

Having run as a serial all year, The Lilac Sunbonnet was published amidst a cacophony of controversy on October 2nd 1894.

Here are some of the articles from October/November of that year.

OCTOBER

The Literary World, Oct 5th 1894.

Table Talk

Mr Crockett's new novel, 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' published on Tuesday by Mr Fisher Unwin, while lacking the war-like stir and movement of 'The Raiders' possesses a charm all its own. It is a love idyll, 'drowned in Scotland' as Mr Louis Stevenson said of some of the author's former work, and redolent specially in that Galloway soil which he is making classic ground. The 'humanities' of the book are set in the midst of such pictures of scenery as will make tourists wonder at their folly in spending money in Switzerland and Norway while Galloway is at their doors. To have turned out within a brief interval two works so essentially distinct and yet so entirely successful in their kind as 'The Raiders' and 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is proof that we have in Mr Crockett a writer of wide range of power.

The Glasgow Herald 6th October 1894

Literature Novels and Stories

'The Lilac Sunbonnet' by S.R.Crockett.

Mr Crockett's books follow hard and fast upon each other. In the volume before us the author is as true to Galloway as Mr Hardy is to Wessex, and the beauties of that lovely country, which is all too unknown to even many Scotsmen, find in him a sympathetic and delightful chronicler. But more is required for a good story than charming descriptions of scenery, and we doubt whether 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' will add much to the reputation Mr Crockett deservedly won by 'The Raiders.' No doubt it is cast in a very different mould, for while that was a story of adventure, this is purely a love-tale of the meetings and partings of a youth (whose presumed destiny, but for love, it is to enter the narrow bounds of the Marrow Kirk, a body so select as apparently to contain but two faithful ministers o to wit, the father of young Ralph Peden and the lone clergyman of the manse of Dullarg) and of his love, the delightful Winsome or Winifred Charteris. In all that relates to their affairs the narrative is idyllic. As the semi-paralytic grandmother of Winsome peruses with fascination the volumes of the Great Unknown as they appear, the date of the story must have been somewhere before

1827, when Sir Walter Scott declared his authorship of the Waverly Novels, and as one of the sheep is called Zachary Macaulay (being blackfaced) in honour of the slave emancipation which took place in 1809, we must conceive that the period cannot be earlier than 1810. It is a convenient enough period, not too far off to demand much archaic knowledge, not too modern to be prosaic. Truth to tell, however, so far as most of the personages of the story are concerned, the date might be any time - with one notable exception. Mr Crockett's peasants are sometimes amusing; very often they are terribly tiresome, but once they are decidedly piquant, and that is where they plagiarise. The chapter 'The Cuif before the Session' is a veritable curiosity in literature, for it is to all appearance lifted without acknowledgement from - of all books in the world 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow, of which from a unique copy in the possession of a Glasgow gentleman, a reprint appears in Graham's work (Glasgow 1883 Vol ii). In the chapbook Jockey, a lout of a country lad, is called before the session on a charge of a nature which involves appearance on the cutty stool and his mother accompanies him, and with her flying tongue makes things warm for minister and session. In Mr Crockett's story, Alexander Mowdiewort, the gravedigger, is called to account for miscalling the minister. This is a concession to modern propriety which was certainly necessary. But the mother of Alexander (who, since he is a man of considerable age, and a widower to boot, scarcely seems to require her), like Jockey's mother, comes with him. The minister in both cases is called Mess John, and the dialogue in 'The Lilac Sun Bonnet' is obviously suggested by the chapman: sometimes it is more eg:

CHAPBOOK:

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, and ay whan ony o them turn'd Whigs, they were put on a four neuked thing, like a yarn winnie blades, an I gave a' their gouls sindry till they turned Papists again; and then for anger they put them on a black stane or stool, in the mids o' the kirk, and the seck goan about them... but that was the original of your repeating stools.

Mr Crockett

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 they used to hae fowk that didna do as they did an' believe as they believed. Sae wi' a lang white serk on, an' a canle I their hands, they set them up for the rabble fowk to clod and set lunt to them - an that's the origin o' yer stool o' repentence.

Is this kind of appropriation quite worthy of Mr Crockett? H emay be quite sure that the day for such 'literary borrowing' to use the mildest term - is quite gone by. Besides, the intrusive chapter is in every way an anachronism. If Mr

Crockett cannot make his own peasants humorous, he might at least leave the rough humour of the chapbook and of the ancient bellman of Glasgow alone; such as it is, it is not improved by Mr Crockett's cobbling. Graham died in 1779. We do not see how Lady Elizabeth Greatorix's son could be 'The Honorable Andrew'. Mr Crockett is surely becoming careless in his great haste to the printing press.

The Literary World October 12th

A reviewer of 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' in The Glasgow Herald of Saturday is eager to fasten on Mr Crockett a charge of appropriation. The chapter 'The Cuif before the Session' is, according to this writer, 'a veritable curiosity in literature, for it is to all appearances lifted without acknowledgement from - of all books in the world 'Jockey and Maggy's Courtship, Part III' a chapbook of Dugald Graham, the skellat bellman of Glasgow.' The reviewer proceeds to show points of resemblance between the two stories, and quotes in parallel columns a passage from each showing the extent of Mr Crockett's indebtedness. The review closes with the remark that 'Mr Crockett is surely becoming careless in his great haste to the printing press.'

The Publishers' Circular Oct 13th 1894

From Mr T Fisher Unwin 'The Lilac Sunbonnet'

Galloway is the scene of Mr Crockett's new romance, but the story itself contrasts with 'The Raiders' very strongly. Instead of the rapid action, the fighting, and the plenitude of incident which we had in the earlier romance, we have rather a tedious love story. Ralph Peden is a young student of divinity who is sent by his father from the distractions of Edinburgh that he may pursue his studies with Alan Walsh at the Marrow Kirk manse at Dullarg. It was while reading his books in the open air on the hillside above Loch Grannoch that Ralph first saw the lilac sunbonnet and the sweet maid over whose shoulders it was hanging. The owner of the lilac sunbonnet is Winsome Charteris, a girl on whom devolve the chief duties of management of the farm of Craig Ronald. Her grandfather is helpless with paralysis, and her grandmother, also past working, chiefly passes her time in reading the novels of the then 'Great Unknown' Sir Walter Scott. When Ralph first spied Winsome she is engaged with one of her maids Meg, in blanket-washing, and when he sees her sit down and take off her stockings, thoughtless of his books, he flees. Winsome afterwards finds his books, and returns them to him the next day, with the exception of his note-book, which she keeps, for in it she finds he has written: 'Of all colours I do love lilac; I wonder maids do not all wear gear of that hue.' Wonsomes parents have known Ralph's parents, and the love between the two young people grows apace. Captain Greatorix is Raplh's rival, while Winsome has a wouldbe supplanter in the person of Jess, who has fallen in

love with Ralph, and who considers him as hers by right, for she was the first person he spoke to in Dullarg. Despite Jess, however, and despite Captain Greatorix, Ralph and Winsome finally come together, and the last we see of the lilac sunbonnet is over the face of Mistress Five year old Winifred Peden. The characters are fairly well presented, but the story as a whole drags, and is not free from cheap smartness and vulgarity. Southern readers, too, will find considerable difficulty in battling with the dialect.

The British Weekly October 18th 1894

The Correspondence of Claudius Clear

The Lilac Sunbonnet To the Editor of the British Weekly

Sir, I had not thought of writing a criticism of Mr Crockett's new book 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' and, for that matter, this letter will be a talk rather than a criticism. There is apparently a dead set being made against the story in certain quarters, and though Mr Crockett can stand injustice, it is possible he may not like it any more than the rest of us.

There is an impression apparently that he is writing too much. But, as a matter of fact, this book was written before the publication of 'The Raiders,' and so were 'Mad Sir Uchtred' and 'The Play Actress'. They have all received the best revision the author could give them, and are the result of a long application. And even if it were otherwise, is it any business of ours? The only question for us readers is whether a writer is giving them good work. Provided he does not collaborate with any Lloyd Osborn, provided he does not write to fill the money-bags that pay the labourers that work on the house the author built, provided he passes nothing that does not satisfy his conscience, the more he gives us the better.

There is something delightful to us who are growing old in the prodigality and industry of the young novelists. As a rule they are not only healthy, but athletic. They play every kind of game, from golf to lawn tennis. Their habits are outrageously good. They rise in the morning at any hour between three and eight, with a leaning to the earlier period. I have reason to believe that no author under thirty will be in bed tomorrow after eight o'clock, and any man who lies in bed till eight will find it difficult to do a book oftener than once in two months. Then these youths are very orderly in their habits. When they take down a book from their shelves, they put it back again *in the same place*. They always have blotting-paper within reach. They know where letters are. They never go out without a pencil, and I have known one or two instances in which they kept silver pencils going for years. Though I do not expect to be believed, I will not be kept from telling that one of them knows how to manage an inexhaustible pen. (that is not the name but it will do.) They have large books in which they paste useful cuttings. And they can work typewriters. A portion of every day is devoted by them to regular exercise and the first-hand observation of nature. They can name

every bird by its song, and if they close their eyes in a woo when the wind is blowing, they can tell each tree by the noise of its leaves. At least they say so, and I have never been in a position to contradict them. These things being considered, it is not surprising that their fertility is very great. It may soon be the best thing for an ordinary reader to attach himself for life to some able-bodied young author whose work he likes. In this way his time will be fully occupied.

A more important objection to 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is that it is not a book like 'The Raiders.' It is not; but then it never professed to be. 'The Raiders' is a first-rate story of adventure - so good that with all its success I doubt whether full justice has been done to it. On Saturday a brilliant young critic and novelist who is an expert both in writing and reviewing the adventure story, said in this room that no book of quite the same freshness and power as 'The Raiders' had appeared in 1894. All may not agree; but the opinion is worth recording. But 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' is a sweet, slow idyll of Scotch love-making. You must not imagine that life in Scottish parishes is full of poignant things. One may live there a lifetime and though he will hardly miss his own joys and pangs, he may never be able to tell anything worth remembering about his neighbours. Those with the clear eyes of poets are able out of ten thousand experiences to set forth a few which, once told, are remembered. No, the background is commonplace, and how happy and enviable does the commonplace sometimes appear. Mr Crockett tells a pure and fresh love story. If the love came suddenly - that is like life. If the obstacles in its course melted quickly away and came to very little - that is like life. If it brought the crowning happiness to two true lovers - that is like life also. If it stirred some sad secrets, some unbearable memories among older people - is not, that, too, how it happens in life?

For my part, I think he has done a great thing for us all in writing a story so full of inspiring faith in womanhood. Some may think that in passages he too much resembles the Ettrick Shepherd at his worst. But I do not know. There is something so blithe, so sunny, so hopeful in these pages that they are a cordial for the times. Is the 'new woman' to be the woman of the future? Some say that all the new women write novels, and that they appear in consequence to be more numerous than they are. Others say that the old ideals we have worshipped of innocence, gentleness, unselfishness, and sweet, invincible goodness, are disappearing. Well, if they are, one can only say with Carlyle that much will go with them. They had not disappeared as long as Winsome Charteris was living. I will own to some disappointment that religion plays so poor a part in the story. There is a real danger that Mr Crockett may dwell too much on what is external and grotesque in the faith of his men and women. Better leave religion alone than use it merely for scenic effect.

Mr Crockett's imagination sees a more golden day coming for authors than they have ever dared to dream. He evidently thinks that minor poets will yet be able to live in peace on the revenues of their books. Ralph Peden owed some of his prosperity to Winsome, but not all of it, and his circumstances are very comfortable. We shall yet have announcements from Messrs. Marks and Street running in this fashion: 'The first edition (ten thousand copies) of So-and-So, and other Poems, by a Party, has been exhausted before publication, and a second edition, making twenty thousand, will be ready on Monday.' A criminal code for

the protection of literary property will then be in force. The first provision will be that every Continental tourist returning to England shall be compelled to turn out all his pockets at Dover. If a Tauchnitz be found about him he will be severely reprimanded and sharply fined. The pillory will be revived for all critics who dare to pen an unfavourable review. *The Crimson Chapbook* may, greatly daring, go as far as this: 'So-and-So, and other Poems, by a Party.' This book is by a new writer. We have not read more than the title page. It was unnecessary. Sufficient proof has been given that the work possesses originality and distinction.'

I am, sir, yours etc
Claudius Clear.

NOVEMBER

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 nemesis 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 milkmaids, 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, 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... 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 1st 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 maybe 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 pursuit 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 tipping 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 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

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Mr Crockett's chapter contains this:

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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 Samml 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 with 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

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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 Wallace, 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 repentance; 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 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 fro 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.

Why not read for yourself and make up your own mind. You can read *The Lilac Sunbonnet* for free, chapter by chapter online at www.unco.scot as [SLOW READING serial](#). Or you can buy the 2014 *Galloway Raiders* (Aytton) edition from the [unco bookstore](#) for £9.99 & postage.