers of our Countryside* and *Congregational Sketches* that brought him to the attention of William Robertson Nicoll ('The British Weekly' and 'The Bookman') who described Crockett's pen portraits as 'frank and penetrating studies.'

Biographer Islay Murray Donaldson notes that: 'Crockett's acerbic take on ministers (as in Rev Pitbye) was fresh and original in the context of the douce respectable content of the 'Christian Leader' magazine.'

Nicoll was a big hitter in publishing at the time and he put Crockett in touch with new writing publishers T.Fisher Unwin. In 1892 they agreed to publish 24 of his stories/sketches under the title *The Stickit Minister* and other common men. Crockett wrote: Almost all the tales in *The Stickit Minister* appeared in...*The Christian Leader*. I used to get as much as a guinea apiece for them.

In 1893 Crockett was definitely seen as a new talent, and his writing somewhat risqué rather than nostalgic or kailyard. Donaldson explains: 'The lively, biting sketches of country parishes, parishoners and ministers leap out of the page at the reader from among the worthy but not especially exciting News of the Churches, Temperance Notes, reprinted sermons.'

The Saturday Review (April 29<sup>th</sup>) described the collection as 'Scotch stories, racy, of the soil, told with a masterly command of dialect and national characteristics' and 'powerfully realistic.'

By contrast, and soon enough, the call of 'Kailyard' was made and Andrew Nash, who acknowledges that Crockett does go 'beyond' Kailyard, still suggests; 'In terms of the Kailyard debate, the central Crockett text is *The Stickit Minister*.' Therefore, if one is to lay the Kailyard ghost to rest, lifting its curse from that book would surely offer a fatal blow.

In its day comparisons were inevitably also drawn with Barrie who had had success with *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums* five years earlier, and inevitably with the more recent success *The Little Minister*. Crockett will have read this work, and his own work *The Lilac Sunbonnet* offers an interesting comparison to Barrie's *Little Minister*. It is not derivative and as Stevenson suggested, Crockett was outdoors to Barrie's indoors. All three of them were offspring of Scott, Galt and Hogg to a greater or lesser degree and all three pushed forwards the Scots romance tradition in prose.

In 1893 Crockett was at the start of a publishing journey that lasted twenty years, until his death in 1914. The rest, as they say, is history adventure and romance. 125 years after his first success, with over seventy published works to enjoy, surely it is time for us to reappraise all his work with the benefit (but without the blinkers) of hindsight.

*Works cited:*

Donaldson 'The Life and Works of Samuel Rutherford Crockett' (1989)

Nash 'Kailyard and Scottish literature' (2007) Chapter 3

**Good enough for Stevenson is good enough for me.**

SRC first corresponded with RLS in 1887. The two men kept up a correspondence until RLS's death in 1894. Many of the letters have been lost. Of those that are kept from the RLS side, they have been edited for publication. Editors select and interpret primary source material. That is their job. One has to appreciate that all edited work has been through a process of mediation. In the case of the RLS/SRC correspondence the main editors were Sidney Colvin (friend/contemporary with RLS) and Ernest Mehew in the 1990s. Both had their reasons for their 'interpretations' but with access to more letters, especially from the SRC side, I suggest a subtly different picture emerges than that traditionally explored. It is a picture of two writers exchanging frank views, but reveals a relationship of mutual respect and above all what we today might call 'banter' but is perhaps best termed 'Scots humour' as Crockett himself defined the term in his article on Scots National Humour.

With the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Stickit Minister*, Crockett's first publishing 'success', a reappraisal of the relationship of these friends who never met is perhaps timely. Reading the extant correspondence one thing is clear; as a work *The Stickit Minister* was good enough for Stevenson, and as such, it's good enough for me. 125 years on, I suggest it's time to leave 'Kailyard' slur behind where it belongs; in the factional infighting of poets and publishers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and look at the work both in a broader context and with closer attention to the primary source material.

There are perhaps as many as thirty 'lost' letters between RLS to SRC in the period 1888-94. Some went missing at the time due to vagaries of post and RLS's constant movements. Others, which SRC thought to publish after RLS's death, were instead stored 'in a safe' as Colvin (RLS's first editor) was adamant that they should not be published. There is no point speculating on the reason for this (or indeed what happened to them) but piecing together what we do have, the following correspondence emerges regarding *The Stickit Minister*:

In March 1893 Crockett sent RLS a first edition copy of *The Stickit Minister* with a letter saying that RLS owed him 2 letters. The book didn't arrive because Crockett didn't register it. The book is dedicated to RLS with the following inscription:

*To Robert Louis Stevenson  
Of Scotland and Samoa  
I dedicate these stories of that  
Grey Galloway Land*

*where  
about the graves of the martyrs  
the whaups are crying– his heart remembers how.*

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 1893 SRC writes his letter Declaratory as Prefatory to the Second Edition of *The Stickit Minister* which is published before RLS has seen the first edition. It reads:

‘Dear Louis Stevenson – It is, I think, a remark of your own that the imprudences of men, even oftener than their ill deeds, come home to roost. At least, if you have not so remarked it, you have not lived so long without observing it. Now, in some wise, you have at least a god-papa’s responsibility for *The Stickit Minister*, and if you have no spoon of silver for the poor fellow, you will be expected at the least duly to hear his catechism.

A month ago, when, entirely without permission, I dedicated the first edition of my prose first-born to you, shame kept me from further connecting you with what no one but yourself might ever read. As for you, I had you in a cleft stick, as you shall presently hear. But now a second edition and a preface imperatively required have together thawed my blateness. But it occurs to me that you may deny any parental responsibility, even vicarious. Well, as much is mostly done on these occasions. In that case we will proceed to lead the proof. You have, no doubt, forgotten a power of good law in your time, and might have forgotten even more had you ever known it. But not the wit of the Great Lord President himself in his best days could have shaken this case of mine.

Let me then suggest to you Saranac Lake, a bleak sheet of ice ‘somewhere in America’ – east winds, hotels with a smell of cooking in the corridors, melting snows, and mountains. It is near flitting and settling day with you there, and as your custom is, you are owing a many letters – to me among others, epistles one, two and three. For days you have passed your desk with a kind of pride and wicked pleasure in defying your conscience.

But one morning in the gloaming, Conscience has you down before you were fairly awake, and right grimly takes certain long arrears out of you. Then, according to your own account, your cries of penitence might have been heard a mile. In this abased condition, the Black Dog riding hard on your back, you made yourself responsible for words to the ensuing effect: ‘Write,’ you said, ‘my Timothy, no longer verse, but use Good Galloway Scots for your stomach’s sake – and mine. There be overly many at the old tooth comb!’

Well, 'tis scarce fair to hold you to it, I know; but, your Will thus fleeing in a mere *sauver qui peut* – Conscience hot-foot after you, hectoring with victory – ‘*If you do, I’ll read it every word!*’ says you. And so I had you.

Often when in my turn the Black Dog hath been upon me, and I seemed to see plainly that no Adam’s son would ever read a single line, least of all a reviewer – have I rubbed hands and laughed to think of you in that spotless linen suit, sitting, as you imagined, safe and cool under whatever may be the Samoan substitute for a rose.

But I hold to my pound of flesh. Will you, nill you, you must read – and every word.

Nevertheless, if you find anything here, even a thousand sea miles from good, it is so because ever since Saranac, I have been, like Macready in Edinburgh when the Great Unknown came in, ‘playing to Sir Walter.’

S.R.Crockett.

[WORK ONGOING: A fuller critical interpretation of this letter is currently underway. There has been the suggestion that RLS was annoyed with SRC for this public declaration but if one reads more of the letters this suggestion seems less credible]

On 17<sup>th</sup> May RLS writes to SRC telling him the copy of *Stickit* still hasn’t arrived. In this letter he also...

VAILIMA, SAMOA,

May 17th, 1893.

DEAR MR. CROCKETT, I do not owe you two letters, nor yet nearly one, sir! The last time I heard of you, you wrote about an accident, and I sent you a letter to my lawyer, Charles Baxter, which does not seem to have been presented, as I see nothing of it in his accounts. Query, was that lost? I should not like you to think I had been so unmannerly and so inhuman. If you have written since, your letter also has miscarried, as is much the rule in this part of the world, unless you register.

Your book is not yet to hand, but will probably follow next month. I detected you early in the *Bookman*, which I usually see, and noted you in particular as displaying a monstrous ingratitude about the foot-note. Well, mankind is ungrateful; "Man's ingratitude to man makes countless thousands mourn," quo' Rab -- or words to that effect. By the way, an anecdote of a cautious sailor: "Bill, Bill," says I to him, "or words to that effect."



I shall never take that walk by the Fisher's Tryst and Glencorse. I shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall never set my foot again upon the heather. Here I am until I die, and here will I be buried. The word is out and the doom written. Or, if I do come, it will be a voyage to a further goal, and in fact a suicide; which, however, if I could get my family all fixed up in the money way, I might, perhaps, perform, or attempt. But there is a plaguey risk of breaking down by the way; and I believe I shall stay here until the end comes like a good boy, as I am. If I did it, I should put upon my trunks: "Passenger to -- Hades."

How strangely wrong your information is! In the first place, I should never carry a novel to Sydney; I should post it from here. In the second place, Weir of Hermiston is as yet scarce begun. It's going to be excellent, no doubt; but it consists of about twenty pages. I have a tale, a shortish tale in length, but it has proved long to do, *The Ebb Tide*, some part of which goes home this mail. It is by me and Mr. Osbourne, and is really a singular work. There are only four characters, and three of them are bandits -- well, two of them are, and the third is their comrade and accomplice. It sounds cheering, doesn't it? Barratry, and drunkenness, and vitriol, and I cannot tell you all what, are the beams of the roof. And yet -- I don't know -- I sort of think there's something in it. You'll see (which is more than I ever can) whether Davis and Attwater come off or not.

Weir of Hermiston is a much greater undertaking, and the plot is not good, I fear; but Lord Justice Clerk Hermiston ought to be a plum. Of other schemes, more or less executed, it skills not to speak.

I am glad to hear so good an account of your activity and interests, and shall always hear from you with pleasure; though I am, and must continue, a mere sprite of the inkbottle, unseen in the flesh. Please remember me to your wife and to the four-year old sweetheart, if she be not too engrossed with higher matters. Do you know where the road crosses the burn under Glencorse Church? Go there, and say a prayer for me: *moriturus salutat*. See that it's a sunny day; I would like it to be a Sunday, but that's not possible in the premises; and stand on the right-hand bank just where the road goes down into the water, and shut your eyes, and if I don't appear to you! well, it can't be helped, and will be extremely funny.

I have no concern here but to work and to keep an eye on this distracted people. I live just now wholly alone in an upper room of my house, because the whole family are down with influenza, bar my wife and myself. I get my horse up sometimes in the afternoon and have a ride in the woods; and I sit here and smoke and write, and rewrite, and destroy, and rage at my own

impotence, from six in the morning till eight at night, with trifling and not always agreeable intervals for meals.

I am sure you chose wisely to keep your country charge. There a minister can be something, not in a town. In a town, the most of them are empty houses -- and public speakers. Why should you suppose your book will be slated because you have no friends? A new writer, if he is any good, will be acclaimed generally with more noise than he deserves. But by this time you will know for certain. -- I am, yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

[WORK ONGOING: there is much of interest, and speculation, in this letter and a critical interpretation is underway as we delve deeper into the Raiders Archives]

On 23 June SRC writes to RLS enclosing a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Stickit* and refers to his published prefatory letter as follows: *'with a letter to yourself which I tried to make lightly touched to keep down the too florid expression and deepest reverence, which comes out whenever I write about you... of course, if a man writes in Scotch at all, he must be compared with Barrie. The fact that most of the Sketches were published serially three years before Barrie issued 'Auld Licht Idylls' is of no account. That is all right. Barrie is among the Immortals and has his own place; but if I can I shall grab a spar of the higher baulks too, when I flee up.'*

[WORK ONGOING: The relationship between RLS, SRC and JMB is interesting and will be explored further as we develop our correspondence archive articles]

RLS received the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Stickit Minister* in August 1893 and writes to his friend/editor Sidney Colvin on 23<sup>rd</sup> of that month:

*'Did you see a man who wrote the Stickit Minister and dedicated it to me, in words that brought the tears to my eyes every time I looked at them. 'Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying. His heart remembers how.' Ah, by God it does! Singular that I should fulfil the Scots destiny throughout, and live a voluntary exile, and have my head filled with the blessed, beastly place all the time.'*

[WORK ONGOING: use of language/ 'banter' between the correspondents. Interpretation of the words 'a man' have been used to suggest that RLS didn't know SRC at this time. However, if one interprets it as Scots it reads

quite differently. There is a subtlety to it which requires further investigation.]

In Sept 1893 RLS addressed the Honolulu Thistle Club, recounting the same event.

*'I received a book the other day called 'The Stickit Minister' with a dedication to myself, which affected me strangely so that I cannot read it without a gulp. It was addressed to me in the third person and bade me remember the places 'where about the graves...'*

It is clear that RLS was very moved by SRC's dedication (and some of the stories) since it inspired him to write a poem almost immediately for SRC which he then sent to SRC.

In a letter to SRC (unclear date but probably July/August) RLS also gave him his verdict on the book:

*'I have carried out my promise and read every word, and while some of your stories are a trifle light and one at least seems to slender and fantastic – qualities that rarely mingle well, the fantastic demanding considerable solidity of texture -*

*The whole book breathes admirably of the soil, 'The Stickit Minister' and 'The Heather Lintie' are two that come near to me particularly. They are drowned in Scotland. They have refreshed me like a visit home. Cleg Kelly is a delightful fellow. I enjoyed his acquaintance particularly. Likewise that of the Junior Partner. By all accounts, you have described at least a possible descent for me in your fickle maiden; daft Elliot blood I have – and now it appears I may also have some of the tide of the Red MacGregors in my veins. So you see I am, by many directions, sib to your volume.*

*I have to speak of Gavin Ogilvy, however; he and you are complementary. When I read your first page, the Stickit Minister ploughing – I knew I was in Scotland and I knew I was not with Gavin Ogilvy. You are out of doors; he is within doors. You would die (and I think all the rest of us might be hanged) or we could write the inimitable tragedy called 'The Glove' in the Window. That is great literature. But ask Barrie to do the scenery and atmosphere of your Stickit one, and where is he? Look at his flood in the Little Minister; it is pitiful. Do you believe in that island? No. No more do I. By different ways, ye shall attain. Might I just breathe in your lug, that Angus is rather a dreary point of the country.'*

The poem Crockett's dedication inspired (which is in part quoted on The Crockett Memorial at Laurieston) is as follows:

To S. R. Crockett

Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain are flying,  
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,  
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,  
My heart remembers how!

Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,  
Standing Stones on the vacant wine-red moor,  
Hills of sheep, and the howes of the silent vanished races,  
And winds, austere and pure!

Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,  
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;  
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying;  
And hear no more at all.

Robert Louis Stevenson

SRC writes back to RLS about this poem on Sept 13<sup>th</sup> 1893

*'Dear Master of mine,*

*Your beautiful verses are like heady wine to me. That my phrase should have suggested them to you is beyond my thought or hope. All that I thought or cared was that you should not think me presumptuous in so writing of you. Yet I thought you would understand why I did it. You have no doubt much affection coming to you overseas, but O man I think whiles I loe ye like a lass, wild Eliot, red-hand Macgregor and a"* This also is Scots and only a Scot would understand.

*Gavin is great, and it rejoices me to see that you see that I did not derive from him – as said sometimes the Common (or Tom) reviewer... Gavin could not help them saying it, I don't think they will say it next time. Yes 'the Glove' is great – nothing less, and the 'registrardly letter – serene, unapproachable, but as you say the 'flood' and the 'Island' are not good enough for the Surrey side, let alone the Lyceum. Indeed all his action is not seen but only described and he does not write about the oot o' doors as if he have leaved there – and Angus is, as you say, interesting and the feck o' its fowk a kennin' dreich. His friend Nicoll, whom I ken well, tells me that when he gangs oot walkin' he sees nocht but the road slidin' atween his richt fit an' his left, an' that when Gavin wants to describe a scene in a story, he gangs hs way oot and looks at something, syne comes ben an' writes it doon.'*

*You'll no say me nay to prent it at the page opposite of the next edition, noo that the Letter Declaratory has done its work. The second edition (2000) gaed in a month, and the third's weel through by noo.'*

[WORK ONGOING: Note more references to the three way relationship between RLS, SRC and JMB which forms part of the critical analysis of the correspondence from the Raiders Archive material]

On 15<sup>th</sup> September SRC wrote to his publisher TFU

*'Haste ye fast and get through the 3<sup>rd</sup> edn of the 'Stickit'. RLS has sent me a beautiful prefatory poem from Samoa for the 4<sup>th</sup> edn which should give us a lift as well as be a great enhancement for the Book.'*

In other correspondence SRC says he has some 30 letters from RLS at time of his death. He had thought to publish them but Colvin said no, and the letters were thus kept in 'a' safe. Many have now gone missing.

In the Raiders Archive, Richard D. Jackson notes: *'the indications are the at most missing letters were written after RLS received his copy of The Stickit Minister about August 1893 and realised this was a literary rival of no mean kind.'* [personal letter]

This suggests there was a regular correspondence between the two men. RLS invited SRC to visit him in Samoa, as he had been inviting JMB from 1892. In late 1893 the two men discussed the possibility, but the trip never happened. Pressure of work, ill health and Barrie's marriage put paid to that 'adventure.

Time pressed on. *The Stickit Minister* kept selling well. By 1894 it was into an 8<sup>th</sup> and lavishly printed illustrated edition, showing that it sold well both as a popular and as a 'highbrow' work.

[WORK ONGOING: We are combing the archives for a fuller picture of exact sales/months of editions]

Crockett was in the position of making hay as the sun shone, preparing 4 works for publication with TFU in 1894. His wife gave birth to their third child (a boy) in December 1893. These were busy times.

Early in 1894 RLS wrote to SRC telling him he hadn't yet read *The Raiders*

*'In the meantime, what a success you have had! How grateful you should be! And with how much penitence you should recall your faithless and dispirited words of last year, which I then chastened you for and made you repent in*

*ashes and rags! \* I fear with every book that it may have no merit; I never fear it will be so full of merit that the public can't see it. There are two publics: about 10,000 persons who like literature qua literature if its good; and about 100,000 who like ink upon paper if its interesting. You can't live on the first public, but the first public with its 10,000 voices is the great advertiser; they dance with the 800,000, they meet him (it I should say) at dinner, and they sell it your book, whether it likes or not.'*

[\* This refers to the letter of May 17<sup>th</sup> 1893: 'Why should you suppose your book will be slated because you have no friends? A new writer, if he is any good, will be acclaimed generally with more noise than he deserves. But by this time you will know for certain.']

The correspondence between RLS and SRC continued throughout 1894 until RLS's untimely death in December – but that is outwith the scope of this current 'episode'.

What conclusions can we draw thus far? Remember my claim that editors choose and interpret. I am in danger of falling into the same category, and certainly do not suggest that I am offering the only true, or indeed a full picture. But my stated aim is to offer a 'what if' alternative to the standard view that SRC was something of a 'hanger on' or 'annoyance' to RLS. The more one reads the less I find it possible to substantiate this view.

For me, from the letters I've read, dating from the first in 1887, through to the last, the clear suggestion is that SRC looked up to RLS and that the latter was something of a mentor to SRC earlier on in his career. He advises SRC to give up on poetry, encouraging him to stick to prose. He offers the younger man on the cusp of success some reassurance. I take that as a sign of friendship.

Anyone who has read RLS's letters is well aware of the 'robust' manner in which he discussed writing with fellow authors. He offers praise and criticism in equal measure and SRC is the recipient of both. If one reads the correspondence without prejudice and without trying to preserve RLS as some kind of 'god' figure and cast JMB and SRC as 'Kailyard', one gets quite a different story. It is easy to misinterpret correspondence or to put a 'spin' on it – tone can be difficult to read, and easy to manipulate. My aim is to cut through that and offer a suggestion that RLS, SRC and JMB were fellow Scots who revelled in a corresponding relationship particular to writers. I suggest that Colvin (and perhaps Mehew) both do RLS as much of a disservice as they do SRC by their 'interpretations' of that particular writing relationship. But my overall purpose is to make as much of the

correspondence as possible available for others to make up their own minds. This is a work in progress!

When all is said and done, *The Stickit Minister* inspired RLS to write a beautiful poem – surely that speaks volumes about his feelings to and for SRC? And as I said at the beginning – if *The Stickit Minister* is good enough for RLS it's good enough for me. And I hope it will be good enough for you!

## **The Stickit Minister - a matter of perspective.**

In her biography of Crockett<sup>1</sup>, Dr Donaldson offers a critique of title story of *The Stickit Minister*. It focuses on his use of language. She writes:

'He had a keen ear for Scots. In *The Stickit Minister* he uses it at three levels. The narrative is in what Professor Kurt Wittig called 'Scots-English' when writing of Burns,<sup>2</sup> English with Scots pronunciation, Scots vocabulary and constructions. The speech of Fraser, the ex-divinity student, is in educated English with Scots undertones which grow stronger as his feelings run more deeply. For Saunders McQuharr, Crockett turns to strong colloquial Scots, not mean as the English colloquialisms can be, but warm-hearted, vigorous and earthy.

The scene is set in Scots-English:

*The crows were wheeling behind the plough in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of snow in the air - a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown about by the south wind up from the Solway - a snell, Scotch but not unfriendly day altogether.*

Fraser comes in from ploughing and explains to Saunders for the first time why he gave up his college career:

*I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good frien' to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like to let you see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeth from the beginning!*

Saunders interrupts impulsively:

*'Hear till him,' said Saunders; 'man, yer hoast is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hev I no' kenned ye sins ye war the size o' twa scrubbers?'*

Fraser's quiet narrative continues; he uses purely English expressions as he describes how Sir James at the Infirmary recognised that this student who had come to consult him had lungs badly affected with tuberculosis, because this belongs to the Edinburgh world he had long left behind and is naturally told in the language of that world.

*'He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a great prickly coldness come over me, and I seemed to walk*

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<sup>1</sup> Still the fullest and most positive publication since it was first published in 1989. A new edition is available (published 2016) with an additional chapter and introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (1958), pp 200-20.



*light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump.'*

*'What's that?' queried Saunders.*

*'A cruel ploy not worth speaking of,' continued the Stickit Minister.*

Fraser's sense of shock is well conveyed as he remembers and relives it; Crockett is good at rendering emotion in terms of physical sensation. But once the mouse and the air-pump - how exact a comparison for Fraser's situation - are brushed aside as self-pitying and irrelevant, his Scots grows stronger as he explains his decision.

*'I must come home to the farm and be my own 'man'; then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year ... I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the 'stickit minister' the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me.'*

*'I ken,' said Saunders McQuhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.'*

The compression is sharply effective; 'it was laid on me' expresses a strong sense of duty almost religious in intensity; 'no better than a machine set to go five year' carries a peasant's contempt for his own physical weakness; and his deliberate use of 'stickit minister' shows how well he is aware of the low opinion in which he is held, and how it hurts him. The increasing use of simple Scots indicates that we are near the heart of his trouble, the unworthiness of his brother - an unworthiness which he will not admit to because of his affection for him. Saunders' apparent agreement in the sardonic 'I ken' implies exactly the opposite and brings to our attention the ambiguity of 'different' and 'canna be judged by the same standard as you and me'. The gleam of anger in Saunders' eye impresses on us, if we have not thought it already, that Harry is different in being infinitely less of a man than his 'failure' of a brother.

*'He doesna come here much,' continued Robert, 'but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!'*

*'That was kind of him,' said Saunders McQuhirr.*

We are instantly reminded of the smoothly prosperous picture of Harry we have been shown early in the story, smart in his gig driven by a man in livery, and giving 'a careless wave of recognition over the stone dyke'.

The climax is reached by the three levels of Scots interacting. The farm has been mortgaged to buy Harry a practice, and repayment is nearly due.

*'I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November,' said Robert. 'So I'll be obliged to flit.'*

*Saunders McQuhirr started to his feet in a moment. 'Never,' he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, 'never as lang as there's a beast in Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank' - bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.*

*'No Saunders, no,' said the Stickit Minister very gently; 'I thank you kindly, but I'll be flitted before that!'*

The different elements are handled with dexterity - the flat legal terms which Fraser uses to describe the financial crisis which has been in his mind all day and has led to these confidences which are foreign to his reticent nature, the impulsive warm reaction of the simpler older Saunders, the Milton on the table reminding us of Fraser's rich promise so cruelly frustrated, and the repetition of the Stickit Minister to remind us of the mean jibe in the same moment as we realise his stature as a man, aware of his doom but unafraid. Above all there is the concentration of several layers of meaning in 'I'll be flitted before that' - one could have wished that Crockett had omitted the italics; they are not necessary.<sup>3</sup> The verb is a common Scots one derived from Norse and not found in English; it means to move house, brief, casual and concrete. In the context it has a dry effectiveness of meiosis, a calm acceptance of what is to come, a hint of triumph that he is soon to be beyond the reach of brother, lawyers and all, and a humour especially Scottish in the laconic equation of death with a mere change of abode, which to the believer it is. It could have been said sardonically - there is a hint of this in its gleam of amusement - but it is said gently because it is said to Saunders. All this is packed into one simple sentence; Crockett has used the commonplace to extract the full significance from the situation.'

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Doctor Donaldson's 1989 work remains the sole full length published biography of any kind on S.R.Crockett. As such it has to bear a massive weight. While there is much in it which remains valuable, I think new perspectives are long overdue. I am sure Dr Donaldson would have developed other positions had she lived and had an active community of Crockett scholars to exchange views with. But in the absence of any real critical analysis since (excepting only Andrew Nash's 'Kailyard and Scottish Literature' itself now over a decade old, which gives Crockett a chapter) I feel it incumbent to offer a new perspective both on the work and on Donaldson's interpretation on this 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Crockett's first publication in book form.

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<sup>3</sup> I suggest this was not Crockett's call - his publishers were keen for him not to write too much 'Scotch' and the italicisation of such words is perhaps an example of him bending to the publishers will. We should note that this story was written for a general readership. Glossary and italics were commonly used to make Scotticisms readable to the wider public.

In the final quoted paragraph above it seems to me that Donaldson reveals a shortcoming of literary criticism- or at least as it stood in 1990. (I might 'wish' she had not diverted her argument in this way). She falls into what I see as an academic trap, the end result of which is damning Crockett with faint praise. While showing how cleverly he constructs his work, she nevertheless suggests a lack of authorial skill. I'm not convinced. Doctor Donaldson continues her critique by suggesting that despite the realism of speech, the story is flawed:

Yet for all the skill of the telling, for all the realism of the speech and the setting, the story is flawed.'

Her argument rests on the fact that Fraser was diagnosed with tuberculosis and given a five or six year life span. Yet here he is, seven years on, having worked in the fields in the intervening times. I would take issue with her suggestion that this represents a flaw in the narrative. She suggests that 'tuberculosis was a swift destroyer' stating:

'Seven years earlier Fraser has had a tubercular cough and has been told that with care he may live for five or six years. He has in fact lived for longer than that, and done the work of a labourer on the farm 'rain and shine'. Crockett knew from his own experience of at least three deaths in his own family that tuberculosis was a swift destroyer; his mother died of it in twelve months; his Uncle Robert of Drumbreck in six months; his literary cousin Robert in five months.'

But we may assume this was the number of months after diagnosis. If diagnosis is late, then death will be swift. A tuberculosis diagnosis did (in those years) offer a five year life span. So it is not inconceivable that Fraser's condition, caught early, would offer him some five or more years of life. Another famous TB 'sufferer' was author Katherine Mansfield. Like Robert Fraser, she lived in the shadow of tuberculosis for more than five years. While she did not work out in the fields 'rain and shine' as Crockett allows Fraser, we should also note that the 'cure' for tuberculosis at the time was plenty of good, fresh air. So that it is not inconceivable that he might have lived as long. George Orwell also suffered for many years with TB. He moved to Jura to write *Nineteen Eighty Four* while dying of TB. There his life included what might be seen as harsh outdoor work in the garden, (though not, we assume at the level of Fraser's ploughing.) Surely the examples of Mansfield and Orwell are enough to offer an element of doubt regarding Donaldson's suggestion that Crockett's description of Fraser is melodramatic rather than realist.

In the revealed character of Fraser we see a determined man. A man determined to make a sacrifice would not simply give up. So I refute Donaldson's claim that Crockett giving Fraser a life span of seven years is a flaw in the narrative necessarily tending to melodrama.

The struggle to survive is at least as easily interpreted as realism as it is condemned as melodrama. Fraser lived a rural life, and the rural life at the time meant getting on with it. Yes, the story is about sacrifice and the

obvious sacrifice he made was giving up a profession and returning 'to the soil.' I do not agree with Donaldson that this shows Crockett straining 'probability beyond belief' and writing 'melodrama instead of tragedy.' Crockett was certainly aware of the differences between the two, perhaps more aware than we generally are today, with our retrospective and slanted understanding of melodrama as a narrative/dramatic form.

Donaldson notes that:

'The honest homely detail with which the story is told blinds us to this until we examine it later; we want to believe it because Robert and Saunders are so convincing and Harry so vividly selfish, but we have been cheated for the sake of dramatic effect and a better story.'

To me this smacks of privileging the perspective of the literary critic or at least an unawareness of rural realism. This, I have found, is rather common among literary critics who do tend towards an urban-centric intellectualist stance. I hold Dr Donaldson in high respect, and she has done more than almost anyone to advocate for Crockett, but I suggest her argument reveals one trained to find weakness in the work, when the weakness may lie in the critic's own understanding. It is perhaps an example of intellectualising with little regard for 'alternative' realisms. Such views fan the flames of kailyard, a flame lit by those with 'agendas' of their own which go beyond unbiased critical appraisal.

I make the point simply to show that our prime purpose in literary review should be to go looking for errors in an author's work. If we do, we are certain to find them, but perhaps they tell us more about our own understanding than about the authorial skill.

Donaldson's exegesis of Crockett's use of language is interesting and thorough. Her understanding of the 'themes' are perhaps less so. The sacrifice made by Robert Fraser can be interpreted as melodramatic if (and only if?) we as readers position ourselves as anticipating nostalgia rather than realism and have issues with 'sentiment' and 'emotion' as they are generally utilised in the writing of the day. We have to avoid retrofitting our argument and try to embrace the context in which a piece is written.

One cannot escape the contextual significance of religion in the writing of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but one should not damn a work because of it. It is simply the 'flavour' of the times. For me, the sacrifice in *The Stickit Minister*, albeit motivated partly by religious belief, is a more human one. And if we read the three Robert Fraser stories together, we get a much better picture.

The basic scenario in this first story is as follows: coming from a poor rural family, Robert, the older brother, is sent to college to become a minister. When he discovers that he has a life-threatening condition, he makes a number of sacrifices. He gives up his education in favour of his younger brother, freeing the finances to allow his sibling to become a doctor. This is a sacrifice to family. He also sacrifices his future happiness with the woman he loves. In both cases his sacrifice is shown to fail, at least partially. If we were to take a religious perspective and suggest the theme of the story is 'am I my brother's keeper?' the answer would be a resounding, no, you shouldn't be.

Perhaps the lesson is that making sacrifices doesn't pay off. Crockett, in the guise of the narrator in this story, and the 'character' Alec McQuhurr in the second and third stories, is able to reflect on Fraser's sacrifice and see both how significant it is, and how tragic. He will not call it worthless, as we do not call the deaths of those killed in war worthless, because to do so invalidates the person making the sacrifice and perhaps diminishes ourselves. But we as reader are well able to see (if we see past the 'religion') that Robert Fraser may have made altruistic choices which have not paid off. His brother is largely a waste of space and his beloved runs into the arms of a man who will make her life miserable and worse.

Robert Fraser himself lives the best life he can in the circumstances. He offers himself as a sacrifice and as an exemplar, but he cannot change the behaviours of those he loves. Crockett wrote this story when he was in his twenties, and it is told from the perspective of a young man who wants to honour the behaviour of a man he looks up to while at the same time, holding to account those who do not appreciate the very humanity of the man. The subsequent stories are written later and offer an interesting development of viewpoint (reflected not only by change of narrator).

There is no simple answer to the questions posed in the story. Crockett is well aware of this. Fraser has condemned himself, but he has condemned others too. That his brother is ungrateful and a boor is not an unusual narrative device - contemporary is Stevenson's *Master of Ballantrae* for example - and in reality we know that siblings can express markedly different characteristics. Fraser may be seen as indulging his younger brother and thus encouraging his 'badness.' Crockett, I think, holds each person responsible for their own actions. More vexed, but equally real, is the sacrifice of love. Fraser's choice, and his failure to properly disclose his condition to Jessie, is significant in her subsequent bad choice which blights her life. Is Fraser to blame here? Jessie might have acted differently, but as with so many of us, he pushes aside a truth too painful to endure in the mistaken belief that he is 'doing the right thing.' To that extent he is perhaps complicit. She may have jumped, but you can't help feeling she was pushed.

That Fraser is a failed minister is less relevant to me than that he feared being 'stickit.' He did not want to waste his life and he did not want others to waste their opportunities. The shame of the situation is that where opportunity is so slender, prosperity comes at a powerful price. Fraser finds some peace working the land, at least content that he has 'done the right thing' by others, but he must be disquieted (Crockett and the reader certainly are) by the fact that those for whom the sacrifices have been made do not seem to rise to the occasion.

Perhaps there is something wrong with the notion of sacrifice? As the three stories progress, Crockett certainly does not simply suggest that sacrifice is a good or 'right' thing to do. He explores the consequences. While he clearly respects Robert Fraser, he also shows a wider picture and we, as readers, would do well to look at all the aspects of the stories rather than reduce our critical faculties because of our cultural or literary prejudices. If we read these stories with open eyes, there is plenty to learn - about

Crockett as a writer, about the times he wrote in, and perhaps even about ourselves and our relationship to the written word and the ideas it contains.

## An introduction to the Robert Fraser Trilogy.

While Crockett told his publisher T.Fisher Unwin that the characters in *The Stickit Minister and other common men* the title character Robert Fraser was based was Crockett's relative Robert Crockett. Of him, Crockett writes: *'Whilst I was a school-boy at Castle Douglas, I used often to go over to the house of a second cousin of mine, a farmer at a place called Drumbeck. He had been in Canada, and was a great reader and collector of books. He used to make me read Shakespeare and learn scenes by heart; and it was he who taught me to love Milton. He was a great lover of books, and used to buy all the books he could afford out of his small income. He had all the original editions of Carlyle. His character is the character of the Stickit Minister. He used to lend me Shakespeare and Milton, which I smuggled into my bedroom under my clothes, and it was he who presented me with my first copy of Shakespeare.'*

Love and the sacrifices made on its account are a tour de force of sentimental writing (in its truest sense) and are made even more poignant for our realisation that they are based on realism. Crockett explores and pays tribute to his cousin's sacrifice in a way that will touch all but the hardest hearts.

The first story is told by another great Crockett character Saunders McQuhirr (who is a fictionalised version of Crockett's grandfather) whereas the second and third (published some 7 years later) see a shift in perspective and are told by Saunders son Alec, a medical student and a fictionalised version of Crockett himself.

### THE STORIES:

1. THE STICKIT MINISTER
2. THE STICKIT MINISTER'S WOOING
3. THE STICKIT MINISTER WINS THROUGH

## THE STICKIT MINISTER

*From The Stickit Minister and other common men (1893)*

The crows were wheeling behind the plough in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of storm in the air—a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea-gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown by the south wind up from the Solway—a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether. Robert Fraser bent to the plough handles, and cast a keen and wary eye towards his guide posts on the ridge. His face was colourless, even when a dash of rain came swirling across from the crest of Ben Gairn, whose steep bulk heaved itself a blue haystack above the level horizon of the moorland. He was dressed like any other ploughman of the south uplands—rough homespun much the worse for wear, and leggings the colour of the red soil which he was reversing with the share of his plough. Yet there was that about Robert Fraser which marked him no common man. When he paused at the top of the ascent, and stood with his back against the horns of the plough, the countryman's legacy from Adam of the Mattock, he pushed back his weatherbeaten straw hat with a characteristic gesture, and showed a white forehead with blue veins channelling it—a damp, heavy lock of black hair clinging to it as in Severn's picture of John Keats on his deathbed. Robert Fraser saw a couple of black specks which moved smoothly and evenly along the top of the distant dyke of the highway. He stood still for a moment or two watching them. As they came nearer, they resolved themselves into a smart young man sitting in a well-equipped gig drawn by a showily-actioned horse, and driven by a man in livery. As they passed rapidly along the road the hand of the young man appeared in a careless wave of recognition over the stone dyke, and Robert Fraser lifted his slack reins in staid acknowledgment. It was more than a year since the brothers had looked each other so nearly in the eyes. They were Dr. Henry Fraser, the rising physician of Cairn Edward, and his elder brother Robert, once Student of Divinity at Edinburgh College, whom three parishes knew as 'The Stickit Minister.'

When Robert Fraser stabled his horses that night and went in to his supper, he was not surprised to find his friend, Saunders M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, sitting by the peat fire in the room. Almost the only thing which distinguished the Stickit Minister from the other small farmers of the parish of Dullarg was the fact that he always sat in the evening by himself ben the hoose, and did not use the kitchen in common with his housekeeper and herd boy, save only at meal-times. Robert had taken to Saunders ever since—the back of his ambition broken—he had settled down to the farm, and he welcomed him with shy cordiality.

'You'll take a cup of tea, Saunders?' he asked.

'Thank ye, Robert, I wadna be waur o't,' returned his friend.

'I saw your brither the day,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, after the tea-cups had been cleared away, and the silent housekeeper had replaced the books upon the table. Saunders picked a couple of them up, and, having adjusted



his glasses, he read the titles— Milton's Works, and a volume of a translation of Dorner's Person of Christ.

'I saw yer brither the day; he maun be gettin' a big practice!'

'Ay!' said Robert Fraser, very thoughtfully.

Saunders M'Quhirr glanced up quickly. It was, of course, natural that the unsuccessful elder brother should envy the prosperous younger, but he had thought that Robert Fraser was living on a different plane. It was one of the few things that the friends had never spoken of, though every one knew why Dr. Fraser did not visit his brother's little farm. 'He's gettin' in wi' the big fowk noo, an' thinks maybe that his brither wad do him nae credit.' That was the way the clash of the countryside explained the matter.

'I never told you how I came to leave the college, Saunders,' said the younger man, resting his brow on a hand that even the horn of the plough could not make other than diaphanous.

'No,' said Saunders quietly, with a tender gleam coming into the humorsome kindly eyes that lurked under their bushy tussocks of grey eyebrow. Saunders's humour lay near the Fountain of Tears.

'No,' continued Robert Fraser, 'I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good frien' to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like to let you see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeeth from the beginning.'

'Hear till him,' said Saunders, 'man, yer hoast is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hae I no' kenned ye sins ye war the size o' twa scrubbers?'

'I thank you, Saunders,' said Robert, 'but I am well aware that I'm to die this year. No, no, not a word. It is the Lord's will! It's mair than seven year now since I first kenned that my days were to be few. It was the year my faither died, and left Harry and me by our lane.

'He left no siller to speak of, just plenty to lay him decently in the kirkyard among his forebears. I had been a year at the Divinity Hall then, and was going up to put in my discourses for the next session. I had been troubled with my breast for some time, and so called one day at the infirmary to get a word with Sir James. He was very busy when I went in, and never noticed me till the hoast took me. Then on a sudden he looked up from his papers, came quickly over to me, put his own white handkerchief to my mouth, and quietly said, 'Come into my room, laddie!'

'Ay, he was a good man and a faithful, Sir James, if ever there was one. He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump.'

'What's that?' queried Saunders.

'A cruel ploy not worth speaking of,' continued the Stickit Minister. 'Well, I found something in my throat when I tried to thank him. But I came my ways home to the Dullarg, and night and day I considered what was to be done, with so much to do and so little time to do it. It was clear that both Harry and me could not gang through the college on the little my faither had

left. So late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own 'man', then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.

'Now all these things I did, Saunders, but there's no use telling you what they cost in the doing. They were right to do, and they were done. I do not repent any of them. I would do them all over again were they to do, but it's been bitterer than I thought.'

The Stickit Minister took his head off his hand and leaned wearily back in his chair.

'The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him in Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the 'stickit minister' that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me.'

'I ken,' said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.

'Well,' continued Robert Fraser, lightened by Saunders's apparent agreement, 'the time came when he was clear from the college, and wanted a practice. He had been ill-advised that he had not got his share of the farm, and he wanted it sold to share and share alike. Now I kened, and you ken, Saunders, that it's no' worth much in one share let alone two. So I got the place quietly bonded, and bought him old Dr. Aitkin's practice in Cairn Edward with the money...'

'I have tried to do my best for the lad, for it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper. He doesna come here much,' continued Robert, 'but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!'

'That was kind of him,' said Saunders M'Quhirr.

'Ay, was it no',' said the Stickit Minister, eagerly, with a soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown, which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece.

'I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November,' said Robert. 'So I'll be obliged to flit.'

Saunders M'Quhirr started to his feet in a moment. 'Never,' he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, 'never as lang as there's a beast on Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank —bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

'No, Saunders, no,' said the Stickit Minister, very gently; 'I thank you kindly, but I'll be flitted before that...'

THE STICKIT MINISTER'S WOOING  
*From The Stickit Minister's Wooing first published 1900.*

It was in the second year of my college life that I came home to find Robert Fraser, whom a whole country-side called the 'Stickit Minister,' distinctly worse, and indeed, set down upon his great chair in the corner as on a place from which he would never rise.

A dour, grippy back-end it was, the soil stubborn and untoward with early frost. And a strange sound it was to hear as I (Alexander McQuhirr) came down the Lang Brae, the channel stones droning and dinnelling on the ice by the third of November; a thing which had not happened in our parts since that fell year of the Sixteen Drifty Days, which has been so greatly talked about.

I walked over to the Dullarg the very night I arrived from Edinburgh. I had a new volume of Tennyson with me, which I had bought with the thought that he would be pleased with it. For I loved Robert Fraser, and I will not deny that my heart beat with expectation as I went up the little loaning with the rough stone dyke upon either side — aye, as if it had been the way to Nether Neuk, and I going to see my sweetheart.

'Come your ways in, Alec, man,' his voice came from the inner room as he heard me pause to exchange banter of a rural sort with the servant lasses in the kitchen; 'I have been waitin' for ye. I kenned ye wad come the nicht!'

I went in. And there by the little peat fire, drowsing red and looking strangely out of place behind the ribs of the black-leaded 'register' grate, I saw the Stickit Minister with a black-and-white check plaid about his knees. He smiled a strange sweet smile, at once wistful and distant, as I entered — like one who waves farewell through a mist of tears as the pier slides back and the sundering water seethes and widens about the ship.

'You are better, Robert!' I said, smiling too. Dully, and yet with dogged cheerfulness, I said it, as men lie to the dying — and are not believed.

He stretched out his thin hand, the ploughman's horn clean gone from it, and the veins blue and convex upon the shrunk wrist.

'Ave atque vale, Alec, lad!' he answered. 'That, is what it has come to with Robert Fraser. But how are all at Drumquhat? Ye will be on your road ower to the Nether Neuk?'

This he said, though he knew different.

'I have brought you this from Edinburgh,' I said, giving him the little, thin, green volume of Tennyson. I had cut it to save him trouble, and written his name on the blank page before the title.

I shall never forget the way he looked at it. He opened it as a woman unfolds a new and costly garment, with a lingering caress of the wasted finger-tips through which I could almost see the white of the paper, and a slow soft intake of the breath, like a lover's sigh.

His eyes, of old blue and clear, had now a kind of glaze over them, a veiling Indian summer mist, through which, however, still shone, all undimmed and fearless, the light of the simplest and manfulest spirit I have ever known. He turned the leaves and read a verse here and there with

evident pleasure. He had a way of reading anything he loved as if listening inly to the cadences — a little half-turn of the head aside, and a still contented smile hovering about the lips, like one who catches the first returning fall of beloved footsteps.

But all at once Robert Fraser shut the book and let his hands sink wearily down upon his knee. He did not look at me, but kept his eyes on the red peat ash in the 'register' grate.

'It's bonnie,' he murmured softly; 'and it was a kind thing for you to think on me. But it's gane frae me, Alec — it's a' clean gane. Tak' you the book, Alec. The birdies will never sing again in ony spring for me to hear. I'm back upon the Word, Alec. There's nocht but That for me noo!'

He laid his hand on a Bible that was open beside him on the stand which held his medicine bottles, and a stocking at which his wearied fingers occasionally knitted for a moment or two at a time.

Then he gave the little green-clad Tennyson back to me with so motherly and lingering a regard that, had I not turned away, I declare I know not but that I had been clean done for.

'Yet for a' that, Alec,' he said, 'do you take the book for my sake. And see — cut out the leaf ye hae written on and let me keep it here beside me.'

I did as he asked me, and with the leaf in his hand he turned over the pages of his Bible carefully, like a minister looking for a text. He stopped at a yellowing envelope, as if uncertain whether to deposit the inscription in it. Then he lifted the stamped oblong and handed it to me with a kind of smile.

'There, Alec,' he said, 'you that has (so they tell me) a sweetheart o' your ain, ye will like to see that. This is the envelope that held the letter I gat frae Jessie Loudon — the nicht Sir James telled me at the Infirmary that my days were numbered!'

'Oh, Robert!' I cried, all ashamed that he should speak thus to a young man like me, 'dinna think o' that. You will excite yourself — you may do yourself a hurt.'

But he waved me away, still smiling that slow misty smile, in which, strangely enough, there was yet some of the humoursomeness of one who sees a situation from the outside.

'Na, Alec, lad,' he said softly, 'that's gane too. Upon a dark day I made a pact wi' my Maker, and now the covenanted price is nearly paid. His messenger wi' the discharge is already on the road. I never hear a hand on the latch, but I look up to see Him enter — aye, and He shall be welcome, welcome as the bridegroom that enters into the Beloved's chamber!'

I covered my brows with my palm, and pretended to look at the handwriting on the envelope, which was delicate and feminine. The Stickit Minister went on.

'Aye, Alec,' he said meditatively, with his eyes still on the red glow, 'ye think that ye love the lass ye hae set your heart on; and doubtless ye do love her truly. But I pray God that there may never come a day when ye shall have spoken the last sundering word, and returned her the written sheets faithfully every one. Ye hae heard the story, Alec. I will not hurt your young heart by telling it again. But I spared Jessie Loudon all I could, and showed her that she must not mate her young life with one no better than dead!'

The Stickit Minister was silent a long time here. Doubtless old faces

looked at him clear out of the red spaces of the fire. And when he began to speak again, it was in an altered voice.

'Nevertheless, because power was given me, I pled with, and in some measure comforted her. For though the lassie's heart was set on me, it was as a bairn's heart is set, not like the heart of a woman; and for that I praise the Lord — yes, I give thanks to His name!

'Then after that I came back to an empty house — and this!'

He caressed the faded envelope lovingly, as a miser his intimatest treasure.

'I did not mean to keep it, Alec,' he went on presently, 'but I am glad I did. It has been a comfort to me; and through all these years it has rested there where ye see it — upon the chapter where God answers Job out of the whirlwind. Ye ken yon great words.'

We heard a slight noise in the yard, the wheels of some light vehicle driven quickly. The Stickit Minister started a little, and when I looked at him again I saw that the red spot, the size of a crown-piece, which burned so steadfastly on his cheek-bone, had spread till now it covered his brow.

Then we listened, breathless, like men that wait for a marvel, and through the hush the peats on the grate suddenly fell inward with a startling sound, bringing my heart into my mouth. Next we heard a voice without, loud and a little thick, in heated debate.

'Thank God!' cried the Stickit Minister, fervently. 'It's Henry — my dear brother! For a moment I feared it had been Lawyer Johnston from Cairn Edward. You know,' he added, smiling with all his old swift gladness, 'I am now but a tenant at will. I sit here in the Dullarg on sufferance — that once was the laird of acre and onstead!'

He raised his voice to carry through the door into the kitchen.

'Henry, Henry, this is kind — kind of you — to come so far to ses me on such a night.'

The Stickit Minister was on his feet by this time, and if I had thought that his glance had been warm and motherly for me, it was fairly on fire with affection now. I believe that Robert Fraser once loved his betrothed faithfully and well; but never will I believe that he loved woman born of woman as he loved his younger brother.

And that is, perhaps, why these things fell out so.

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I had not seen Henry Fraser since the first year he had come to Cairn Edward. A handsome young man he was then, with a short, supercilious upper lip, and crisply curling hair of a fair colour disposed in masses about his brow.

He entered, and at the first glimpse of him I stood astonished. His pale student's face had grown red and a trifle mottled. The lids of his blue eyes (the blue of his brother's) were injected. His mouth was loose and restless under a heavy moustache, and when he began to speak his voice came from him thick and throaty.

'I wonder you do not keep your people in better order, Robert,' he said, before he was fairly within the door of the little sitting-room. 'First I drove right into a farm-cart that had been left in the middle of the yard, and then

nearly broke my shins over a pail some careless slut of a byre-lass had thrown down at the kitchen-door.'

Robert Fraser had been standing up with the glad and eager look on his face. I think he had half stretched out his hand; but at his brother's querulous words he sank slowly back into his chair, and the gray tiredness slipped into his face almost as quickly as it had disappeared.

'I am sorry, Henry,' he said simply. 'Somehow I do not seem to get about so readily as I did, and I daresay the lads and lasses take some advantage.'

'They would not take advantage with me, I can tell you!' cried the young doctor, throwing down his driving-cape on the corner of the old sofa, and pulling a chair in to the fire. He bent forward and chafed his hands before the glowing peats, and as he did so I could see by a slight lurch and quick recovery that he had been drinking. I wondered if Robert Fraser noticed.

Then he leaned back and looked at the Stickit Minister.

'Well, Robert, how do you find yourself tonight? Better, eh?' he said, speaking in his professional voice.

His brother's face flushed again with the same swift pleasure, very pitiful to see.

'It is kind of you to ask,' he said; 'I think I do feel a betterness, Henry. The cough has certainly been less troublesome this last day or two.'

'I suppose there are no better prospects about the property,' said Dr. Fraser, passing from the medical question with no more than the words I have written down. I had already risen, and, with a muttered excuse, was passing into the outer kitchen, that I might leave the brothers alone.

So I did not hear Robert Fraser's reply, but as I closed the door I caught the younger's loud retort: 'I tell you what it is. Robert — say what you will — I have not been fairly dealt with in this matter — I have been swindled!'

So I went out with my heart heavy within me for my friend, and though Bell Gregory, the bonniest of the farm lasses, ostentatiously drew her skirts aside and left a vacant place beside her in the ingle-nook, I shook my head and kept on my way to the door with no more than a smile and 'Anither nicht, Bell.'

'Gie my love to Nance ower at the Nether Neuk,' she cried back, with challenge in her tone, as I went out

But even Nance Chrystie was not in my thoughts that night. I stepped out, passing in front of the straw-thatched bee-hives which, with the indrawing days, had lost their sour-sweet summer smell, and so on into the loaning. From the foot of the little brae I looked back at the lights burning so warmly and steadily from the low windows of the Dullarg, and my mind went over all my father had told me of what the Stickit Minister had done for his brother: how he had broken off his own college career that Henry might go through his medical classes with ease and credit; and how, in spite of his brother's rank ingratitude, he had bonded his little property in order to buy him old Dr. Aitkin's practice in Cairn Edward.

Standing thus and thinking under the beeches at the foot of the dark loaning, it gave me quite a start to find a figure close beside me. It was a woman with a shawl over her head, as is the habit of the cotters' wives in our parish.

'Tell me,' a voice, eager and hurried, panted almost in my ear, 'is Dr. Fraser of Cairn Edward up there?'

'Yes,' I said in reply, involuntarily drawing back a step — the woman was so near me — 'he is this moment with his brother.'

'Then for God's sake will ye gang up and tell him to come this instant to the Barmark cothouses? There are twa bairns there that are no like to see the mornin' licht if he doesna!'

'But who may you be?' I said, for I did not want to return to the Dullarg. 'And why do you not go in and tell him for yourself? You can give him the particulars of the case better than I!'

She gave a little shivering moan.

'I canna gang in there!' she said, clasping her hands piteously; 'I darena. Not though I am Gilbert Barbour's wife — and the bairns' mither. Oh, sir, rin!'

And I ran.

But when I had knocked and delivered my message, to my great surprise Dr. Henry Fraser received it very coolly.

'They are only some cotter people,' he said; 'they must just wait till I am on my way back from the village. I will look in then. Robert, it is a cold night, let me have some whiskey before I get into that ice-box of a gig again.'

The Stickit Minister turned towards the wall-press where, ever since his mother's day, the 'gardevin,' or little rack of cut-glass decanters, had stood, always hospitably full, but quite untouched by the master of the house.

I was still standing uncertainly by the door-cheek, and as Robert Fraser stepped across the little room I saw him stagger, and rushed forward to catch him. But ere I could reach him he had commanded himself, and turned to me with a smile on his lips. Yet even his brother was struck by the ashen look on his face.

'Sit down, Robert,' he said, 'I will help myself.'

But with a great effort the Stickit Minister set the tall narrow dram-glass on the table and ceremoniously filled out to his brother the stranger's 'portion,' as was once the duty of country hospitality in Scotland.

But the doctor interrupted.

'Oh, I say!' he exclaimed, when he saw what his brother was doing, 'for heaven's sake not that thing — give me a tumbler.'

And without further ceremony he went to the cupboard; then he cried to Bell Gregory to fetch him some hot water, and mixed himself a steaming glass.

But the Stickit Minister did not sit down. He stood up by the mantelpiece all trembling. I noted particularly that his fingers spilled half the contents of the dram-glass as he tried to pour them back into the decanter.

'Oh, haste ye, Henry!' he said, with a pleading anxiety in his voice I had never heard there in any trouble of his own; 'take up your drink and drive as fast as ye can to succour the poor woman's bairns. It is not for nothing that she would come here seeking you at this time of night!'

His brother laughed easily as he reseated himself and drew the tumbler nearer to his elbow.

'That's all you know, Robert,' he said; 'why, they come all the way to

Cairn Edward after me if their little finger aches, let alone over here. I daresay some of the brats have got the mumps, and the mother saw me as I drove past. No, indeed — she and they must just wait till I get through my business at Whinnyliggate!

'I ask you, Henry,' said his brother eagerly, 'do this for my sake; it is not often that I ask you anything — nor will I have long time now wherein to ask!'

'Well,' grumbled the young doctor, rising and finishing the toddy as he stood, 'I suppose I must, if you make a point of it. But I will just look in at Whinnyliggate on my way across. Barmark is a good two miles on my way home!'

'Thank you, Henry,' said Robert Fraser, 'I will not forget this kindness to me!'

With a brusque nod Dr. Henry Fraser strode out through the kitchen, among whose merry groups his comings and goings always created a certain hush of awe. In a few minutes more we could hear the clear clatter of the horse's shod feet on the hard 'macadam' as he turned out of the soft sandy loaning into the main road.

The Stickit Minister sank back into his chair.

'Thank God!' he said, with a quick intake of breath almost like a sob.

I looked down at him in surprise.

'Robert, why are you so troubled about this woman's bairns?' I asked.

He did not answer for a while, lying fallen in upon himself in his great armchair of worn horsehair, as if the strain had been too great for his weak body. When he did reply it was in a curiously far-away voice like a man speaking in a dream.

'They are Jessie Loudon's bairns,' he said, 'and a' the comfort she has in life!'

I sat down on the hearthrug beside him — a habit I had when we were alone together. It was thus that I used to read Homer and Horace to him in the long winter forenights, and wrangle for happy hours over a construction or the turning of a phrase in the translation. So now I simply sat and was silent, touching his knee lightly with my shoulder. I knew that in time he would tell me all he wished me to hear. The old eight-day clock in the corner (with 'John Grey, Kilmaurs, 1791' in italics across the brass face of it), ticked on interminably through ten minutes, and I heard the feet of the men come in from suppering the horse, before Robert said another word. Then he spoke: 'Alec,' he said, very quietly — he could hardly say or do anything otherwise (or rather I thought so before that night) — 'I have this on my spirit—it is heavy like a load. When I broke it to Jessie Loudon that I could never marry her, as I told you, I did not tell you that she took it hard and high, speaking bitter words that are best forgotten. And then in a week or two she married Gib Barbour, a good-for-nothing, good-looking young ploughman, a great don at parish dances — no meet mate for her. And that I count the heaviest part of my punishment.

'And since that day I have not passed word or salutation with Jessie Loudon — that is, with Jessie Barbour. But on a Sabbath day, just before I was laid down last year — a bonnie day in June — I met her as I passed through a bourock fresh with the gowden broom, and the 'shilfies' and



Jennie Wrens singing on every brier. I had been lookin' for a sheep that had broken bounds. And there she sat wi' a youngling on ilka knee. There passed but ae blink o' the e'en between us — ane and nae mair. But oh, Alec, as I am a sinful man — married wife though she was, I kenned that she loved me, and she kenned that I loved her wi' the love that has nae ending!

There was a long pause here, and the clock struck with a long preparatory g-r-r-r, as if it were clearing its throat in order to apologise for the coming interruption.

'And that,' said Robert Fraser, 'was the reason why Jessie Loudon would not come up to the Dullarg this nicht — no, not even for her bairns' sake!'

THE STICKIT MINISTER WINS THROUGH  
*From The Stickit Minister's Wooing first published 1900*

Yet Jessie Loudon did come to the Dullarg that night — and that for her children's sake.

Strangely enough, in writing of an evening so fruitful in incident, I cannot for the life of me remember what happened during the next two hours. The lads and lasses came in for the 'Taking of the Book.' So much I do recall. But that was an exercise never omitted on any pretext in the house of the ex-divinity student. I remember this also, because after the brief prelude of the psalm-singing (it was the 103rd), the Stickit Minister pushed the Bible across to me, open at the thirty-eighth chapter of Job. The envelope was still there. Though it was turned sideways I could see the faintly written address:

MR. ROBERT FRASER,  
Student in Divinity,  
60, St. Leonard's Street, Edinburgh.

Even as I looked I seemed to hear again the woman's voice in the dark loaning — 'I canna gang in there,' and in a lightning flash of illumination it came to me what the answer to that letter had meant to Jessie Loudon, and the knowledge somehow made me older and sadder.

Then with a shaking voice I read the mighty words before me: 'When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' . . . But when I came to the verse which says: 'Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?' I saw the Stickit Minister nod his head three times very slightly, and a strange subtle smile came over his face as though he could have answered, 'Yea, Lord, verily I have seen them—they have been opened to me!'

And as the lads and lasses filed out in a kind of wondering silence after Robert Fraser had prayed — not kneeling down, but sitting erect in his chair and looking out before him with wide-open eyes — we in the little sitting-room became conscious of a low knocking, persistent and remote, somewhere about the house of Dullarg. We could hear Bell Gregory open and then immediately close the kitchen door, having evidently found no one there. The knocking still continued.

'I believe it is somebody at the front door,' I said, turning in that direction.

And then the Stickit Minister cried out in a curious excited voice: 'Open to them — open, Alec! Quick, man!'

And his voice went through me with a kind of thrill, for I knew not who it was he expected to enter, whether sheriff's officer or angry creditor — or as it might be the Angel of the Presence Himself come to summon his soul to follow.

Nevertheless, with quaking heart enough, and resolving in future to be a more religious man, I made bold to undo the door.

The woman I had seen in the lane stood before me, as it were, projected out of the dense darkness behind, her shawl fallen back from her face, and her features all pale and changeful in the flicker of the candle I had snatched up to take with me into the little hall. For the front door was only

used on state occasions, as when the parish minister came to call, and at funerals.

'He has not come — and the bairns are dying! So I had to come back!' she cried, more hoarsely and breathlessly than I had ever heard woman speak. But her eyes fairly blazed and her lips were parted wide for my answer.

'Dr. Fraser left here more than an hour ago,' I stammered. 'Has he not been to see the children?'

'No — no, I tell you, no. And they are choking — dying — it is the trouble in the throat. They will die if he does not come.'

I heard a noise behind me, and the next moment I found myself put aside like a child, and Robert Fraser stood face to face with her that had been Jessie Loudon.

'Come in,' he said. And when she drew back from him with a kind of shudder, and felt uncertainly for her shawl, he stepped aside and motioned her to enter with a certain large and commanding gesture I had never seen him use before. And as if accustomed to obey, the woman came slowly within the lighted room. Even then, however, she would not sit down, but stood facing us both, a girl prematurely old, her lips nearly as pale as her worn cheeks, her blown hair disordered and wispy about her forehead, and only the dark and tragic flashing of her splendid eyes telling of a bygone beauty.

The Stickit Minister stood up also, and as he leaned his hand upon the table, I noticed that he gently shut the Bible which I had left open, that the woman's eye might not fall upon the faded envelope which marked the thirty-eighth of Job.

'Do I understand you to say,' he began, in a voice clear, resonant, and full, not at all the voice of a stricken man, 'that my brother has not yet visited your children?'

'He had not come when I ran out — they are much worse — dying, I think!' she answered, also in another voice and another mode of speech — yet a little stiffly, as if the more correct method had grown unfamiliar by disuse.

For almost the only time in his life I saw a look, stem and hard, come over the countenance of the Stickit Minister.

'Go home, Jessie,' he said; 'I will see that he is there as fast as horses can bring him!'

She hesitated a moment.

'Is he not here?' she faltered. 'Oh, tell me if he is — I meant to fetch him back. I dare not go back without him!'

The Stickit Minister went to the door with firm step, the woman following without question or argument.

'Fear not, but go, Jessie,' he said; 'my brother is not here, but he will be at the bairns' bedside almost as soon as you. I promise you.'

'Thank you, Robin,' she stammered, adjusting the shawl over her head and instantly disappearing into the darkness. The old sweethearting name had risen unconsciously to her lips in the hour of her utmost need. I think neither of them noticed it.

'And now help me on with my coat,' said Robert Fraser, turning to me.

'I am going over to the village.'

'You must not,' I cried, taking him by the arm; 'let me go — let me put in the pony; I will be there in ten minutes!'

'I have no pony now,' he said gently and a little sadly, 'I have no need of one. And besides, the quickest way is across the fields.'

It was true. The nearest way to the village, by a great deal, was by a narrow foot-track that wound across the meadows. But, fearing for his life, I still tried to prevent him.

'It will be your death!' I said, endeavouring to keep him back. 'Let me go alone!'

'If Henry is where I fear he is,' he answered, calmly, 'he would not stir for you. But he will for me. And besides, I have passed my word to — to Jessie!'

The details of that terrible night journey I will not enter upon. It is sufficient to say that I bade him lean on me, and go slowly, but do what I would, I could not keep him back. Indeed, he went faster than I could accompany him — for, in order to support him a little, I had to walk unevenly along the ragged edges of the little field-path. All was dark gray above, beneath, and to the right of us. Only on the left hand a rough whinstone dyke stood up solidly black against the monotone of the sky. The wind came in cold swirls, with now and then a fleck of snow that stung the face like hail. I had insisted on the Stickit Minister taking his plaid about him in addition to his overcoat, and the ends of it flicking into my eyes increased the difficulty.

I have hardly ever been so thankful in my life, as when at last I saw the lights of the village gleam across the little bridge, as we emerged from the water-meadows and felt our feet firm themselves on the turnpike road.

From that point the Stickit Minister went faster than ever. Indeed, he rushed forward, in spite of my restraining arm, with some remaining flicker of the vigour which in youth had made him first on the hillside at the foxhunt and first on the haystacks upon the great day of the inbringing of the winter's fodder.

It seemed hardly a moment before we were at the door of the inn — the Red Lion the name of it, at that time in the possession of one 'Jeems' Carter. Yes, Henry Fraser was there. His horse was tethered to an iron ring which was fixed in the whitewashed wall, and his voice could be heard at that very moment leading a rollicking chorus. Then I remembered. It was a 'Cronies' night. This was a kind of informal club recruited from the more jovial of the younger horsebreeding farmers of the neighbourhood. It included the local 'vet,' a bonnet laird or two grown lonesome and thirsty by prolonged residence upon the edges of the hills, and was on all occasions proud and glad to welcome a guest so distinguished and popular as the young doctor of Cairn Edward.

'Loose the beast and be ready to hand me the reins when I come out!' commanded the Stickit Minister, squaring his stooped shoulders like the leader of a forlorn hope.

So thus it happened that I did not see with my own eyes what happened when Robert Fraser opened the door of the 'Cronies' club-room. But I have heard it so often recounted that I know as well as if I had seen. It

was the Laird of Butterhole who told me, and he always said that it made a sober man of him from that day forth. It was (he said) like Lazarus looking out of the sepulchre after they had rolled away the stone.

Suddenly in the midst of their jovial chorus someone said 'Hush!' — some one of themselves — and instinctively all turned towards the door.

And lo! there in the doorway, framed in the outer dark, his broad blue bonnet in his hand, his checked plaid waving back from his shoulders, stood a man, pale as if he had come to them up through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. With a hand white as bone, he beckoned to his brother, who stood with his hands on the table smiling and swaying a little with tipsy gravity.

'Why, Robert, what are you doing here?' he was beginning. But the Stickit Minister broke in.

'Come!' he said, sternly and coldly, 'the children you have neglected are dying — if they die through your carelessness you will be their murderer!'

And to the surprise of all, the tall and florid younger brother quailed before the eye of this austere shade.

'Yes, I will come, Robert — I was coming in a moment anyway!'

And so the Stickit Minister led him out. There was no great merriment after that in the 'Cronies' club that night. The members conferred chiefly in whispers, and presently emptying their glasses, they stole away home.

But no mortal knows what Robert Fraser said to his brother during that drive — something mightily sobering at all events. For when the two reached the small cluster of cothouses lying under the lee of Barmark wood, the young man, though not trusting himself to articulate speech, and somewhat over-tremulous of hand, was yet in other respects completely master of himself. I was not present at the arrival, just as I had not seen the startling apparition which broke up the 'Cronies' club. The doctor's gig held only two, and as soon as I handed Robert Fraser the reins, the beast sprang forward. But I was limber and a good runner in those days, and though the gray did his best I was not far behind.

There is no ceremony at such a house in time of sickness. The door stood open to the wall. A bright light streamed through and revealed the inequalities of the little apron of causewayed cobblestones. I entered and saw Henry Fraser bending over a bed on which a bairn was lying. Robert held a candle at his elbow. The mother paced restlessly to and fro with another child in her arms. I could see the doctor touch again and again the back of the little girl's throat with a brush which he continually replenished from a phial in his left hand.

Upon the other side of the hearthstone from the child's bed a strong country lout sat, sullenly 'becking' his darned stocking feet at the clear embers of the fire. Then the mother laid the first child on the opposite bed, and turned to where the doctor was still operating.

Suddenly Henry Fraser stood erect. There was not a trace of dissipation about him now. The tradition of his guild was as a mantle of dignity about him.

'It is all right,' he said as he took his brother's hand in a long clasp. 'Thank you, Robert, thank you a thousand times — that you brought me here in time!'

'Nay, rather, thank God!' said Robert Fraser, solemnly.

And even as he stood there the Stickit Minister swayed sidelong, but the next moment he had recovered himself with a hand on the bed-post. Then very swiftly he drew a handkerchief from his pocket and set it to his lips.

His brother and I went toward him with a quick apprehension. But the Stickit Minister turned from us both to the woman, who took two swift steps towards him with her arms outstretched, and such a yearning of love on her face as I never saw before or since. The sullen lout by the fire drowsed on unheeding.

'Jessie!' cried the Stickit Minister, and with that fell into her arms. She held him there a long moment as it had been jealously, her head bent down upon his. Then she delivered him up to me slowly and reluctantly.

Henry Fraser put his hand on his heart and gave a great sob.

'My brother is dead!' he said.

But Jessie Loudon did not utter a word.

### **Critical Review of The Stickit Minister.**

The title story of Crockett's collection opens with a wonderfully evocative pastoral view. Perhaps rural rather than pastoral. The 'bask blowy day' and 'snell' weather takes us instantly into 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Scotland as easily as a Van Gogh landscape takes us into the 19<sup>th</sup> century rural France.

Cairn Edward is a fictionalised version of Castle Douglas, a small market town in South West Scotland. Crockett grew up in this environment and his writing offers a realistic picture of the landscape and the people.

The third person narrator introduces us to the title character, Robert Fraser and to Saunders McQuhirr. These are both drawn from life: Crockett's second cousin Robert is the template for the 'stickit minister' and his grandfather William is the template for Saunders.

Robert Fraser is about to impart a secret. Saunders is reticent to hear. Fraser explains how a trip to the doctor led him to make a choice, which we might interpret as a sacrifice. It is a choice based on a realistic understanding of his prospects, in both financial and practical terms. He takes what he sees as the only sensible course of action. The blow which has fallen on him is not one he wants to impact on either his brother or his beloved. His decision will have a detrimental impact on them both all the same.

*'late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own 'man', then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.'*

We might read this as a loss of faith, or simple pragmatism. Either way, the choice made, Fraser gets on with his lot. Because he kept his reasons secret, he has been vilified by the aspirational society around him, becoming the butt of their jokes and labelled a 'stickit' minister. This is not strictly accurate given that a 'stickit' minister was actually one who could not get a 'living' and in fact Fraser never completed his training. He is more a 'stickit' man than a 'stickit' minister and even then, he is only 'stickit' in the eyes of those who do not know the truth. Basically, he is seen as a failure and he lives with that slander in order (as he sees it) to give his brother and his beloved better chances in an uncertain world.

Crockett shows that Fraser's decision, while worthy of the man, backfires on him. His brother, though a combination of lack of understanding and lack of character, fails to appreciate the sacrifice and remains demanding; while his beloved marries on the rebound. Neither brother nor beloved understands

why Fraser has acted as he has. Thus neither is in a position to make good choices, and so it is perhaps inevitable that his sacrifice will, to some degree, be unsuccessful in outcome.

But Crockett is eager to show the goodness of the man.

*'it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper'* says Fraser. And he has tried to live up to his responsibilities. His illness no doubt were a main part of why he failed in his farming endeavours, but we cannot help but see Henry as ungrateful at the least. While we see Henry thus, Robert refuses to blame his brother. Crockett, though, leaves us in no doubt as to which man is the 'greater.' Thus he reveals that the 'common man' has more worth than the Doctor – a position reminiscent of Burns. It offered, and still offers, a challenge to those in the professions, those with aspirational leanings. The story can be read from multiple perspectives (a fact Crockett was doubtless well aware of) but it is surely hard for anyone to side with Henry rather than Robert.

Robert has been unsuccessful both in his farming and in his struggle for life. As he reveals to Saunders that he is about to lose his tenancy, Saunders responds with reasonable and passionate indignation. Fraser delivers the killer blow, making it clear to Saunders that he is dying and such things are no longer of any importance to him. The underplaying of the word 'flit' for death, far from being melodramatic, shows a masterly poignant use of language. This is a tour de force of short story writing for its depth and skill and has plenty to reveal to modern readers and writers.



### **Critical review of *The Stickit Minister's Wooing*.**

As in the first story, weather is used to set the scene in this sequel. Crockett refers back to his own published work (and a historic 'event') the *Sixteen Drifty Days* in a way that reminds us of his skill in cross-referencing his own work and indeed in his skill at showing multiple (and unusual) perspectives in his writing.

While in the first of the Robert Fraser trilogy, Crockett retains a distance for his author as narrator, telling the story mainly from the third person, he relatively quickly resorts to dialogue and lets the characters reveal themselves thus, in this story he shifts perspective from the start. In this second part, the 'familiar' story of Robert Fraser is now told in the first person by Alec McQuhirr, son of Saunders, and one of Crockett's familiar fictional alter egos.

As such it becomes Alec's story as much as Fraser's. There is a touch of personal reminiscence about it, as Crockett, in Alec's form, describes the reality of coming back from college to discover a man he respects at death's door.

The gift of Tennyson's poetry is a key to hidden depths. Alec states:

*'For I loved Robert Fraser, and I will not deny that my heart beat with expectation as I went up the little loaning with the rough stone dyke upon either side — aye, as if it had been the way to Nether Neuk, and I going to see my sweetheart.'*

We see the poignancy of familial love, suggesting that Crockett still mourns the loss of his cousin (the template for Fraser) and wishes to honour his memory. Crockett fictionalises throughout and we cannot assume that the 'real' Robert had a lover whom he lost – but the emotion is honest even when the story is fictive. Certainly Crockett is keener to show the humanity of the man – it's a love story more than a didactic one.

The description of the dying man is well observed. From the smile they exchange, both knowing they lie and the 'veins blue and convex upon the shrunk wrist' Crockett draws us into the reality of an experience which is familiar to many.

At such a time smiles, and gifts, take the place of words. There are no honest words to be spoken. Alec offers a volume of Tennyson. We can imagine him (and Crockett) purchasing the book and feel the anticipation of when he would give it.

*'I had cut it to save him trouble, and written his name on the blank page before the title.'* The depth is in the detail and as readers we are drawn into a whole world of hope and memory which surely touches us personally –

booklovers especially will not fail to be moved by the words:

*'I shall never forget the way he looked at it. He opened it as a woman unfolds a new and costly garment, with a lingering caress of the wasted finger-tips through which I could almost see the white of the paper, and a slow soft intake of the breath, like a lover's sigh.'*

Alec understands the power of a gift – and the uselessness of the giving. A sense of hopelessness pervades but it is the living man rather than the dying who is the most hopeless. It is Crockett's skill of imagery which moves the reader most. It is not a dissection such as a medical man would offer, but a poem in prose imagery – in which no word or phrase is wasted. The words work to explore the ideas (and the reality) behind them in a powerful way. That they touch our emotional response is both intended and inevitable. If we reduce this to melodrama it is ourselves we diminish, not Crockett or his characters.

Fraser reveals, in much greater detail than the original story, the act and consequences of his covenanted pact with his Maker. We cannot help but think that while he may have acted with the best of motives, he made wrong choices – certainly in the case of Jessie Loudon. He sought to spare her pain later on, but this was not in his gift. Her lack of understanding of his action resulted in them both paying a painful (and unnecessary) price. But his own understanding may have been flawed. He tells Alec that:

*'though the lassie's heart was set on me, it was as a bairn's heart is set, not like the heart of a woman.'*

It is hard for the reader to judge the truth of this and Crockett does not come down on one side or the other (at least not yet) but simply explores the consequence of the action.

We might consider whether perhaps Fraser should not have lost faith in life when he discovered his ailment. It is the loss of faith in life rather than a loss of faith in God which I find particularly interesting in this story. Those of a religious bent may read it differently. I simply point out that a religious belief is neither a pre-requisite nor a particular benefit when reading Crockett's work.

The story then progresses to the other, closer love. 'Am I my brother's keeper' was the obvious text for 'The Stickit Minister' story, and we are forced even more in this story to conclude that the answer is no. Henry is clearly not worth the bother. As if a dying man is not enough to deal with, Crockett twists the knife by showing us that Fraser has given his all to a man who now will not even help the woman he loved by visiting her when her children are sick.

Initially Alec is unaware of this (as the reader may be), simply seeing Henry as a wastrel. But the full enormity of his betrayal in response to his

brother's love is revealed in the course of the story. We might well suggest that Robert Fraser is a man who loves 'not wisely but too well.'

The title suggests that this is a love story. It is clearly also a story of unrequited love. The love story of Robert and Jessie, while perhaps in the background, is the central concern. Unrequited love is quite a big enough topic for any story. Crockett adds more in order to give us more depth and a variety of perspectives from which to address the issue of love. The love of a man for his brother and the love of one man for a kinsman are shown in parallel – as much as Robert cannot 'help' Henry to live a good life, nor can Alec help Robert to stay alive – never mind to live in hope.

Alec's description of Henry is clear and uncompromising. We see a man gone to bad. Alec has not seen him in some time and Crockett uses both plain and figurative language to deliver his verdict:

*'A handsome young man he was then, with a short, supercilious upper lip, and crisply curling hair of a fair colour disposed in masses about his brow.*

*He entered, and at the first glimpse of him I stood astonished. His pale student's face had grown red and a trifle mottled. The lids of his blue eyes (the blue of his brother's) were injected. His mouth was loose and restless under a heavy moustache, and when he began to speak his voice came from him thick and throaty.'*

Henry is everything that Robert is not, and a clearer example of why 'common men' are worth more to Crockett than those of status is evidenced in this description and the following exploration of Henry's character and behaviour.

Alec cannot bear the exchange and Crockett plays us as he takes the young man out with a deliberate and delicate digression on 'young love'. Then he brings us back to the central issue, with the arrival of a woman who we do not then know to be Jessie. Her love for her children has brought her back to Robert's door, in her desperation for Henry, the doctor, to help them. Somehow we already know (even though we do not know who she is) that Henry will not help. Crockett winds us up to the big reveal when we discover that Henry is not just an ordinary 'bad' man but in a symbolic sense, when he should pay his brother back, he will not do so. Thus we see morality in the extreme hidden in the small minutiae of domestic social detail. This is clever and powerful writing.

Alec does what he can, and Robert begs his brother to intervene. Henry finally accedes and Robert (not for the first time) trusts him. We guess that this will not end well. We do not yet know the full impact of the situation but as Henry departs Robert reveals it:

*'Robert, why are you so troubled about this woman's bairns?' I asked.*

*He did not answer for a while, lying fallen in upon himself in his great armchair of worn horsehair, as if the strain had been too great for his weak body. When he did reply it was in a curiously far-away voice like a man speaking in a dream.*

*'They are Jessie Loudon's bairns,' he said, 'and a' the comfort she has in life!'*

Crockett ends the story (or this part of it) with Robert's explanation to Alec of his failed relationship with Jessie and gives a clear picture of the pain he has endured ever since. We are forced to conclude that whereas he cares nothing of being termed 'stickit' or a loser, Jessie's actions have broken him. Giving up on life and love happened together and the consequences have been immense. The story is left on this cliff-hanger as there is a final part to come.

## Critical review of *The Stickit Minister Wins Through*

We have to be happy with the title, as the story thus far has been unremittingly hopeless. It is hard, indeed to see in what way Robert Fraser may 'win' given the situation he finds himself in. Alec is in a state of confusion. There is a delay of some time while the religious observance of 'taking the buik' is concluded. Robert has put his faith in his brother and so keeps his faith in God. We might simply see this as a couple of hours wasted. Alec is moved by Robert's faith but there is some indication that he does not share it. Each to his own. Once more Crockett shows that nothing is simple.

A knock on the door forces action. Henry's inaction is about to result in Robert's hastened death. And yet the consequence brings about a conclusion which, in perverse way might be seen as, if not a happy ending, then a fitting one. Robert dies in the arms of his beloved. But is this enough to lift a sense of waste, loss and anger? For me, no. For Alec I suspect no. For Crockett... we can only speculate. But I suggest it shows him offering less a homily, more a chance to interrogate our own perceptions.

In this story there is clear religious imagery and symbolism. Light and darkness are used figuratively. Weather is employed both to give realism and metaphorically. Crockett is well aware of his writer's toolbox. He gives us jeopardy and suspense and pain and emotional engagement. And finally, even within the resolution, he offers us a choice. Perhaps the suggestion is that God works in mysterious ways. Perhaps it is simply that we should make the most of our lives while we have them and not try to be 'our brother's keeper' or protect those we love by distancing ourselves from them, even if our goal is to spare them suffering.

Henry finally does something good with his life – a small pay back to his brother. Robert and Jessie have a final moment of union. The ending of this story (and of the trilogy) is, I suggest, immensely complex and profound. Alec tells it:

*His brother and I went toward him with a quick apprehension. But the Stickit Minister turned from us both to the woman, who took two swift steps towards him with her arms outstretched, and such a yearning of love on her face as I never saw before or since. The sullen lout by the fire drowsed on unheeding.*

*'Jessie!' cried the Stickit Minister, and with that fell into her arms. She held him there a long moment as it had been jealously, her head bent down upon his. Then she delivered him up to me slowly and reluctantly.*

*Henry Fraser put his hand on his heart and gave a great sob.*

*'My brother is dead!' he said.*

*But Jessie Loudon did not utter a word.*

Robert goes to the woman he loves. She ‘delivers’ him up to his brother. His brother finally understands what he has lost.

What of Jessie’s speechlessness? We can read it as pain beyond endurance, or an inability to understand. There is no resolution here – perhaps Crockett wants us to understand that love between a woman and a man is of such a unique and complex nature that we can only speculate and should not judge.

And what of Alec? He is left to recount the story. His grief is still palpable. His love is clear and his sense of loss is not resolved. As narrator he is every bit as central to the story as the others. His perspective is every bit as valuable. And he is, at least to some extent, Crockett’s mouthpiece, so we may speculate (which is all we can do of course) on Crockett’s own perspective.

Crockett may have achieved some sense of closure in his own grief from writing these stories. He may have been repaying a debt to a loved relative. He may simply have been bearing witness. But whatever he was doing, it was honestly done. To suggest that these works are melodramatic is to undermine his integrity as a writer. Any close study reveals they are far from trivial and much more than simply pandering to the tastes of a market for sentiment or melodrama. They show depth, guts and bravery on the part of the writer, whose perspective waxes and wanes as he moves in and out of the characters, real and imaginary, who populate the story.

In these three, slender, stories, we find a depth and power of writing which should alert us to Crockett’s skill. All it takes is open eyes and an appreciation of authorial intent. You don’t even need to be religious. Just believe in the author as he believes in his characters and you are half way there to an appreciation of a unique voice that has been overlooked for far too long. Surely 125 years is long enough for us to gain a new, cleaner and more healthy perspective on Crockett’s writing.

## The Devil is in the Detail –

Correspondence between Crockett and publisher T.Fisher Unwin regarding  
the publication of *The Stickit Minister*

### PART ONE

December 1892 to April 1893.

#### Letters:

1. 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1892
2. 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893
3. 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893
4. 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893
5. 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1893
6. 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893
7. 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893
8. 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 1893
9. 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1893
10. 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1893
11. 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1893
12. 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1893
13. 6<sup>th</sup> March 1893
14. 20<sup>th</sup> March 1893
15. 14<sup>th</sup> April 1893
16. 27<sup>th</sup> April 1893
17. 28<sup>th</sup> April 1893.

#### Abbreviations:

FCM = Free Church Manse Penicuik (Crockett's home at the time and since his marriage. Headed paper used.

TFU = Thomas Fisher Unwin (1848–1935). T. Fisher Unwin, was noted as a publisher of both fiction and non-fiction series directed at differing audiences. He was apprenticed in 1868 with the publishing firm of Jackson, Walford, and Hodder but started his own house in 1882, at the age of thirty-four, purchasing Marshall, Japp & Co. for £1,000 and setting up shop in Holborn Viaduct. By 1893 it was 'the' publishing house for new writing. Thomas Fisher Unwin came from a Congregationalist family but had a liberal outlook that made him a champion of free trade, a pro-Boer

and an advocate for Africans in the Congo and for Irish Home Rule. He was a keen mountaineer, (a passion shared with SRC). He published 6 of Crockett's works between 1893 and 1896.

SRC = All letters signed. S.R. Crockett

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S.R. Crockett". The letters are written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.



## Letter 1.

Free Church Manse

Penicuik

N.B. <sup>1</sup>

DEC 31<sup>ST</sup> 1892<sup>2</sup>

Dear Mr Unwin,

I hope to send you the MS in about a week or ten days complete.

I shall try a few more titles 'The Ministers of our Countryside' did good serial service and is widely known but I think we might do better. Thanks for good wishes.

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<sup>1</sup> This (as all other correspondence marked FCM is on stamped letterhead – given to SRC as a wedding present. For the full story of the N.B. click. <http://www.gallowayraiders.co.uk/src-rls-letters.html>

<sup>2</sup> This is the first recorded correspondence between SRC and Mr Unwin (of T.Fisher Unwin publishers) with respect to collection that would become *'The Stickit Minister and other common men.'*

## Letter 2.

FCM<sup>1</sup>

Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1893

Dear Mr Unwin

I send you the MS of my book complete. I have chosen the best stories and sketches and arranged them in the order I would like them to appear. <sup>2</sup> I think we should give [have?] as many as possible in the book. If any are to be omitted they can be deleted from the end. Each story is separately [ ]<sup>3</sup> I have about as much MS left over as I have sent. <sup>4</sup>

It occurs to me that 'The Sticket [sic] Minister and Some Others' might be a good title <sup>5</sup>– in which case the second story would need to come first; but you may still prefer 'The Ministers of our Countryside' which was the original title, and under which they have been reprinted by various American, Canadian and Australian papers.<sup>6</sup>

Please ask a clerk to send me a PC that the MS has come safely to hand

With kind regards

Yours very truly

SRC

*This letter gives the picture of a man who is relatively well versed in publication, but also eager for his first full length collection to be done 'right.'*

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<sup>1</sup> Free Church Manse, Penicuik noted as FCM in future

<sup>2</sup> Note the order changed subsequently

<sup>3</sup> Where transcription or original is unclear [ ] is used

<sup>4</sup> 24 stories were used and Crockett states he has at least as many again in store.

<sup>5</sup> The first reference to a possible new title – Crockett showing himself very hands on with the proceedings

<sup>6</sup> Crockett making it clear the success of the stories in the international market

### Letter 3.

Jan 13 1893

Dear Mr Unwin

I thank you for your kind note and enclosure of the cover. I shall be in town about the 26<sup>th</sup> and we might have comprehensive talk<sup>1</sup> – not that I will take up much of your time – but it will be satisfactory for both of us. I am to preach in London somewhere in the wilds of Stoke Newington for a man I know.<sup>2</sup>

Re title - Don't you think it would be better to put full title

*The  
Stickit Minister  
And some  
Others*

On the back? My book selling friends Thin, Elliot, Molyneaux of the RTS in Edin. who will sell some large part of the edition without doubt think that the public is riled to find a book with one solid title a *collection* of stories.<sup>3</sup>

Again, could you not let the book have either all buckram lumpish (like Kipling Barrack Room Ballads and ribbed cloth like Stevenson's Deacon Brodie.) Smooth cloth I don't much like. It spots so readily.

My own ideal which I have dreamed of is dull blue half buckram with boards like the Cameo series overlapping a little? – What say you?<sup>4</sup>

Here is something else you may care to look at. You said you wanted to have all my work – at least the refusal of it. I have a book of verse which Kegan Paul issued for me Dulce Cor<sup>5</sup>, and a little thing that David Douglas printed, besides some new poems. They are all long out of print. How would a Cameo series<sup>6</sup>, extract of the rest (like [Mireid?]) do? I send them by post. I dare say Amand Durand<sup>7</sup> has the plates still, which could be got for almost nothing. It would make a pretty book. I have indicated in red on the Index of Dulce Cor those I would select. Of course

Ford Brereton needs rubbing up; but it was well reviewed by the Spectator and other papers. I think a limited number might be. At any rate, you can take a look and tell me when I see you.<sup>8</sup>

I shall not leave home till the 25<sup>th</sup> so shall be glad to receive proof.

Yours very truly

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> Proposal of a meeting on Jan 26<sup>th</sup> when Crockett would be in London. Subsequent letters show he and his wife stayed at the Savoy from Jan 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> 1893. His first meeting with Unwin happened on Jan 26<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> I have not as yet got a confirmed source of this person.

<sup>3</sup> Once again Crockett offers suggestions for the collection, and shows he has some connections in Edinburgh who are giving him advice.

<sup>4</sup> Crockett, like many an eager first time author, has a vision of how he wants his book to look. Response from Unwin leaves him clear that this is not within his control, and he (reluctantly? but politely) accepts Unwin's experience. He's not trying to be difficult, but his letters do suggest he is trying to stand up for himself at this early stage of his publishing career.

<sup>5</sup> Dulce Cor is the collection of poems that Crockett had published at his own expense (and under a pseudonym) in 1886. He is clearly keen to get some recognition for the poems – a new version – and bring them out under his own name.

<sup>6</sup> The Cameo series was one of TFU's many 'series' of books.

<sup>7</sup> Durand was the pioneer in France of making and publishing photogravure (héliogravure) reproductions of engravings and etchings. His main series of facsimiles of old master prints began in 1869, usually published in portfolios with accompanying text by G. Duplessis. His prints have a stamp in red on the verso.

<sup>8</sup> Crockett is keen to show that the poems were well regarded by some.

#### Letter 4.

FCM

Jan 20<sup>th</sup>

I have received your two letters, and thank you for them very much. I have been ill in bed (where I still am) with white throat;<sup>1</sup> but I still hope to be in London next week. I shall let you know where I am stopping and we shall arrange when it would be convenient for me to call. I am perfectly willing to leave the binding and all details in your hands. The buckram was the suggestion of an ignorant layman. Of course you know best.<sup>2</sup>

About the poems, the question had better be over. I know there is no money in poetry. I know that I have made over £300 in the last two years in writing stories for magazines etc but never in my life made as many pence off verse, though, comparatively I have done well with that too – a *succes d'estune* – at all events, and got rid of an edition of 500 at 6/-.<sup>3</sup>

But if the 'Stickit' goes and some others of prose make, then would be the time for the poems? – with some district dialect ones more in line with the Galloway prose.<sup>4</sup>

Yes, I think there would be little difficulty in getting Wylie of Glasgow<sup>5</sup> and Thin (of Edinburgh)<sup>6</sup> to take half the edition of 500 if you put it in the Cameo. I would not care for it otherwise much.

But as I never meant it to be more than a nice thing to do sometime, I am by no means sharpest on it. <sup>7</sup>For some years I meant to stick to prose. I am rewriting the latter part of 'A Galloway Herd' <sup>8</sup> I had very important literary advice which advised me that the French chapters weakened it.

I shall let you know when I come to town and shall probably call next Wednesday or Thursday if that is convenient.

With kind regards

Yours very truly

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> White throat (or strep throat) is caused by a bacterial infection. Crockett later had cancer of the jaw, (1896?) and it is possible that this was an early indication? His health was never robust, but he learned over the years not to tell publishers – they didn't like taking risks on authors who might not deliver!

<sup>2</sup> Note how he backs down on the details of the production – deferring to 'the professional' was wise at this stage of his career.

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<sup>3</sup> He shows his awareness of the ‘business’ side of things – and points out that he makes good money from short stories but understands there is no money to be made in poetry

<sup>4</sup> Still, he can’t quite let go of the poetry idea. Crockett was nothing if not tenacious – as he points out in a later letter (give ref) it never hurts to ask.

<sup>5</sup> William Pollock Wylie, was manager of the commercial department of the *Christian Leader* for which SRC was still writing (and possibly editor) at the time.

<sup>6</sup> James Thin (1824–1915) founded the famous Edinburgh booksellers.

<sup>7</sup> Crockett sent a copy of *Dulce Cor* to Stevenson in 1887, who, it seems, wasn’t impressed. This letter shows that Crockett probably did still hold the possibility of poetry publication, though he backs down very quickly when Unwin doesn’t want them – there is some confusion about exactly what and under what conditions the poems might be published. Crockett wants them in the Cameo collection

<sup>8</sup> This is the first mention of the Galloway Herd. There would be some back and forward about it before it was abandoned. Again, Crockett is more concerned with getting his work published than in a specific work. He was happy to write new, more, revise, change... as many authors early in their career learn, versatility (and humility) work best.

### **Letter 5.**

FCM

23<sup>rd</sup> Jan

If you will send me a note to the Savoy Hotel, Thames Embankment where I hope to be on Wednesday evening, what time I could find you disengaged on Thursday (or Friday) I would very gladly call upon you.

Yours very truly

SRC

### **Letter 6.**

26<sup>th</sup> Jan – Savoy Hotel

I enjoyed our talk today very much, and I certainly owe you a very deep debt for the courteous way in which you have met me.<sup>1</sup> I shall try not to disappoint you in any way. Let me thank you for the splendid selection of the Pseudonym which came in just now.<sup>2</sup> They are Treasure Trove for my wife - who with womanly instinct has selected 'Some Emotions' to start work on. <sup>3</sup> I shall start work on the rewriting of the 'Galloway Herd' on my return<sup>4</sup> and let you have it as soon as I can. I shall keep before me the writing of something as good as is in me for the Pseudonym. I think I could promise it by the end of August (70,000 words) I would write it in my holiday retirement in the wilds of Galloway.<sup>5</sup>

You have looked over the stories in the vol of 'Stickit Minister'. Could you indicate which style you think would suit the Pseudonym best. If I had an idea which you took to my mind could play round that kind of subject. <sup>6</sup>

I have a story motif in my head – for a story of about that length 'the Kirk of the Remnant' the story of two men at the beginning of the century who fell out about a girl as is the manner of men – they became ministers of one of the smallest and most 'split up' of Scottish Kirks – orthodox to the bone and farther – the Kirk split and split till they twain only remained as Ministers in full standing – all others had defaulted – There was one theological student, and the girl about whom they fell out, who was the hope of the Kirk of the Remnant. He was to preach for one of the two – a Minister far in the country. On a snowy Saturday night, the senior suddenly discovered that the younger was unorthodox and turned him out of doors. There was a presbytery meeting (the two ministers) and the two ministers in full standing differed about the lad, and one deposed the other.<sup>7</sup>

A love story of the lad's running through and other matter – the atmosphere I made a study for in 'The Split in the Marrow Kirk' which is in the 'Stickit Minister.'<sup>8</sup>

If you think this will do, I'll write if for you, better than the rest (I think I may praise) if you will take it. I work best when I know it is to be taken. If you think a story on these lines – as good as Hugh Hamilton<sup>9</sup> or the Stickit (I think the better) would do, tell me and I shall begin to lay it out. I hope to see you again, but I shall hold myself at your service. I would not willingly intrude on a busy man.

With kind regards

Ever truly yours

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first meeting between the two men.

<sup>2</sup> The Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries were distinctively packaged novelettes that caught the attention of late nineteenth-century British and American audiences and attracted imitators on both sides of the Atlantic.

<sup>3</sup> The suggestion is that Unwin sent over some examples of Pseudonym works for Crockett as exemplars of style. Also received as a generous gift. It also reveals that Ruth Crockett was in London with him. The children Maisie and Philip we assume were in Penicuik with a nurse.

<sup>4</sup> This is the first of several on the topic of A Galloway Herd, which had been serialised. At this point Crockett sees it as the next work he will deliver – ensuing conversation reveals otherwise.

<sup>5</sup> Crockett would be revising the work, and suggests he can do so within a time frame of 5 months. Note also his plan to be in Galloway on holiday (working) during August. This will be significant later on! It is here he had his breakthrough for *The Raiders* after his first meeting with John Macmillan of Glenhead.

<sup>6</sup> Showing that Crockett is willing to write to a style guide or to suit the wishes of the publisher. Adaptability was vital for a writer seeking publication. (And still is)

<sup>7</sup> This is the first mention of the story that will become *The Lilac Sunbonnet* (published 1894)

<sup>8</sup> Interesting that SRC talks of the 'atmosphere' of the story. It suggests a keen and professional relationship between him and publisher, an understanding of the constraints and requirements of publication. Worth reading the *Split in the Marrow Kirk* in conjunction with *The Lilac Sunbonnet* for 'atmospheric' comparison!

<sup>9</sup> The title character in the story 'Accepted of the Beasts' in *The Stickit Minister*.



## Letter 7.

Savoy Hotel 28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1893

My dear Mr Unwin,

Let me thank you for your very frank and kindly letter and the enclosed opinion, which is exceedingly valuable to me as being from a man who has so keenly touched the breakdown of Barrie and Hardy<sup>1</sup> – on an lesser flame also my own in the Commune part of ‘A Galloway Herd.’<sup>2</sup>

I assure you such words as these are just the faithful words which a young fellow needs. I shall not make my story too Scotch – I shall try to give atmosphere without overloading with dialect.<sup>3</sup>

As soon as I get back I shall get under way and let you know how the thing develops.

Of course it will not be fair to ask for any guarantee (in the strict sense) that the story shall be used for the Pseudonym. Your general interest and promise to use it in some way is quite sufficient. But all the same, I mean to make it good enough for that library!<sup>4</sup>

I am glad you like the general sketch. I did not detail the heroine; but I think I have got a charming (and unhackneyed) one.<sup>5</sup>

We shall see.

If I do not take up your time I should be delighted to come and see you again in the city. I am going down to see old Birket Foster on Monday afternoon for a day or two but I have the forenoon of that day. If you dropped me a PC or wired, I could come in. If not we shall see you at the end of the week and I shall be in or about the city till the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>, so that I shall see you again at all events. <sup>6</sup>

With kind regards

Yours very truly

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> Unwin obviously wrote as soon as they had met, laying out some criticisms of the work which SRC happily takes on board – drawing a comparison between himself and other contemporary authors published by/known to Unwin – J.M.Barrie and Thomas Hardy. Here SRC acknowledges TFU’s expertise (sensible if you’re trying to keep a publisher on side!)

<sup>2</sup> The French sections of A Galloway Herd had previously come under criticism. It is worth noting that the events of the Commune were more or less contemporary politics having happened barely 20 years previously.

<sup>3</sup> Again we see SRC deferring to publisher’s knowledge – and the intent to tone down his use of Scots dialect for the proposed readership.

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<sup>4</sup> SRC shows that he is aiming for the Pseudonym series, but has the humility not to claim it by right. He wants to be judged by the value of his work.

<sup>5</sup> The heroine is Winsome Charteris. She is not perhaps as feisty as many of Crockett's heroines, but neither is she a stock character.

<sup>6</sup> It is not clear how long the Crockett's spent at The Savoy, but this suggests they were in and around London until 11<sup>th</sup> February.

## Letter 8.

FCM

Penicuik

Feb 21<sup>st</sup> 1893 <sup>1</sup>

Dear Mr Unwin,

Re poems and verses, as I told you I was not very keen on issuing just now; but Over of Ruby who brought out Normal Gale<sup>2</sup> and prints le Galliennes' books<sup>3</sup> has written to me about them. He wants me to let Elkin Matthews<sup>4</sup> do a little book – handmade paper 120pp just 80, limited edition sort of thing. If you don't think they would do for the Cameo series, would you mind asking your forwarding clerk to send them back to me. I would rather the Cameo had them for it is s delightful thing, but I would not care for them out of a kind of [ ] of some kind. I can quite see that verse if not in your way, still if you care for them, you can have them.<sup>5</sup>

I don't expect you will think of it but I owe it to your kindness to make you the first offer. By the way Wylie,<sup>6</sup> who has just been here, would I have no doubt help with the sales. <sup>7</sup>

The revise of the 'Stickit' is well through. I don't think there is much to alter.

Kind regards

Ever

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> Crockett back home.

<sup>2</sup> I have not found the source of this to date.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Le Gallienne (1866 – 1947) was an English author and poet.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Elkin Mathews (1851 –1921) was a contemporary British publisher and bookseller.

<sup>5</sup> It shows that Crockett still has some hopes for the poetry, offering Unwin first refusal. It is impossible to know whether this is shrewd business or youthful enthusiasm – either way it suggests that Crockett was not quite ready to let go of his dreams of being a poet.

<sup>6</sup> William Pollock Wylie was manager of the commercial department of the *Christian Leader*

<sup>7</sup> Shows SRC's awareness of the sales aspect of publishing. He's a professional, looking for his big break.

## Letter 9.

FCM

Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1893

Dear Mr Unwin

I knew very well that poems were not in your way; but still I felt in honour bound to show them to you, as you had been so kind about 'The Stickit'. Of course nothing may come out of Matthews and [ ]' or another request I have – and indeed I am in no wise keen . It was Mr Le Gallienne who wished to move in the matter. <sup>1</sup>

I am glad indeed that the 'Stickit' is so nearly through.

I am of course very busy since my return from town. I hope you will have a splendid visit to America. The 'Century' does not want any Scotch stories I suppose? (this is the cloven foot)<sup>2</sup>

Yours ever

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> See letter 8. Crockett backtracking on the poetry.

<sup>2</sup> He wrote cloven hoof, crossed it out and wrote foot. Which is interesting as it turns the expression from one suggesting 'the devil' to one suggesting 'bovine.' Subtle humour?

## Letter 10.

FCM

Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 1893

Dear Mr Unwin,

I fear I must very indifferently have expressed my meaning. I did not at all mean that poetry was not in your line – only that my verses were not. I have largely lost taste for them myself. They are a past issue for me, and would not troubled [sic]about them, but that a number of people occasionally worry me to send them some of my old verses – and others (Nicholl, Over etc) want me to publish them. I quite agree that they are not worth it.<sup>1</sup> I think however that you will change your mind about the fiction. I have not had a show yet in fiction.<sup>2</sup> 'The Galloway Herd' needs pulling together and rewriting; when it will be something, but I have something in my head which

ought to do. We shall see.<sup>3</sup> I shall get off in July and August to an island in the Solway, where I am to write a story of four very lively Crusoes<sup>4</sup> which I shall try to make as realistic as your reader wished<sup>5</sup> - there is a love story in it too and I shall try to put in the two-o'clock in the morning feeling which one has when one must get up and go off to tramp flounders for breakfast. That's realistic enough, if you like.<sup>6</sup> I've a good title too - which you shall hear all in good time. <sup>7</sup>At that season, you will be grilling at Chicago - not so? That will be an added coolness for me to think of it!

The 'Stickit' and all his clan are really fictitious [sic] There are types of course; but not a single one of them can possibly be localised. <sup>8</sup> Generally they are wholly, as stories, stories; though the environment and characteristics are drawn as near the quick as possible.<sup>9</sup> I don't want to settle down to short stories - though that is what is most quickly marketable for me, I find. <sup>10</sup>

There is only the second Revise of the 'Stickit' now and then it is off hand! <sup>11</sup>

Again thanking you for your kindness and with best wishes,

I am

Always truly yours

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> SRC is not going to let his fiction be jeopardised by the poetry. Again, it's hard to tell here whether this is all some shrewd business move, or whether he's just being open and wanting to 'give' Unwin the first chance on all his work. Once A.P.Watt takes over managing his work these kind of 'confusions' will stop. If nothing else SRC quickly becomes aware he needs 'managing' by a (or in this case 'the') professional.

<sup>2</sup> And this is what he really wants to achieve. See later in this letter regarding his desire to move on from short stories.

<sup>3</sup> He knows the Galloway Herd isn't right yet, but still hopes to work on it.

<sup>4</sup> This is the first reference to *The Raiders*, which is partly set on Rathen (Hestan) island in the Solway.

<sup>5</sup> Shows that there are concerns of 'realism' - which is a whole area for discussion - SRC continues to show that he understands the parameters (and constraints) of realistic writing. The 'reader' is probably Edward Garnett, who was Unwin's reader at the time. He worked as an editor and reader for other London publishing houses. He mentored Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford and later befriended D.H.Lawrence. He was keen on 'realist' fiction - but of course we have to interrogate the term 'realism' within the context of the day.

<sup>6</sup> SRC uses humour to show his understanding of 'realism.' We can appreciate today that the realism of rural Galloway in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was different from that of post First World War 'realism' and/or that of late 20<sup>th</sup> century realism. Context is everything when considering these comments.

<sup>7</sup> Crockett originally wanted to call *The Raiders*, *The Dark o' the Moon* but this title was turned down on the basis that readers might not understand the reference. He saved the title for the sequel, published in 1902 when it was his name that would sell books rather than the titles themselves.

<sup>8</sup> Again this suggests conversations about 'realism' and the possibility of being too close to the bone by using 'real' people. Crockett generally fictionalised places and people (although he got into some trouble with Mad Sir Uchtred early in his career, and some claims of plagiarism - which were rife throughout the whole publishing world at that time as J.M.Barrie commented on - may have made him more careful as he progressed through his career.

<sup>9</sup> Crockett's realism is there, however, despite fictionalising places and people. He is drawing from life.

<sup>10</sup> He states clearly that he has designs greater than short story writing. But is well aware of the commercial reality. He knows that he's on the cusp of a 'big break' He also knows success is not assured.

<sup>11</sup> Stickit is at 2<sup>nd</sup> Revision stage less than a month from publishing.

## Letter 11.

FCM

Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1893

My Dear Mr Unwin,

Your delightful note came in just now and set me to thinking. You are open for a Pseudonym. Well, I think I could advantageously cut 'The Galloway Herd' to the size of 'A New England Cactus'<sup>1</sup> or a little more. I see my way to straighten out the plot, leave out the Introductory Chapters (which make a story by themselves) leave out the French part and generally make more idyllic and less melodramatic.<sup>2</sup>

I send 'The Herd' with an indication of what chapters could be left out. Wylie will tell you that it lifted the circulation of the Leader some thousands in a few weeks and that more than a thousand dropped the week it stopped. I need not tell you Dr Nicoll's opinion of it. You are quite as able to judge as he. I could improve greatly as I went along, and if you say the word I would leave other work and deliver MS currently week by week. I would need to go over each chapter. If you think the idea would do, I am game to go ahead. I would start with chapter IV which is a London Chapter.<sup>3</sup>

I have the main article in the Bookman this month 'The Apprenticeship of Robert Louis Stevenson'<sup>4</sup> It may interest you to see it.

When you return the Herd (in any case whether you want it now or not) you might send the spare sketches.<sup>5</sup> Take a look at the 'Sweetheart Travellers' sketches. They will make a book some day, with some illustrations.<sup>6</sup> I am going to send Mrs Fisher Unwin a portrait of my sweetheart aged 4 ½. We have great journeys together – and are planning more this summer.<sup>7</sup>

Alas, there is almost a snow block outside, and our mails etc have to go by horse (mailbags across saddle) as in the Olden time when things were so jolly –uncomfortable.<sup>8</sup>

With kind regards

Ever truly yours

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> A New England Cactus and other stories by Frank Pope Humphreys, published 1892 by TFU.

<sup>2</sup> Crockett still trying to turn A Galloway Herd into a suitable novel. The conflict between 'realism' and 'melodrama' is obviously being played out.

<sup>3</sup> SRC tenaciously showing that others have faith in the basic story.

<sup>4</sup> I have not been able to source this article but would be very interested to do so. There is short reference to aprt

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of it in Nash's 2007 'Kailyard and Scottish literature.'

<sup>5</sup> Giving TFU the choice – accept or reject

<sup>6</sup> *Sweetheart Travellers* was indeed published as a book (by Wells, Gardner, Darton and Co) in 1896.

<sup>7</sup> These are journeys in the Glenkens, undertaken during Crockett's holiday there in July/August 1893.

<sup>8</sup> Interesting personal detail regarding the post (which from the amount of letters that went back and forth and the speed with which they were answered shows that the late 19<sup>th</sup> century could teach the early 21<sup>st</sup> century a thing or two – but that weather always plays an impact on post. The joke about the 'Olden days' is vintage SRC and once again shows he never takes himself too seriously.

## Letter 12.

March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1893

FCM

Dear Mr Unwin

I would like to see a copy of the second revise of the 'Stickit' London printers (comps) setting up of Scotch are apt to make some strange mistakes. It is better rightly done.<sup>1</sup> Might I ask you to send a copy to D.R.Somerville, Christian Leader Office, Glasgow

He is an admirable proof reader of Scotch and already passed them for serial publication.

Yours very truly

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> Shows an awareness of the requirement for Scots to be proof read by Scots!

### Letter 13.

March 6<sup>th</sup> 1893

FCM

Dear Mr Unwin,

I daresay you are right about *The Herd*. An author cannot quite be fair to the merit of 'his first, his eldest child.' But I still think I can make something of *The Herd*. We shall see. <sup>1</sup> I shall at all events take your advice and lay it aside and see what I think of it a year or two after this. There is a story of Barrie's in 'The Young Man' which he would gladly see fathom deep.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it will be so someday with *The Herd*.<sup>3</sup> It is all right about the second revise. You and I counted differently, that was all. I counted – Proof, Revise – you Proof 2<sup>nd</sup> Revise – but I daresay that it'll be all right. There are no extra errors that I know of. You will, of course, look after the Canadian market. Some of their papers reprinted many of them, and I have letters nearly every week asking me about them – chiefly from Toronto. You will in some form and with or without consideration as is you [sic] custom let me have 25 copies when it comes out. <sup>4</sup>

I hope that you did not think that I wanted to worry you again about the *Herd* – but I always think there is no harm in asking. Sometimes great things come out of little (which is a frightfully banal saying... and I wanted you to know that if I could do anything, I shall be glad to do it, if what I had or could do suited you. You understand?<sup>5</sup>

I am glad you like 'Sweetheart Travellers.' I have one or two more journeys with her in print, which I shall send to you sometime if you care to see them.<sup>6</sup> I send you a picture of the Sweetheart herself to brighten your office withal... she and I are already planning our journeys for this year... in spite of the fearful weather.

With kind regards

Yours faithfully

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<sup>1</sup> SRC more or less gives up on placing *The Herd* with Unwin. Defers to publisher again, somewhat reluctantly. 'We shall see' is something of a stock phrase of his in these circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Barrie's 'Better Dead.'

<sup>3</sup> It did indeed prove to be. SRC abandoned it and was irritated to discover, some time later, that a pirated copy was published in America. He never revised an edition in his lifetime and the modern reader can see that it is episodic in form, perhaps too experimental or loose in form for its time and the French sections do seem strange at times, but it's a good read anyway, and a good insight into his early novel writing process as he tries to transition from short story to novel form.

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<sup>4</sup> Business terms being confirmed. Later he would rely on Watt to make these kind of negotiations. It serves to remind the modern reader quite how complex affairs could be for a writer – and this is just one book. Soon he would be juggling multiple works and the financial/contractual dealings are extensive (as the Watt archives attest)

<sup>5</sup> Again, just making it clear that he's simply testing out the water – 'I always think there's no harm in asking' – gives us an illustration of his attitude at the time.

<sup>6</sup> Shows that 'Sweetheart' stories were already yielding some income, three years before publication of the full book. We see SRC is already spinning multiple plates as regards published material.

## Letter 14.

March 20<sup>th</sup> 1893<sup>1</sup>

FCM

Dear Mr Unwin

The 'Stickit' has turned up and I need hardly say that I am very much pleased with it. I would be hard to please if I was not. You have given it a very pleasant dress, and it is not your fault if it does not catch on. It is thicker than I thought it would be, but that will be an advantage, in the eyes of the common bookseller. It certainly looks – to use the dialect, 'douce an' sonsy baith.'<sup>2</sup>

Yes, the critics must soon take their will of it. I am sure to start with a dressing down from the National Observer<sup>3</sup> and the Scotsman, being politically at daggers drawn with the conductors of these admirably 'Tory Savage' papers.<sup>4</sup>

But they say a good slating does not hurt.

With kind regards, I am ever truly yours

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> Publication day!

<sup>2</sup> Any first time published author will appreciate the feeling SRC explains here.

<sup>3</sup> The National Observer was published from 1889 to 1897. Initially named the *Scots Observer* its location was moved from Edinburgh to London in 1889. It was a conservative paper and the editor in 1893 was William Ernest Henley (friend of RLS). Henley is a significant figure as regards the emergence of the 'Kailyard' slur and the reasons for this will be explored elsewhere. At this point it's worth simply noting that The National Observer was a commercial rival of Nicoll's The British Weekly/Bookman and as such Henley had 'an agenda.' SRC is well aware of these rivalries and their possible consequences.

<sup>4</sup> The Scotsman was also (and remains) a conservative paper (you may wish to add a big C). Interestingly, SRC's son Philip worked there for a time as a journalist and SRC fictionalises both it as The Scottish Thistle in The Smugglers (1911) in which Philip is loosely fictionalised as Paul Wester.



## Letter 15.

April 14<sup>th</sup>

Dear Mr Unwin

You will be on your way to the State, I fear, before this reaches you. The reviews of 'The Stickit' have been so far good – I hope it begins to go off. I suppose the printer has kept back the copies. You were good enough to say that you would send the other 21 copies a fortnight ago to me. They have not turned up yet, but will no doubt do so in good time.<sup>1</sup> The Editor of the British Weekly wrote me to say that no review copy had been sent to him either for the British Weekly or for the Bookman. I sent him one for the BW – one of the four I had as early copies. Will you please send one to Dr Robertson Nicoll, Editor of the Bookman, 27 Paternoster Row – <sup>2</sup> I hear that Sir George Douglas, Author of 'the New Border Tales' is to review me in the Bookman. <sup>3</sup>A review there would do us good. No doubt the matter has been overlooked.

Hoping that you will have a very happy voyage and land travel as well

I am, ever truly,

SRC

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<sup>1</sup> The all too usual interaction between publisher and author over 'author copies'. SRC showing that he's on the ball at least. From the 4 copies he's already had, he sent one to RLS (which never arrived)

<sup>2</sup> It's interesting the business like tone of this letter. As we saw in letter 15, SRC knows that he may receive poor reviews from the Tory papers, but TFU is well aware of WRN. Both worked for Hodder & Stoughton, but as TFU left H&S in 1882 to set up his own publishing house perhaps SRC is concerned that Unwin won't push a review hard enough in this direction where he is likely to get a better reception than from the 'rival' Tory papers.

<sup>3</sup> George Brisbane Scott Douglas (1856–1935) was a Scottish poet and writer, as well as a Baronet who authored some of his books under the name of Sir George Douglas. Given his background he isn't likely to have been 'on side' for Crockett's style of writing but his New Border Tales, published 1892 by Walter Scott were successful works at the time. I have not read them so can draw no comparison. Nor have I managed to find his review in Bookman. It all serves to remind us, however, of the small (potentially nepotistic) world of publishing at the time. Breaking into this world required stamina and connections every bit as much as 'talent.' That SRC achieved this given his background is nothing short of remarkable. It's perhaps not remarkable that he was not fully accepted in all quarters either! Yes, I'm suggesting that class issues as well as commercial ones played their part (especially in the 'emergence' of the Kailyard criticisms which derived from the very quarters noted in these letters.) There is a bigger picture to be researched in this area.

## Letter 16.

April 27<sup>th</sup>

FCM

Dear Sir,<sup>1</sup>

I shall surely send you a new preface for the second edition at once. Mr Unwin mentioned better terms for second edition. I think 1/6<sup>th</sup> or 10d a copy would be right. What do you say – that would be fair and give you every inducement still to push the book<sup>2</sup>. I would like to alter one bad mistake in split in the Marrow Kirk<sup>3</sup>

Yours ever

SRC

(you will of course see to advertising it)

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<sup>1</sup> SRC is now dealing with a 'clerk' as Unwin is abroad. The tone is therefore entirely businesslike.

<sup>2</sup> Interesting to note the sums involved. And the desire to promote. Stickit would go into many editions in the following months and years, but at this stage SRC is still fighting hard to make sure it is a 'success.' He knows it's important to keep the publisher on side and working!

<sup>3</sup> Ah, typos. It was ever thus.

## Letter 17.

April 28<sup>th</sup>

Dear Sir

Herewith Prefatory Letter to RLS for preface to 2<sup>nd</sup> edn Stickit Minister<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> And the adventure was off and running. There's much more to be said about this Prefatory Letter and the RLS correspondence. The Raiders website has some information but more work is underway.