

February Letters:

February was a month of high tension, waiting for the publication of *The Raiders*, in which so much was invested.

There is an undated letter from around this time. It's significant because there was some confusion over the 'revisions' of *The Raiders*, which seemingly held up publication. Crockett writes to Unwin:

I am just finishing revision of 'Raiders' shall send out a copy tomorrow or Wednesday I have been having it re-typed and corrected so it should be pretty good.

Any word whether title 'Raiders' is already entered at Stationers Hall or not?

I am much pleased with beautiful type you are putting on the R and the proof is very well read when it comes to me. I always return it the same day

Yrs

SRC

We can see that he wants to be sure that the title is 'registered' and that he intends to send the revisions out by Wednesday - this might be Weds 31st January and link to the following:

From SRC to Unwin:

Written yesterday (weds Jan 31st 1894) before I received your letter which came this morning.

Additional Memo

I have been overhauling my accounts of the Stickit (and found that I do not understand the matter of the third and fourth editions. Have I received payment for the third and fourth edition and forgotten it?) I was counting on something like this – indeed took a new house on the strength of it. I thought we had arranged that each edition of the reprint was to represent 1000 copies. And I reckoned thus:

3rd edn 1000 royalty £10 5s £25

4th edn 1000 royalty do £25

£50

Two additional cheques on the basis of your last as per letter Sep 11th £20

£70

Of course there are those which Wylie has – I must get you sometime to give me an account of all that he has had so that I may square up with him also. It is not fair that you should have to pay me so much before he does.

You see I hate business details (and perhaps it would be better to put this as well into Mr Watt's hands) My business is to write and I cannot bear friction and misunderstanding. My statement of expectations from the third and fourth editions is based simply on what you paid me for the first two. Mr Wylie has only paid me as yet £8 6s and £5.2 Feb 1st 94 in all for all the books he has had from you. You see it is a little hard on me. Before I ask you for a detail of what you have sent to Wylie I shall write you such a letter as you can send to Wylie.

Of course the whole thing is simply that there are some factors in the case with which I am not acquainted. I am not very particular now, but I should like the whole cleared up by the May term, when I enter into new responsibilities.

SRC

Writer of books.

Crockett clearly still has money issues on his mind. He states, however, that he hates the business side of all this. He wants all such matters to go through Watt, leaving him free to write! But we can see that he is concerned (perhaps rightly so in the case of Wylie and Unwin) that he is not being entirely played fair. However, as shown below, he was playing a balancing act, not wanting to be seen as biting the hand that fed. His destiny was (almost literally) mortgaged to Unwin at this time.

Penicuik

1st Feb

Dear Unwin,

This is I believe, the first day of spring. There is a foot of snow outside in these mountain solitudes, and it is still falling! You fellows in London have the best of it now. Your letter of yesterday's date has just come in. Of all things I hate the appearance of screwing my friends – specially those who like you have always met me honourably and fairly. I see quite well your point, and I did not remember that the balances were only to be struck at mar 30. Indeed I did not ask you to cast up your accounts now. But I thought that as in the case of the first and second editions you would settle each edition when it was through if they went with decent smartness. That was what I understood from your letters and as I have just taken a new and much larger house – impelled there to by the necessities of my books and my family, as well as by the necessity of a quieter place to write in than a house in a village street with children yelling and playing all day long outside, I was a little alarmed. I enclose a note of my expectations which in my painful [] I wrote yesterday, when I was costing up new ways and means. I think if you look over the correspondence of September you will think that the expectations were by no means extravagant. It is no doubt the case that you have given Mr Watt better terms than Wylie got for the Stickit, but I have every belief that you will find the Raiders far more profitable to yourself than the Stickit. If it is not so, I shall be disappointed. But when your letter of 11th Sept was written, I had told you that all my work would have to pass through Mr Watt's hands, for you to say that 'you understand that my new story will be offered to you by my agent if I (SRC) can manage it.' I have managed it you see, and I think that you will not regret your bargain. Of

course, what made me think that you did not mean to adhere to the strict times and seasons of the agreements with regards to royalties was you saying that 'as soon as the third edition was sold out, you would have pleasure etc in sending the cheque and extra honorarium. However, I am not in any great hurry if you could manage to clear up our matters and let me have as much as possible at the May and Nov terms which are our Scottish days of judgement. That would keep my mind easy for work for I never do good work if I am worried about household finance.

I shall hurry up the illustrations for the Stickit as much as ever I can. All the fellows are busy now with their Academy and Gallery pictures and as soon as these are well on, I shall keep worrying them to finish.

With kind regards and all good will,

Ever truly yours

SRC

Ps – I have today got all the Raiders signatures. I am working hard at the proof in its various forms. I have taken great pains with the style.

SRC

Wylie sends me £5.2 this morning which makes £13 odd in all for what he has had: but we will settle up all that in time.

Then an unpleasant shock. Whether this was the real reason for the delay on The Raiders, or gamesmanship, is hard to know. The battleground was the publishers readers reviews and a game of cat and mouse, or chicken was perhaps being played given that there were still disputes about some of the content.

Penicuik

Feb 7th

Dear Unwin,

I had no idea I had been keeping proof - generally I managed to correct the first proof in a day or two – but the second proof which is being read by one or two specialists – takes a day or two longer. But I hope you will not have to keep back publication by a single day, for this reason among others because I have arranged my affairs to let me get to London in the third and fourth weeks of March when the reviews are beginning to appear, so that I should not like it to be later than the sixth or seventh of that month at the latest. I shall, as you say, send all the proof I have (revise) this week. I have already sent the first (galley) proof, and send today all to 192 by this post. Some more is nearly done, and shall follow later. I have received this morning 305 -336 so that there is from 193-336 in my hands which shall come quickly, and if the rest of the revies comes on at once, I shall return well within the week.

Faithfully yours

SRC

Feb 8th Telegraph – to Unwin 11 Paternoster Square

All Raiders proof returned kindly send more Crocket

Penicuik

Feb 9th

Dear Unwin,

I quite understand about simultaneous publication in America. I only hope that you can set a time for the issue of the book, because I want to come up to town a week or ten days after... in the sort of psychological moment to meet a number of authors and critics at the instigation of my friend Nicoll. And be it remembered that I have to make arrangements for locum tenens etc here so that I must know in good time. I had tentatively arranged to be away from the 12th to the end of March, but I daresay I could put it back a week or so if you think it absolutely impossible that the book can be out on the 1st or 6th. Of course if it can be managed, let it be tried and done – the sooner the better, and I am sure that you will hurry up as fast as you can.

As you say about map and frontispiece, perhaps it is better not to march too close at the heels of Stevenson, Haggard and Co, so we may give up the idea of a frontispiece. Your idea of a facsimile is a capital one, unfortunately the document is in the crown offices and they won't permit a loan. I have only the transcript in Pitcairn's Criminal Trials dated 1830 which it would be no use copying. So that we shall just have to go to press without it.

The pattern of cloth sent is of course just the thing – the quality is just what I want and should like. If that particularly metallic gloss and quality could be got in the shade of the Stickit, that would be exactly what I want – It was for the texture and finish more than the shade that I sent the book of plays. My greatest anxiety is lest the book should be fat like Byron 'I hate your dumpy women' .. and dumpy books as well. So in despite of the tendency for adipose, keep the book slim.

I sent a line to your address which you might send on to Mark Rutherford, congratulating him on his book 'Catherine Fu???' which I have just read. It is beautiful. 'Markam Howard' not to hand yet but when it does come I shall note the cloth and let you know what I think in my next letter. There is no more proof to hand this morning so that I am in the proud position of being clear.

Ever truly yours

SRC

While all the letters I've sourced this month are between SRC and Unwin, there were other business matters to attend to, and the letter below (I don't know who Mr Hall is at present) reminds us that Watt is key to the process.

Penicuik

Feb 10th

Dear Mr Hall,

I did not know what Watt was putting on me at present. I see he is just asking about what I get for my short stories – three guineas a thousand. That is what I have got for the last six months, and without difficulty. The St James' Gazette will take as many of the short ones as I like to write. You know I leave all that to Watt by my agreement with him, and he has managed splendidly for me, I must say. It saves me no end of worry. I think that with the Raiders coming on the First of March, probably his prices will go away up, so that if you think of anything from me, you should buy or arrange now.

You could arrange for a shorter one anyway and I should have special pleasure in writing for Great Thoughts which is a favourite paper of mine.

Faithfully yours SRC

With just a few weeks to go, and with so much riding on it, the following news must have been devastating.

Feb 17th

Dear Unwin,

I am desolated to hear that the publication will need to be delayed. I had been making my arrangements to get away on the strength of your last note. But I know that you cannot help it. Of that I am sure. But could you not let me know generally the date so that I could arrange. At any rate wire me as soon as you hear by cable, for it is of extreme importance to me. I only get south once a year and there are a whole world of visits and engagements to be fitted in. Also there are local matters to be arranged here as if I were a great publisher going to America... a least on a little smaller scale.

You cannot of course issue review copies till you publish, that constitutes publication does it not? You might let me have twenty five as soon as possible however, and I shall undertake that none of them get into the hands of reviewing people – or even if you can only let me have one or two copies, that will always be something.

I am just going to look over the prospectus and return it

With kind regards and in hopes to see you before hope is too long deferred.

Ever truly yours

SRC

PS I am glad to hear the Raiders is being well ordered. I had a note from Mr John Heywood saying that he had thought so highly of the Stickit that his first order was 104 copies. He began with 12 Stickits ten months ago.

Crockett was fully aware that review copies could not be issued until publication date, but he was keen for several people to read it. This is perhaps not surprising given the negativity of some of the publishers readers. And the practicalities of making sure that he tied his trip to London in with the publication date is clearly foremost in his mind. He had pointed out before how important he thought that it was to be seen at 'the moment' of publication. Unwin must have sent back a placatory letter as a few days later Crockett writes:

Penicuik

Feb 20th

My dear Unwin

Thanks for the letter and good news of progress. I am of course wearying to see the buik. Send me one of the colonials when ready.

I heard from Wylie about the agreement and he has sent me invoices (or what d'ye call the thing) of the books he has got from you.

I see a notice in the Scottish press presumably sent by Mr Wylie stating that the 6th edition is 'in the press' Is that so? If so I am glad indeed

Sincerely yours

SRC

This would be the 6th edition of the Stickit Minister. He then sent an example of the 'notices' in the Scottish papers (relating to The Stickit or The Raiders?) It looks like Unwin ws now chasing him for 'new' work, with The Raiders hardly in press. A demand for 'The PlayActress' was made and Crockett tried to manage expectations.

Penicuik

Feb 22nd

Enclosed one of the notices I referred to in the Scottish papers.

My dear Unwin,

By Zeus, you are in a hurry – and a poor man has had no breathing time allotted to him. Well, I am coming to London next month, and I cannot just promise when I shall turn 'The Playactress' out of the workshop. I have been looking her over, and I must rewrite a considerable part, and even add new chapters to the first part, which as your critic said, is hardly strong enough to bear the superstructure.

Then the London part must be rewritten according to promise, so do not be in too desperate a hurry. Believe me that I am not forgetting, and that when I get a little time I shall go to work earnestly upon the little bookie; I think I can make it a great improvement upon when you saw it. The hard work on the Raiders has disciplined me.

With kind regards ever truly yours

SRC

At last the Stickit Illustrated Edition looked like it was to become a reality.

Feb 27th

Dear Unwin,

I have your 'format' of the illustrated edition. It looks exceedingly well and I am quite satisfied with it... as indeed I may well be. When it comes to really setting it up, I shall put a swatch of the text or some title under each picture... do you not think so? I am writing to all the artists today to remind them that the time is short. Artists, specially those who are not professional illustrators, are the most dilatory of individuals, as perhaps you know,... much worse than authors. The class of paper will of course be a question for you and your printer. I shall say to all the artists that we must have the drawings by the end of March, which will put them on their mettle. We could give them a week more but we need not say that. I have not any of them yet, but I shall send them all as they come in. I shall be in London at the end of March and we can talk over them as they come in

Ever cordially yours

SRC

Of the two papers sent the first, white hand-made, is far the better in my opinion.

There followed a telegram which shows that he had seen a final proof of *The Raiders*.

Feb 28th Telegram

To Century London

Heartiest congratulations on format of Raiders admirable distinctive kindly forward today author copy to dedicatee Crockett

And this was followed by a letter:

Feb 28th

Dear Unwin,

As I said in my telegram, I heartily congratulate you on the format of the book. I do not see a single possible improvement except omission of the list of publications at the end, which being printed for a

larger publication is cut into the margin and looks out of keeping with the book. Otherwise the printing, paper, binding of the book, are all that I could wish. You have most certainly done your part admirably, and I am grateful for your great care.

The book opens nicely, which is to my mind the be-all of good binding and it is very agreeable to handle. I asked you to send me another copy for Dr Whyte, who is not a critic but my very dear friend of many years. You would probably send it yesterday... if not you might do so at once. I am going to Edinburgh to see him on Friday and I should like to take him a copy as Dedicattee.

It is very generous of you to suggest that I should send a list of reviews, critics etc. You are so judicious with your own sending that if you send somewhat liberally to the Scottish Local papers, of which Wylie has a better knowledge than I (and of which you can get a list from W) that would be for Scotland. I do not know many critics which makes the Stickit criticisms the more remarkable.

But you might send copies, with, I think, advantage to:

- 1. Robert Louis Stevenson, Esq Vailima, Samoa*
- 2. Andrew Lang Esq – Directory or at Saville Club and Care of Longmans*
- 3. Richard de Gallienne Esq – Directory or Authors club*
- 4. James M. Barrie Esq Kirriemuir N.B*
- 5. Robert McClure Esq, 33 Bedford Street covent Garden*
- 6. Barry Pain Esq, v Directory or Authors Club*
- 7. And early copy to the Daily chronicle would do good. They gave me a great lift last time.*
- 8. D.R. Somerville Esq Christian Leader Office, Glasgow*
- 9. Editor at Dumfries Standard, Dumfries N.B.*
- 10. Editor at Dumfries Herald, Dumfries N.B.*
- 11. J.H. Maxwell Esq, Kirkcudbrighshire ‘advertiser’ Castle Douglas N.B.*
- 12. Rev W. I Dawson, Ed Young Man*
- 13. T.A Atkins Esq, Ed young Woman 2 amen Corner E.C*
- 14. Frank George esq 8 Randall Road, Clifton, Bristol*
- 15. Robert Wildgoods esq, The Gables, Matlock, Derby*

It's game on. *The Raiders* will be published on 10th March 1894. But the delay from the proposed date of March 1st has some unpleasant and long-reaching consequences. The above letter has some possible significance. Crockett does not mention the ‘mistake’ on the ‘Tablet Advert’ but he's not keen on the 12 pages of advertisements at the end of the book. He reminds Unwin to send a

copy to Dr Alexander Whyte (the dedicatee) - aware that Unwin is concerned the book fall into 'critics' hands before publication. (Which in the event, it obviously did). The list of reviewers/critics to whom Crockett wanted complementary copies sent is quite telling. First of all is RLS. He would hardly be happy to do this if he felt that the Tablet Advert would cause offence or was inappropriate. Yet these were exactly the charges levelled at him in the near future by the likes of Henley and others whom Crockett labelled 'the Cockney scribblers.' The plot, as they say, thickens!