

ARTICLES FROM THE PRESS NOVEMBER 1894.

**Longman's Magazine, November 1894**

At the Sign of the Ship (Andrew Lang)

Mr Crockett's Lilac Sunbonnet 'needs no bush'. Here is a pretty love tale, and the landscape and rural descriptions carry the exile back into the Kingdom of Galloway. Here, indeed, is the scent of bog myrtle and pet. After inquiries among the fair, I learn that of all romances they love best, not 'sociology', not 'theology,' still less open manslaughter for a motive, but just love's young dream chapter after chapter. From Mr Crockett they get what they want, 'hot with,' as Thackeray admits that he liked it. Open manslaughter is more to an elderly taste, perhaps, since the world must still be peopled, whereas many romancers only depopulate it. Not without a mantling blush can I contemplate these Galwegian endearments, though 'dallying with the innocence of love.' On points of choronology and botany I do not feel satisfied. Do hawthorn, poppies and grass of Parnassus all bloom at once, in June, in Galloway? Let us hope so, but 'I hae ma doots' - about the grass of Parnassus especially. As to history, we find a grandmother who had been wooed by officers, including an ensign, that fought at Fontenoy (p39). Fontenoy was in 1744 or 1745 (I write far from books), but I know that men who, at Fontenoy, stood well, ran like hairs at Falkirk. Well, put the granny's age at twenty when the warriors wooed her. She was born then, say, in 1725, she married forty-five years ago, at the time of the tale, at twenty three. That brings her to 1773. Yet she is reading *Waverley* (1814), *Nigel* (1822) and she quotes:

Up wi' the bonnets o' Bonny Dundee!

Now there is an old Scotch song of 'Bonny Dundas and Bonny Dundee.'

I have na slain, I have na stolen  
I've done nae man an injurie  
I've only -

Behaved in the most reprehensible manner as regards -

The Bailie's dochter o' Bonny Dundee!

That song is old, but 'To the lords of Convention 'twas Claverhouse spoke,' was written by Sir Walter in 1826, if my memory is worth a plack. Here, then, in 1773, is an old granny anticipating the future by no less than fifty three long years. Taking fifty years, not forty-five (on another statement) as the duration of the old lady's wedded life, she is still forty-eight years in advance of her age. But she had worn the white cockade, and much must be forgiven to her.

As the indispensable person 'round the corner,' the Edie Ochiltree of the tale, Mr Crockett has an excellent village idiot of the soundest sense and most judicious conduct. The Omadhaun, as usual, is the real working hero, and easily defeats the wicked squire. For myself, I could do without the wicked squire; have met him before in romance, and this one is hardly a Brian de Bois Gilbert. His nemsis is most appropriate and deserved;

still, anything transpontine is out of place in this idyll of a Galloway Daphnis and Chole. Were I engaged on historical introductions to the tales of the land of the wild Picts, I would assuredly try to tell the public what 'The Marrow Controversy' and the Marrow Kirk were. The English never knew, the Scotch have forgotten, yet the Marrow is a potent factor in the legend. It was, in fact, after the Roman and the Episcopal Churches had been properly trampled upon, a nice internal occasion of fanaticism, dourness, and persecutions; a marrow bone for ministers to worry. But the unhistorical reader will understand so much as that, and the public bitterly resent information. Nobody can say this time that Mr Crockett is ploughing with heifers from the studs of Mr Barrie or Mr Stevenson. As his topic is rural, perhaps he will be accused of emulating Mr Thomas Hardy; and he does, but surely the country is not an exclusive preserve. There is no copyright in cows, and byres, and milk-maids, nor are Mr Crockett's milkmaids at all like those of the other great authority.

### **The Bookman November 1894**

#### **The Lilac Sunbonnet**

It seems to us but a few weeks ago since we had the pleasure of reading Mr Crockett's 'Raiders.' And now the result of another 'raid' is in the hands of the reading public. In his former book the author took his readers into the wilds of Galloway, till then terra incognita to the outside world. He made us acquainted with the wild race of gypsies - the Faas and the Marshalls, the Rob Roys of the Southern Highlands, who, secure in the fastnesses of the rough glens, made a raid from time to time and despoiled the more peaceful and law-abiding inhabitants of the plains below. The book was full of fascination, and the descriptions so breathing the spirit of grey hills and deep glens that the reader laid down the story only to feel the spell still remaining. In 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' Mr Crockett again takes his readers to the same happy hunting ground, but the period of the story is less remote than that of 'The Raiders'. Once more we have the healthy breath of winds sweeping the gray hillside, the same lochs and rivers, the moan or whisper of trees, storm and witchery of sunlight - in short, all that endears Galloway to the true Gallovidian. In this new book of Mr Crockett's what strikes us most is the infinite charm of the pictures he describes. The author has a keen perception of the beauties of landscape and an eye quick to note all the variety of change in the lights and shadows that come and go on hillside and mountain. The story itself is truly a love story, and the author has given us, in the character of the heroine, Winsome Charteris, as fine a portrait as can be met with in the whole range of fiction. The story is a series of little idylls, each full of exquisite descriptions of rural life and its manners and customs. We are not stretching our praise too far when we venture to name Mr Crockett a Scotch Theocritus in prose. And here we would instance such chapter as 'The Love Song of the Mavis,' 'Midsummer Dawn,' 'The Dark of the Moon at the Grannoch Bridge,' and others in which the descriptions are masterly, and true to the very heart of the things written about. Ralph Peden, the hero of the story, is the son of Gilbert Peden, the Metropolitan Marrow minister who resides in James's Court, Edinburgh, and is sent by his father to his old friend Allan Welsh, minister of the Marrow Kirk in Dullarg. And here the story opens and the wearer of the lilac sunbonnet steps in to play sad havoc with the note-books, commentaries, and Hebrew lexicon of the young student who comes to the

Manse of Dullarg to prepare his trial sermon, for he is the hope of the people of the Marrow faith. No wonder that he neglected his studies - here is the portrait of Winsome Charteris:

*'Fair hair, crimping and tendrilling over her brow, swept back in loose and flossy circlets till caught close behind her head by a tiny ribbon of blue—then again escaping it went scattering and wavering over her shoulders wonderingly, like nothing on earth but Winsome Charteris's hair... eyes which, emulating the parish poet, we can only describe as like two blue waves when they rise just far enough to catch a sparkle of light on their crests. The subject of her mouth, though tempting, we refuse to touch. Its description has already wrecked three promising reputations.'*

Into the story itself we do not propose to enter. But we cannot lay down the book without drawing attention to the Farm Town of Craig Ronald, and the sad, pathetic figure of Walter Skirving, a cavalier Puritan, sitting there, powerless though still erect and firm, gazing through the window on the far-away Galloway hills, and dreaming of many things and saying little, though the old fires still smoulder in his heart. We consider this the finest thing in 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' - a story which is sure to add to the fame of its author, and to raise high hopes for the next volume from his pen.

Alexander Anderson.

### November 1<sup>st</sup>. The British Weekly.

#### The True Story of Mr Crockett's Kirk of the Marrow.

It is interesting to know that the much criticised incident of the ministers' mutual deposition in Mr Crockett's 'Lilac Sunbonnet' is not only based upon authority, but is (allowing for the difference between fiction and fact) actually true. The Kirk of the Marrow of the story represents the Nemesis of one of the splits into which about fifty years ago the Original Secession Kirk was rent, upon questions which to a Southern eye seem altogether infinitesimal.

Briefly, the history of the case is as follows. The two ministers who mutually desposed one another were the Rev James Wright of Laurieston-street Original Secession Church, Edinburgh, and the Rev Mr Lambie of Pitcairngreen, about eleven miles from Perth. With the exception of the change from Perth to Galloway, Mr Crockett has fairly represented the circumstances other than personal of the two men in the story. They were, to begin with, both ministers of the Original Secession church. On the 18th May, 1842, a Union took place. The Synod of Original Seceders was joined to the Synod of Original Burghers, and became the Synod of the United Original Seceders. This Union appears in the novel as 'the day of the Great Apostacy.' As in the story, the two ministers stood out from the Union, dissenting and forming themselves into the True Blue Original Seceder Session Synod, as they were called, though probably not by themselves. They were the only members of that court, save their several elders, and they made up for the sparseness of their numbers by the multitude and fervency of their protests against all and sundry.

Our informant bears personal witness that every Sabbath evening year in and year out,

was occupied in the Kirk of the True Blue Edinburgh Seceders, by the Rev James Wright raising 'the testimony' against somebody or other; and the scanty congregation ever went away triumphant and rejoicing that 'he had redd them up to richts this time!' After a specially vituperative and confusing evening, the sentiments of the congregation found vent in the beadle's characteristic phrase 'Eh, sirs, but wasna the minister verra enterteenin' the nicht!'

Now these two associated remnants of the only true and protesting Kirk in Scotland had one student, whom they trained with all diligence for the ministry in the way wherein he ought to have gone.

It happened that one Saturday evening this student found his way to the manse of Pitcairngreen, probably to exhibit his gifts of preaching upon the ensuing Sabbath. The evening was agreeably spent between the hot peats of the parlour fire and the hotter fire of the minister's catechising. Suddenly, however, it was revealed to the Eli of Pitcairngreen that his young Samuel was unsound in the faith. Whereupon he told him (as in the story) that he must take his departure, the Scriptures expressly declaring that the 'faithful' must not keep company with unbelievers.

The student remonstrated, pointing out to his orthodox host the lateness of the hour, the snow that covered the ground, and the long eleven miles to Perth. Very likely also the scarceness of his bawbees, as in Ralph Peden's case, and the consequent difficulty of securing a lodging, may have weighed with the young man. But all was to no avail. The Scripture command was clear and explicit. No allowance was specified in the text for such temporal difficulties, pecuniary or local. So the poor lad had unwillingly to depart, but whether he found his Winsome and lived happily ever, the credible historian is not in a position to say.

Then in due course the Synod of two members had to try the case. They met, but instead of framing a libel against the young heretic, they discovered in the heat of argument grave cause for censure in one another. Each found deadly heresy in the other, and both were warlike and 'zealous unto slaying.' So without more said, Mr Wright solemnly deposed his erring brother Lambie, and Mr Lambie with equal solemnity deposed his colleague Wright.

Thus was truth vindicated, and in this little Armegeddon of two renowned champions of denunciation, the 'True Blue' Original and Only Secession divided itself finally like a split pea, to unite no more.

This is the true story of Mr Crockett's Kirk of the Marrow.

### **The Academy Nov 3rd 1894.**

#### **Mr Crockett's Novels**

**The Raiders, Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills, The Lilac Sunbonnet.**

The publication of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* makes it more uncertain than ever whether Mr Crockett is an original romancist or only a clever imitator - with an eye to scenery, however,

that is all his own - who can, when the call is upon him, run with Mr Barrie or hunt with Mr Stevenson. Nothing he has done since *The Stickit Minister* is at all equal to that early volume in simplicity or sincerity. But then, *The Little Minister* is not equal to *Auld Licht Idylls*, or the *Window in Thrums*: Mr Barrie, too, has yet to demonstrate that he is a novelist of the calibre, say of Mr Thomas Hardy.

Two dogmatic statements may be hazarded of these three books. *The Lilac Sunbonnet* is greatly inferior to *The Raiders*, and *Mad Sir Uchtred of the Hills* is greatly inferior to either. The last may, indeed, be dismissed as an historical impertinence in the guise of historical fiction. No doubt many extraordinary claims were put forward in behalf of the persecuted and hunted adherents of that Solemn League and Covenant which, as Burns said 'now brings a smile, now a tear.' But among them was not, so far as I am aware, the power of working miracles. Yet it is this power which is exercised by the Rev Alexander Renfield, who, when he is arrested by Sir Uchtred of Garthland, acting as the agent of Lauderdale, calls down a curse upon him, and converts him into a Galloway Nebuchadnezzar. Apart from this miracle, there is absolutely nothing in the story that can be said to be impressive. The great wild cat - which snaps weasels as if they were rotten sticks, which 'watches with yellow-irised eyes as the dreams chase themselves across the clouded brain of that man whom God had driven out to eat with the beast of the field,' and which 'that man' welcomes with 'Sweet Belus, my god!' - has the effect of a bit of low comedy thrust into the heart of a tragedy.

The love making of Randolph Dowall to his brother's wife Philippa is ineffective and unreal - mere Restoration and water. Even Mr Crockett's scenic effects are here failures. He gives one or two phrases such as 'the indigo-blue night winking with stars,' which startle by their trickiness, not by their graphic power; for it is the stars that wink not the night. As rule, however, this is the sort of thing that Mr Crockett thinks good enough for his readers.

*Then the night came. A serene and austere coolness settled down on the hills. The world was very full of sweet air to breathe. The bog myrtle, which men name 'gall of the hills,' gave forth a rare smell, and Sir Uchtred awoke out of his dream.*

Such a description is suggestive not of the open air, but of a well-ventilated sick room.

*The Lilac Sunbonnet* is strong where *Mad Sir Uchtred* is palpably weak. I cannot help quoting from one of the best chapters in it, because the passage indicated better than anything else its author's power of reproducing the influence of scenery and of night, with its awe-inspiring stillness and its eerie possibilities, upon a coarse, superstitious nature:

*He noted where, on the broad bosom of the loch, the stillness lay grey and smooth like glimmering steel, with little puffs of night wind purling across it, and disappearing like breath from a new knife-blade. He saw where the smooth satin plane rippled to the first water-break, as the stream collected itself, deep and black, with the force of the water behind it, to flow beneath the arch.*

*He looked over. He saw the stars, which were perfectly reflected a hundred yards away on the smooth expanse, first waver, then tremble, and lastly break into a myriad delicate shafts of light, as the water quickened and gathered. He spat in the water, and thought of trout for breakfast. But the long roar of the rapids of the Dee came over the hill, and a feeling of stillness with it, weird and remote. Uncertain lights shot hither and thither under the bridge, in strange gleams of reflection. The ploughman was awed. He continued to gaze. The stillness closed in*

*upon him. The aromatic breath of the pines seemed to cool him and remove him from himself. He had a sense that it was Sabbath morning, and that he had just washed his face to go to church. It was the nearest thing to worship he had ever known. Such moments come to the most material, and are their theology. Far off a solitary bird whooped and whinnied. It sounded mysterious and unknown, the cry of a lost soul. Ebie Farrish wondered where he would go to when he died.'*

Mr Crockett rather spoils the effect of this passage by making Ebie resolve 'that he would go seldomer to the village public o' nights, and that he would no more find cakes and ale pleasant to the palate.'

'Cakes and ale' and 'o' nights' are too obviously meant for English consumption; yet the quotation illustrates what is likely to be of permanent value in *The Lilac Sunbonnet*. As a story, it is ill-compacted. The love-making is painfully slow, and the lovers have an intolerable habit of making light comedy out of their own sentimentalities. There is a suspicion of Mr Barrie's Egyptian in Winsome Charteris; Ralph Peden the divinity student and distracted lover is a (physically) robust Mr Dishart; and the confession of Mr Welsh, the Marrow minister, that he is the father of Winsome Charteris, at once recalls the confession of the Dominie in *The Little Minister*, that he is Mr Dishart's father. The villainy in *The Lilac Sunbonnet* is of mere intrusion. Jess Kissock, the gipsy rival of Winsome, who intercepts letters, and Agnew Greatorix, the tipling young laird, who tries his hand at abduction, are lugged in merely in order that Ralph Peden may not have it all his own way. Mr Crockett ought, too, in this connexion to give up his bad habit of moralising in this commonplace fashion:

*black-browed Egypt, the serpent of old Nile, can sit in a country byre, and read a letter to another woman. For Cleopatra is not history; she is type.*

Galloway may be to Mr Crockett what Thrums is to Mr Barrie; or, better still what Wessex is to Mr Hardy. The love-making and the rude philosophy of Saunders Mowdiewort would seem to indicate that he cherishes an ambition of this kind. The chapter in which Saunders rehearses in his byre his intended attack on the heart and the waist of May Kissock is no doubt genuine Scotch fun, and therefore something very different from mere 'comic copy.' But he must beware of 'effects' like 'Meg's clours are like original sin, and to be borne wi' a complaisancy; but Birsie's dunts are, so to speak gratuitous, and amount to actual transgression.' This is simply an exercise in the 'new humour' by a man who has been brought up on the Confession of Faith. Shakepeare's grave-digger would have managed better; so would Joseph Poorgrass.

Before I leave *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, I must say that Mr Crockett would do well to deal with the serious charge of plagiarism which has been made against him in Scotland, and which, so far as I have seen, he has not hitherto attempted to meet. That charge is to the effect that his most notable and most distinctly Hardyesque exhibition of the humour of Scotch rusticity, the chapter entitled 'The Cuif before the Session,' has been to all appearance lifted without acknowledgement from 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III,' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow who died in 1779, and whose works were reprinted in 1883. It has been pointed out that in the chapbook there is a dialogue which runs on thus

*Mither, I hae been three or four times through the Bible and the New Testament, and I never saw a repending stool in't a; then war could the first o them come frae, the Apostles had nane of them. But adaft history book tells me, that the first o' them was used about Rome amang the Papists,*

Mr Crockett's chapter contains this:

*Mother, I've been through the Testaments mair nor yince, the New Testament mair nor twice - an' I never saw naething about stools o' repentence in the hoose o' God. But my son Saunders was readin' to me the ither nicht in a fule history buik, an' there it said that amang the Papists etc*

The Raiders is conspicuously superior to The Lilac Sunbonnet in style, in flow of narrative, and in plot. But, as I have already said, I cannot learn from it whether Mr Crockett will be a great, in the sense of an original, romancist. For one thing, it recalls too many books with which one is familiar. The love-making between Philip Heron and May Maxwell forcibly recalls one of the courtship of John Ridd and Lorna Doone. Silver Sand, otherwise John Faa, reminds one here and there of Alan Breck. The fighting makes one think of Mr Conan Doyle - at his best. However, there is little doubt that Mr Crockett has a mastery of Galloway scenery, and of the art of reproducing it with a few rapid dashes. In spite of 'The Cuif' chapter, I am disposed to believe that he has also a thorough knowledge of Galloway character. Lady Grizel is quite as good as Miss Grant in Mr Stevenson's *Catriona*; and I hope that henpecked, garrulous Sammlle Thompson is all Mr Crockett's own, for he is a delightful companion and gossip.

The fight on the Bridge of Dee, and, indeed the whole series of struggles between the outlaws and their scarcely more civilised enemies, demonstrate Mr Crockett's capacity for battle-pieces. Somehow, it is impossible to refrain from comparing him with Mr Barrie and Mr Stevenson. He has not Mr Barrie's humour, but he has a wider knowledge of Scotch nature generally. His style has not the distinction of Mr Stevenson's nor has he such an eye either for the picturesque or for the virile in scoundrelism. But he has more sympathy wit the average men, and still more with the average women. Neither the May Mischief of *The Raiders* nor the Winsome Charteris of *The Lilac Sunbonnet* is such an artistic creation as *Catriona*; but both are more distinctly girlish and natural. Yet Mr Crockett has done nothing so memorable as both Mr Barrie and Mr Stevenson have done. His achievements prove nothing as to the future. They may be but the preliminary canthers of a genius; or they may be the best work of a second-rate writer who has struck oil.

William Wallace.

### **The Literary World Nov 9th 1894**

#### **Mr Crockett's Latest.**

The diametrically opposite estimates formed of Mr Crockett's new story, *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, do not surprise us at all. It is open to any man in discussing his fish either to choke himself with the bones and swear at the 'meat', or to put the bones quietly to the side of his plate, and eat his fish with gladness and singleness of heart giving thanks.

As for ourselves, we prefer the latter method as being in most accord with common sense and true profit. No one with half an eye open can fail to see without the help of a magnifying glass the defects of *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, but it would be nothing short of a literary crime to let these little blemishes and crudities spoil the enjoyment of as pure, delightful, and inspiring a love-idyll as has been penned for many a long day. Besides it

is now an open secret that *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, though the last to be published, was really written some time before *The Raiders*, and may be expected to show some marks of the 'prentice hand.' 'Prentice hand or not Mr Crockett works in such an atmosphere of light, and with so deft and skilful a touch, as may well be the envy and despair of some more experienced writers.

The story opens with Ralph Peden - the rising hope of his father and 'the Marrow Kirk' - asking his way of 'an exceeding handsome maid,' Jess Kissock by name. Ralph was going to spend a time of final preparatory study before entering upon the Marrow Kirk ministry, with his father's friend and only fellow minister, the Rev Allan Welsh. Fate, however, in the shape of Winsome Charteris, comes between him and his books, and forces him to think that the proper study of young mankind is woman. By accident he sees Winsome at a rural Scotch washing by the riverside, and the die is cast. Who could resist such charms as these?

*Fair hair, crisping and tendrilling over her brow, swept back in loose and flossy circlets till caught close behind her head by a tiny ribbon of blue—then again escaping it went scattering and wavering over her shoulders wonderingly, like nothing on earth but Winsome Charteris's hair. It was small wonder that the local poets grew grey before their time in trying to find a rhyme for 'sunshine,' a substantive which, for the first time, they had applied to a girl's hair. For the rest, a face rather oval than long, a nose which the schoolmaster declared was 'statuesque' (used in a good sense, he explained to the village folk, who could never be brought to see the difference between a statue and an idol—the second commandment being of literal interpretation along the Loch Grannoch side), and eyes which, emulating the parish poet, we can only describe as like two blue waves when they rise just far enough to catch a sparkle of light on their crests. The subject of her mouth, though tempting, we refuse to touch. Its description has already wrecked three promising reputations.*

Ralph, being a poet, falls desperately in love and enters upon the wooing with all a poet's ardour. How the hearts of the twain grew to each other and how the course of love flowed, our readers must find out for themselves in Mr Crockett's pages. Suffice it to say the story is told with a naivete, an insight into the workings of the human heart, a humour and joyous abandon which leave little to be desired. Nor must we forget to add that the charm of the story is largely to be attributed to its setting of unconventional out-of-doors country life, and its grouping of various types of bucolic and religious character.

The Kissock family play a considerable part in the story, and are vividly drawn. Meg, with her shrewish tongue but deep and unfaltering loyalty of heart to her young mistress Winsome; Jess, with her gipsy beauty and blood, equally ready to throw herself into the arms of Ralph, the hero of the story, with whom she thought herself desperately in love, or those of the villain Agnew Greatorix; the young unbroken colt Andra, who hated school, but was an adept at 'trout tickling,' and who loved to dwell in the glorious realms of romance. As Mr Crockett is happiest in his delineation of boy character, we cannot resist a short quotation just here:

*Biting the dust*

*when Dick Little came across the bridge he was greeted by Andra Kissock with the information that he was in the clutches of *The Avenger of Blood*, who, mounted upon a mettled steed with remarkably dirty feet, curveted across the road and held the pass. He was required to give up a 'soda scone or his life.' The bold Dick, who had caught the infection, stoutly refused*

*to yield either. His life was dear to him, but a soda scone considerably dearer. He had rather be dead than hungry.*

*'Then die, traitor!' said Andra, throwing down his bag, all forgetful of Winsome Charteris's precious parcel and his promises thereanent. So these two brave champions had at one another with most surprising valour.*

*They were armed with wooden swords as long as themselves, which they manoeuvred with both hands in a marvellously savage manner. When a blow did happen to get home, the dust flew out of their jackets. But still the champions fought on. They were in the act of finishing the quarrel by the submission of Dick in due form, when Allan Welsh, passing across the bridge on one of his pastoral visitations, came upon them suddenly. Dick was on his knees at the time, his hands on the ground, and Andra was forcing his head determinedly down toward the surface of the king's highway. Meanwhile Dick was objecting in the most vigorous way.*

*'Boys,' said the stern, quiet voice of the minister, 'what are you doing to each other? Are you aware it is against both the law of God and man to fight in this way? It is only from the beasts that perish that we expect such conduct.'*

*'If ye please, sir,' answered Andra in a shamefaced way, yet with the assurance of one who knows that he has the authorities on his side, 'Dick Little wull no bite the dust.'*

*'Bite the dust!—what do you mean, laddie?' asked the minister, frowning.*

*'Weel sir, if ye please, sir, the Buik says that the yin that got his licks fell down and bit the dust. Noo, Dick's doon fair aneuch. Ye nicht speak till him to bite the dust.'*

*And Andra, clothed in the garments of conscious rectitude, stood back to give the minister room to deliver his rebuke.*

*The stern face of the minister relaxed.*

*'Be off with you to school,' he said; 'I'll look in to see if you have got there in the afternoon.'*

*Andra and Dick scampered down the road, snatching their satchels as they ran. In half an hour they were making momentary music under the avenging birch rod of Duncan Duncanson, the learned Dullarg schoolmaster.*

Up to recent years no class of people in Scotland had such marked individuality of character as the church beadles. 'Chartered libertines' as far as freedom of speech was concerned at any rate, they made good use of their opportunities, and often domineered over the minister, and all his belongings. Mr Crockett convulses us with laughter by his delineations of Saunders Mowdiewort, the simpleton beadle of the Dullarg Marrow Kirk, and his sharper city fellow-officer John Bairdieson. Ralph's father, general factotum, household servant, church officer and synod's officer, and beadle to boot. One of the most entertaining chapters in the book is that devoted to 'The Meeting of the Synod.' This said synod consisted of Reverent Gilbert Peden, moderator, and Reverend Allan Welsh, clerk, together with John Bairdieson, synod officer. When the two divines excommunicated each other, John Bairdieson ran into the street, 'bitter and honest tears' running down his cheeks, while he cried 'There's nae kirk o' God in puir Scotland ony mair!' and yet this same John had urged Ralph to tell a lie or two to keep in his father's favour! Mr Crockett has not been able to resist the temptation to caricature somewhat the feeble ecclesiastical folk known as Cameronians, but it is done so frankly and in

such good humour that only the most thin-skinned could take offence at it. Our space is gone, but we trust we have said enough to send our readers to the book with the zest of expectation.

### The Academy November 10th 1894

#### CORRESPONDENCE

*A charge of Plagiarism.*

*Penicuik, Midlothian, Nov 5th 1894.*

*Mr William Wallace's review of my novels in the Academy of November 3 contains the following passage which I must ask you to reprint:*

*Before I leave The Lilac Sunbonnet, I must say that Mr Crockett would do well to deal with the serious charge of plagiarism which has been made against him in Scotland, and which, so far as I have seen, he has not hitherto attempted to meet. That charge is to the effect that his most notable and most distinctly Hardy-esque exhibition of the humour of Scotch rusticity, the chapter entitled 'The Cuif before the Session,' has been to all appearance lifted without acknowledgement from 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III,' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow who died in 1779, and whose works were reprinted in 1883. It has been pointed out that in the chapbook there is a dialogue which runs on thus*

*Mither, I hae been three or four times through the Bible and the New Testament, and I never saw a repending stool in't a; then war could the first o them come frae, the Apostles had nane of them. But adaft history book tells me, that the first o' them was used about Rome amang the Papists,*

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*The 'serious charge' has already done duty in the Glasgow Herald, and in the Literary World.*

*I have said it thrice:*

*What I tell you three times is true!*

*Says another Bellman, whom I do know - him of teh Hunting of the Snark. Mr Allace, or someone, has told the universe three times that I am a plagiarist. How true the remark is you may judge. I never saw, or to my knowledge, even heard of the works of Dugald Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow. I saw his name printed for the first time in the accusation of the plagiarism itself.*

*But I did read, a year or so before writing The Lilac Sunbonnet, an old anonymous chapbook, one of a multitude such which I then studied; and in that tract, as in my novel,*

*and as in a familiar ingle-nook tale told in every farm-kitchen in Galloway, a man gets his mother to plead his cause before the Kirk Session.*

*The extract from 'Bellman' refers to a daft history book for the CAtholic origin of stools of repentence; so do I. The book in question is the Scots Magazine for Februrary 1757 pp80,81: 'Reasons for abolishing STools of Repentence.'*

*I conceive that, without the aid of literary and traditional sources of information - chapbooks, sermons, magazines - a writer on old times in Scotland would be in Mr Wallace's own state of ingenuous ignorance, and would suppose, for example, that the Covenanters did not claim the power of working miracles.*

*As Mr Wallace talks of 'my most distinctly Hardyesque exhibition,' I may remind or inform him that he is more accurate than he wots of, and that a charge precisely parallel to that which he brings against me was urged against Mr Thomas Hardy. He was said to have 'lifted' a description of certain military manoeuvres from a forgotten old book about Georgia. This kind of thing is always going on, and I do not think Mr Hardy took any further notice of his Mr William Wallace. And in this, having said my say, I propose to follow his example.*

*S.R.Crockett.*

## THE SCOTSMAN

Weds November 14th.

(See the separate article Scots National Humour)

Thursday 15th November

### **Mr Crockett at Edinburgh Literary Institute.**

Mr S.R.Crockett delivered a lecture last night at the Edinburgh Literary Institute before an audience which crowded the large hall to overflowing. The chair was occupied by Lord Provost M'Donald, who, in introducing the lecturer, said, he had after having read 'The Raiders' been induced to go for himself to see the country in which the scene of Mr Crockett's book was laid. In the summer he had made a short driving tour through Galloway and with 'The Raiders' in his hand he had enjoyed the holiday greatly (Applause.) Mr Crockett, who was very warmly received, began by claiming a particular interest in the South Side of Edinburgh, owing to his having lived in St Leonard's during his student days. He went on to say he did not know why he had called his subject 'The Humours of Trampdom.' He might as well have called it anything else, or nothing at all; but only Mr Greig had insisted on it having a name. (Laughter.) As a matter of fact, he wanted to take them to Italy and to the southerly borders of Switzerland, that bright side of the hills that turned toward the sun. Carrying out this intention, he described, in racy fashion, a walking tour which he, in company with a friend, had made in norther Italy. He gave graphic pictures of the scenery met with and of the peasant life of the districts passed through; he entertained his hearers with his impressions of the country folk with whom he had come in contact on the way; and he related in capital style a number of anedcotes of incidents and accidents that had befallen him and his companion as they

journeyed - having throughout the close attention, and as it seemed, the hearty appreciation of the audience. At the close Mr Crockett was cordially thanked. On the motion of Mr David Lewis a vote of thanks was also given to the Chairman...

### **November 16th The Literary World**

Mr S.R.Crockett's story, 'The Grey Man of Auchindrane,' will appear in The Graphic during 1896.

Mr Crockett replies, in The Academy, to the charge of plagiarism which was brought against him by a reviewer in that journal on the strength of a criticism in a Glasgow journal, to which allusion was made in these columns. Mr Crockett's reply is that he frankly admits having studied old chap-books, though he never heard of one as the work of Dugald Graham, the Skellat Bellman of Glasgow. He found in an anonymous one the idea of the man getting his mother to plead his cause before the Kirk Session; but the tale is a familiar one, he says, in every farm-kitchen in Galloway. The real defence is this: 'I conceive that, without the aid of literary and traditional sources of information - chap-books, sermons, magazines - a writer of old times in Scotland would be in Mr Wallace's (his reviewer's) own state of ingenuous ignorance' etc. We suppose the plea must be admitted, or else a great many authors beside Mr Crockett, - Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott for instance - must be dubbed 'plagiarists.'

### **The Academy Nov 19th**

The Raiders: A note.

In a letter addressed to the Academy, Mr S.R.Crockett refers to the assistance he has derived from 'literary and traditional sources of information - chapbooks, sermons, magazines.' There are few writers of reputation who, in the crucible of their imagination have not turned base metal of this kind into the purest gold. By such transmutation sprang into existence Shakespeare's finest work. To Scott, as a literary alchemist, nothing came amiss.

The present generation of writers are finding that their predecessors have used up much, if not the best, of this raw material. And now, as the question of commercial competition in literature more and more presses a writer becomes less and less anxious to indicate the sources of his inspiration. He wants to keep the field to himself; and in the event of his having 'pegged out' a particularly rich claim, he tacitly appropriates the resultant treasures of episode and fancy as the products of his own brain.

I wish to make clear that it is no part of any present purpose to pronounce how far such assumption of inventive genius on the part of a novelist is justifiable. But if we are forced to pry into the workshop of every latter-day novelist and analyse for ourselves the extent and value of his materials we may have to revise our judgement in the case of several.

Take Mr Crockett. Till The Raiders was published, we had no work of considerable value from his pen. His Scots dialect, his pawky humour, his grip of Lowland characteristics, struck me at once as delightful. But their vehicle took the shape of mere sketches, in which constructive skill was neither displayed nor required. With The Raiders Mr Crockett challenged comparison with R.L.Stevenson. The book was a great success. The critics forthwith admitted him to the higher rank of novelists, on account of

the constructive and inventive genius of which *The Raiders* apparently gives evidence. On reading the book I clinched that opinion in my own mind by admiration of the two most striking episodes - the episodes on which Mr Crockett's claim as an artist might fairly hitherto be rested. I refer to Yawkin's escape from a king's ship, and the hero's adventures in the hut near the Murder Hole.

I have before me a book with the following title 'Historical and Traditional Tales in Prose and Verse, connected with the South of Scotland, Original and Select, Kirkcudbright: Printed and published by John Nicolson 1843.' One of these tales is 'The Smugglers' by Samuel Wilson; another is 'The Murder Hole' given as anonymous. It is not too much to say that *The Raiders* owes the best part of its corporate existence to these two tales.

I may say: first, Mr Crockett makes no acknowledgement in his book; second, the details, the slightest details are practically annexed from the older tales; third, and the most serious offence, he utilises the phraseology:

#### *The Raiders Cap ix*

*'Here she comes. By the weathercock of Krabbendyk, 'tis the Seahorse boys - sloop of war of eighteen guns. See the jack at her mizzen. Mark their skyscrapers.'*

#### *The Smugglers;*

*'She's a sloop of war by G-, with her skyscrapers and royal studding sails, flying jib and spritsail - top-sail, with the Union Jack at her mizzen peak.'*

#### *Raiders Cap x*

*'He'[Captain Yawkins] would have stuck a knife in you as quick as get married on shore - and they say he was married as many as sixty seven times, the old Mahometan!*

*'And it was bonny to see the boarding nets triced up and the pikes ready, the pistols all primed and the matches burning, ilka yin stuck in a linstock on the deck.'*

*'The gunners were dumping round shot on the boards, and the grape and cannister were coming up from below.'*

#### The Smugglers

*'Cast off breechings and muzzle-lashings, overhaul the gun-tackles, prime your guns fore and aft, and get your matched lighted - trice up the boarding nettings and see your pikes and pistols ready - the first man aboard that offers to flinch his quarters shall have my cutlass in his guts, by g-. Besides a goodly tier of twelve pounders on each side, the brig mounted two long eighteen pounder stern chasers, which Captain Yakens usually called his long Tome and of which he was not a little vain. These he ordered to be double shotted with round and cannister, and beside each he stuck in the deck a linstock with a match ready lighted.'*

#### Raiders

*'Down dropped the peak, round went the spars, the yards were braced and away we swung'*

#### Smugglers

*'Helm a weather' cried Yakens, 'drop the peak - square the mainyard - let go the head bowlines - brace about the headyards.'*

### Raiders

*With that he leaped down, and snatching off his wig and broad, flapping hat, he crammed them into the right-hand Long Tom, and with his own hand shot them aboard the king's man.*

### Smugglers

*Old Yakens on the quarter-deck, betwixt his two stern-chasers plucked from his bald scalp the hat and wig and tossing them on the cruiser's deck, 'Take these,' cried he, 'you lubberly dogs, for wadding to your guns.'*

### Raiders cap xix

*Where'er we see a bonny lass, we'll caa' as we gae by; Wher'er we meet wi liquor guid, we'll drink an we be dry. There's brandy at the Abbyburn, there's rum at Heston Bay, and we will go a smuggling, afore the break o' day*

(the same in the Smugglers except gin instead of rum)

Other close parallels might be quoted. In addition, of course, 'The smugglers' supplies the strong vivacious outline of the whole Yawkins episode, as reproduced by Mr Crockett.

Considerations of space prevent my dealing at any length with the anonymous tale 'The Murder Hole.' Mr Crockett here uses the material but little of the phraseology. Its story is shortly this. A moor between Ayrshire and Galloway had become notorious owing to the disappearance of travellers. A pedlar-boy, crossing the moor one tempestuous night, seeks refuge at a cottage. He looks through the window, sees an old woman scrubbing the floor and strewing it with sand, and her two sons hastily thrusting some heavy body into a chest. He is seized, and, after retiring to bed, hears the murderous crew discuss his passage to the next world. He escapes, though he has not gone far before a hoarse voice exclaims: 'The Boy has fled! Let loose the bloodhound!' Eventually he baffles his pursuers, though he has fallen and hurt himself severely on a heap of stones.

Readers of *The Raiders* will be at no loss to gather from the above brief analysis the origin of an extremely clever and racy portion of Mr Crockett's volume.

Wilfully or not, Mr Crockett, by his reticence, suggests the impression that *The Raiders* is, in every respect, his own. So far as the popularity of his work is concerned, he would not have suffered by indicating his indebtedness. Literary reputation is not a thing to be played with.

X

### The Academy Nov 24th.

Correspondence *The Raiders*

*Penicuik Nov 17th 1894.*

*I am more than delighted that Mr William Wallace disassociates himself from the charge which I understood him to have repeated in *The Academy*. I heartily apologise to him for my misapprehension, which, however, I think he will allow was a somewhat natural one.*

*Then we have 'X' which I understand implies an unknown quantity. I am not surprised at many X's; but I confess that I am surprised that the Academy should think*

*it worth its while to take a hand in the merry game.*

*Of course I have repeatedly and publicly declared that in *The Raiders* I endeavoured to reset the best known of Galloway traditions, as others have done and are doing. My friend Sir Herbert Maxwell wrote for *Blackwood's* a version of the 'Murder Hole' legend simultaneously with mine in *The Raiders*. Neither of us knew that the other was doing it. Yet, as I think you will agree, we had a perfect right severally to do our best with these stories and common traditions. I only wish there were more of them to make use of.*

*It is of course, perfectly absurd to suppose that I ever dreamed of concealing my indebtedness to Mr James Nicholson's *Traditional Tales of Galloway*. The editor is alive, and is today my most kind and able helper in obtaining material on which to found my stories.*

*Strange as it may see, I do not claim to have invented Galloway or its traditional records: I only claim, as the humblest of her sons, to have written affectionately about her, that what I love so well others might come to love also.*

*The *Traditional Tales* is in nearly every house in Galloway. The living representative of Samuel Wilson is my friend. Mr Nicholson himself is at present assisting me in obtaining material for a pendant to *The Raiders* - a story which may concern itself with the later 'Levellers' of Galloway. As in *The Raiders*, I shall again be indebted to Mr Nicholson's *Traditional Tales*, to Trotter's excellent *Galloway Gossip* (alas! That one volume has been published) to Mactaggart's *Galloway Encyclopdia*, to the *Castle Douglas Miscellany*, to the *Dumfreis Magazine* (I make a present of these to X and his industrious clan). If I knew any more sources I should be glad to use them, and to stick as closely to them as I possibly could.*

*But as a lesson in the folly of the effete double-columns dodge, it is instructive to turn to Scott's Preface to *Guy Mannering* itself. Here there are parallels quite as close as those which the Academy has done me the honour to print. Says Scott:*

*'In his proper element Yawkins was equally successful... the dauntless free trader instantly weighed anchor, and bore down between the luggers so close that he tossed his hat on the deck of one and his wig on the deck of the other, hoisted a cask to her maintop to show his occupation, and bore away under an extraordinary press of canvas.'*

*Here is it not obvious that Sir Walter has also been plagiarising from the *Traditions* - perhaps also from Mr Stevenson, as witness of the very suspicious use of the word 'extraordinary'? A reputation like Scott's 'ought not to be played with,' as sayeth the moral but strictly anonymous X.'*

*Seriously, I hold that Scott, or Sir Herbert Maxell, or I, or anyone else, has a perfect right to use all traditional and other material contemporary with the period which he desires to illustrate, and to use it as accurately as possible. For my part I don't know how a lugger would manoeuvre, and cannot invent it of my own inner consciousness. But I believe the chronicler in *The Traditions* knew much better than I. VErY well. The Yawkins lugger shall manoeuvre in that way and in no other, in spite of all the X's in the world.*

*I will, in concluding, make that gentleman yet another present. In my next book, which concerns the *Covenanting* times, and is to run the whole year through the columns of *Good Words*, I believe that every scene is based accurately on documents both printed and written, in every case contemporary. The incidents of the story actually occurred. I have told them, so far as I can, in the style and language of the period. Almost every conversation can be substantiated; and the letters quoted were actually written by the characters themselves in the flesh. By the expenditure of sixpence monthly, X can insure*

*himself a great deal of instructive research, and an indefinite supply of parallel columns to any journal which may think it worth its while to print them. I am only sorry that there is so little of this splendid rough popular material extant. It is pure gold to the romancer; and wherever I can lay hold of it and use it, why, I intend to 'do it and do it again.'*

*SR Crockett.*

Hampstead Nov 20th

*From information supplied by Mr Crockett, I published an account of his work in the Bookman for April 1894. There it was stated that his true Quellen was to be found in a volume entitled Traditionary and Historical Traditions of Galloway published by Nicholsson at Kirkcudbright about 1840.*

*Previously in October, 1893, and on the authority of a statement made to me by Mr Crockett, I had stated that The Raiders was based upon Galloway legends. Mr Nicholson, I understand, is still alive, and engaged in collecting legendary and other material in Galloway for Mr Crockett.*

*W. Robertson Nicoll.*

Covenanting Miracles

*St Andrews Nov 22, 1894.*

*I have not time to give Mr Wallace complete references for the Covenanting claims to miraculous powers; that I could prove they worked miracles I did not assert. Mr Wallace may remember the death of Rothes; other cases he will find in Blackadder, Blair, Walker and Wodrow. If he wants chapter and verse I can supply them next week.*

*A. Lang.*

**The Athenaeum Nov 24th .**

The Lilac Sunbonnet.

To readers who saw both accomplishment and promise in The Stickit Minister and The Raiders, the authors new volume must prove disappointing. The Lilac Sunbonnet contains the idea and some of the materials of a beautiful rustic idyl; not a little humour; not a little pathos; not a little poetry; but all is rendered ineffective, and even irritating, by hasty and loose construction. As a story the book is quite amorphous, while some of its episodes, excellent in themselves, are all but thrown away for want of harmonious setting. Others are poor stuff, and of these, the one which occupies a whole chapter 'The Cuif before the Session' possesses neither relevance nor originality. The painful lack of coherence in the book is largely accounted for by the fact that the story is grounded on the mystery supposed to hang round the parentage of the heroine, a secret which must have been open not merely to all parties directly concerned, but to the whole contemporary population of Galloway. The heroine is a graceful figure, but she is an anachronism. She has 'Englishy ways' and speaks the finest of English, because she had spent her early childhood with a small Scottish farmer settled in Cumberland. She is mistress of a considerable household and farm, and cultivates the most delicate sentiments, yet, when the season of blanket-washing comes round she 'kilts her coats' and shares the 'tramping' with her

servant-lasses. Her grandmother, too, is a graceful figure; but she also is an anachronism at many points. At the age of sixty eight she reads 'The Fortunes of Nigel' hot from Ballantyne's press (1822) and regales us with stories of girlish flirtations with cavalry officers still youthful, though they had distinguished themselves at Fontenoy (1745). Mr Crockett owes it to both himself and to the large body of readers in whose breasts he has raised expectations to do justice to his unquestionable abilities by taking some pains with his next book.